

### III. STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Market Trends and Opportunities

A number of national trends in tourism and travel provide opportunities for the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Corridor. These trends are:

1. An increase in “drive-in” markets rather than “fly-in” markets - Partly as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks, more and more people are choosing to drive to their destinations rather than fly. Seneca County, while more than 45 minutes to the nearest commercial airport, is centrally located within a half-day’s driving distance of many upstate cities and hundreds of thousands of people. It is easily accessible from the New York State Thruway and a number of State and federal highways.
2. Trips closer home – This trend is obviously related to Number 1 above, as more people take driving vacations nearer to home. As aforementioned, Seneca County is within an easy half-day drive of hundreds of thousands of people, and within a day’s drive of larger markets such as New York, Montreal, and Toronto.
3. Shorter stays of one to three nights rather than a week or two – More and more households have two people working and, as schedules become busier and busier, the trend has been away from annual and semi-annual extended vacations to a larger number of weekend and long weekend vacations. While Seneca County has a number of interesting attractions, it does not generally have the “critical mass” of amenities and attractions that would likely attract longer stays of a week or more. The trend of more frequent but shorter stays is one that should benefit the County.
4. An increase in recreational/outdoor activities, water based or water related activities, and eco-tourism – Outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, biking, boating, etc. are growing in popularity as a more urban population wishes to “escape the city”. “Eco-tourism”, tourism based on the ecology and environment, is also a growing trend. The location of the Canal Corridor and its existing natural and man-made resources makes it well suited to capitalize on these trends. The planned development of the Cayuga-Seneca segment of the Erie Canal corridor trail will offer tremendous opportunity for bikers, hikers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. The Cayuga-Seneca Canal, in tandem with the two Finger Lakes it connects, offers world class water-based and water-related recreational opportunities. The Montezuma Wildlife refuge holds great potential for increased eco-tourism activity.
5. An aging U.S. population and an increase in the number of healthy, affluent, retired persons- Over the next decade, many “baby boomers” will be reaching retirement age. Many of these people will be retiring younger than ever before, have greater disposable incomes, and enjoy good health later in their years. Many of Seneca County’s and the Canal Corridor’s existing attractions such as wineries, the Women’s Rights National Historical Park, etc., tend to be geared to an older, more educated visitorship. This is in contrast to younger visitors with children who are more likely

to desire entertainment attractions such as theme parks, of which there is a lack of in Seneca County. Therefore, it can be anticipated that the County's market potential will increase in future years as the population continues to age. This population will provide significant growth opportunities for tourism-based economic development in Seneca County, and must be considered when identifying amenities, improvements and activities necessary to maximize the economic impact of the tourism industry on Seneca County and the Canal Corridor.

In addition to these national trends, the Canal Corridor has a number of other characteristics that provide tremendous opportunities for economic and tourism development. Over the past decade, New York State and the federal government has allocated significant resources to revitalize New York's Canal System and stimulate economic development. With significant effort and attention, the Cayuga-Seneca Canal has the potential to outpace other Canal communities in terms of economic and tourism development.

The Cayuga-Seneca Canal is the shortest Canal on the system. While this may be seen as a detriment, it can benefit the County. Other communities must market a specific destination point or section of the Canal. Seneca County has the opportunity to market the entire Cayuga-Seneca Canal experience since it is located wholly within its borders. The limited number of municipalities along the canal (five) also allows for greater coordination and cooperation in marketing and development efforts. The Canal is located in one of New York's premier tourism regions, the Finger Lakes, and connects the two largest lakes, Seneca and Cayuga. It also has a number of well-known attractions, including the National Women's Hall of Fame, the Women's Rights National Historical Park, the Cayuga and Seneca wine trails and others. The National Historical Park is the only National Park on New York's Canal System. The United States Congress recently designated the New York's Canal System as a National Heritage Corridor under the auspices of the National Park system. The presence of a National Park on the Cayuga-Seneca Canal places the County at an advantage in reaping the benefits of the National Heritage Corridor designation.

## **2. New Business Opportunities**

Based on review of demographic data, market trends, surveys, and interviews with business leaders, the following have been identified as potential business opportunities in the Canal Corridor:

- **Bed and Breakfasts** – The Corridor is well served by larger chain hotels, but the visitor profile for the area shows a greater need for a more unique accommodations experience. The many large, older homes in the Villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo provide excellent opportunities for such a use. Locations on or near the waterfront, near the downtown, and in walking distance to shops and services are preferable.

