Housing Inventory

for the

BOA Step 3 Implementation Strategy

City of Rome, NY

March 2017

BERGMANN
A S S O C I A T E S

INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND

This Housing Inventory and Analysis report was prepared as part of the Rome Step 3 Implementation Plan, Component 5, task 5.1 "Housing Inventory." The purpose of the inventory is to describe the existing housing supply within the BOA Study Area and identify opportunities for demolition, land assemblage, rehabilitation, new construction and programs to increase homeownership and improve housing quality. This report is not a market analysis or a feasibility study for a specific site or use, but does draw on conclusions about market demand provided in previously completed market studies.

1.2   METHODS

Sources of data, limitations, and methods of analysis used for this report are described below.

Analysis Boundary

The boundary used in this analysis is coterminous with the Rome BOA boundary. All parcel data and ESRI/Census data used in this analysis were derived from within this boundary.

Sources of Data

We reviewed available information about the housing supply in Rome, including primary local sources and commercial proprietary data sources.

- *City of Rome Parcel Data.* The City of Rome parcel database includes all parcels in the BOA boundary. The database identifies the parcel number, owner name, acreage, total assessed land value, total assessed value, and New York State Office of Real Property Services' Property Classification and Ownership Codes for each parcel. The property classification codes used in this inventory are:

    - 210 - Residential – One family residence

    - 220 - Residential – Two family residence

    - 230 – Residential – Three family residence

    - 270 – Residential Mobile Home

    - 280 – Residential Multi-purpose, Multi-structure

    - 311 – Residential Vacant Land

    - 312 – Residential Vacant Land with minor improvements not used for living space

- 411 – Commercial Apartments

- *ESRI Business Analyst.* A portion of this inventory relies on data from ESRI Business Analyst, which is a proprietary data source that can be used to analyze characteristics of the population and housing stock. ESRI draws from a variety of sources, including the US Census Bureau, US Labor Department, Economic Census, and others. The characteristics of the housing stock included in this analysis are*:*

    - Total number of housing units

    - Type of housing unit

    - Tenure (ownership patterns)

    - Year built

    - Value of owner occupied housing

    - Median rent

- *"Windshield" Conditions Assessment.* An visual assessment of exterior housing conditions was conducted using Google Earth Pro and limited field verification. Each residential parcel and structure were individually evaluated and given a score from 1 to 5, based on the criteria below:

    - 1 - Excellent: A structure appears to be recently built and meeting codes or appears to be well maintained, both structure and grounds. No surface wear is apparent and repairs do not appear to be needed.

    - 2 - Good: There is limited wear and tear evident, but structure appears to be safe and is not an eyesore.

    - 3 - Fair: There is evident wear and tear and the structure / property are in need of improvements, though is not unsafe.

    - 4 - Poor: Significant surface wear is noticeable. Paint is blistered and windows, steps, etc., may need to be replaced. Major maintenance is needed.

    - 5- Deteriorated: More than 2 substantial defects, such as sagging roof, missing roof materials, hole in roof, crumbling stairs, crumbling/sagging porch, boarded up windows, broken or barred windows, missing bricks, sloping or sagging walls.

Previous Studies

This report references and incorporates recommendations from the following previously completed studies:

- *Rome Rental Housing Market Summary Report, 2014.* This report reviewed the need for rental housing in Rome, with a focus on rental housing within the BOA. The study concludes that there is demand for rental housing products in the BOA with a mix of unit

types and for different income levels. Further, it concludes the market can support the 220-market rate units explored as part of this study.

- *Proposed Housing Development Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis (2013).* This report included an economic and fiscal impact analysis of residential development in the BOA.

- *From Brown to Green: A Revitalization Strategy for the Downtown Rome BOA (Step 2 Nomination Study).* This report included a section focused on redevelopment within the South Rome residential subarea. It identifies strategic sites and includes recommendations for land use, zoning, capital projects, and programs.

- *Real Estate Analysis for the Erie Boulevard Brownfield Opportunity Area, Rome, NY (2016).* This report analyzed the residential real estate market and current housing supply, and provided estimates for future housing demand. The report highlights opportunities to capture regional growth, particularly at Griffiss Technology park and Marcy Nanocenter, which could generate demand for new or renovated housing, particularly multi-family rental units in the moderate to high-end price range. The report notes that new and/or redeveloped mixed-use buildings offer the greatest potential to fulfill expected demand, as housing preferences are rapidly shifting towards mixed-use, rental units with proximity to services and amenities. Specific findings about future housing demand include:

  - Multi-family inventory in the Greater Rome area has remained stagnant over the last nine years, with vacancy rates swiftly decreasing - **indicating a demand, but no new supply, of multi-family units**. There were no multi-family deliveries in Greater Rome between 2007 and 2015.

  - **Future demand is expected for multi-family apartments** catering towards young professionals and empty-nesters. Mixed-use style buildings have the greatest potential because housing units will need to be paired with new amenities.

  - **Age 55+ housing will be in high demand**. The greatest demand is anticipated to be for apartments and condos in walkable areas and independent living facilities. Assisted living and nursing homes are not expected to be in the greatest demand initially, although there may be some potential.

Definitions of "vacant"

The definitions of "vacant" property vary greatly among municipalities and data sources. The two major sources of data used in this analysis each use a different definition of vacant.

- New York State Office of Real Property Services definition of "Vacant" refers to land that is classified as residential, but contains no improved structure.

- Census definition of "vacant" refers to property that contains a vacant housing unit, i.e. no one is living in it at the time of the census interview, unless its occupants are only temporarily absent.

The difference between these definitions has larger implications for the recommendations in this report. For instance, recommendations for housing rehabilitation and demolition activities should focus on properties that contain structures (including vacant structures). Strategies focused on land assembly and new construction may prioritize vacant residential properties that do not contain structures.

