

Village of Homer, Town of Cortlandville, and City of Cortland

Route 11 Corridor Study Area

Cortland County, New York

June 1, 2013

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thoma Development Consultants' (Thoma) assignment was to prepare a Route 11 Corridor Study Area (CSA-11) report for the municipalities of the Village of Homer, Town of Cortlandville, and the City of Cortland. All three communities are adjacent to one another in Cortland County, New York, often referred to as the geographic heart of New York State. Cynthia Teter, Registered Landscape Architect, Teter & Teter design consultants, is our sub-consultant for this work.

The Village of Homer is one of three small County villages. Directly to the south of the Village is a portion of the Town of Cortlandville. Cortlandville totally encircles the County's only city, Cortland. The Homer/Cortlandville/Cortland area of Cortland County has a population of 31,000 persons, which is approximately 63% of the County's population. This area is bisected by Interstate 81 and includes several interchanges of the highway, including Exit 12, which is the northern boundary of this study area. The Tioughnioga River, the County's main waterway, parallels I-81 and borders the eastern portion of the corridor. The New York Susquehanna and Western Railroad operates a freight line in the corridor which passes through the area approximately five to seven times per day.

All three communities are connected by US Route 11, also known as Homer Avenue in the City, the subject of this report. Route 11 parallels I-81 and NYS Route 281, making Routes 11 and 281 major arterials of the highway. The roadway, and the properties that front the route, create a first impression of the area. This plays a pivotal role in the recruitment of employees, especially for the Cortland Regional Medical Center, one of the largest County employers, located at the southern terminus of the CSA-11.



The CSA-11 is heavily commercialized with respect to land use in all three communities. Residential properties tend to be two to four unit multi-family structures. Unfortunately, many properties have deteriorated over time, which has resulted in a domino effect of lack of investment and more deterioration. There is a significant lack of greenspace along the corridor including individual property landscaping and a lack of trees and other amenities in the public right-of-way. The Tioughnioga River is an ignored resource. Many residents and business owners; therefore, view this area in a negative light, resulting in all three communities expressing the need to plan for the future of this corridor so that further decay is halted and new investment is encouraged.

While this area presents its challenges, there is an undercurrent of renewed interest in the corridor. This includes a newly opened museum and a relocating business that will remove a blighting influence along the corridor. The Cortland YMCA has purchased a near-vacant strip mall and will move its services to the CSA. This

provides a significant ray of hope for Homer, Cortland, and Cortlandville in transforming this community gateway into an attractive and welcoming area in which to live, work, recreate, and visit. This report summarizes these challenges and recommends steps to developing key properties, making zoning changes, creating design guidelines, greening the streetscape, and making a physical connection to the Tioughnioga River. These recommendations will assist the communities in creating a unified front in developing the CSA-11 in the future.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA/ONSITE ASSESSMENT

The target area selected for this study begins on the southern end at the intersection of West Main Street and Homer Avenue in the City of Cortland, adjacent to the Cortland Regional Medical Center. It continues for approximately 3/10 mile through the City, through part of the Town of Cortlandville, and into the Village of Homer. The stretch of Cortlandville is a 1/2 mile long between the Town's borders with the Village of Homer and the City of Cortland. The Village's portion of the study area includes 4/10 mile, for a total corridor length of approximately 1.2 miles. This is depicted in the map below.



The northern terminus of the target area is just north of the Exit 12 interchange of Interstate 81. I-81 runs north to south through Cortland County and includes Exits 9 through 13, making the highway the most traveled road in Cortland and the means by which most travelers are introduced to the community at-large. Travelers entering the community via Exit 12 have the option of continuing to Route 281 or exiting onto Route 11.

For those exiting from I-81 onto Route 11, they are in the Village of Homer. Four buildings “greet” travelers on the east side of the roadway. Three buildings are modern construction while the fourth is an 1880’s vintage wood frame building with a large sign that says, “unroom” (gunroom). The four buildings that herald the arrival into the Village lack landscaping, with the older building needing significant exterior repairs. The exit ramp sign is small and easy to overlook. There is a small sign on the exit ramp of I-81 directing drivers to either Homer to the north or Cortland to the south. If a traveler were to quickly reenter I-81, they might go away thinking the Village and surrounding area had little to offer.

As noted in the Village’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan:

The character of Route 11 north of the Exit 12/Route 11 interchange quickly transitions from highway commercial to the large historic homes and charming downtown for which Homer is known. The Route 11 area, with its location directly off of I-81, serves as the gateway to the community and is the first impression most visitors have of Homer. It is, in effect, Homer’s front door.

The Tioughnioga River parallels Route 11 for most of the target area. There is no apparent connection between the corridor and the River.

Annotated photographs included on pages 5 through 7 illustrate the building and property conditions found along Route 11 as one travels south. There are a number of buildings that are well maintained such as the industrial site of Albany International in the Village, the aforementioned campus of the Living History Center in the Town of Cortlandville, and the Cortland Regional Medical Center in the City of Cortland. Unfortunately, many commercial and residential structures are sorely in need of repair. Landscaping and streetscape improvements are needed to create a welcoming area for all three communities. As discussed following, Homer, Cortlandville, and Cortland have invested time and funding for this corridor study so that they may move forward in a unified approach in improving this area.

Village of Homer



Albery International maintains an attractive industrial building on Route 11



Village of Homer gateway sign



J&J Repairs occupies a wooded parcel that has housekeeping issues



When Route 11 was widened, the green space between the sidewalk and curb was blacktopped



Town of Cortlandville



The Budget Inn is in poor condition



The Rover scrap yard has no green-space and little screening



The former Grocery Outlet store will be the new home of TLC ambulance



The CNV Living History Center converted a vacant, former department store into a regional attraction



Streetscape area near Living History Center could use more green-space

City of Cortland



Home of the future YMCA, this site has a large expanse of asphalt and no trees which draws attention to overhead wires and poles.



Commercial businesses have very little landscaping.



Cortland Regional Medical Center has a large expanse of surface parking which is not screened.



Here We Grow Daycare Center has nice sidewalks and landscaping.

