CITY OF ROME, NEW YORK
APPENDIX F: SUSTAINABILITY

INTRODUCTION

The term sustainability is often used primarily in reference to environmental factors. Yet community sustainability, the ability for City investments and private development to provide a high quality of life for residents now and into the future, is much more than that. A sustainable community is one that contains a land use pattern that fits and encourages the particular economic and lifestyle needs of its residents. It is one that accommodates a host of transportation modes, scaled to the needs of the community. And it is one that enables and encourages environmentally-sound development practices, reducing urban heat islands through parking lot landscape, allowing solar panels and wind turbines, and permitting community gardens and farmstands to expand access to locally grown, healthy foods. It increases transportation choice by accommodating bicycles, encouraging more dense development where appropriate, and linking development proposals to adequate public facilities. Finally, it provides the opportunity to assess the tools in place to protect the City's natural resources. With these considerations in mind, policies must be established to assure that they support, encourage, and contribute to a sustainable and high quality of life.

To address sustainability, it is important to recognize the complex, interdependent relationships between the City's numerous policies and regulations; changing one policy or regulation may inadvertently affect a number of others. For example, regulations designed to accommodate vehicular parking may unintentionally encourage over-paving, leading to greater prevalence of heat-islands, and increased run-off. Accessory structure and use regulations designed to protect the character of neighborhoods may unintentionally restrict renewable energy devices and other eco-initiatives. Uses are separated so that it becomes infeasible or unsafe to walk from home to the store. These requirements were not established to create conflict or purposefully increase energy demand. They resulted from trying to meet specific community goals within a narrow focus. Therefore, policy needs to be comprehensive in addressing all aspects of quality of life, and cognizant of any unintended consequences it may create.

Since the last Comprehensive Plan Adoption in 2004, the City has worked on several focused neighborhood-based master plans including the Downtown Rome Brownfield Opportunity Area, Erie Boulevard Corridor Brownfield Opportunity Area, and Woodhaven Redevelopment Plan. Each plan will be officially added to the Comprehensive Plan through local legislation as the respective plan is completed in full. Each plan addresses sustainable redevelopment practices from a perspective of overcoming land use obstacles created by prior site use. In preparing these geographic specific documents sustainability practices that work for the City of Rome has been identified, and can be seen throughout herein. This Comprehensive Plan component will help in expanding these practices cohesively and equitably throughout the City.

In addition to this Appendix F, each neighborhood level master plan is considered a roadmap for the zoning sustainability updates. For more detailed information on each master plan see applicable appendices.

In addition, it is important to note that Rome is part of the larger region's sustainability goals. The Mohawk Valley Regional Sustainability Plan addresses sustainability comprehensively with goals, indicators, and targets for economic development, transportation, land use and livable communities, water management, materials management, energy, and agriculture and forestry. This Comprehensive Plan component will touch upon all these categories in establishing planning policies. These include:

- Land use policies that encourage and facilitate mixed-use and LEED-ND development. This includes standards that require multi-modal connections.
- Planning policies to protect and preserve agricultural land.
- Planning policies to encourage connections to local food production and similar access to local food.
- Use permissions for renewable energy on both the private and commercial scale.

This appendix of the Comprehensive Plan addresses these policies in the following six categories

I. Growth
II. Development
III. Economic Development
IV. Agriculture
V. Natural Resources
VI. Transportation

I. GROWTH

Growth policy must be focused on supporting the principles of smart growth, preserving open space and natural areas, utilizing existing infrastructure and resources, and preserving quality of life for Rome residents.

New growth and development in Rome must occur in a managed fashion, emphasizing a smart growth approach, much of which is related to issues of infrastructure. New development should favor infill sites, and growth should be limited or avoided in areas where delivering services poses a challenge. Infill development is most desired as it is often cost-effective, preserves natural resources, reduces pressure on agricultural land, and focuses growth where it provides the greatest benefit to the City as a whole

Growth Policy #1

Direct residential growth toward existing developed areas in the Inside District as much as possible to maximize the use of existing infrastructure. Leapfrog development shouldbe discouraged.

Land use policies and the related development regulations must encourage investment in Rome's existing infrastructure and housing stock, to the greatest extent possible. It is recommended that new residential development require connection to public infrastructure, with techniques like conservation design being the only types of development that would be permitted without such connection. Further, limited residential conversions should be allowed where feasible, to maintain the density needed to support new businesses and services, and to ensure that Rome's Inside District neighborhoods, and the wealth of existing homes therein do not fall into disuse or disrepair.

Growth Policy #2

Allow increased residential density within the Inside District for efficient land use. Efficient and innovative development types should be encouraged.

