

Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy

Working Draft – September 21, 2009



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Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy

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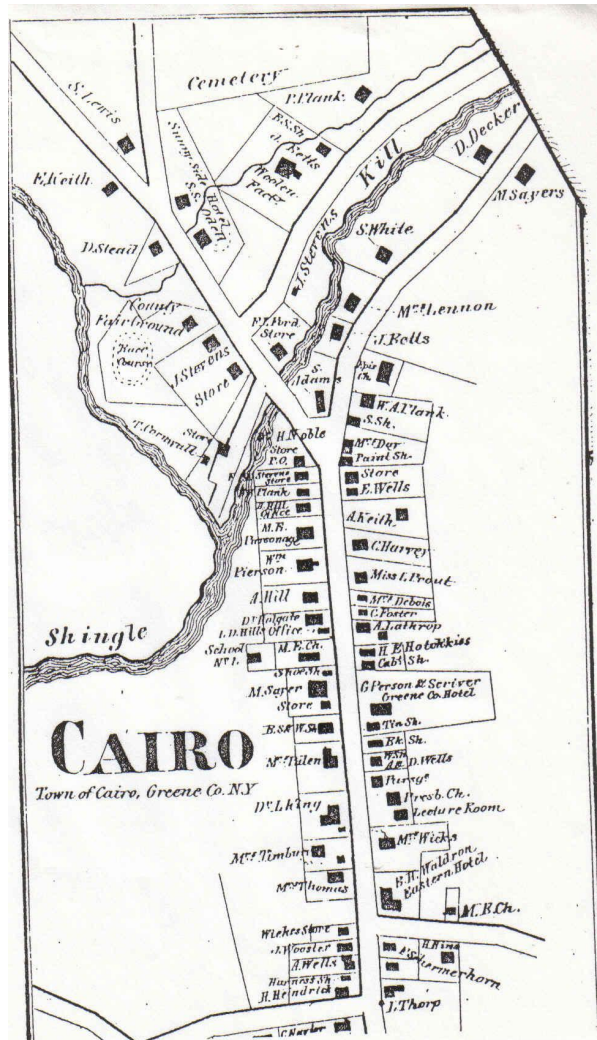
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Main Street Revitalization Strategy for the Town of Cairo, NY

- A. Introduction
- B. Summary of Recommendations
- C. List of Strategy Issues and Proposals

A. Introduction

The Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy has been prepared by Dadras Architects – with MJB Consulting, under contract with the Town of Cairo and the Greene County Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, in order to begin efforts to revitalize the Main Street area of the Town, which remains its commercial, civic and cultural center. The Town appointed a Revitalization Committee to work with the consultants, review its recommendations, and initiate the revitalization process. This Strategy contains short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations for actions that can be taken to enhance the economic and cultural vitality of Cairo’s important Main Street corridor.



Historic Map of Town of Cairo

The study area for the Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy is the area on Main Street between Route 23 East and Route 23 West. There are three distinct segments used as sub-sections in the report: the Eastern Gateway, which contains most of the “strip retail” in Cairo, the “Historic Hamlet” area (shown above), and the Western Gateway, which has a few commercial enterprises and significant parcels available for redevelopment.

The Town of Cairo is located in the center of Greene County, and has a 2000 Census population of 6,355. The Town has been growing, with a change in population of 17.3% from 1990 to 2000, and continued growth of 3.4% from 2000 to 2007. The 2007 Census estimate for the Town as a whole is 6,559. Cairo's hamlet area (including the Main Street Strategy study area) is also tracked as a Census Designated Place, and that area grew from 1,273 residents in 1990 to 1,390 in 2000. Cairo is growing faster than the County and the State as a whole.

While its population is older than the State and National averages at a median age of 40.2 years, many of the Town's general economic characteristics track the County and State averages fairly closely. The Town's median family income in 1999 was \$41,820, and only 6.1% of its families were below the poverty line, as opposed to 9.2% nationally. Housing prices roughly track the Greene County averages, and have experienced a sharp spike since 2000 from approximately \$90,000 to the current \$160,000-\$180,000 level.