Future Development in the CSA-11

In addition to the removal of a dilapidated building in the Village of Homer that paved the way for the construction of the new ice cream business, Brain Freeze Madness, in 2012, there are a number of newly completed projects, or proposed projects, that will positively impact the corridor. These are listed following:

- The new owner of the Budget Inn is interested in upgrading this property which will improve a blighting property.
- The NYS DEC is in the process of remediating an approximate one-acre superfund site next to ID Booth and directly across the street. New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG) is the property owner and stated they would be agreeable to negotiating a sale, with conditions, sometime in 2014.
- Natoli's Market, which closed in December of 2012, was recently purchased, renovated on the interior, and reopened as a market.
- TLC Ambulance, which is currently located in the corridor in leased space on the north corner of Evergreen Street and Homer Avenue in the City has purchased the former Grossman's Lumber Outlet Store and will relocate its services in 2013 to the new site. This project will be an adaptive reuse of a vacant and deteriorating building. TLC's former site will be occupied by the hospital.
- The NYS DOT will repave the Cortlandville and Homer portion of Route 11 in 2013. They have agreed to plant some trees along the roadway.
- The Cortland YMCA has purchased the former P&C Supermarket strip mall in the City of Cortland. They intend to relocate their services to the new site although a date has not been set (See rendering below). This will greatly improve this property.



YMCA of Cortland, 184 Homer Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045 

- In 2012, the Central New York Living History Center opened its doors after refurbishing the former AB Brown Department Store, and surrounding outbuildings, in the Town of Cortlandville. This project was the culmination of a six-year effort by a number of Brockway Truck enthusiasts. Brockway Trucks were manufactured in Cortland from 1912 to 1977. In addition to Brockway Trucks, the museum houses other collections related to wars, Tractors of Yesteryear, and the railroad, all with a Central New York connection. This is a local and regional tourist attraction.



III. PROCESS

To guide the work of Thoma Development Consultants, and the planning process, the Village of Homer, Town of Cortlandville, and City of Cortland appointed two individuals each to serve on a Steering Committee. Their input into the process is recognized and greatly appreciated:

Village of Homer

Genevieve Suits, Mayor
Susan Sandy, Homer Business Association

Town of Cortlandville

Doreen Bates, Director, CNY Living History Center
Trish Hansen, TLC Ambulance

City of Cortland

Ken Dye, Deputy Mayor
Garrick Henry, Cortland Regional Medical Center

Steering Committee Kick Off Meeting

An initial kick off meeting of the Steering Committee included a brainstorming session on the concerns in the CSA-11. Possible solutions for addressing the concerns were also noted:

Corridor Concerns

- Auto repair companies/junkyards along the river in the Village
- Occupancy and other issues with the motel
- Poor directional signage
- Poor landscaping/streetscaping
- Zoning issues
- Dollar General Plaza/Formal Gas Station condition
- Poor building conditions throughout the corridor
- No public access to the Tioughnioga River
- Density of housing behind Fabio's
- Parking issues: lack of paving, no striping, no greenspace
- Garbage issues
- Overhead power lines are unattractive
- Bridge over viaduct needs to be more attractive
- DEC site next to I.D. Booth

Potential Solutions to Address Corridor Concerns

- Grants/Financing
- Relocate some businesses
- Make sure zoning is compatible with the future plans for the area
- Get a buy-in from property owners
- Landscaping
- Complete an overall design concept
- Complete building conditions reports where appropriate
- Develop a pedestrian route from the Village of Homer, through Cortlandville, and to the City of Cortland
- Stricter code enforcement
- Better signage

Work Scope

This brainstorming session served as the basis for the scope of work to be completed under this plan:

1) Provide an inventory and analysis of the land uses and zoning classifications. Review any existing design guidelines.

2) Façade and other designs and conceptual site plan improvements for specified sites including:

- Circus House site
- NYSEG Superfund Site
- Olde World Bake Shoppe/nearby properties
- Overall unified streetscape plan for the entire corridor

3) Conceptual designs for the CSA 11, including addressing a perceived unsightliness and lack of character of the area, the lack of wayfinding and signage from Interstate 81, the lack of connection between the Tioughnioga River and the area, including poor pedestrian amenities, and the lack of specific and/or unified gateways that herald the arrival into all three communities.

4) Identification of development strategies for specific sites including:

- Rehabilitation of the Circus House for commercial use/visitors center.
- Identifying the benefits of land assemblage strategies such as the development of contiguous properties to provide opportunities for new commercial or higher density residential development. This could include properties contiguous to the former Olde World Bake Shop site, for example.
- Development of the NYSEG site next to ID Booth after the completion of its Superfund remediation.

Other Steering Committee Meetings

Throughout the development of the plan, a series of Steering Committee meetings was held. The Steering Committee guided the work of Thoma Development Consultants, reviewed pertinent data, discussed opportunities, and articulated thoughts and opinions regarding the contents of the Corridor Plan.

Property Owner Survey

Owners were surveyed via mail to gauge their opinions regarding the corridor and to ascertain future plans for their properties.

IV. SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

A total of 113 surveys were mailed to property owners in the CSA-11. Six were returned as undeliverable, for a total survey sample of 107. The number of respondents was 49, a response rate of 45.6%. Several questions included in the survey related to how long the respondent has owned the property, what are the property's uses, and how much parking is available. Two open-ended questions were included which asked what the owner's plans are for their property within the next five years, and another question regarding suggestions on how the Route 11 Corridor might be improved.

Future Plans

Listed following are the summarized responses to the question regarding future plans for properties:

- Nine (9) property owners, 18% of respondents, indicated an interest in selling their property.
- Sixteen (16) owners, 32.6%, indicated a desire to rehabilitate their properties. The scope of work included such items as painting, insulating, roofing and general repairs, up to and including major renovations.
- Cortland Regional Medical Center noted that they are making major renovations to various hospital departments.
- Albany International noted that they are planning an expansion for a new product line.
- The CYN Living History Center wishes to clean up the riverfront, develop walking paths, and construct a pavilion.

Suggestions on How the Route 11 Corridor Might be Improved

Listed following are ideas respondents had regarding what they would like to see happen in the corridor. Similar themes are combined:

- Repair the Olde World Bakery building
- Fix up rundown properties
- Install trees, shrubs, and greenery; create curb appeal
- Create a welcome center at Exit 12
- Businesses should work together to secure an economic development grant
- Enforce snow removal on sidewalks
- Get rid of the Budget Inn or find a new owner
- Get rid of "junkers" at car repair shops
- Improve crosswalks
- Create a bus stop area

Public Meeting

A public meeting was held on April 23, 2013 at the Central New York Living History Center. Approximately 30 persons attended. A powerpoint presentation was given on the highlights of the information to be included in the Corridor Plan. A question and answer session followed.

V. PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

The Village of Homer's Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2010 by Thoma Development Consultants. Cortlandville completed a NYS Route 281/13 Corridor Area Land Use and Aquifer Protection Plan in 2002 which was done by Clough, Harbour Associates LLP. Finally, the City of Cortland adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 2012 which was also developed and written by Thoma Development Consultants with significant public input. Each of these plans references the Route 11 Corridor, as noted following:

Village of Homer

In addition to the information contained in the Homer Comprehensive Plan that is noted on page 4 of this Corridor Plan, the Inventory and Analysis Section of Homer's Comprehensive Plan additionally notes the following related to the CSA-11:

Despite the open, green areas nearest Exit 12, much of the Route 11 corridor suffers from many of the same problems as the commercial nodes in the Route 281 Corridor: unattractive buildings, little greenspace, and a poor streetscape.

The roadway runs very close to the River's edge, in some cases leaving barely 30' between the edge of the sidewalk and the top of the riverbank. Several small businesses are crowded into this narrow strip of land, including at least two auto repair shops. This area is unattractive and the sites are overcrowded with vehicles. Their current uses are inappropriate given such close proximity to the River. Efforts to improve the physical appearance of the area and its buildings are needed to infuse a sense of place and create a gateway appropriate to the historic character of the rest of the Village. Efforts should be made to acquire these properties and relocate the businesses to a more suitable location, perhaps to the vacant property that will be left following the demolition of the structure next to the I.D. Booth building. The buildings should be removed and a linear park developed in their place. This will create a better connection between the River and the street, create a public promenade and a possible route for the Tioughnioga River Trail, and transform the Route 11 commercial corridor from an eyesore to a graceful entrance befitting the community.

The Plan's Implementation Measures call for the following:

- *The Village will seek funding for a streetscape improvement and beautification effort for Route 11 (adjacent to and south of the I-81 interchange) to improve the aesthetics of the gateway, which shall include, as appropriate, removal of asphalt paving between the sidewalk and the street and installation of paving blocks, removable street scale planters, appropriate landscaping and other design features such as lighting and sidewalks. Particular emphasis should be placed on the area directly across from the I-81 off ramp.*
- *Support efforts to restore the historic Circus House as an attraction in the community.*

- *Encourage relocation of businesses located on the east side of the highway within the floodway and redevelop the area as a waterfront ribbon park.*

Town of Cortlandville

The Land Use and Aquifer Protection Plan divided the Town into eight (8) development areas and discussed each one in detail. The Route 11 Corridor is included in Planning Area 2. The Plan notes:

Planning Area 2 is located along the NYS Route 11 corridor just south of the Village of Homer and west of Interstate 81. This area contains a mix of residences, utilities, community services, commercial use and small businesses. Much of the commercial activity is related to automotive repair, outdoor utility storage areas, gas stations and fuel storage areas. Much of this area exhibits a degraded quality. The general visual quality of the area is poor with the exception of the area in the vicinity of Fisher Avenue.

Another section of the Plan notes:

There are waterfront and floodplain issues and opportunities in this area. The area is susceptible to flooding. However, recreation and redevelopment opportunities in this area may stem from future development of the Tioughnioga River Trail through the eastern portion of the planning area. Improved river access should be a priority for this area. Green space areas which are currently used as recreation fields should be maintained and enhanced.

The Conclusions section of the Plan states:

The area has an inconsistent and often neglected appearance. Due to its location along a highway (NYS Route 11) this area should receive increased attention for development and redevelopment opportunities and emphasis on a general clean-up of commercial and non-conforming uses. Continuation of non-conforming uses shall be discouraged....this area is potentially attractive to types of redevelopment that are associated with river and trail use as well as other recreational forms of entertainment. There may be future opportunities to consolidate many existing small parcels into larger parcels that offer increased redevelopment opportunities.

City of Cortland

The City Comprehensive Plan details the following regarding the CSA-11:

The lack of landscaping or a tree canopy, large expanses of asphalt, and rundown building conditions contribute to a very poor first impression of the community. It should be noted that the same conditions continue north on Homer Avenue through the Town of Cortlandville to the Village of Homer. The Village of Homer's new Comprehensive Plan (2010) highlights the need to improve the corridor and recommends a number of specific actions. The City needs to undertake similar actions to improve this gateway. The

streetscape must be infused with additional trees and landscaping, and buildings must be renovated in order to develop a sense of place.

Under Goals and Implementation Measures, one of the Implementation Measures reads:

Undertake streetscape improvements at the Exit 11 area, Port Watson Street, and Homer Avenue in order to create welcoming and interesting gateways to the community. Special attention should be provided to the abandoned gas station on Clinton Street, the P & C Plaza on Homer Avenue, and the BOCES plaza on Port Watson Street.

VI. ZONING ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Zoning and Land Use: Existing Conditions

The corridor encompasses five distinct, yet similar, zoning districts along Route 11. These zoning districts include the Village of Homer's Industrial and Business-2 districts, Cortlandville's Business-2 district, and the City of Cortland's General Business and Professional Office districts. The map on page 22a shows these zoning districts.

Zoning Analysis

A close reading of the zoning ordinances in all three municipalities on the allowable uses reveals a mix of commercial, residential, and industrial uses; the root of the corridor's historically diverse existence (See Map 1, Route 11 Corridor Zoning Districts on page 24). However, based on the gradual zoning out of the single-family residential use, the trend appears to be a slow shift towards commerce and service, along with an opportunity for higher density multi-family dwellings. The majority of existing land uses are currently in conformance with the existing allowable uses, with the exception of a few parcels that are now prior existing non-conforming residential uses. As an apparent gateway corridor, these types of commercial uses should be welcomed



and promoted in order to capitalize on the high volume of traffic/consumers passing over the corridor with regularity.