Increased density is not limited to multi-story multi-family development. Much of the residential land area within Rome, especially within the Inside District, is devoted to single-family development. As this is the predominant form of residential development, it is important that residential development regulations reflect the City's established development patterns. When minimum lot sizes require lots that are larger than the established lotting pattern, this creates a significant number of nonconforming lots. More importantly, it may work to decrease Rome's residential density over time. Where existing neighborhoods are built with small, dense lot patterning, it is important to ensure that regulations are tailored to maintain such density, and that they do not require unrealistic minimums in terms of lot sizes or setbacks. For existing homes, if the dimensional standards don't match current development patterns, this limits owners in the ability to make improvements to their properties and makes reconstruction of or alterations to existing properties difficult. Maintaining existing homes is a key component of sustainable development.

In addition, because there are large land areas available for redevelopment within the Inside District, a neighborhood redevelopment district should be created to facilitate large-scale development in a sustainable manner. Such a district would require development to occur in line with principles like those included in LEED for Neighborhood Development and similar systems. This would allow redevelopment of large areas like the Woodhaven site to occur in a manner

that prioritizes the creation of viable mixed-use communities, built on principles of traditional urbanism and environmental sustainability.

A development option such as cluster design subdivision should also be included. Cluster design subdivision should be an optional subdivision process, intended to preserve natural and scenic qualities while allowing for increased density, which normally would not be achievable through conventional development. Cluster subdivision is also recognized as a means to combat sprawl by allowing for smaller lot development with more access to common open space, both natural and improved, which is an asset that can enhance property values as well as quality of life.

The City should also use the leverage provided by planned development to encourage green design and sustainable development. Planned development should be expanded so that public amenities and benefits are required to be provided to the City in exchange for zoning and design flexibilities. This would encourage such things as green roofs, impervious surface reductions, greywater reuse systems, conservation easements, innovative stormwater management, multimodal and accessibility enhancements, etc.

Growth Policy #3
Limit development in areas where infrastructure and services are not available, such as within portions of the Outside District. The majority of new development should be directed into existing neighborhoods and commercial areas. When development occurs in more rural areas, policies should advocate for various types of conservation design to minimize impacts.

Conservation design development is intended to preserve environmentally sensitive areas while allowing for limited residential development. The intent is to work with – rather than against – the natural and scenic qualities of open space (i.e., lakes, streams, wetlands, and other natural land features). Conservation design would accomplish a number of goals:

- A more detailed analysis of the site proposed to be developed would allow for better location and coordination of areas best-suited for development or conservation.
- The rural character would be maintained by preservation of natural resources and scenic natural views.
- Conservation design addresses quality of life issues by providing for commonly-owned open space areas for use by residents of the development, both passive and/or active recreation.
- Conservation design requires extensive buffering between residential development and non-residential uses, such as agriculture, to prevent land use conflict.

Conservation design also promotes clustering of residential development within the larger development space and maintains the remainder of the site as open space, either common open space shared by the community or preserved in its natural state. There is a perimeter buffer along the edge of the development, a minimum development size, required minimum open space for the development, and spacing requirements between residential clusters within the development.

There are clear benefits to the use of conservation design. The preservation of large tracts of open space allows for habitat preservation for flora and fauna, and creates a “green corridor” for species to continue to travel. The large amount of open space also functions as a natural filter for stormwater that prevents no additional flowing to wetlands; this also means that filtered water makes it way to underground aquifers, which are then recharged. There is also a social benefit to the common open space throughout the development, allowing areas of passive and active recreation for development residents.

Growth Policy #4
Establish an efficient land development pattern and provide a variety of housing stock to meet the needs of City residents.

The City must make efficient use of land for residential development. Encouraging infill development in the Inside District is the primary means of achieving this efficiency, by directing new development in a manner that takes advantage of existing infrastructural and housing resources, as well as existing public services. Further, encouraging infill development is also a key strategy for ensuring the long-term viability of many of Rome’s Inside District non-residential land uses, ensuring that a market continues to exist to support them. Infill development can also serve to reduce average vehicle miles traveled, by locating residential uses near other non-residential land uses, such as neighborhood parks, shopping, schools and employment centers.

Infill development is typically more cost-effective over time than new development in greenfield areas, primarily because it takes advantage of existing infrastructure and resources. Prioritizing infill development is also a key strategy to combat suburban sprawl, reduce transportation costs, and encourage the creation of walkable, mixed-use

neighborhoods with a variety of housing options. Whereas greenfield development may typically provide a homogenous residential environment, infill development in an existing neighborhood can serve to provide a rich variety of housing options, including single-family and two family homes, townhouses, and apartments of varying size. This mix of housing options helps to foster a diverse community that accommodates the needs of different household types and income levels.

