

1. Executive Summary

Overview

The Arcade community, and in particular, its downtown area, has many positive attributes. It also has many challenges and issues that need to be addressed. The Village administration, and many community members, recognized this situation and received funding from the New York State Governor's Office of Small Cities to undertake a Strategic Planning process for Downtown Arcade. Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council coordinated and facilitated this planning process, in cooperation with the Village, the Strategic Planning Committee, and other county and regional stakeholders.

The challenges facing Arcade's downtown range from traffic concerns, to parking, to walkability, to deteriorated and unattractive buildings, to vacant storefronts, to governmental administration, are not unique to Arcade. Many communities throughout Upstate New York, indeed, throughout the nation, face these issues. However, with good leadership, concerted effort, and the enthusiastic backing of the business community and the citizens of Arcade, positive change can occur.

Of the many action items contained in the plan, it is crucial to recognize two important overarching themes:

- The challenges facing downtown Arcade did not appear overnight, or even over a few years. Therefore, the solutions will require sustained efforts over a decade or more. Concurrent with this, as town after town across the country has shown, negativity and apathy must be replaced with a focus on the positive and a commitment to civic engagement if the community has any hope of successfully addressing the challenges. Only the people of Arcade have the power to ensure this happens.
- Transportation and retail patterns on a regional, national, and global scale have shifted greatly in the last fifty years. For the foreseeable future, these trends will continue. It is unrealistic to expect downtown Arcade to return to "the good old days" when a variety of retail goods could be found on Main Street. That is not to say that downtown Arcade cannot be active, attractive, and vibrant; it simply means that the community must change how it measures downtown vitality compared to thirty or forty years ago.

Selected Findings

- The current zoning law is generally ill-suited for an existing village Main Street or for encouraging new development to be built in a pedestrian friendly, village-scaled pattern
- Working with the New York State Department of Transportation, traffic calming tools should be studied and implemented on Main Street. These range from the inexpensive short term solutions such as re-striping to more expensive longer term solutions such as the construction of roundabouts

- Utility infrastructure has the capacity to accommodate new growth
- Utility lines are underground throughout much of Main Street; this is an aesthetic advantage that few communities like Arcade have.
- Interconnections between the stormwater and wastewater sewers needs to be addressed
- Façade and signage improvement is needed at key locations in the downtown area
- As with most small towns, market conditions are not likely to bring about a return of what many people remember as downtown retailing; downtown retailers must reinvent themselves to remain relevant and the community must re-envision what it considers to be a vibrant downtown.
- Village government must address the perception that it is unresponsive to business concerns; and ensure that all aspects of village administration are conducted in a fair, consistent, and professional manner
- A defeatist, negative attitude, and lack of community engagement must be overcome if any of the recommendations are to be implemented
- Citizen-based energy, enthusiasm, and effectiveness is possibly being diluted by the multiple committees that are all working towards the same ultimate goal.
- A local capital improvement limited partnership is one way for the community to invest in its own downtown

Specific Actions

The Strategic Plan for Downtown Arcade reviews the background conditions of the village's Main Street corridor and provides action-oriented recommendations to address the challenges that affect this part of the community. Recommendations were developed by the project's Planning Committee and the professional planning expertise of Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council.

Between August 2004 and May 2005, the project's Planning Committee met monthly to discuss challenges and suggest solutions.

There are 39 specific action items identified, grouped into five categories:

- Pedestrian Action Items (Group A)
- Parking Action Items (Group B)
- Street and Roadway Action Items (Group C)
- Aesthetic Action Items (Group D)
- Regulatory Action Items (Group E)
- Structural/Programmatic Action Items (Group F)

The actions range from short term and relatively inexpensive, to long term requiring more substantial funding. Of primary importance is the need for various groups, entities, and departments (many of which have been identified with each action) to take ownership of recommended action to ensure that there is follow-through and completion. The success of a few initial actions will help build momentum in the community towards implementing the longer-term, more complicated actions.