In view of the City of Cortland being largely built out, and there being a renewed interest regarding development in the Town of Cortlandville's portion of the study area, the trend towards commercialization along the corridor will likely continue (See Maps on pages 25 to 26 showing current land use as predominantly

commercial / service oriented immediately adjacent to Route 11). Taking into consideration this anticipated pressure of future commercial development, the allowable land uses, although diverse, are uses that may exist in harmony and do not appear to prevent the achievement of the desired community atmosphere. Rather, the conditions now, and moving into the future, seem to be hindered by a lack of aesthetic guidance and the need for an integrated streetscape. The corridor should provide a welcoming presence to engage the passerby and entice ingress from Route 81 to the City of Cortland, Town of Cortlandville, and Village of Homer.

Recommendation: Adoption of Design Guidelines

Without proposing significant amendments to the zoning districts and allowable uses of the three corridor municipalities, the long-term gateway atmosphere could greatly be improved through the adoption of and adherence to design guidelines similar to those currently in use by the Town of Cortlandville enumerated in Chapter 300, Article XXIII of the Town of Cortlandville Code (*See also* Cortlandville's Business District Design Specifications document). Recommendation of the adoption of design guidelines is in accord with the recommendations found in the 2012 City of Cortland Comprehensive Plan and the 2010 Village of Homer Comprehensive Plan. Recent development along the Route 11 Corridor in the Town of Cortlandville, specifically the CNY Living History Center, is an excellent example of the positive impact brought about through an adherence to design guidelines.

With the exception of the Town of Cortlandville, there are currently no adopted design guidelines for the stretch of Route 11 through the Corridor Study Area. The City of Cortland Design Guidelines are applicable only to the Downtown Historic District and the current Village of Homer Design Guidelines are specific to the Village's Main Street Design District. Design guidelines are an important tool that may be employed by a municipal government in establishing a baseline for a community's vision and for channeling future development and the built environment. Specifically, design guidelines are often adopted and enumerated in the zoning code so as to require consideration by the municipal planning board when deliberating approval of any new construction, substantial reconstruction, façade work, or landscaping to ensure the promotion of a positive aesthetic experience and appropriate site development. Design guidelines often incorporate instructive images and other annotated graphic representations that are intended to guide a planning board's decision-making, typically requiring the board to consider in detail the following before approving new development or substantial rehabilitation*:

- Site design and building orientation
- Building design and architectural features
- Building materials
- Screening of utilities and storage
- Vehicular access and parking
- Pedestrian circulation
- Lighting
- Signage
- Landscape design
- Buffering

* A design sketch of the above elements is included on page 20.

As part of the above listed considerations, a design guideline document will specify, in detail, development and building criteria such as desired building orientation in relation to major roads, roof line heights in relation to surrounding development, appropriate landscape, green space, and buffering, as well as the preferred lighting, signage, and pedestrian circulation necessary to achieve the community vision.



Although the site plan approval procedures effective in the Village of Homer and City of Cortland do account for some of the considerations embodied in basic design guidelines, they are very abbreviated and non-descript in comparison to the details incorporated into comprehensive design guidelines. The above listed design guideline considerations can be used to strengthen site plan review and help to ensure that future development is consistent with the overall vision for the community.

Specifically, the design guidelines for the Town of Cortlandville, titled “Business District Design Specifications,” were adopted with the purpose of “promoting new development and redevelopment that is compatible with its surroundings,” and to “encourage high-quality design . . . that protects and enhances open space, rural characteristics, and the natural environment.” A review of Cortlandville’s business district design guidelines reveals that the guidelines are comprehensive, and most importantly, could sufficiently accommodate the future design guidance needs of the CSA 11 stretching from the City of Cortland, through the Town of Cortlandville, to the Village of Homer. Cortlandville’s design guidelines successfully cover the above mentioned design considerations that are typically covered in a comprehensive design guideline document. For the above reasons, and to ensure uniform future development along the CSA 11, the Village of Homer and City of Cortland should consider adopting and applying Cortlandville’s design guidelines to their respective sections of the corridor.

Design Guidelines: Potential for Implementation

There are a few different methods by which design guidelines can be adopted to ensure consideration during the planning and approval process of future development. The most common means are by parallel incorporation in the municipal zoning code or through the adoption of a design overlay district, which is also incorporated and adopted into zoning. The Town of Cortlandville’s design guidelines are enumerated in the Town’s zoning code and in the Business District Design Specifications document in a manner that parallels existing Business Zone district regulations. In other words, all non-residential development in all business zoning districts in Cortlandville are further restricted by the parallel design guidelines in the zoning code and the design guidance document.

Rather than recommending that the Village of Homer and City of Cortland adopt boundary-wide design guidelines, based on the diverse and unique mixture of uses along the corridor, it would be more advantageous for all three municipalities to adopt a Route 11 Design Overlay District. Adoption of a design overlay district will allow the municipalities to guide future development of the CSA 11 without disturbing the underlying zoning. An overlay district will provide flexibility by allowing the municipalities to shape the aesthetic feel and direction of future development in a unified manner along the defined corridor without restricting or affecting other areas within the municipal boundaries that are likely distinct in nature from the sense of place that is desired along the gateway corridor.

The ultimate goal in adopting a multi-municipal overlay district would be to create a vehicle through which the above recommended uniform corridor design guidelines

could be adopted and subsequently applied to any new development or redevelopment along the corridor. A design overlay district would specifically demand the attention of the municipal planning boards and developers alike, through inclusion on the municipal zoning maps, and thereby ensure that the incorporated design guidelines are not only noticed but also applied.

Taking progressive action such as adopting design guidelines consistent among three closely related municipalities would profoundly affect future development along the Route 11 Corridor. With the close proximity of each municipality to one another and the location of Exit 12, promoting consistency in design will help achieve the desired gateway atmosphere. Recognizing the potential to attract consumers, business people, students, visitors, and a professional workforce from Route 81, Exit 12, endorsement of design guidelines would be a significant step toward providing a welcoming gateway to the Village of Homer, Town of Cortlandville, and City of Cortland.