One of the most efficient uses of resources, especially for infill development, is mixed-use development. In developed areas, this can mean development on a parcel where commercial uses occupy the ground floor, and residential uses occupy the upper floors. On a larger scale, new developments designed in a manner similar to that described above, but as a cohesive neighborhood redevelopment district, is also desired. In a mixed-use neighborhood redevelopment district, such as the Floyd Avenue portion of the Woodhaven site, the development as a whole may consist of a mix of land uses designed as a single integrated community, and include both vertical and horizontal mixed-uses.

Growth Policy Strategy

- *Update subdivision regulations to allow for conservation design and cluster subdivision as outlined in the Division of Local Government Services Subdivision Review document revised 2/2015*
- *Assess and adopt residential housing incentives (First Time Rome Buyers Program)*
- *Encourage cluster subdivisions and conservation design where applicable*
- *Reduce outside district minimum lot sizes where public water is available and utilized*
- *Develop a system of proactive project engagement that helps establish a dialog at the early stages of project development*
- *Develop a system to identify natural resources within the outside district which can be used in conservation designs*
- *Identify large tracts of land as the primary sustainable development lands*
- *Keep updated lists of available city-owned properties for development and advertisements of development opportunities*
- *Legislate tax incentives for new construction residential/mixed use properties within the inside district (Similar to LL485B)Identify targeted neighborhoods for piloting a residential façade improvement program*
- *Nominate the local historic district to state and federal listing so historic tax credits can be available*
- Provide an appropriate density bonus to incentivize use of Conservation and Cluster Subdivision Design by offsetting land held for community or public benefit

» Provide an easily understandable flow chart for the subdivision and site plan review and approval process

II. DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development techniques should be encouraged and/or required, as applicable to move to a "greener" development form.

Sustainable development takes many forms – from large-scale development concepts like neighborhood redevelopment based on LEED ND or equivalent standards, to site-specific technologies and design elements, such as passive solar orientation, alternative energy generation, and the use of permeable paving surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff and protect water quality. New development should be required to employ new technologies and techniques where appropriate, to promote community sustainability. Further, in addition to site-scale redevelopment standards, new and existing structures should be encouraged to attain minimum efficiency standards as outlined under programs such as LEED, Energy Star, and Green Globes.

Development Policy #1

Adopt regulatory framework to allow for sustainable development techniques.

Components of sustainable development are numerous, from impervious surface controls, to requiring native landscaping and innovative stormwater management through green infrastructure solutions, to allowing for solar panels and wind turbines. Many of these can be incorporated into development regulations. Some basic examples of sustainable practices that can be incorporated into regulations include:

- Allowing for the use of semi-pervious paving materials, tied to impervious surface controls.
- Creating comprehensive accessory use standards that allow for eco-friendly structures, like solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicle charging stations.
- Including exterior lighting standards, including the design and intensity of building-mounted lighting and light poles in residential and non-residential districts, neon tubing/LED dark sky lighting, and illumination of signs, buildings and canopies, to minimize light pollution and conserve energy.
- Drafting landscaping provisions that reduce the heat island effect for parking lots, as well as other paving impacts such as parking islands designed to drain stormwater.
- Requiring native landscaping and encouraging alternative stormwater management techniques like bio-swales.
- Allowing for community gardens.
- Encouraging maintenance of, and continued investment in historic buildings by creating flexibilities for adaptive reuse and raingardens.

Development Policy #3
Parking is a key part of any development. Without proper regulation, new developments may create too much parking, over-paving lots and leading to a number of associated negative environmental impacts. Further, as opposed to a community image focused on sustainability, over-paving may promote a community image that emphasizes an auto-orientation.

The minimum amount of required parking should be tailored to local demand. While it is understood that most residents typically travel through Rome by car, it is important to make sure that such understanding does not dominate the City's philosophy on parking and undermine the walkability of Rome's commercial areas. One clear way to articulate that through regulations is to institute parking maximums to ensure that excessive amounts of parking are not installed. Frequently, parking amounts are provided to accommodate peak demand that is not regularly seen – i.e. "Black Friday" or Christmas Eve retail shopping. Such amounts of parking are not necessary for retail success, and can create an unfavorable image in Rome's commercial areas.

In addition, certain developments should be required to provide bicycle parking. As the transportation section of this Chapter describes, the City should look toward creating a bike path network in the City, connected to a larger regional alternative transportation network. Bicycle parking furthers this policy by accommodating users when they arrive at their destination.