<u>Data Limitations</u>
The City of Rome Parcel database contains locally gathered information about real property within the BOA, including the New York State Assessor's Land Use Property Classification code. While the database indicates the type of unit located on a parcel, it does not provide information about the characteristics of the housing units or the total number of residential units within each parcel. In some cases, the total number and type of residential units on a particular parcel can be estimated. For example, parcels classified as Two-Family Residential likely contain two housing units. However, the number of residential units located on parcels classified as "Multi-Unit," and "Mobile home" could vary. As a result of this limitation, the City of Rome parcel database was supplemented with ESRI/Census data, which offers information about the characteristics of the housing stock. It should be noted that these data sources are not interchangeable.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

This section describes the detailed results of the inventory.

SUMMARY OF RESIDENTIAL LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

Figure 1 shows a breakdown of residential parcels in the BOA by property classification code. There are 747 parcels in the BOA Study Area classified as "Residential" and "Commercial Apartment." Parcels classified as single- and two-family residential make up the majority of these parcels (61% combined). Vacant residential parcels make up the next largest category (25%). Parcels containing mobile homes and multi-unit structures each account for less than one percent of residential parcels. (Note: the total number of residential parcels is *not* equal to the number of housing units. The total number of housing units is discussed in the next section.)

Figure 2 Residential Parcels, BOA Boundary

Legend

BOA Boundary

Residential Property Classifications

210 - Single Family

220 - Two Family

230 - Three Family

270 - Mobile Home

280 - Multi-Family

311 / 312 - Residential Vacant

411 - Apartments
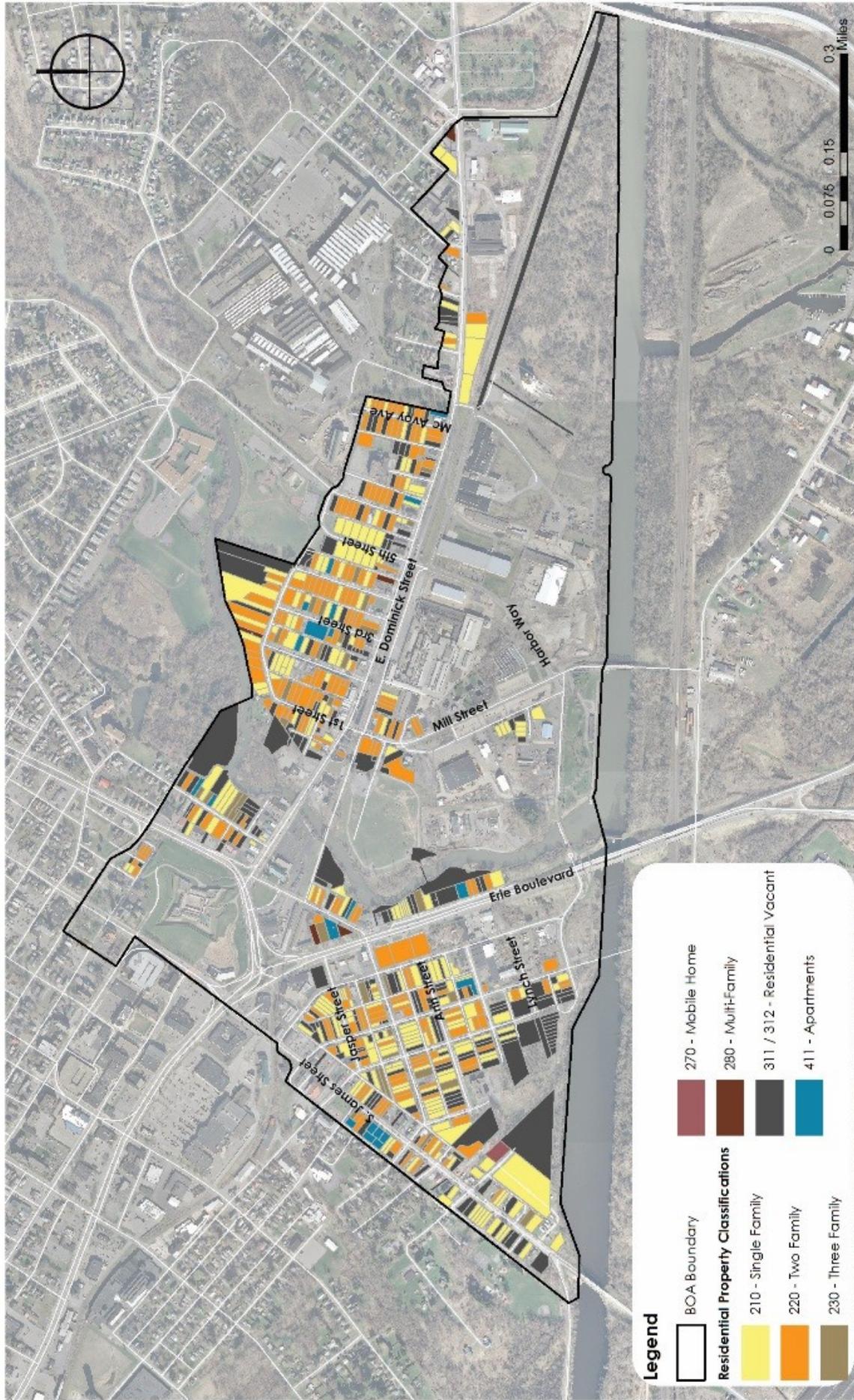
Downtown Rome Step 3 BOA
Housing Inventory - Residential Parcel Classification