- Small Inn(s) – Similar to Bed and Breakfasts above, but on a larger scale of perhaps 15 to 20 rooms. A more full-service, unique dining facility and perhaps facilities for small meetings are preferred. It is likely the market could support more than one such inn, depending on their size, location, and amenities. They will likely need to be new construction and will need a lot size of several acres, although the re-use of existing historic buildings should not be ruled out. Any inn should be located on, or very near, the waterfront, preferably with boater access. The former DOT site in Waterloo and vacant woodlands off Seneca Street near C&S Locks 2 and 3 are potential locations for such inns.
- Spa facilities – Such facilities, whether for day or overnight/extended visits are growing in popularity. The success of the luxury Mirabeau Inn in nearby Skaneateles is testament to this trend. While a luxury spa like the Mirabeau may not be appropriate for the Canal Corridor, spa facilities, whether stand-alone or perhaps in tandem with an Inn above, would represent a market opportunity for the corridor.
- Family oriented activities – While families with children are not the primary market for the area, additional smaller scale family attractions would round out the amenities available in the corridor. Such facilities, including a movie theater, miniature golf, arcades, etc., may be most appropriate away from the downtown and waterfront areas.
- Antique Stores – The Canal Corridor already has a number of quality antique stores. This type of business tends to do better when there is a greater concentration of stores in the vicinity. Furthermore, the visitor profile that Seneca County is likely to attract is one that would also be interested in antiques. The creation of an “antique corridor” along Route 5 and 20 would be a strong marketing tool that would attract visitors. The success of the nearby Antique Mall on Route 318 is testament to the attraction of antiques. Such establishments would be suitable for both the first and upper floors of downtown buildings, historic residential structures, and other buildings along the highway.
- Canoe/Kayak/Paddle boat rentals – While some canoe/kayak rentals were available on the canal in 2002, additional rental locations are needed. It is important to provide land-based visitors with opportunities to access water-based activities.
- Bicycle Rentals/Bicycle repair/equipment – The planned completion of the Cayuga-Seneca segment of the Erie Canal Corridor Trail will provide opportunities for biking-related businesses. The availability of rentals will provide another activity and mode of transportation for visitors. The availability of repairs and equipment will assist in drawing cyclists off of the main trail since cyclist will plan their trips around the availability of biking-related goods and services. It will also give the County an edge in marketing the Corridor to bicycle tours.
- Canal Harbor vendors (quick food, gifts, supplies, etc.) – The Seneca Falls Canal Harbor is a tremendous asset to the Village of Seneca Falls and the entire Canal Corridor. The impact of this facility should be maximized. Currently, there is little

for land-based visitors to do other than visit the harbor to see the canal. Greater activity should be encouraged. Open-air and kiosk type businesses should be considered in addition to businesses operating out of the rear of downtown buildings.

- Charters (fishing/tour) – A tour boat currently operates out of Seneca Falls, and this business should be provided support until a strong market is established. Additional charter opportunities for fishing and tours should be encouraged. These may operate out of existing marinas, although use of the Seneca Falls Canal Harbor and the Oak Island Canal Port in Waterloo should be encouraged.
- Laundry – There are no public laundry facilities that are located in close proximity to the Canal. In order for the Corridor to capitalize on the greater visibility of New York’s Canal System, basic needs must be provided to travelers. A laundry facility located adjacent or near to the Seneca Falls waterfront could benefit from Canal traffic. If private enterprise cannot be enticed to create this service, local government could consider providing it in tandem with public restrooms, creating a potential source of revenue to support public waterside amenities.
- Tent camping – As the Erie Canal Corridor is built in Seneca County and across the State, hiking and biking use will increase. This population will be looking for acceptable places to camp that have at least basic facilities. Sites are available at both Cayuga and Seneca Lakes, but providing camping opportunities within a short distance of the downtown areas will help to maximize the economic impact of this visitor profile. These tent campsites do not need to be large, perhaps only five to ten sites. They should have access to potable water and restroom facilities, but could remain relatively primitive. The western end of Oak Island, and Big Island just east of Lock 4 are potential sites for camping areas.
- Wine store dedicated to New York wines – The Finger Lakes Wine industry has grown significantly in recent years, and appears poised to continue this growth. The Canal Corridor can serve as a link between the two major regional wine trails, the Cayuga Wine Trail and the Seneca Wine Trail. Business opportunities to capitalize on this market should be encouraged. A first-class retail wine store focusing on Seneca County and Finger Lakes wines is one such opportunity. This could be a stand-alone business or an offshoot of an existing liquor store. Such businesses will also increase the visibility of the region’s wine industry to people visiting the Canal Corridor for its historical attractions, prompting return visits. The vacant Evans-Chemetics office building in Waterloo is one possible location for such a wine store.
- Quality “tourist” retail – There are very few retail businesses that cater to the existing tourist base in the corridor. “Tacky” tourist related businesses such as T-shirt shops are not appropriate, but books, high quality gifts and souvenirs, local crafts, unique home furnishings, etc., have potential to serve both the local and visitor population.