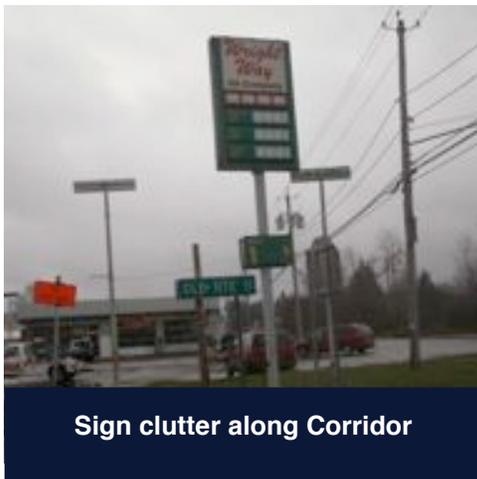
Sign Maintenance and Zoning

The Village of Homer, Town of Cortlandville, and City of Cortland have each adopted comprehensive zoning regulation of signage that can be found at Chapter 228, Article III; Chapter 176, Article XVIII; and Chapter 300, Article XI of the respective zoning codes. The signage zoning for each of the municipalities covers essential regulatory issues such as placement, material, type, size, lighting, and other construction requirements.



Sign deterioration along Route 11 Corridor

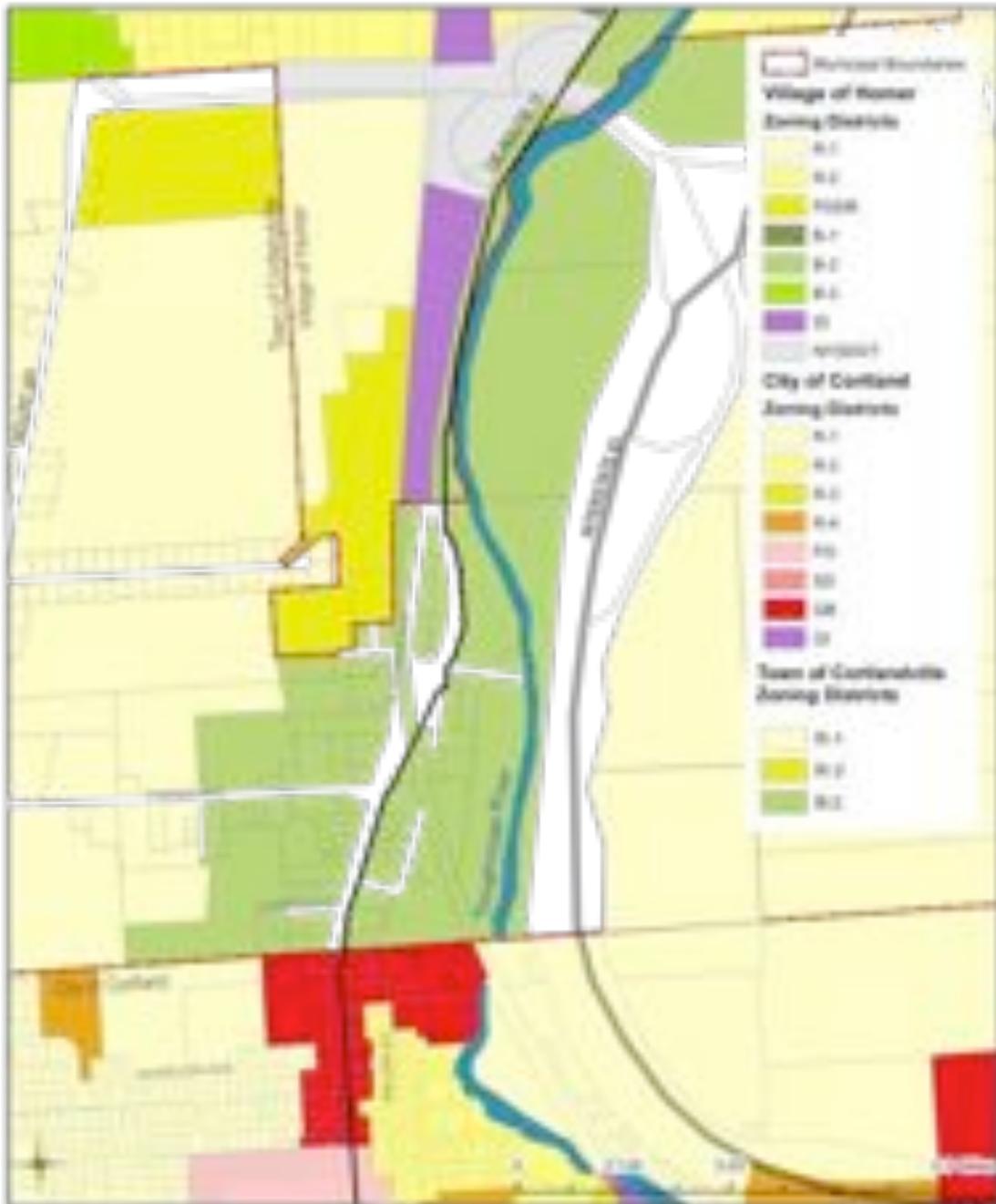
Just as important, each of the municipal codes also regulates the maintenance, repair, and physical appearance of signage on an ongoing basis. Both the Town of Cortlandville and the City of Cortland have zoning code sections that explicitly require property owners to maintain signage in “orderly condition” and “proper appearance” so as to prevent corrosion, rotting and other deterioration, with the penalty for violation being mandatory removal of such sign. It is clear that the pertinent sections of zoning in Cortlandville and the City of Cortland have been drafted to promote an aesthetic awareness. The Village of Homer zoning code has a provision for sign removal if a sign is “abandoned, unsafe or insecure or is a menace to the public.” (See *Village of Homer Code Chapter 228, Article III, Section 228-22*) It is unclear whether this zoning



Sign clutter along Corridor

section requires orderly and proper physical appearance, as in the Town of Cortlandville and City of Cortland, or if Homer's signage zoning pertains specifically to the structural integrity. This section of Homer's zoning could be strengthened by explicitly requiring proper maintenance as it pertains to physical appearance, thereby eliminating any questions to that fact.