Bergmann

McAvoy Ave

5th Street

3rd Street

E. Dominick Street

1st Street

Mill Street

Harbor Way

Erie Boulevard

Lynch Street

Ann Street

Jasper Street

S. James Street

5

Figure 3 Vacant Residential Parcels, BOA Boundary
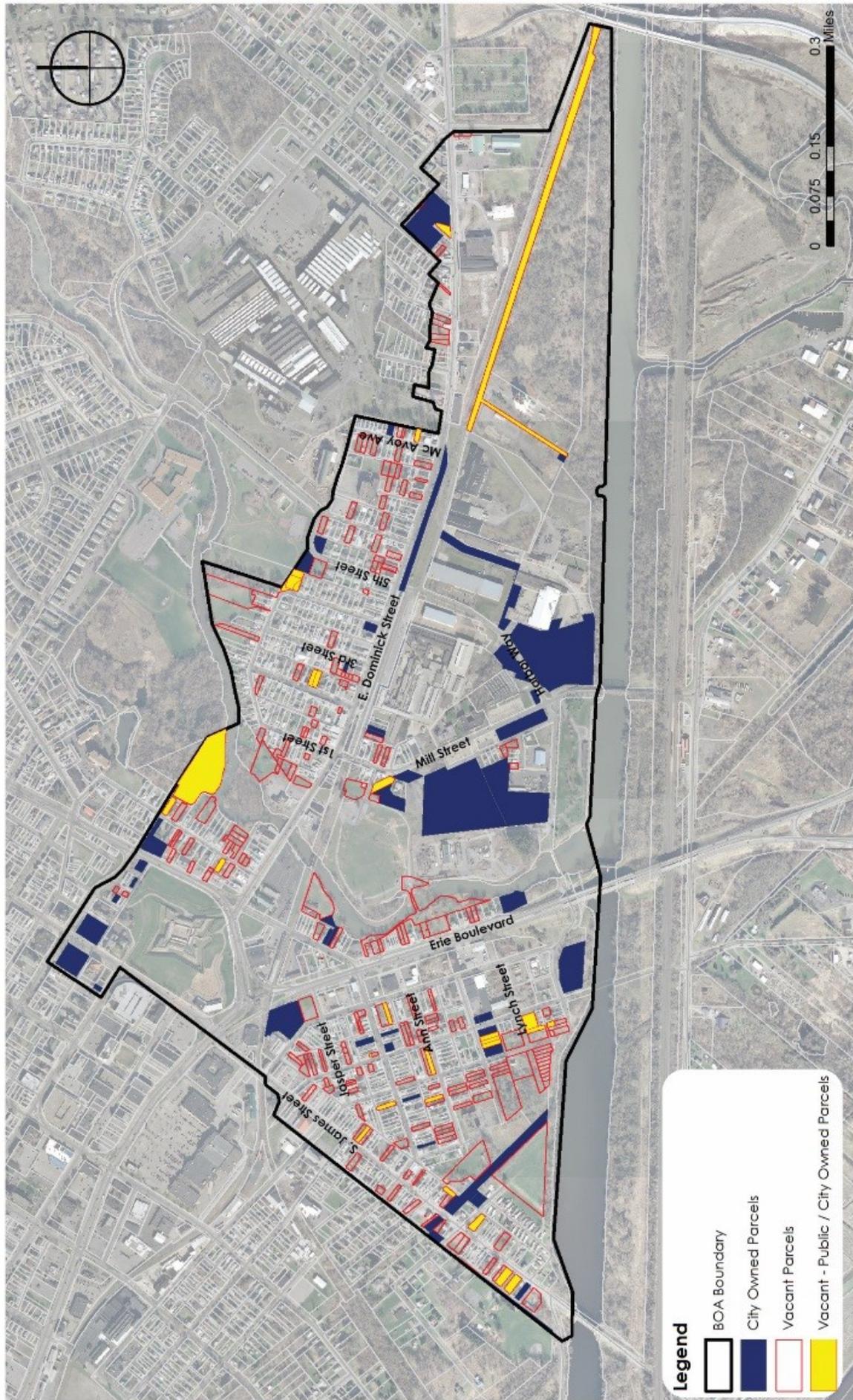
Downtown Rome Step 3 BOA
Residential Land - Ownership Patterns

Legend

BOA Boundary
City Owned Parcels
Vacant Parcels
Vacant - Public / City Owned Parcels

Bergmann
architects / engineers / planners

0   0.075   0.15   0.3
Miles

MC Avoy Ave
5th Street
3rd Street
E. Dominick Street
1st Street
Mill Street
Harbor Way
Erie Boulevard
Ann Street
Lynch Street
Jasper Street
S. James Street

Figure 1 Parcel Land Use Classification

Code	Description	Parcels #	Parcels %	Acres #	Acres %
210	Single-Family	227	30.4%	34	27.9%
220	Two-Family	233	31.2%	31	25.6%
230	Three-family	33	4.4%	5	3.8%
270	Mobile Home	1	0.1%	0	0.4%
280	Multi-Structure	5	0.7%	1	0.7%
311	Vacant	190	25.4%	41	33.1%
312	Vacant (minor improvement)	38	5.1%	7	5.7%
411	Commercial Apartment	20	2.7%	3	2.7%
	Total	**747**	**100%**	**122**	**100%**

Source: City of Rome Parcel Data, 2015

1.4 LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

The City of Rome owns 76 residential parcels in the BOA, accounting for 68 acres of land. Of these, 29 parcels (14 acres of land) are classified as vacant. There are over 10 different owners of other vacant parcels within the Study Area. Given this, land assembly strategies should prioritize publicly-owned parcels and groups of parcels under single ownership.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

This section includes a description of the characteristics of housing within the BOA Study Area, including type, ownership, value, age, and conditions. For context, information about the Study Area is compared to the City of Rome as a whole and Oneida County. In some cases, the information is also compared to the City of Utica, which is considered a comparable city for benchmarking purposes.

1.5 RESIDENTIAL UNITS BY TYPE

Key takeaway: The Study Area has a relatively diverse housing stock, with a lower proportion of single-family homes and a higher proportion of duplexes and 3-4 unit structures than city-wide.

Figure 4 shows the total number of residential units by type of unit. There are 1,083 housing units within the BOA Study Area, accounting for 7 percent of housing units in the City of Rome (15,392 units). Duplexes make up the largest proportion of total units (38%) in the Study Area, followed by single-family units (29%) and 3-4 unit structures (21%). By contrast, the City of Rome and Oneida County contain a higher proportion of single-family detached homes and a lower proportion of duplexes than the BOA. The BOA contains a lower proportion of multi-unit structures than the City of Rome as a whole.