### 3. Other Activities

In order to capitalize on the opportunities the following tourism/economic development activities should be undertaken to stimulate economic development/recreation opportunities in the Canal Corridor.

- “Brand” the Canal Corridor – The Cayuga-Seneca Canal communities need to begin to consider themselves as a unified whole rather than individual destinations. The completion of this report and the development of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program are good first starts for this transition. To further this, efforts need to be made to market the “Canal Corridor” rather “Seneca Falls” or “Waterloo”. A unified marketing theme should be created with a Cayuga-Seneca Canal logo and slogan. A “graphic vocabulary” should be established so that all Corridor related materials have similar colors, lettering styles, and graphic detailing. These should be included in printed marketing materials, websites, signage, etc. to reinforce the image of a Canal Corridor. Individual businesses, organizations and attractions should include the Canal Corridor logo in their marketing efforts. Cortland County has been successful in developing high-quality materials that effectively “branded” the Tioughnioga River with a logo, slogan, and uniform graphic presentation.
- Develop a Canal Corridor map/brochure with services, and businesses identified – In tandem with the way-finding signage, a simple, well-designed map of the Canal Corridor should be developed with major attractions/services identified. These maps should also utilize the Canal logo and graphic vocabulary detailed above. A Canal Corridor brochure should also be developed that highlights the important assets of the Canal Corridor. It may be possible to create a single piece that encompasses both a map and brochure. The maps developed as brochures for the Wine Trails, and the map developed by the Champlain Valley Heritage Network, are two models for a Canal Corridor Map.
- Develop Canal Corridor Website – A single website for the Cayuga-Seneca Canal should be established. As more and more people plan vacations on the internet, the ability of Seneca County to market the entire Cayuga-Seneca Canal at one location will place it at an advantage over other locations in the Canal System. The page should include all available information regarding the Canal Corridor, including historical attractions, recreational opportunities, boater services such as marinas, pump-out facilities, overnight and transient docking, etc. This site could be a page of the existing tourism website, but at a minimum the two sites should have a clear link and not be repetitive. Links for other services, attractions, and businesses, should be included. Efforts should also be made to assure that links to the Corridor website are included in State and regional sites, such as “nycanal.com”, “tourny.com”, and “roundthebend.com”.
- Establish a coordinated directional or “way-finding” signage program for the Corridor – The vast majority of visitors to the Corridor are driving their own vehicles. A simple, unified, easy to follow signage system, incorporating the graphic vocabulary

discussed above, should be established throughout the Corridor to assist auto, pedestrian, and bike travelers to easily locate attractions and services. The grape logo and name signage used for the Wine Trails are a good example of a simple way-finding system. The system may also include more detailed historic information at certain sites, such as those developed by the Champlain Valley Heritage Network in Essex County. In addition to land-based visitors, the way-finding system must also address boaters disembarking at the Seneca Falls Canal Harbor and the Waterloo Oak Island Canal Port, as well as other sites along the Canal.