Finally, similar to bicycles, car-share and bike-share facilities have become commonplace in municipalities, and have proven to be a popular means of transportation for both residents and visitors. Given the benefits that such facilities bring – positive environmental impacts, increased transportation choices for the community – regulations should include provisions that incentivize property owners to accommodate these facilities on their property.

Development Policy #4
Regulations should be attuned to their potential impacts on issues of public health.

Development regulations can have direct positive impacts on public health. Larger concepts such as mixed-use development work to reduce dependence on cars and encourage more walkable environments. Providing alternative transportation options encourages a more active lifestyle which may include walking or bicycling to work or to shop at the local market. Including proper landscaping requirements can serve to both beautify the environment and reduce negative externalities such as heat island effect from large areas of paving, and stormwater run-off affecting water quality and erosion in downstream areas of a watershed. Creating the right set of districts, with the right mix of uses and site development controls, helps to eliminate issues of incompatibility between the built environment and public health. There are also a number of specific regulatory actions that can assist in improving public health.

- Allowing for community gardens will provide the opportunity for all residents to grow healthy foods within the City itself, no matter if they live in a single-family home or an apartment with no outdoor space.
- Requiring green space and active/passive open space in new development, and through open space zoning districts will provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation, and will help to maintain a green network in Rome that allows for the movement of wildlife and natural resources.
- Incorporating zoning techniques that promote sustainability, as outlined in this section, will assist in creating healthier places and minimizing negative impacts on the environment.
- Adding standards for approval of discretionary approval actions (variances, conditional use, etc.) that consider public health will give the City the means to evaluate potential decisions in the light of their potential impacts on the health and well-being of residents.

Development Policy Strategy

- Update Zoning Code to allow for flexibilities including landuse and parking requirements to support implementation of Downtown Brownfield Opportunity Area and Woodhaven Redevelopment Plan
- Legislate the Woodhaven Redevelopment Plan to promote smart growth infill development
- Adopt a form-based zoning district(s) in key redevelopment areas to promote sustainable growth
- Adopt updates to subdivision regulation to allow forconservation designs and cluster subdivisions
- Develop a downtown public parking plan with identified lots and implement the Wayfinding Plan identified through the Downtown BOA
- Improve access to health and wellness programs (Community Needs Assessment Goal #5)

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Promote economic development throughout the City that balances the history of Rome with needs of the current and future economy with a high quality-of-life standard.

Smart growth strategies speak to diversifying the economic base and ensuring that there are readily available sites for non-residential development with proper infrastructure. Smart growth strategies also advocate for externalities beyond location and infrastructure, such as quality of life. There should be an accessible network of supporting commercial businesses, industries, and transportation facilities so that the full spectrum of worker's and business' needs are addressed.

Rome has a strong history in early manufacturing which has left many appropriately sized industrial sites throughout the Inside District with access to infrastructure. New development should be encouraged to take advantage of remediation practices to bring historically industrial sites back to productive use as outlined in documents such as the Downtown Brownfield Opportunity Area Master Plan (BOA) and other specific neighborhood master plans.

Economic Development Policy #1

Because of the intensity of use of industrial and commercial businesses, require connection to public infrastructure.

When planning for the construction or expansion of infrastructure, areas reserved for industrial or commercial use should be prioritized. These types of land uses cannot function properly without a connection to public infrastructure. Similarly, new industrial and commercial development, where feasible, must be directed to existing urban areas within the Inside District, such as vacant industrial or commercial buildings and parcels, where such infrastructure is already available. BOA identified sites should be prioritized.

Economic Development Policy #2

Comprehensively address land use regulations for current and future industrial and commercial developments. A clear set of high-quality physical design and land use standards within the development regulations for new commercial and industrial development prevents land use conflicts, and makes the process of development more predictable.

Many times, there are concerns when allowing industrial or heavy commercial to locate in an area by-right, such as unattractive development that does not mitigate off-site impacts or externalities. Conversely, addressing all such concerns through special use and rezoning processes can discourage development because there is no set standard regarding what is allowed or desired, and approval becomes unpredictable. Creating a comprehensive series of basic design standards for industrial and commercial districts will create a process where development is predictable – both to the developer and the neighbors – and can maintain a high aesthetic standard. In particular, landscaping, buffering and screening requirements for commercial and industrial developments can greatly improve the appearance and performance of these types of developments. Generous setbacks and landscaping requirements also prevent use conflicts.

Economic Development Policy #3
Key transportation routes and nodes, especially those with existing infrastructure in place, are prime locations for commercial and industrial uses. Such areas must be reserved for non-residential uses.