Figure 4 Units in Structure

Units in Structure	Study Area #	Study Area %	City of Rome #	City of Rome %	Oneida County #	Oneida County %	Benchmark City of Utica #	Benchmark City of Utica %
Single-unit detached	313	28.9%	8,484	55.1%	64,137	62%	11,259	41%
Single-unit attached	10	0.9%	233	1.5%	1,406	1%	534	2%
Two-family unit	409	37.8%	2,478	16.1%	13,919	13%	8,068	29%
3 or 4 units	231	21.3%	1,553	10.1%	7,036	7%	2,989	11%
5 to 9	17	1.6%	771	5.0%	4,018	4%	1,423	5%
10 to 19	0	0.0%	452	2.9%	2,071	2%	704	3%
20 to 49	3	0.3%	324	2.1%	1,704	2%	699	3%
50 or more	20	1.8%	610	4.0%	3,160	3%	1,725	6%
Mobile home	80	7.4%	487	3.2%	6,604	6%	129	0%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19	0%	0	0%
Total Units	**1,083**	**100%**	**15,392**	**100%**	**104,074**	**100%**	**27,530**	**100%**

Source: ESRI Housing Summary 2016

1.6 TENURE

Key takeaway: The Study Area has higher vacancy and lower rates of home ownership than the City as a whole.

Figure 5 shows tenure for all housing units in the BOA Study Area, the City of Rome, Oneida County, and the City of Utica. Thirty-one percent of housing units in the Study Area are owner-occupied, compared to 50 percent city-wide, and 58 percent in the County. The Study Area contains a larger percentage of vacant housing units (18%) than the surrounding areas and the City of Utica.

Figure 5 Housing Tenure

Housing Units	Study Area #	Study Area %	City of Rome #	City of Rome %	Oneida County #	Oneida County %	Benchmark City of Utica #	Benchmark City of Utica %
Total Units	1,070	100%	15,019	100%	105,369	100%	28,696	100.0%
Occupied	880	82%	13,467	90%	94,325	90%	25,223	87.9%
Owner	*330*	*31%*	*7,491*	*50%*	*61,616*	*58%*	11,609	40.5%
Renter	*550*	*51%*	*5,976*	*40%*	*32,709*	*31%*	13,614	47.4%
Vacant	190	18%	1,552	10%	11,044	10%	3,473	12.1%

Source: ESRI Housing Profile, 2016

While Census data measures the *number* of renter-occupied units within with the BOA, it does not tell us the *location* of renter-occupied parcels. The City of Rome does not currently track the location of rental properties and tenure is not identified within the City's Parcel Database. However, the mailing addresses for all property owners in the BOA can provide insight into whether units on that parcel are owner or renter-occupied.

Parcels for which the property owner's mailing address is outside of Rome are more likely to contain renter-occupied units. It is noted that many parcels contain more than one housing unit and thus this measure is not an accurate reflection of the number of renter-occupied units—only the potential location. Further, this measure likely underestimates renter-occupied units, as it is possible that there are more rental properties in the BOA owned by people who live elsewhere in Rome and thus have a Rome mailing address.

The City of Rome Parcel Database indicates that 115 parcels in the BOA are owned by property owners with mailing address outside the City of Rome, which accounts for 15 percent of the residential parcels in the BOA. There are 15 parcels in the BOA owned by property owners with mailing addresses outside New York State. Figure 6 shows how many parcels are owned by "out-of-town" owners according to the type of units on the property.

Figure 6 Property Mailing Address Outside City of Rome

Code	Description	Parcels
210	Single-Family	22
220	Two-Family	42
230	Three-Famly	11
270	Mobile Home	-
280	Residential - Multi purpose	1
311	Vacant	26
312	Vacant (minor improvement)	5
411	Commercial Apartments	8
	Total	**115**

Source: City of Rome Parcel Database

1.7 VALUE

Key takeaway: The Study Area has significantly lower home values than the City of Rome as a whole, with twice the proportion of homes valued less than $50,000 than city-wide.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of home value for owner-occupied homes within the Study Area, the City of Rome, Oneida County, and the City of Utica. The median home value in the Study Area is $65,447, compared to $90,612 city-wide (and $113,495 in the County).

Thirty-eight percent of homes in the Study Area are valued less than $50,000, compared to 17.5 percent city-wide and 15 percent in the County. About 25 percent of homes in the Study Area are valued more than $100,000, compared to 42 percent city-wide and 56 percent in the County.

Figure 7 Owner Mailing Address Outside City of Rome

Downtown Rome Step 3 BOA
Owner Mailing Address

Legend

- BOA Boundary
- Owner Mailing Address- Outside Rome
- Owner Mailing Address - In Rome