- Expand Canal festivals to include the entire Canal and establish fall and/or winter event - Efforts should be made to host events on a Canal-wide basis rather than in a single municipality. There should be at least one Canal event that includes the entire Corridor, with activities from Montezuma to Waterloo. Events can be a major source of revenue for local businesses, and the larger the event, the greater the draw. It may be possible to merge, either wholly or partially, two existing events to increase the impact of both. Efforts should also be made to establish a Fall and a Winter event, since these are typically slower times of the year for business.
- Construct/expand informational kiosk at Outlet Mall, and truck stop – The Outlet Mall north of Waterloo and the planned new truck stop provide tremendous opportunities to capture additional visitors and their spending dollars. It cannot be assumed that visitors to the Outlet Mall are at all aware of the existence of the Canal and other attractions available nearby. The assets of the Canal Corridor must be marketed directly to these patrons. Well-designed information kiosks should be installed at both locations and have information on the Corridor available. The establishment of a shuttle bus/trolley type of transportation between the Corridor and the Mall should be investigated.
- Develop needed public facilities – In many areas, necessary public facilities are not available or are in need of expansion. These include restroom and public showers in both Waterloo and Seneca Falls; additional transient/overnight docking with electric at Oak Island; additional transient/overnight docking at Seneca Falls Canal Harbor; and construction of the Cayuga-Seneca segment of the Erie Canal Corridor Trail.
- Upgrade Waterloo museums and increase attendance - The Canal Corridor is fortunate to have several world-class museums, and a number of local historical attractions. The Memorial Day Museum and the Terwilliger Museum in Waterloo are two of these. Bringing these two institutions “to the next level” in terms of interpretation, exhibits, etc., will draw more visitors from Seneca Falls to Waterloo, increasing the length of visitors’ stays and their economic impact.
- Change “industrial” zoning of former DOT site in Waterloo – The former DOT site in Waterloo is a very important site in terms of future waterfront development efforts. The current industrial zoning allows for many uses that may no longer be appropriate for the site or beneficial to the Village. A more restrictive zoning designation of that site will assist the Village in assuring that appropriate development occurs.

- Institute Rt. 5&20 streetscape improvements – The quality of the streetscape along Route 5&20 varies greatly in quality. Low-end sprawl development outside Village limits and detracts from the quality of the downtown areas and give a poor impression of the Corridor. The wide expanse of asphalt running through the Village of Waterloo also tends to be unsightly and hinders pedestrian access. The Village of Waterloo has completed conceptual designs for a streetscape improvement project and is working to implement it. Streetscape improvement efforts should be undertaken throughout the rest of the Corridor, with the exception of the Village of Seneca Falls, which, for the most part, is in good condition. Efforts should be made to unify the streetscapes outside of the Villages, which in part can be accomplished through implementation of development standards as detailed elsewhere.
- Institute façade improvement programs in downtown areas – Both the Village of Waterloo and Village of Seneca Falls could benefit from façade improvements to downtown buildings. Such improvements should be in keeping with the historic character of the respective downtowns.
- Adopt and implement the LWRP – A Local Waterfront Revitalization Program is being prepared for the Canal Corridor. Once adopted, the Program will guide local and State actions and open up potential sources of funding for Canal Communities. The LWPR should be completed and adopted by all affected municipalities.

The above detailed activities may be undertaken individually or jointly by the new Canal Corridor “Main Street” organization, individual municipalities, Seneca County, or other private organizations. It is important, however, that those activities affecting the entire Corridor be coordinated. For instance, instituting a way-finding signage program in only one community would be counter-productive to the goals of the overall effort. All of these activities should be tailored to changing conditions, community priorities, or existing or on-going efforts.

#### **4. Development Standards and Management Tools**

In order to create a cohesive and appealing character to the Route 5 and 20 Corridor, enactment of Development Standards for the corridor is recommended.

Development/Design Standards provide a community with the resources and tools necessary to control and shape its character and ensure that development occurs in accordance with community priorities. The incorporation of development and design standards into local zoning and land-use regulations can assist a community in preserving important resources, achieving the goals of comprehensive planning, improving the local quality of life, and creating or enhancing a positive image for the community. Such standards are not intended to limit or prohibit development, but to ensure that development occurs according to the community’s goals and values, improving the community rather than detracting from it. Development/design standards, in their many

forms, have become far more common in recent years, and their use has been upheld by the courts.

Design guidelines are a set of written and/or graphic standards intended to preserve or improve a community's character through its architecture, landscapes and streetscapes. The guidelines express what a community wants and expects in terms of new development. They integrate closely with existing zoning and site plan regulations although they vary in regard to the level of control they exert. They set forth standards for such things as site layout, building design, landscaping, parking, etc. For example, guidelines may set forth requirements for uniform setbacks, landscaped medians between roadways and parking, visual screening and buffering, building location, lighting, and the size, location, and design of curbing and sidewalks. Building design requirements may include guidance on such things building scale, proportion, and size; architectural style and detailing; materials; color; etc. Written design guidelines are usually supplemented with pictures, drawings and/or illustrations to more clearly convey a community's intentions.