Transportation access and infrastructure are major factors in selecting proper sites for industrial and commercial uses. One way to retain these sites is to zone appropriate areas for anticipated industrial and commercial development. With areas "pre-zoned" for these uses, it becomes easier to direct development to appropriate areas, to preserve areas where such development may not be suitable, and to reduce the chance of conflict with neighboring uses.

Economic Development Policy #4
Create a waterfront district that protects natural resources, guides development so that physical and visual access to the waterfront is maintained, and ensures that the types of development occurring there are appropriate.

A waterfront district should be created to facilitate development along the river that both protects water quality and maintains views and access to this valuable asset. Site design is the key aspect of regulation. The special aspect of waterfront development should address how the structures are sited and how they facilitate continuous access, where appropriate, to the Mohawk River and Erie Canal. The boundaries of the district will have to be established, as well as key locations for view corridors and/or viewsheds.

Because of the unique mix of development types and uses that occur along the waterfront, it is anticipated that this district would consist of sub-districts to better address the form and function of waterfront development as well as planning polices currently being established for the area. Flexibility in the development process may be necessary as well. Guidelines and criteria for site plan approval should be established as part of the initial program approval, and would build off of the Rome Main Streets program design guidelines and storefront design manual. The extent of the approval approach would be broader than that usually ascribed to zoning as it would address the complete development pattern within the area including access, parking location, landscape, urban design, and sustainability, as well as the usual controls over building location, bulk, and use.

Economic Development Policy #5
Encourage the reuse and redevelopment of existing industrial buildings that no longer serve the original purpose for which they were built.

An industrial mixed-use district can help to facilitate adaptive reuse of older industrial buildings. To acknowledge a growing mixed-use market and preserve existing manufacturing buildings, such a district would encourage the reuse of older industrial or commercial buildings for light industrial use and a variety of other non-industrial uses, such as live/work dwellings, higher density residential, commercial, and limited institutional uses, creating a mixed-use environment.

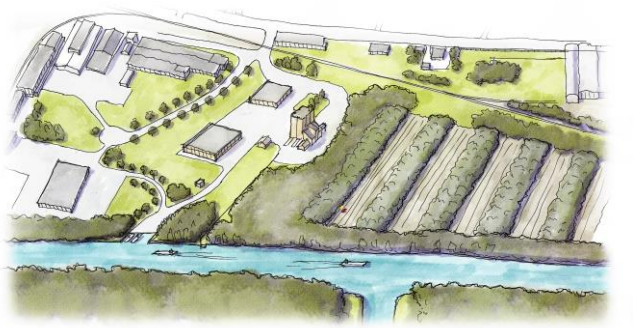
Economic Development Policy Strategy

- *Develop a formal economic development strategy (Community Needs Assessment Goal #2)*
- *Market BOA Strategic Sites available for redevelopment*
- *Develop local incentives for redevelopment and infill projects within the inside district*
- *Update local charter & city code to include lasting, enduring, and sustainable terms and policies*
- *Develop a community calendar that the school district, city, county, and local organization can contribute to*
- *Promote the Commercial Façade Program as a job creation tool*
- *Revive the REAp Program as the Rome Business Assistance Program and work with MVEDGE on administering the program in collaboration with other funding sources*
- *Incentivize inside district and infill development for all project types (commercial, industrial, residential, recreational) through local tax incentive laws in addition to the current tax incentives*
- *Adopt form-based zoning districts to enhance desirable development areas and promote mixed use neighborhoods*
- *Implement Brownfield Opportunity Area Projects (BOA) (List catalytic BOA projects)*
- » Adopt the Wayfinding Strategy and expand to include destinations throughout the City
- *Engage a consultant to identify and evaluate potential historic sites*
- Nominate the local Historic District and Historic Landmarks to the State and National Registry of Historic Places
- Develop a history bicycle tour or walk path that connects all identified local historic resources and places of interest

IV. AGRICULTURE

Preserve agricultural land.

Agriculture is part of both Rome's identity, and its economy. Preserving prime agricultural land and maintaining the rural character within the Outside District should be a key priority. Policy goals should: 1) emphasize the importance of agriculture to the City's economy; 2) acknowledge and manage the pressure to develop prime agricultural farmland as a non-agricultural use; and 3) reinforce the need to protect prime farmland, even with continued growth.



Agricultural Policy #1

Residential development should be directed to the Inside District, as a major challenge for agriculture is the encroachment of incompatible residential development. Scattered residential sites can cause conflict with existing agricultural uses by breaking up the continuity of large areas devoted to farming, and increasing the potential for nuisance conflicts between the residences and neighboring farm.