The Town commissioned the Main Street Strategy in an effort to revitalize its Main Street, which has experienced decline and disinvestment in recent years. The decision of New York State to build "the bypass," re-routing Route 23 around the Cairo Main Street area, diverted much of the traffic and potential for business expansion. Many of the buildings on Main Street have been vacant for many years, and some of the occupied "storefronts" are in residential or storage use. The Town has worked with Catskill Mountain Housing Development Corporation and Greene County to implement several Main Street Revitalization projects in the hamlet, but a clear strategy providing a roadmap for revitalization was seen as critical to the future success of Main Street.

In response to this need, the Town of Cairo, in conjunction with Greene County, commissioned Dadras Architects to complete the Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy. The Strategy process included a detailed review of the existing conditions and relevant existing information, as well as numerous site visits, documentation, several meetings and consultations with the Greene County Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning and the Town of Cairo Revitalization Committee, and a Public Meeting with citizens of the Town of Cairo.

The Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy contains a description of the current conditions in the Main Street study area, mapping and digital photography that documents the current conditions and makes recommendations for short, medium, and long-term quality improvements to the future of Cairo's Main Street area. The completion of the Strategy is a first, important step towards the realization of that goal.

B. Summary of Recommendations

We are recommending the following actions to be taken by the appropriate entity in the Town. The Town Board will have to take ownership of the recommendations assigned to the Town, and work with other entities such as the Chamber of Commerce and local property owners to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

These recommendations are divided into three categories: immediate [first steps], short-term [next steps] and longer-term [long steps], and are required in order to immediately begin to improve the current physical and economic state of Cairo's Main Street into a positive, beautiful and successful place that supports an increasing level of commerce and residents with fewer vacancies and more successful buildings and enterprises. Chapter IV of the Strategy, "How to Proceed," provides more details on the recommendation with the specific implementation steps.



Cairo Welcome Sign in the Eastern Gateway

The Town of Cairo has existing significant assets: a unique and beautiful natural location (as a true gateway to the Catskill Mountain recreational areas), with an historic physical setting and infrastructure. Cairo is also at a crossroads, with decisions needing to be made about shaping and absorbing growth. There is no doubt that "change," in the form of future development, will be occurring throughout the Town including in its Main Street area. The biggest issues are what shape and form (and uses) that new development will take, what type of physical environment it will preserve or create, and how successful the Town will be in absorbing those changes in a manner that most residents support.

The best way to help ensure that the future development of Cairo's Main Street area is successful is to demonstrate that the Town has a strategy with a coherent vision for its future development, and then to take immediate and significant actions/steps towards the implementation of that strategy.

"Welcome to Cairo: Recreational Gateway to the Catskill Mountains"

The Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy contains many specific ideas and recommendations for actions to be taken in order to encourage and guide the future revitalization and redevelopment of Cairo’s Main Street. It is critical to the success of this effort that the Strategy be implemented in a comprehensive manner. Individual recommendations, while having merit, are intended to build upon each other and not to be considered in isolation. The proper sequencing of revitalization efforts (as detailed in the “How to Proceed” Chapter IV section) is critical to getting the revitalization process underway, as well as to seeing it progress properly. Proceeding in a timely manner, with each of the steps described, is also of critical importance to the success of this effort. Persevering during good and bad economic times is also critical to success.

This issue leads to perhaps the most important issue of this entire revitalization effort: the capacity of the Town of Cairo to properly implement the Strategy, and all of its elements. Dadras Architects identifies potential sources of funding in the recommendations sections, as well as specific ideas in regards to funding.

Moving forward with these Strategy recommendations, the Town of Cairo – working closely with Greene County, must provide the capacity to implement each of these (sometimes intricate and complex) revitalization proposals, as well as maintenance of effort for a period of time, in order to be successful. If there should be any lack of capacity or commitment to this effort, there cannot be a guarantee of success. Consistent effort of local government, community and stakeholders promises the greatest chance for a truly successful revitalization of the Main Street area of the Town of Cairo, NY.