Development/Design Guidelines may be adopted and applied through local ordinance in each municipality, or as non-binding recommendations. Regardless of the method, in all effective design guidelines, the review process is clearly defined; design objectives are clearly stated and supported with specific review criteria; vague language is avoided; and, illustrations are used where appropriate. It is important that these guidelines be consistent across the Corridor, that they be developed with significant public comment, and that they be implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

There are various tools that may be used to implement development guidelines. These include zoning, which regulates the location, type, and intensity of land use; overlay zoning, which applies a common set of standards to a designated area that may cut across several conventional districts; and special use permits, which examine the compatibility of the proposed use with neighboring uses and zoning regulations. Sign guidelines and historic preservation ordinances are other tools a community may employ as part of development guidelines. Development guidelines would generally require review of all new buildings constructed, new signs installed, and projects that require site plan review.

In the case of Seneca County, development guidelines can be used in the Canal Corridor to promote cohesiveness in the built landscape and improve the visual character of the Corridor. Different requirements/guidelines would need to be developed for the Central Business Districts and the outlying "sprawl" areas of Route 5 and 20. These outlying areas could particularly benefit from implementation of development guidelines since, unlike the village centers, there is ample opportunity for new development to occur. Such new development could significantly degrade the character of these areas, or significantly improve them. Standards can be applied to both residential and commercial development, but, in the case of the Canal Corridor, controls would most likely be limited to non-residential properties, with the exception of mobile home parks and perhaps large subdivisions.

## 5. Organizational Setup

In order for positive and proactive change to occur, and for the strategies and recommendations of this and other plans to be implemented, a framework for implementation must be established. There are a number of organizational models that could be utilized for the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Corridor, ranging from a loose affiliation or network of existing groups or organizations to a highly structured, incorporated, non-profit organization.

Due to the wide range of issues facing the Canal Corridor, it is recommended that revitalization activities for the Corridor be modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation's successful "Main Street Program". This program was developed as a framework for downtown revitalization and has been implemented successfully in communities across the country. While the Canal Corridor is not a traditional "Main Street" or "downtown", Route 5 and 20 and the Cayuga-Seneca Canal is symbolically the Main Street of Seneca County. The Corridor also includes the business districts of Seneca Falls and Waterloo, the two largest commercial districts in the County. The organizational framework espoused by the Main Street Program can easily be tailored for a Corridor-wide revitalization organization.

Many resources are available regarding the establishment and operation of a Main Street Program. One of the most comprehensive and concise is the National Trust for Historic Preservation's publication Revitalizing Downtown – The Professional's Guide to the Main Street Approach. This publication should be purchased as a guide for the Organizational Committee detailed below. The following is an excerpt from the introduction to Revitalizing Downtown that provides a good overview of the Main Street Approach to revitalization:

The Main Street approach to downtown revitalization is based on four points:

- **Design** involves improving the downtown's image by enhancing its physical appearance – not just the appearance of buildings, but also that of streetlights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, promotional materials and all other elements that convey a visual message about the downtown and what it has to offer.
- **Organization** means building consensus and cooperation among the groups that play roles in the downtown. Many individuals and organizations in the community have a stake in the economic viability of the downtown, including:
  - Bankers
  - Property owners
  - City and county officials
  - Merchants
  - Downtown residents
  - Professionals
  - Chamber of Commerce representatives

- Local industries
  - Civic groups
  - Historical societies
  - Schools
  - Consumers
  - Real estate agents
  - Local media
- **Promotion** involves marketing the downtown's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of the downtown through retail promotional activity, special events and ongoing programs to build positive perceptions of the district.
  - **Economic Restructuring** means strengthening the existing economic base of the downtown while diversifying it. Economic Restructuring activities include helping existing downtown businesses expand, recruiting new businesses to provide a balanced mix, converting unused space into productive property and sharpening the competitiveness of downtown merchants. By strengthening the downtown's economy, communities are able to support the ongoing use of historic commercial buildings, preserving unique community assets.

The key to the success of the Main Street approach is its comprehensive nature. By carefully integrating all four areas into a practical downtown management strategy, the Main Street approach produces fundamental changes in the downtown's economic base, making it economically feasible to put historic commercial buildings to productive use again.

The Main Street approach also relies on eight principles:

1. **The Main Street approach is a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization.** Unlike many downtown revitalization strategies that have been tried in the past, the Main Street approach is comprehensive, addressing all the areas in which action must take place. Only one aspect of revitalization – design – has been addressed by most downtown programs, such as those which covered entire blocks of downtown building facades with aluminum slipcovers, adopted false historic themes and applied them artificially to the fronts of buildings or demolished portions of the downtown in hopes of attracting a developer to build something new. Design improvements alone will not bring about meaningful change; effective marketing, a strong organizational base and solid economic development strategies are all necessary to reverse the cycle of decay from which many downtowns suffer and to sustain preservation activity.
2. **The Main Street approach relies on quality.** Downtown architecture tells the history of the community. Traditional commercial buildings reflect the pride past generations felt for their communities. These buildings embody quality in construction, craft and style that cannot be replicated today – and which no

shopping center can really imitate. The quality inherent in its commercial architecture and in the services offered by its businesses make the downtown unique in the marketplace and give it many marketing advantages. The projects undertaken by the local Main Street program should reflect this high level of quality to reinforce the downtown's special characteristics.