Bergmann
associates
architects // engineers // planners

MC Avon Ave
5th Street
3rd Street
E. Dominick Street
1st Street
Mill Street
Harbor Way
Erie Boulevard
Ann Street
Lynch Street
Gosper Street
S. James Street
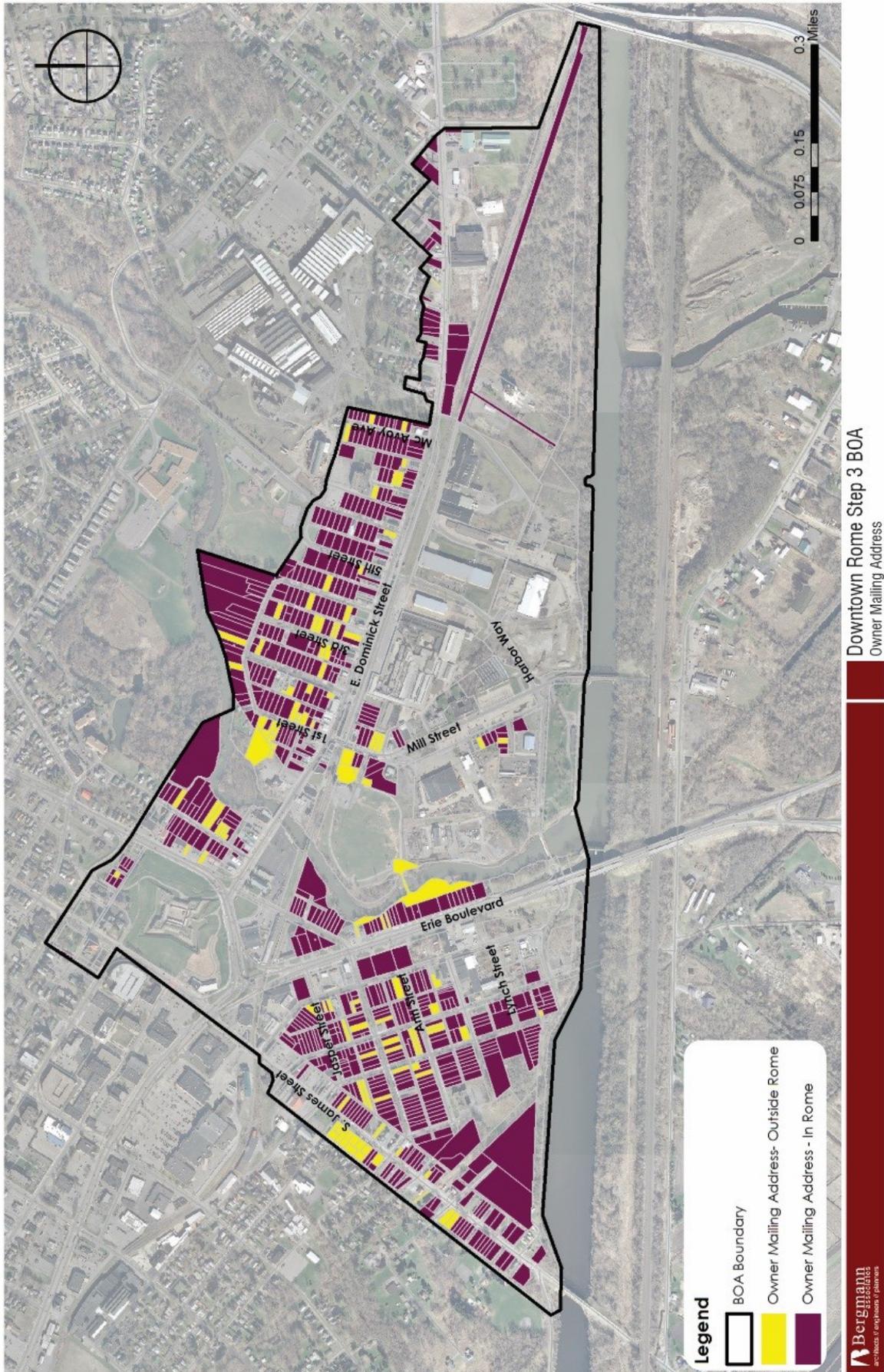
Figure 8 Owner Mailing Address Outside New York State

Downtown Rome Step 3 BOA
Owner Mailing Address

Legend
- BOA Boundary
- Owner Mailing Address - Inside NY State
- Owner Mailing Address - Outside NY State

Bergmann Associates
architects / engineers / planners

0   0.075   0.15   0.3
Miles

McTavoy Ave
5th Street
3rd Street
E. Dominick Street
1st Street
Mill Street
Harbor Way
Erie Boulevard
Lynch Street
Ann Street
Jackson Street
S. James Street
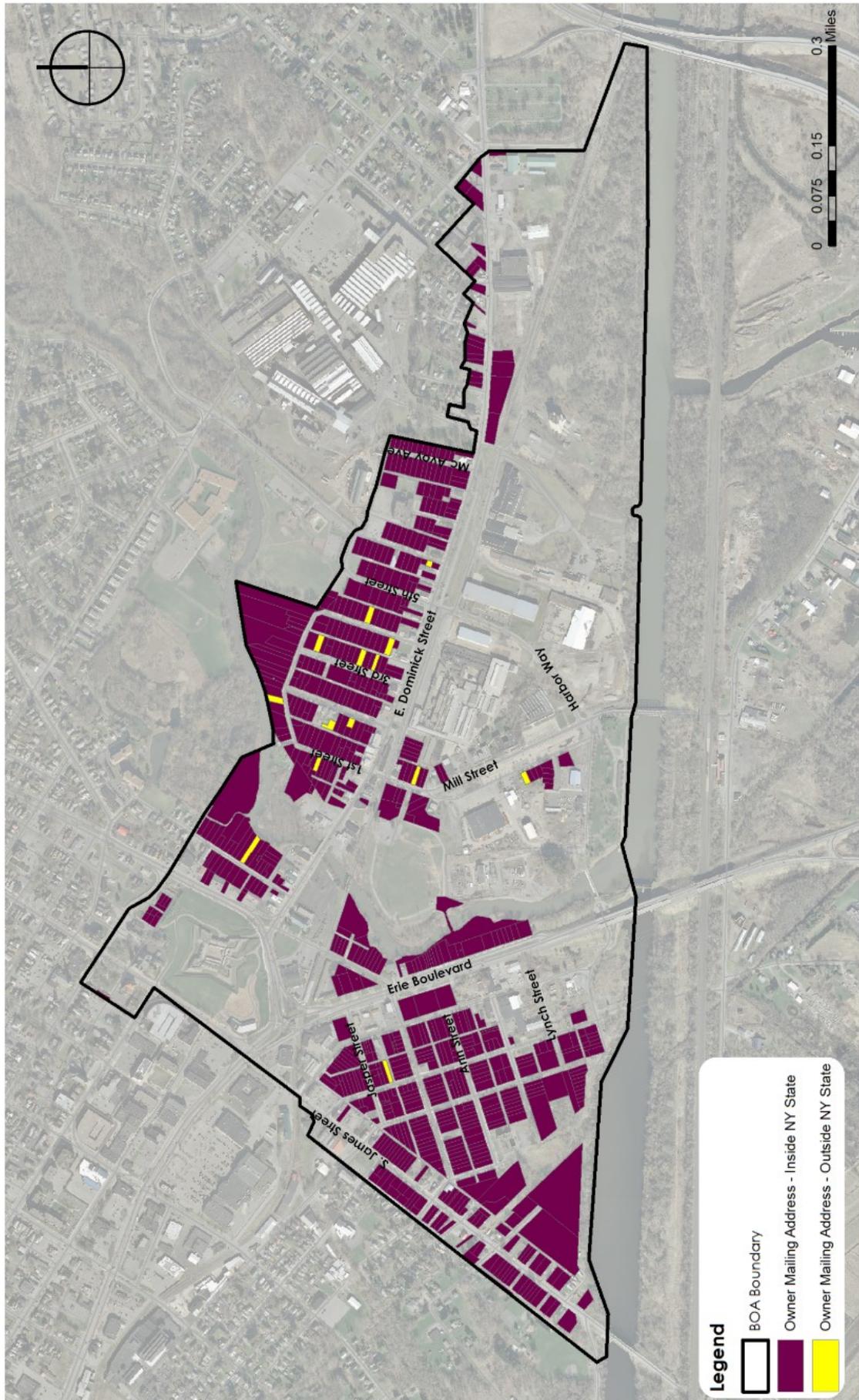
Figure 9 Value of Owner Occupied Homes