The following strategies implement this policy:

- Agricultural districts should be limited to agricultural uses and limited non-farming uses that are compatible with farms, such as some industrial uses and agri-businesses.
- Permitting accessory agri-businesses within agricultural districts, for example, nurseries, greenhouses, pumpkin patches and vegetable stands, maintains the economic viability of farming operations.
- New residential development should be directed into the Inside District as much as possible. However, it is not the intent to prohibit all residential development within Outside District; it is expected that some development may occur there. In such cases, land use development techniques like conservation design should be used.

Agricultural Policy #2

To prevent land use conflicts, non-agricultural development must be buffered from agricultural development. Anticipating conflicts – and creating proper mitigation controls ahead of time – is key to agricultural preservation.

Non-agricultural uses that locate near farms require buffering requirements – large setbacks with specific landscaping and screening requirements. In particular, buffering is necessary for uses locating near livestock farms where nuisance conflicts can be more severe. Planned open space, forest preserves and conservation easements can also be used to secure proper buffering, which provides the additional benefit of natural resource preservation.

Agricultural Policy #3

Because of the significant amount of agricultural land within Rome, agri-business services and facilities, such as equipment sales and service, research facilities, nurseries and greenhouses, grain elevators, bio-fuels, feed and fertilizer services, are an opportunity for economic development.

Many industrial and agri-business uses are compatible and complementary to agricultural uses, subject to site characteristics such as access to key transportation nodes and corridors and the required infrastructure. Oftentimes, agribusiness land uses can be controversial in terms of location, especially when in close proximity to residential, but permitting these uses adjacent to agricultural uses builds a complementary use relationship.

Agriculture Policy #4

Access to local food should be expanded, and private food production should be broadly allowed.

Farmstands and farmers markets are key ways for the community to access local food. With the variety of food grown in the local area, these types of uses should be encouraged in the City. This means both organized events (farmers markets) and allowing for on-site sales (farmstands on agricultural land). In addition, there has been significant interest in recent years in the keeping of animals on site for private use on private property, such as chickens, bees, and fish farms.

» Chicken Coops. Allow for chicken coops, with regulations that limit the number of chickens allowed on a lot, prohibit roosters, require proper housing of chickens, and contain other appropriate maintenance requirements.
» Apiaries/Bee-Keeping. Similar to chickens, there has been significant interest in allowing apiaries for private use on private property, and allowing for a set number of hive structures and colonies, with regulations for proper set up and maintenance.
» Aquaponics. Private fish farms are also of interest to some property owners, and should be allowed subject to regulations pertaining to their location, design, and maintenance.

Also, homeowners have expressed interest in planting vegetable gardens in yards visible to the public. These gardens both enhance local food production efforts and conserve water on-site. Vegetable gardens should be allowed in all yards.