3. ***A public-private partnership is needed to make meaningful, long-term downtown revitalization possible.*** To make a downtown revitalization program successful, both public and private entities must be involved, as neither can bring about change alone. Each sector has unique skills and particular areas in which it works most effectively; combining the talents of both groups brings together all the skills necessary for revitalization to occur in a unified program.
4. ***The Main Street program involves changing attitudes.*** The Main Street program involves changing attitudes. The economic changes experienced by downtown commercial areas in recent decades have made shoppers and investors skeptical about the downtown's ability to regain economic viability. Because of its physical decay, many people have forgotten how important the downtown's historic commercial buildings are to shaping the community's identity and explaining its unique history. Changing people's attitudes – demonstrating that positive change is taking place downtown – is central to a successful downtown revitalization program.
5. ***The Main Street program focuses on existing assets.*** Each community is unique, and each downtown has special characteristics that set it apart from all others. By creating a strong revitalization effort based on the downtown's unique heritage, each local Main Street program creates an organizational structure that builds on its own specific opportunities. In this way, the Main Street program is adaptable.
6. ***Main Street is a self-help program.*** Without the will to succeed and the desire to work hard to create change, no downtown revitalization program will succeed. Grant programs can help fund pieces of the work plan and consultants can provide guidance, but without local initiative, the Main Street approach will not work.
7. ***The Main Street approach is incremental in nature.*** Downtown commercial areas did not lose their economic strength overnight; it happened over a period of years, with a number of small declines gradually leading to a severe downward spiral. Improvement must be gradual, too.

Cataclysmic changes, like those brought about the urban renewal's large-scale land clearance programs and massive infusions of funds to build pedestrian malls, have rarely created long-term downtown economic growth.

The Main Street approach relies on a series of small improvements that begin to change public attitudes about the downtown, making the area's investment climate more favorable. Gradually, the small changes build to larger ones as the

local revitalization organization gains strength and becomes efficient in mobilizing resources for downtown revival.

8. ***The Main Street Program is implementation oriented.*** By identifying and prioritizing the major issues that downtown must confront, revitalization organizations can develop work programs that break down the large issues into smaller tasks. Then, by developing a strong network of volunteer support, Main Street programs can build organizational structures capable of achieving the quantifiable tasks mapped out in the work plans.

While obviously many of the issues facing the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Corridor differ from those faced by traditional downtowns, the organizational setup and the principles espoused in the Main Street approach remain valid for the corridor.

The recommended organizational structure for a Canal Corridor Revitalization Committee is as follows:

- A “Parent” Board with four primary committees and additional subcommittees as needed. Board and committee membership should include primarily local business people, as well as representatives from local and County government, and non-profit organizations. In order to succeed in transitioning from a focus on individual communities to a corridor-wide emphasis, care should be taken to ensure that Board and primary committee membership equally represents each community in the corridor. If desired, separate committees or subcommittees could be established for each community. Although this option is not recommended, if implemented, these committees will, at a minimum, need to be coordinated on a corridor-wide basis. It is of utmost importance that this Revitalization Committee neither be, nor be perceived as, just another organization in addition to existing ones. The Revitalization Committee must establish a framework that enables and supports the coordination or existing organizations, groups, and activities under one umbrella. Careful consideration must be provided as to how existing business associations in Waterloo and Seneca Falls are incorporated into/coordinated with the larger Revitalization Committee. These two existing organizations are important to this effort, but a certain level of autonomy will need to be retained.
- The four primary committees of the Revitalization Committee are:
  - 1) Design - This committee would focus on the physical appearance of the Corridor, including streetscape and possible façade improvements, community facilities development, and other improvements designed to enhance the character of the Corridor and create a “sense of place”. The Committee may also take an advisory role to local planning boards for development projects occurring in the Corridor.
  - 2) Promotion and Marketing - This committee would be responsible for organizing, developing, and implementing joint marketing campaigns and promotions for the

Corridor. Such efforts might include website development, marketing materials, way-finding programs, etc.