MAP 1: ROUTE 11 CORRIDOR ZONING DISTRICTS



Route 11 Corridor Zoning Districts
City of Cortland, Town of Cortlandville, Village of Homer



MAP 2: ROUTE 11 CITY OF CORTLAND LAND USE MAP



Route 11 Corridor: City of Cortland Land Use Map
City of Cortland, Town of Cortlandville, Village of Homer



MAP 3: ROUTE 11 TOWN OF CORTLANDVILLE LAND USE MAP



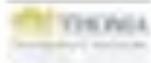
Route 11 Corridor: Town of Cortlandville Land Use Map
City of Cortland, Town of Cortlandville, Village of Homer



MAP 4: ROUTE 11 VILLAGE OF HOMER LAND USE MAP



Route 11 Corridor: Village of Homer Land Use Map
City of Cortland, Town of Cortlandville, Village of Homer



VII. SITE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES/RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the Scope of Work, it was determined that site specific Development Strategies/Recommendations would be created for three sites in the Corridor. These include: (1) the remediated Superfund site next to I.D. Booth in the Village of Homer, (2) an assemblage of properties including the Olde World Bakery, in the City of Cortland and (3) the building commonly referred to as the Circus House in the Village of Homer.

Site: Circus House Building

Property Description: This site includes one parcel along the east side of South Main Street (Route 11) in the Village of Homer. The property is located very close to the Route 81, Exit 12 interchange. The property size is 0.7 acres. The property has a large parking area. It is zoned B-2.



The existing building is octagon shaped with two full stories and an attic area. From the exterior, the existing building appears to be in poor condition. It has a unique history in Cortland County, having been the site of the Sig Sautelle Circus when the circus was not traveling. The building is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places; however, the New York State Historic Preservation Office stated it has the potential to be listed.

Current Use: Antique Store with limited hours and limited visitors.

Current Ownership: Privately held. It has been for sale for many years.

Proposed Uses(s): Public/not for profit (NFP) uses such as a Museum or Visitors Center. Private uses which are tourism-related such as an antique store or coffee shop. It could also be a public/private partnership.

Development Process Recommendation: It is clear that the current owner of the property is not willing or not able to fully develop the property. The Village should encourage a change of ownership.

Whether public or private ownership, the building should be listed on the National Register. Once listed, it may be possible to receive grant assistance related to historic renovation. For public ownership, this listing may qualify the building for grants. For private ownership, the building could qualify for historic tax credits. The National Register listing work may be able to be performed by a Cornell University class or intern, as there is local precedence for this. (See also design recommendations on page 39).

Potential Resources:

Private ownership – Historic tax Credits; Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Small Business Program; Village of Homer Revolving Loan Program.

Public/NFP Ownership – Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP); NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF); New York State DOT Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP); New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA).

Site: Homer Avenue Properties (former Olde World Bakery and adjacent properties)

Property Description: This property contains five parcels, each with five different owners. All parcels are zoned General Business. The total land area of the properties is 1.32 acres.



The buildings appear to be in fair to poor condition, with the exception of the two southernmost buildings.

Current Use: The five parcels contain a single family house on a double lot, a two family structure, and two (2) multifamily buildings. The properties also contain two commercial buildings along Homer Avenue and a larger commercial building to the rear of one of the multifamily residential buildings. The commercial buildings are vacant. The residential units appear to be occupied.

Current Ownership: Privately held.

Proposed Uses(s): New housing, market rate or affordable senior housing (12-20 units). Office complex for medical offices. See conceptual drawing on page 44.

Development Process Recommendation: Identify potential developers. The City can work with the developer to assemble and acquire the properties. The City should adopt design guidelines for Homer Avenue to assure appropriate designs.

The location near the hospital and across from the new home for the YMCA appears desirable for a medium density housing development or office complex. The City may sponsor a preliminary market analysis to show the demand for the proposed use.

Potential Resources: Design guidelines. For affordable housing - CDBG Program Income, LIHTC.

Site: Route 11 Properties

Property Description: This encompasses four parcels, including one on the west side of Route 11. The three parcels to the east of Route 11 are adjacent to the Tioughnioga River and total 1.15 acres. The parcel to the west is .82 acres.



Current Use: NYSEG owns the parcel to the west and one parcel to the east. These parcels were determined to contain hazardous materials, were declared a Superfund site, and were remediated by the DEC. In the next year or two, they will be available for development with minimal restrictions.

The other two parcels contain automotive businesses. Their location adjacent to the River, on narrow parcels, is not an ideal situation. One building is in poor condition and both businesses could benefit from additional space.

Current Ownership: Privately held.

Proposed Use(s): East side of Route 11, create corridor trail; west side, relocate automotive business or other businesses.

Development Process Recommendation: The Village, or other entity, should acquire the two automotive properties in order to protect the River and visually improve the area. The NYSEG property on the west of the road should be developed privately as a business(s) location. The automotive businesses can be given the first option to either own or tenant that property. The Village can work with NYSEG to facilitate the sale of the property to a private owner with a compatible development plan See also design sketches on page 38.

Potential Resources: LWRP, CDBG - Small Business Program, Village revolving loan program, NYSEG, Cortland County BDC.

VIII. DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Design Concepts

To better understand the Design Recommendations put forth for the CSA-11, a discussion of design concepts is helpful:

Connections

- The function of a corridor is to be a connector: in this case between municipalities, businesses, and the people who live and support these entities.
- Human beings react very strongly to their environment, even when they are totally unaware that it is impacting them.
- The project goal is to make stronger connections by impacting humans in a positive way as they move through and function within the corridor environment.

Design Intention

The design intention focuses on analyzing and improving the visual and physical connections between:

- Municipalities with differing regulations
- Businesses within the corridor
- Human beings with each other
- Human beings and their environment

Role of Design

- This study involves the movement of both pedestrian and vehicular users through the environment.
- Design choices can be used to enhance the user experience and to strengthen connections.
- With any linear project, it is important to incorporate destinations at key points along the way and use these to strengthen the whole. This gives users a place to aim for and something to do when they get there.
- Strengthening connections ultimately results in a stronger community by fostering business, tourism, culture, recreation, and an improved quality of life.