Value	Study Area		City of Rome		Oneida County		Benchmark City of Utica	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<$50,000	127	38.5%	1,310	17.5%	9,069	15%	2,272	20%
$50,000-$99,999	123	37.3%	2,996	40.0%	17,952	29%	5,056	44%
$100,000-$149,999	19	5.8%	1,465	19.6%	14,005	23%	2,418	21%
$150,000-$199,999	53	16.1%	979	13.1%	9,165	15%	1,041	9%
$200,000-$249,999	0	0.0%	270	3.6%	4,416	7%	271	2%
$250,000-$299,999	0	0.0%	184	2.5%	2,640	4%	169	1%
$300,000-$399,999	0	0.0%	142	1.9%	1,927	3%	105	1%
$400,000-$499,999	8	2.4%	29	0.4%	774	1%	83	1%
$500,000-$749,999	0	0.0%	63	0.8%	824	1%	87	1%
$750,000-$999,999	0	0.0%	26	0.3%	351	1%	42	0%
$1,000,000+	0	0.0%	23	0.3%	479	1%	55	0%
Total	**330**	**100%**	**7,487**	**100%**	61,602	100%	11,599	100%

Source: ESRI Housing Profile, 2016

The median home value in the BOA Study Area is roughly $65,000, while median rent within the BOA Study Area is $564. Census data show that 34 percent of renter households in the lowest income bracket (earning less than $20,000) in the BOA are cost burdened, while 15 percent of home-owners in the same income bracket are cost burdened. (A "cost burdened" households is one that spends more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs.)

1.8 YEAR BUILT

Key takeaway: The Study Area's housing stock is relatively old; the majority of homes were built before 1939.

The largest proportion of homes in the Study Area were built before 1939 (57%). This is relatively higher than the proportion city-wide (35%) and in Oneida County (35%). Less than ten percent of homes in the BOA have been built since 1980. Compared to the City of Rome and Oneida County, the Study Area contains a higher proportion of older homes.

Figure 10 Year Built

Years	Study Area		City of Rome		Oneida County		Benchmark City of Utica	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Built 2010 or later	0	0.0%	24	0.2%	426	0%	25	0.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	5	0.5%	271	1.8%	5,668	5%	489	1.8%
Built 1990 to 1999	61	5.6%	430	2.8%	6,818	7%	568	2.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	21	1.9%	1,048	6.8%	9,131	9%	888	3.2%
Built 1970 to 1979	65	6.0%	1,560	10.1%	10,012	10%	1,482	5.4%
Built 1960 to 1969	86	7.9%	1,317	8.6%	11,013	11%	2,586	9.4%
Built 1950 to 1959	111	10.2%	3,488	22.7%	16,548	16%	4,271	15.5%
Built 1940 to 1949	118	10.9%	1,822	11.8%	7,541	7%	2,339	8.5%
Built 1939 or earlier	616	56.9%	5,432	35.3%	36,917	35%	14,882	54.1%
Total	**1,083**	**100%**	**15,392**	**100%**	**104,074**	**100%**	**27,530**	**100%**

Source: ESRI Housing Summary Report, 2016

Figure 11 Housing Condition Assessment

Legend

BOA Boundary

Conditions Assessment

- Excellent (16 parcels; 3% of total)
- Good (120 parcels; 21% of total)
- Fair (325 parcels; 58% of total)
- Poor (91 parcels; 17% of total)
- Deteriorated (8 parcels; 1% of total)

Downtown Rome Step 3 BOA
Residential Property Condition Assessment

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McAvoy Ave
5th Street
E. Dominick Street
3rd Street
1st Street
Mill Street
Harbor Way
Erie Boulevard
Lynch Street
Ann Street
Jasper Street
S. James Street

0   0.075   0.15   0.3
Miles

1.9 HOUSING CONDITION

An assessment of housing condition is a useful way to identify concentrations of properties that need rehabilitation and improvement. It is also an important first step in identifying areas for strategic land assembly, demolition, and redevelopment.

A visual assessment of exterior housing conditions was conducted for this report using Google Earth Pro and limited field verification. Each residential parcel and structure was individually evaluated and given a score from 1 to 5, based on the criteria below:

- 1 - Excellent: A structure appears to be recently built and meeting codes or appears to be well maintained, both structure and grounds. No surface wear is apparent and repairs do not appear to be needed.

- 2 - Good: There is limited wear and tear evident, but structure appears to be safe and is not an eyesore.

- 3 - Fair: There is evident wear and tear and the structure / property are in need of improvements, though is not unsafe.