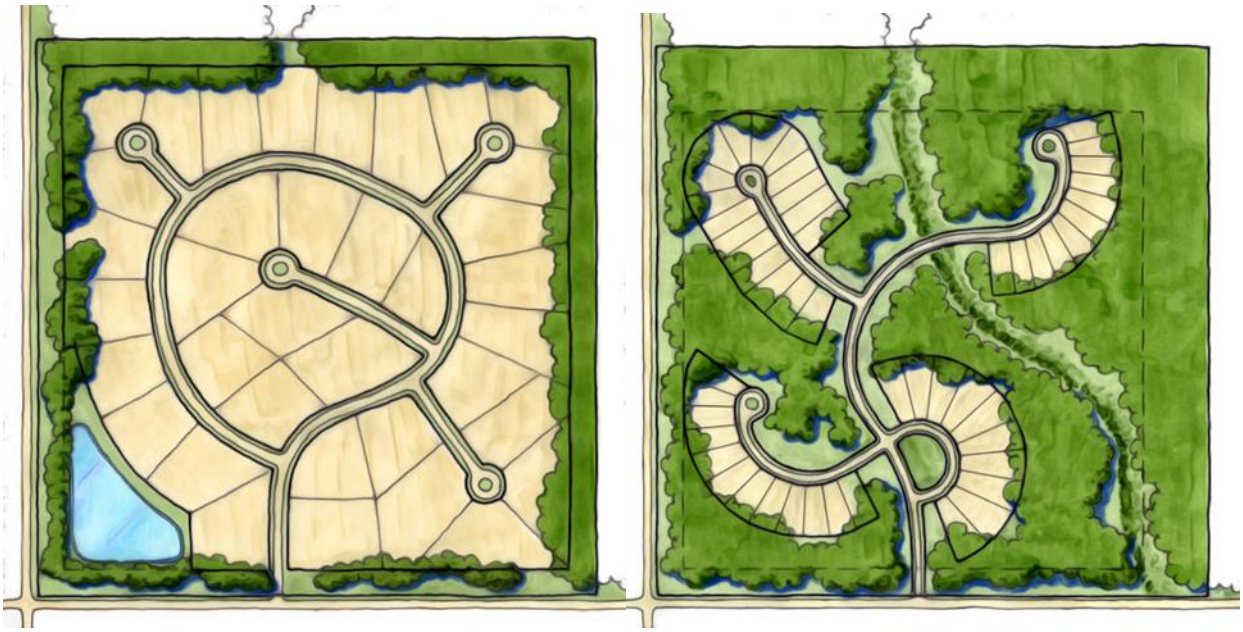
Agricultural Policy Strategy

- *Update zoning regulations and map to preserve and protect agricultural land*
  - » Update the agricultural district in the Zoning Ordinance to ensure uses allowed are compatible
  - » Protect agricultural land from encroachment of non-compatible uses
  - » Direct development to the Inside District when possible to limit potential conflicts with agricultural operations
  - » Limit large solar array development on productive agricultural lands identified within or near certified agricultural districts
  - » Inventory and develop a system of tracking active or potential agricultural lands
  - » Work with MVREDC to support identified regional agribusiness strategies

V. NATURAL RESOURCES

Preserve Rome's green infrastructure by protecting, conserving, restoring and properly managing such assets.

The City of Rome possesses abundant natural resources. The protection of these natural resources will not only enhance the visual beauty of the City, but also provide a wealth of educational opportunities and recreational amenities, and generate long-term economic benefits. It is important to remember that once natural resources are lost, they may not be recovered.



Natural Resources Policy #1

Implement protection and preservation measures for natural resources.

An Open Space District should be assigned to active and passive public recreation areas, primarily parks and playgrounds. A second district, a Natural Areas District, should also be created and targeted to natural environments where development would be severely restricted, allowing only certain low impact uses, such as nature trails. These types of districts offer two benefits. The first is that the only uses allowed within the district are related to recreation or preservation, as applicable. This allows the City to address uses of particular concern to these areas such as private campgrounds, accessory storage sheds, and seasonal uses. The second benefit is that any change in use of such an area would require a rezoning, allowing the City to maintain control over the future land use of valuable natural resource areas.

Natural Resources Policy #2

The City's natural resources should be incorporated as a central feature of new development, such as parks, large tree stands, streams, etc.

When natural resources are present within a new development, there are a number of strategies that can be used to preserve these areas. In addition to preserving natural resources, open space uses such as parks and playgrounds are directly related to quality of life for residents; new large-scale residential developments should require a certain amount of common open space. Conservation and cluster design in particular is well suited to designing communities around common open space.

In addition, green infrastructure is also part of the urbanized fabric. New development and planning efforts should be concerned with preserving and replenishing the urban canopy, integrating parks trails and open space within the City fabric, and requiring landscape that both beautifies Rome and contributes to a vibrant ecosystem within the urban environment. When appropriate, the City should play a leading role in protecting new and existing resources as development takes place. As an example, areas along the Mohawk River Trail abutting the Woodhaven

Redevelopment site should have an increased setback to assure this area is protected for continued community benefit.

Natural Resources Policy #3
In addition to the quality of water and soil, air quality is as important. Land use decisions must work in concert with air pollution control measures.

Cars are the primary contributor to air pollution. Therefore, implementation of this policy to reduce air pollution requires land use decisions that minimize the amount of driving by City residents. This can be accomplished by locating new development near existing resources and employment centers. By bringing the places where people live, work and play closer together, the amount of time spent driving between them is minimized. The City should also encourage alternate means of transportation, including walking paths, bike paths and public transit. Transportation planning should balance these different modes of moving people throughout the City, reducing the number of cars on the road.

Natural Resources Policy #4
Stormwater management should be established through policies and ordinances that reduce stormwater runoff.

Stormwater runoff issues are more than just flood-related. Stormwater run-off can be contaminated by different pollutants, such pesticides from farms and residential lawns, automobile by-products, etc. This can pollute the water resources within the City, and the larger watershed, damaging the flora and fauna that depend on them. Stormwater runoff also negatively impacts groundwater recharge. High amounts of impervious surface diminish recharge, and water resources that depend on a stable flow become subject to highly variable surface runoff amounts. Further, excessive run-off can cause major erosion damage to waterbodies downstream.