- 3) Events - The role of this committee would be development and promotion of special events designed to attract people to the area, thus encouraging business activity in the Corridor. This may include the expansion of existing community events or the development and promotion of new events. This committee would not necessarily take over responsibility for organizing local events, but smaller events may be folded into the organization as subcommittees.
- 4) Economic Restructuring/Business Recruitment – This committee would work closely with existing efforts of the County and Chamber of Commerce, and not duplicate them. It would focus on not only recruiting new business to the area, but in working with existing Corridor businesses to expand or offer new services that are lacking in the corridor.

These four committees will likely encompass a number of sub-committees to address specific issues or geographic locations. For example, the Cayuga-Seneca Trail Committee that is working on the development of the Cayuga-Seneca segment of the Erie Canal Corridor Trail might become a sub-committee of the Design Committee, or the organizing committee for Waterloo’s Real Christmas may be a sub-committee of the Events Committee. This avoids duplication of efforts and protects the autonomy of existing groups while assuring coordination throughout the Corridor.

- Appropriate paid staffing is vital to the success of the revitalization effort. It is recommended that the Revitalization Committee be staffed by a paid County employee working under Economic Development/Tourism Department. This employee will be responsible for coordinating and administering the Revitalization Committee, assisting in implementing Revitalization Committee activities, and will serve as a “Main Street Manager” for both the Seneca Falls and Waterloo Business Associations. The amount of staff time devoted to the Business Associations should be equal, and should be clearly outlined in advance.
- Create a “Canal Corridor Overlay District” in local zoning regulations. The District will be the geographic area that is the concentration of Revitalization Committee activities and the area that is the focus of any future development/design guidelines. The Canal Corridor Overlay District will need to be implemented separately in each municipality through local laws, requiring a significant amount of inter-municipal cooperation and commitment.

In order to begin the process of establishing a Main Street-type program for the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, an initial organizing committee should be created. It will be the responsibility of this organizing committee to become educated on the concept of the Main Street program, and to subsequently educate business and organization leaders on the Main Street program and the Canal Corridor Revitalization effort. They will work to

organize and form the Canal Corridor Revitalization Committee, and, in tandem with the County and Corridor municipalities, will be responsible for identifying and securing seed funding. The Organizing Committee should:

- 1) have equal representation from each municipality;
- 2) not be over-represented by local or County government; and
- 3) have approximately ten members, but in no case more than 20 members

The recommended makeup for the organization is as follows:

- Business:  
Waterloo Business Association  
Seneca Falls Business Association  
One additional Business and/or commercial property owner from each of the five Corridor municipalities
- Other:  
Seneca County Chamber of Commerce  
Seneca County Tourism  
Seneca County Economic Development Director
- One representative from each Corridor municipality should also be included as ex-officio members
- Representatives from other groups/constituencies may be included if determined necessary, but total membership should not exceed twenty persons. A smaller committee will be more effective.

The existing Study Task Force should assume the responsibility of forming the committee. The Organizing Committee chairperson should not be a government official. Incidental clerical support should be provided by the Seneca County Economic Development and Planning Office. Technical assistance may be available to the Organizing Committee through the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council or Cornell University's Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) as detailed below.

## **6. Guidelines for Cooperative Development and Design Review**

It is recommended that development standards be implemented throughout the Canal Corridor through the use of a Canal Corridor Overlay District, and changes to existing zoning, site-plan review, and signage ordinances so as to maximize the compatibility of the various regulations. Due to New York State's Home Rule legislation, each municipality will need to implement the Overlay District and any development standards individually, which will require a significant amount of inter-municipal cooperation.

The Design Committee of the Canal Corridor Revitalization Committee should take the lead role in creating draft development/design standards for the Corridor. It may be necessary and desirable to hire an outside consultant(s) to assist in this process. Local municipal planning boards should also be involved, and community input is essential. The development guidelines should apply to non-residential properties (with the exception of planned new housing developments and mobile home parks) within the Canal Corridor Overlay District detailed above. Again, once draft guidelines are developed, each local municipality will need to adopt them individually.

Upon adoption, the Canal Corridor Design Committee should function as an advisory board with respect to projects undertaken within the Overlay District. Projects within the Corridor would be required to obtain a review and comments from the Design Committee as part of the normal permitting process. These comments, while not binding, should be taken into account in local/County approvals and permit decisions. The Design Committee should establish an expedited/streamlined review process to ensure that the requirement for an advisory review of projects within the Overlay District is not burdensome. Guidelines similar to those established for County review by General Municipal Law §239(l) and (m).