DEFINING FEATURES OF STUDY AREA

There are both assets and limitations that need to be considered when making Design Recommendations for the CSA-11, as noted following:

Existing Spatial Limitations

Spatial limitations that define the project area and may limit opportunities to make connections are due to:

- NYS Route 11
- Interstate 81
- Tioughnioga River
- Railroad
- Cortland County Highway Department Property
- Private Property Ownership
- Location of Existing Buildings on Sites

Existing Visual Limitations

- Lack of large or medium trees and green space along the streetscape.
- Narrow space between curb and sidewalk and location of existing buildings limit tree planting and green space opportunities.
- Unattractive architecture, vehicles parked in front yards, utility lines, excessive amounts of unbroken, gray pavement.
- Lack of visual continuity or sense of place throughout corridor.
- Lack of compatible architecture, historic or decorative detailing on buildings, incongruous building materials, unattractive building materials.
- Gateway experience on each end of corridor is very weak.
- Businesses and municipalities lack updated, attractive signage with unifying qualities.
- Lack of wayfinding signs.

Historical and Cultural Assets

- CNY Living History Center: potential for war reenactments, truck shows, special displays and events, and other activities that will draw people to the corridor area from within and outside the community.
- History of Homer/Cortland industrial past along the Tioughnioga River:
 - Former Tinsley Dam, Superior Mills, and Wrench Factory located near Circus House and IDA property (See page 41).
 - Unique, historic architecture of the Circus House.

Recreational, Scenic, and Health-Related Assets

- Tioughnioga River and wetland area
- IDA property: potential availability, accessibility, and visibility
- YMCA being relocated to Homer Avenue
- McDonald Center

- Cortland Regional Medical Center
- Doctors' Offices
- Here We Grow Daycare Facility
- Suggett Park

See page 35 for a map showing key locations in the Corridor.



The “big picture” corridor plan with destinations and connections to bring people to the area and to connect disparate elements

RECOMMENDATIONS

Trees, Trees and More Trees

- The creation of additional green space and the planting of many large and medium sized trees along the corridor streetscape will have the greatest positive impact on the overall appearance and character of the corridor over time.
- Municipalities and private property owners need to make a commitment to planting (and maintaining) larger trees wherever possible, in addition to removing unnecessary pavement and replacing it with grass wherever possible.
- Benefits of planting trees:
 - Improves the visual appearance, therefore adding to property value and business appeal.
 - Softens harshness of built environment.
 - Brings intimacy and human scale to the streetscape.
 - Adds life, movement and sound and provides habitat.
 - Significantly reduces storm water runoff.
 - Provides shade in hot summer months, cooling buildings and providing energy cost savings.
 - Lowers the Urban Heat Index and temperature of water entering the Tioughnioga River: healthier for fish and other members of the riparian food chain.
 - Absorbs large quantities of CO₂ and releases large quantities of O₂



Rendering shows how planting trees can make a significant difference in the Corridor. This is the area in front of the Living History Center looking south.



Create enhanced crosswalks, the area between sidewalk and curb, and center turning lane with stamped asphalt in a brick red color and pattern

- Red color and design warm up excessive areas of gray pavement and adds historic character.



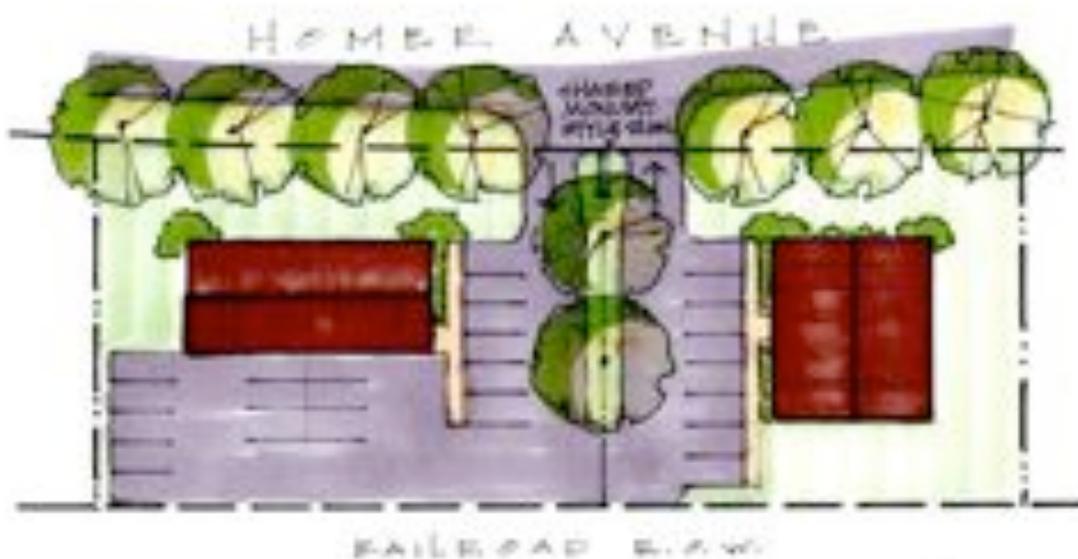
Create a linear park along the Tioughnioga River

- A linear park should include destinations and nodes to encourage pedestrian use as a strong link between the three communities.
- A linear park can include such amenities as a fitness trail, sculpture, historical and environmental displays, shelters, benches, fishing access areas, etc.



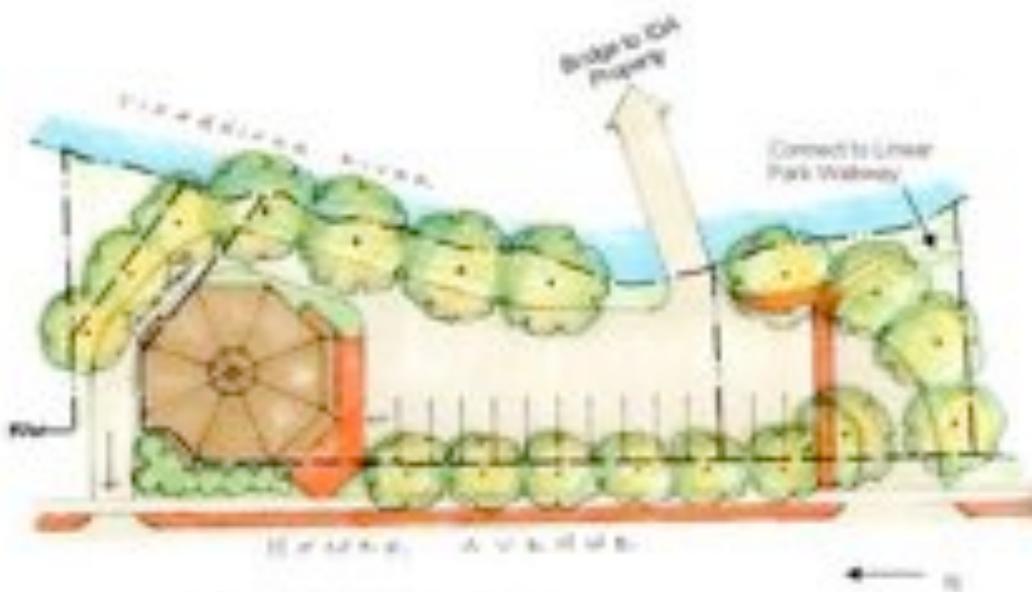
Relocate existing businesses on the east side of Route 11 in the Village to the remediated NYSEG Superfund Site