- 4 - Poor: Significant surface wear is noticeable. Paint is blistered and windows, steps, etc., may need to be replaced. Major maintenance is needed.

- 5- Deteriorated: More than 2 substantial defects, such as sagging roof, missing roof materials, hole in roof, crumbling stairs, crumbling/sagging porch, boarded up windows, broken or barred windows, missing bricks, sloping or sagging walls.

The visual assessment reveals that approximately 79 percent of homes in the BOA Study Area are in good or fair condition. Eighteen percent are in poor and deteriorated condition, with concentrations of homes in poor condition located east of South James Street (Cook Street, Depeyster street and Avenue B). These results indicate that the City should conduct further analysis of these identified areas to determine whether opportunities exist for land assembly and redevelopment. Consideration should be given to ownership patterns, particularly contiguous, publicly-owned parcels.

CONCLUSION

1.10 OVERVIEW

The housing stock in the BOA is made up of a diversity of housing types, with a higher proportion of two and three-unit homes than the City as a whole, and a lower proportion of single-family homes. Relative to the rest of the City, homes in the BOA are older and have lower values. The BOA contains a higher proportion of vacant residential parcels than the City as a whole. In addition, a higher proportion of homes in the BOA are renter-occupied compared to the City.

1.11 RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of key housing indicators in the BOA Study Area suggests the need for a multifaceted approach that includes improvements to the housing stock (i.e. rehabilitation and repair), programs that increase rates of homeownership, and long-term redevelopment strategies to address deteriorated and vacant properties.

While local governments cannot directly control the short-term real estate market, their actions can influence the market. Policy and program decisions about code enforcement, land use regulation, financial incentives and assistance, and infrastructure maintenance can help improve the condition of the housing stock and shape future housing development.

The following recommendations were developed in the context of the analysis and findings presented in the previous sections and are focused on actions the City can pursue to address the challenges of deteriorating conditions, vacancy, and lower rates of homeownership.

It is noted that some of the recommendations described in this report would likely require substantial public resources, including financial *and* human capital. Like many upstate communities, the City of Rome and its non-profit partners do not have unlimited resources needed to implement all of the recommendations identified within this report. Therefore, some recommendations should be viewed as long-term goals (as noted herein) and actions for which the City will need to first seek additional financial resources and develop additional capacity.

Figure 12 Overview of Issues/Opportunities & Strategies

Issue/Opportunity	Remedy	Strategy
High proportion of renter-occupied units & cost burdened households	Home ownership education and financial assistance	Pursue HOME Investment Partnerships Program Funding CDBG Focus Area
Vacant property	Identify areas for assembly of vacant lands, pursue control or acquisition	Pursue Strategic Land Acquisition Alternative Use for Vacant Lands Small-scale Infill
Aging Housing stock/maintenance needs	Home rehabilitation assistance, code enforcement	Pursue HOME Investment Partnerships Program Funding
Deteriorated conditions	Rehabilitation assistance, strategic demolition	Pursue HOME Investment Strategic Demolition
Future Housing Demand (multi-family housing for 55+ and young professionals)	Attract developers to construct new multi-unit housing	Leverage City's RFP process

Strategy #1: Leverage the City's RFP process to attract housing developers (short-term)

Previous studies completed within the Rome BOA Study Area and for the City as a whole suggest there is demand for mid-range (price) apartments/condos and mixed-use commercial/residential. It is clear that downtown residential is currently the greatest opportunity in Rome. The units expected to be in the greatest demand are multi-family rental units in the moderate to high-end range, although a luxury product is not anticipated to be in high demand. Mixed-use buildings have the greatest potential because housing will need to be paired with new amenities. Ground-floor uses should cater to the target demographic of young professionals and empty nesters. These uses may include coffee shops, cafes, bars, and restaurants.

In conjunction with strategic land acquisition, the City should consider pursuing a Developer RFP process to help attract and partner with potential housing and mixed-use developers. The RFP process can make the development process more predictable and attractive to developers by streamlining the development process, clarifying timelines and permitting processes, and ultimately reducing overall risk for potential developers. The RFP process also provides an opportunity for the City to present financial feasibility assessments of potential development scenarios that clearly identify the estimated return on investment for a developer should they decide to pursue a project. Financial feasibility assessments can also show

the impact of available inventive to developers, such as tax credits, density bonuses, PILOTs, and gap financing.

Strategy #2: Pursue Strategic Land Acquisition (medium-term)
Land acquisition and assembly is a process of forming a single site from a number of properties, typically for economic development purposes. An individual site may not be conducive to the type of development or redevelopment desired by the community. Combining contiguous properties can create larger parcels of land more favorable for development projects. Through strategic land assembly, communities can position properties to appeal to the development community and be able to attract a wide range of development. Private land assembly agreements can take many shapes, including land trusts, limited partnerships, joint ventures, and community cooperatives. With a redevelopment plan and legal structure for purchasing the property in place, bring landowners together to sign a contract to pool their land. In some cases, eminent domain may be necessary but may be avoided by engaging property owners early, including them in the planning process, and finding ways to fairly compensate them.

Oneida County recently formed a local Land Bank. The acquisition of key parcels by the City and Land Bank can help create infill housing opportunities, or acquire assemblages of parcels over time that could create a more substantial redevelopment opportunity for the BOA. The Land Bank may also have the authority to convey or sell property to non-profit developers at a reduced cost or work with the developer on a creative financing model to facilitate construction.

It is recommended that the City work closely with the newly established Land Bank to pursue strategic acquisition of residential properties, with a focus on clusters of city-owned parcels and contiguous/adjacent vacant parcels that could be acquired and consolidated into larger sites for redevelopment. The Land Bank can work directly with the City and a non-profit partner to purchase the land, attract potential developer and/or partner with a developer to construct mixed-income housing units for owner or renter-occupancy.

Strategy #3: Expand and Build Upon Existing Code Enforcement Activities to Improve Property and Building Maintenance (medium-term)
The City's Code Enforcement office includes a housing division that is responsible for enforcing zoning regulations and private property maintenance.