Development regulations should include provisions that minimize stormwater run-off, such as:

- Requiring a stormwater management plan for all new development so that any new construction does not increase run-off volume
- Permitting and encouraging green roof design
- Encouraging natural detention basins and rain gardens, which can be integrated as part of an attractive landscaping design
- Permitting the use of bio-swales and filter strips, which allow infiltration and filtering of run-off to recharge groundwater
- Limiting the amount of impervious surface in new development
- Encouraging the use of alternative permeable paving surfaces, such as grass-crete and brick pavers through incentives, or mandating the use of such permeable surfaces for certain developments
- Requiring landscaping for new developments, in particular for large areas of impervious surface like parking lots
- Providing incentives for green building design

Natural Resource Policy Strategy
Establish a Greenbelt Parks &Trail Way Master Plan

- Identify goals and objectives to be addressed
- Evaluate existing conditions and current bicycle, historical, cultural, and parks infrastructure
- Establish project priorities while addressing equitable access community-wide
- Adopt plan with a clear implementation timeline


VI. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Create an accessible, efficient, multi-modal, regional transportation system that meets the needs of the public and commerce, while minimizing risks to health, safety and the environment.

Transportation infrastructure can improve quality of life for all residents if, in addition to vehicular networks, alternative transportation methods, such as pedestrian paths, public transit, and bike paths are considered. The added benefit of travelers using these alternatives is relief of traffic congestion and improvement of air quality.

Transportation Policy #1

As new development or redevelopment occurs, it should promote greater connectivity utilizing a "Complete Streets" philosophy, where rights-of-way are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users.

The recommended approach to right-of-way reconstruction or development is to implement a "Complete Streets" approach. "Complete Streets" are right-of-way facilities that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users; persons with disabilities, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders are able to safely move along and across a complete street. When right-of-way is reconstructed or newly constructed, it should be designed in a way that accommodates multi-modal transportation (auto, bike, and pedestrian) where appropriate and reflects how residents move about their neighborhood and the larger City. The right-of-way standards should include a series of right-of-way widths and design requirements, implementing Complete Streets principles as appropriate to the larger character of the area. These requirements will apply to reconstructed or newly established streets, subject to approval by Public Works.

As part of the larger Complete Streets philosophy, pedestrian connectivity will be more specifically regulated with requirements for the installation of sidewalks and the design of the pedestrian way. The pedestrian way is measured from the curbline to the property line of the abutting property. This is the portion of the right-of-way that typically includes the tree lawn and sidewalk. In order to facilitate better design of these areas, the subdivision regulations should clearly describe each component of the pedestrian way. Depending on the character of the area, not all will be applicable. Typically these are: 1) maintenance zone - the area between the public sidewalk and the building façade; 2) pedestrian zone - the sidewalk used for pedestrian travel; 3) tree lawn zone – that portion used for street trees, landscape, transit stops, street lights, outdoor dining, and site furnishings, as well as used by people accessing cars parked at the curb; and 4) extension zone - the optional element of the sidewalk area where pedestrian zone may be extended into a parking lane, such as by a bulb-out.

Transportation Policy #2

The City must encourage alternate modes of transportation in order to reduce transportation costs, improve air quality, ease traffic and parking congestion, and provide accessibility for all individuals.

There are a number of alternate modes of transportation available to communities. Multi-use paths accommodating a variety of non-motorized transportation methods should be encouraged throughout the City, building on the City's existing network and connecting to a larger regional system. Requiring new development and street systems to accommodate all modes is key to a walkable and bike-able environment.

Transportation Policy #3

New and existing development must participate in consistent signage and wayfinding methods in use to support the larger system.

Success of the growing Complete Streets system and multi-modal transportation corridors relies on the ability of users to move through the system. Both locally and regionally important connections and destinations throughout the system should be clearly marked and easy to find. Signage that utilizes accessibility standards should be provided to assist users in navigating the system. The Signage and Wayfinding components of the Downtown Brownfield Opportunity Area Plan should be considered as a standard for use throughout the City for a visually cohesive system.

Transportation Policy #4

Smart Growth and Complete Street practices must be recognized as an opportunity when maintaining existing infrastructure.

As regular maintenance is performed on roads and infrastructure within the right-of-way the City must determine if work done provides an opportunity to incorporate and further Complete Street and Smart Growth goals. When opportunities arise such improvements should be considered: right-sizing the road, additional sidewalks bike lanes or other accessible improvements, safe road crossings, and other appropriate actions.

Transportation Policy Strategy 1

Create and implement a city-wide bicycle route plan

- Identify goals and objectives to be addressed
- Evaluate existing conditions and current bicycle infrastructure
- Establish project priorities while addressing equitable access community wide
- Adopt plan with a clear implementation timeline

Transportation Policy Strategy 2
Adopt local Complete Streets legislation

- Engage partner agencies and stakeholders
- Identify processes and procedures that should be addressed
- Develop a context sensitive design pallet to address varying needs throughout the city
- Provide program evaluation and performance measures within the final plan
- Create a plan for implementation