- These businesses include Stupid Choppers and JM Auto Repair. They are currently operating in the narrow strip between Route 11 and the Tioughnioga River and may be able to be relocated to the NYSEG Superfund site when it becomes available (see also Site Specific Strategies/Recommendations on page 26).
- For the new location, locate parking to the rear and sides of property, not beyond the front face of the building.
- Create green space and plant large trees in the Route 11 right-of-way and front yard.
- Incorporate an attractive monument-style sign.
- Use design guidelines for building materials to enhance architectural style and appearance of building.



Renovate Circus House

- Historically renovate the building, with a particular emphasis on the historic architectural features, to increase the building's visibility for use as a Welcome Center and coffee shop with drive-thru window.
- An historic paint palette with brighter colors would emphasize the unusual architecture of the building and draw attention to the Welcome Center.
- Parking and queuing space is available on the site and could be expanded to include the property immediately to the south. This action would give better access to the bridge connecting to the proposed park on the IDA property and would connect to the linear park on the west side of the Tioughnioga River.



Circus House Site Sketch



Create a large municipal park on property currently owned by the IDA

- The park would be connected to proposed Tioughnioga River linear park and could include amenities such as historical and environmental displays, shelters, benches, fishing access areas, sculpture, etc. (See also page 41)
- The park would serve as a destination for pedestrians, with walking trails and river access.
- The park could be a location for events hosted by the CNY Living History Center, such as war re-enactments and truck shows, and as a location for YMCA and McDonald Center sponsored events such as 5K races, Cornducky Derby, Canoe Races, etc.
- The park would have the potential to include amenities such as a community garden, playground, dog park, athletic fields, etc.

Develop a stronger gateway experience going into the Village of Homer

- Install a new, updated entrance sign by the I-81 overpass.
- Plant additional large trees to screen I-81 and provide a backdrop for the new gateway signage.
- Remove invasive honeysuckle shrubs along waterfront to open up attractive views to the river.
- Use a black, wrought iron fence as an accent for a new carved, gold leaf sign to replace unsightly plantings and the existing stone planter at the sign base.
- Locate signage for local community groups, such as the Lions Club, in an area that is secondary to the gateway signage, not in the same area or in forefront of the new gateway signage.
- Possibly include benches, fishing access, and a walking path as an extension of the linear park if so desired.
- Enhance the area on the north side of the I-81 overpass with green space and tree plantings, as well as wayfinding signage for vehicles exiting I-81.

See the enhanced photo on the next page.





Create a stronger gateway experience for viaduct

- Should the City of Cortland choose to install red flags and lights along the Route 13 bridge, a similar treatment could be used over the Route 11 viaduct to carry the same design element through to another community gateway.
- Red flags would add architectural character and color to the viaduct bridge which feels like a gateway between the City and Cortlandville, even though not exactly at the municipal boundary.



Route 13 Gateway Designs: C & S Engineers, Syracuse

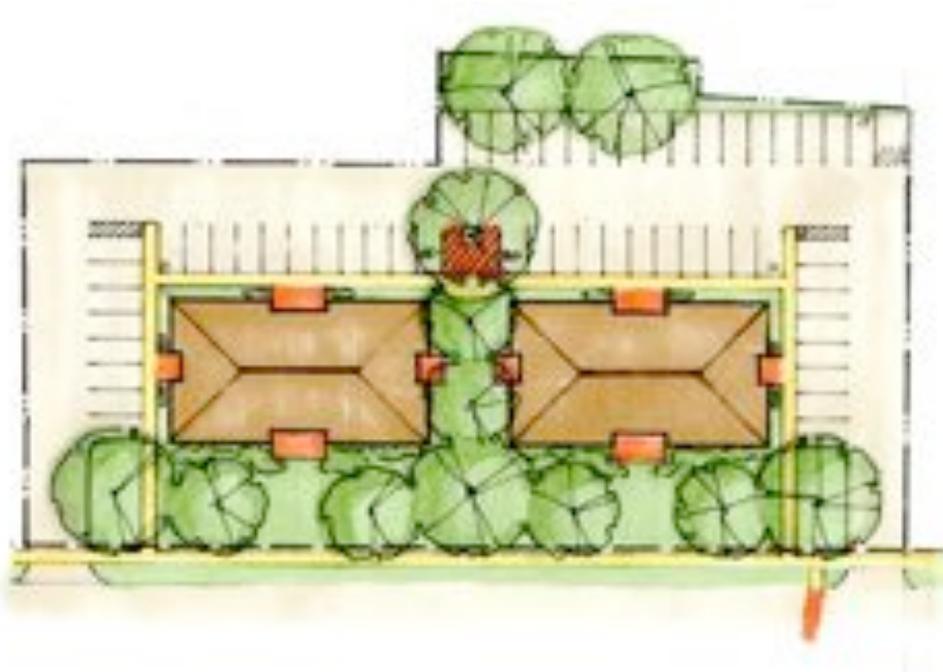
Enhance the future YMCA site with green space, trees, and brick patterned crosswalks

See Landscaping Plan for future YMCA below.



Develop additional multi-family housing in the City of Cortland

- Proposed multi-family housing in area of Olde-World Bakery could support two buildings and parking in rear and sides of property, with green space and tree plantings used to enhance the appearance of the property and adjoining streetscape. This area could also be developed as an office complex.
- Housing in this area would be close to the Cortland Regional Medical Center, daycare, YMCA, McDonald Center, various other business establishments, and Suggett Park.



Site Sketch of Proposed Multi-Family Housing