## **7. Sign Ordinance**

Sign ordinances are an important tool that municipalities have to regulate all manner of signs in order to reduce visual clutter and promote the general attractiveness of the community. In order to avoid litigation, particularly over issues of free speech, the ordinances must be “content neutral” that is, regulating the signage regardless of what message is conveyed on the signs.

While the Towns of Seneca Falls and Waterloo and the Villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo currently have sign ordinances, generally as part of their zoning, it is advisable to update and expand those ordinances. The existing ordinances are short and sometimes vague. Signs come in many forms and can raise many issues; it is important to anticipate as much as possible the sorts of issues that could occur. A strong and comprehensive sign ordinance will assist in the long-term welfare of the Canal Corridor by ensuring a measure of visual cohesiveness that enhances the historic nature of the communities.

A sign ordinance will also help in the “re-branding” of ‘Main Street Seneca County’ by assisting in the establishment of a unified visual theme. Signs are one of the first things visitors to a community see, and it is important to establish a clear, attractive, positive impression early on. In addition, an up to date sign ordinance can assist in the enhancement and marketing of businesses in traditional main street areas of the villages. By establishing a Sign Review Board, it can allow flexibility for certain historic types of signs and other signs appropriate for a pedestrian oriented environment that may not be appropriate in a more suburban, or auto oriented, business environment.

Finally, given the goal to create a unified image or brand throughout the Canal Corridor, it might be advisable for the four municipalities to form a single Sign Review Board. Not only would this be a positive example of intermunicipal cooperation, it would further enhance the unity and clarity of the corridor's image.

A model sign ordinance developed for the municipalities along 'Main Street Seneca County', is included in Appendix E.

## **8. Resources**

The creation and implementation of a Main Street type program for the Canal Corridor will require that both technical and financial assistance be available. Since neither the technical or financial resources are available through Seneca County or the individual Corridor municipalities, outside assistance will need to be sought. Following are potential sources of such assistance:

- **Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (GLFRPC)** – the GLFRPC represents nine counties in the region. Their primary functions include local, regional, and water resources planning; regional economic development; strategic planning; program and grant development; surveys and data; technology; and a resource center. The G/FLRPC has expertise with Main Street Revitalization and the Main Street Program, and could be a source of technical assistance in organizing the revitalization effort.
- **Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI)** – CaRDI works to strengthen and support New York's local communities and citizens. They serve as a point of entry to Cornell University's resources and expertise in community development and local government, and provides outreach to community leaders, educators, elected officials and citizens. They are currently a "host" site for the New York Main Street Alliance. They can provide presentations and information on Main Street revitalization, community mobilization, trade analysis, and other related issues. CaRDI staff may be a valuable resource early in the organizational development process.
- **New York State Department of State** – The Department of State has already invested resources in the completion of this document and in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). Additional financial support to assist in implementing the concepts of these plans may be available, particularly if the LWRP is adopted upon completion.
- **Legislative Member Items** – Local, State and federal representatives often have the opportunity to include special budgeted items in State and federal budgets. These local representatives are a potential source for organizational or project specific funding. A member item may provide seed money to implement and operate a program for the first year or two.

- Local Sources** – Although local municipal budgets are tight, Canal Corridor governments must be committed to this endeavor if it is to succeed. Local businesses and business associations must also be willing to commit time and funding. The impact of limited funding can be magnified by pooling local resources. For example, this report recommends that a “Main Street Manager” position to be created for the Canal Corridor. While the position is proposed to be a County employee working out of the Seneca County Economic Development Office, it is unlikely that the County will have the resources to fund this position on its own. Assuming a salary of \$25,000 to \$30,000, the cost for this staff person will range from \$32,000 to \$40,000. Assuming a \$40,000 cost, the position could be funded locally as follows:

Seneca County		\$11,000
Business Associations	2 @ \$1,000	2,000
Villages	2 @ \$6,000	12,000
Towns	3 @ \$5,000	15,000

Other funding sources, including Empire State Development, the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program, the Main Street New York Program, and others may provide project specific support.

In order for the successful development of a Canal Corridor Main Street Program, a number of sources will likely need to be coordinated. Initially, seed money should be sought to begin the process of forming an organization, creating marketing materials, etc. Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) over a two to three year period would place the revitalization program on solid footing, with ongoing support provided by local municipalities after that time.