- *Expansion of "Targeted Walks."* In partnership with the Mayor's office, the Code Enforcement office conducted a "Targeted Walk" within an identified area of the City to evaluate the condition of infrastructure and housing. It is recommended that the City build upon this program and expand it to include neighborhoods within the BOA Study Area. This process can be leveraged to complete and update a housing conditions assessment to track changing conditions and set priorities for further action.

- *Landlord education and support* The City should explore incentive programs to assist homeowners and landlords with repairs and a landlord education and incentive program (see sidebar).

- *Certificate of Occupancy for Renter-Occupied Units.* It is recommended the City explore a program that requires Certificate of Occupancy for any structure that contains residential rental units, with renewal required three to five years. The process would require a property owner to allow the City's Code Enforcement department access to the interior and exterior of the structure to conduct a thorough inspection and look for potential code violations based on health, safety, and blight conditions. If the Code Enforcement department finds any violations, the property owner is issued a notice with abatement measures and a time frame for compliance. This process would allow the City to begin issuing fines for violations and non-compliance.

Strategy #4: Encourage Small-Scale Residential Infill (long-term)

Residential neighborhoods within the BOA were mostly developed over 50 years ago, resulting in a relatively compact, walkable pattern of single and two-family homes. This pattern is disrupted by the presence of vacant lots scattered throughout the Study Area. In conjunction with a larger land acquisition and redevelopment strategy, it is recommended that the City encourage and facilitate small-scale residential infill of individual lots by addressing the potential regulatory barriers (such as zoning) and creating an expedited permitting process.

Strategy #5: Explore Alternative Uses for Vacant Lots, including the "Lot Next Door" Program (long-term)

Just over 30 percent of residential parcels in the BOA are classified as vacant, meaning there is no home or living structure on the property. In conjunction with strategic land assembly and redevelopment strategies, it is recommended that the City pursue alternative uses for individual vacant lots scattered throughout the BOA. These strategies may include:

- *Urban Agriculture:* growing food within the City limits for consumption, processing, distribution, and sale. The goal is to support the local food market and provide improved access to fresh foods.

- *Stormwater Management*: using vacant land to facilitate sustainable stormwater management practices that help address the quality and quantity of stormwater, including reforestation, greenspace, rain gardens, and bioswales.

- *Greenspace expansion*: adding areas of permanent open space to the existing network of parks, greenways, and natural areas.

- *Alternative Energy:* the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and geothermal wells to supply power to the electric grid.

- *Side lot sales program*: provides opportunities for residents to purchase "side lots" (vacant lots next door) for a nominal fee (such as $100).

Strategy #6: Pursue HOME Investment Partnerships Program Funding (long-term)

Just over half of the housing units in the Study Area are renter-occupied. In addition, 34 percent of low income renter-occupied households are cost burdened. Further, 15 percent of homes in the Study Area are in poor or deteriorated condition. This suggests the need for

programs that encourage home ownership through education and financial assistance, as well as programs that assist home owners and landlords with exterior rehabilitation and improvements. Introducing homeownership opportunities provides residents the chance to build equity and wealth while maintaining a connection to the neighborhood.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) provides formula grants to communities to fund a wide range of activities including building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income people.

- *Home ownership.* HOME funding can be leveraged to help increase overall rates of home ownership. The City does not currently offer programs designed to expand home-ownership opportunities and help current homeowners remain in their homes.

- *Housing rehabilitation.* Cities may use HOME funding to provide home purchase or rehabilitation financing assistance to eligible homeowners and new homebuyers; build or rehabilitate housing for rent or ownership; or for expenses related to housing development such as site acquisition or improvement, demolition of dilapidated housing to make way for HOME-assisted development, and payment of relocation expenses. Communities that do not qualify for an allocation under the established formula can join with neighboring jurisdictions. Municipalities must have an approved Consolidated Plan in order to participate in the program (Rome's five-year Consolidated Plan was approved in 2015).

Strategy #7: CDBG Focus area (long-term)

The City of Rome's Five Year 2015 – 2019 Consolidated Plan identifies how the City's HUD grant (Community Development Block Grant) will be used as an investment within established "target areas." Characteristics of target areas include blighted housing conditions, absentee landlords, and deteriorating infrastructure. As part of this strategy, the City of Rome would consider establishing a CDBG target area within the BOA in order to facilitate investment of CDBG funds to fund housing rehabilitation, homeownership education, landlord outreach/education, and targeted neighborhood clean-up campaigns.

Returning Vacant Land to Productive Use

Communities around the US have established programs to return abandoned, vacant, and foreclosed property to productive use while leveraging the community and existing property owners.

New Orleans: The "Lot Next Door" Program

The Lot Next Door Program, established in 2007 by the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, provides an opportunity to owners that share a common boundary with a City-owned property to purchase the property at market value with the opportunity to receive a $10,000 credit in exchange for making landscaping improvements.

Detroit: "Side Lot Sales"

Established by the Detroit Land Bank Authority, the side lot program offers homeowners who own an occupied home next to a vacant lot the chance to purchase that lot for $100. Side lots can be purchased online or at a Side Lot Fair offered throughout the year.

Success in Housing Redevelopment: Canal Village – Rome, NY

The 400 block of South James Street was home to numerous vacant lots and abandoned or derelict structures, disrupting the urban form, decreasing property values and impacting on the residents' quality of life. In response, Housing Visions Consulting, Inc constructed 33 units of affordable housing on South James Street between Henry and North Streets. The project included a mix of demolition, rehabilitation, and new construction: 4 abandoned buildings were demolished, 3 buildings were rehabilitated, and 8 new structures were constructed. An on-site management office with tenant community space and laundry facilities was been included in the project, which now provides quality housing choices for larger families, veterans, and individuals with mobility and vision impairments. The units are owned and managed by Housing Visions Consultants, and are a great example of successful urban-infill that addresses the needs of the community.