C. List of Strategy Recommendations

The list below contains the Strategy Issues and Proposals, which contains many positive and implementable ideas for the vision and direction of the Main Street area of the Town of Cairo, NY. Following the List (in Section III of this Report) is a detailed description of each recommendation. Finally, our "How to Proceed" section (IV) details the steps which should be taken to begin the revitalization process.

Strategy issues include: Building on existing strengths

1. Create Main Street Commercial Retail Clusters.
2. Visitor Information Center/ Tourism Attraction Effort.
3. A Cairo Main Street Bed and Breakfast and Small Inn District.
4. Cairo Gateway Project: ***“A Recreational Gateway to the Catskills.”***
5. The Angelo Canna Town Park and former Fair Grounds property.
6. The Historic Architecture of Cairo.
7. A Community Gathering Place on Main Street.
8. Main Street Urbanism in Cairo.
9. New Parking/Streetscape Enhancements, with Better Access to Existing
Parking.
10. Cairo Business and Retail Marketing/Branding Strategy.

II. EXISTING STUDY

- A. Summary of Field Observations and Meetings.
- B. Documentation of Existing Conditions:
 - 1. Summary of Analysis of Existing Conditions.
 - 2. Documentation of Existing Conditions, including Annotated Photo Survey.
 - a. Figure Ground Study
 - b. Main Street District Identification Study
 - c. Eastern Gateway Main Street District
 - d. Historic Hamlet Main Street District
 - e. Western Gateway Main Street District
- C. Consultant review of previous information and reports.
- D. Analysis of Existing Conditions in the Town of Cairo, NY:
 - 1. Assets and Opportunities
 - 2. Issues and Challenges

A. Summary of Field Observations and Meetings

Dadras Architects –with MJB Consulting, began work on the Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy in April 2008. Working closely with the Greene County Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning as well as the Town of Cairo’s Revitalization Committee, we have received many different types of information, and “input” during the process. This information included: Revitalization Committee Meetings, on August 1, October 6 and December 1, 2008 (included initial presentation of Strategy ideas) and June 29, 2009; a Public Meeting, Presentation and Visioning Workshop, on October 27, 2008; numerous walking and driving tours of Cairo, and surrounding areas, as well as photo surveys of the entire Cairo Main Street study area and surrounding neighborhoods. Meeting minutes and detailed information appear in the Appendix.

The County, along with providing considerable staff support, also provided all of the aerial photos and base maps for this Strategy.



Meeting of the Town of Cairo Revitalization Committee.

We also received excellent information from the Town Historian (Robert Uzzilia), which is fully shown in the Appendix. All of this input and information that we received was important in developing the Main Street Strategy.



**Public Meeting, Presentation, and Visioning Workshop on October 27, 2008,
at Gallagher's on Main Street, Cairo, New York.**



B. Documentation of Cairo's Existing Conditions

1) Summary of Analysis of Existing Conditions and Observations

The Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy study area runs from Route 23 East, at the node where the local banks have located (called “the Eastern Gateway”), through the Historic Hamlet area of Main Street, and through the Town back to Route 23 West headed toward Acra and Windham (called “the Western Gateway”). Both Gateway sections have a considerable amount of open land that could be developed with the provision of infrastructure and encouragement of appropriate business development.

New commercial development (retail and service) is almost entirely focused on the strip in the Eastern Gateway, and is totally auto-oriented in its design, development, and current use. The most recent developments in this section include the Slater's Smart Shop, which houses a gas station, Subway restaurant, Dunkin' Donuts and ice cream business, and the two banks at the corner, The Bank of Greene County (which moved from a more interior spot on the Main Street) and the National Bank of Cocksackie, which was new to the market. The development of the banks caused considerable local discussion on design and the appropriateness of buildings in the Main Street area, which the consultants believe is a very positive thing.

The Eastern Gateway suffers from poor signage on Route 23. The blue tourist signs are in disrepair and badly need updating, and the billboards and other signage could use refreshing. The billboard on Main Street in the Gateway also could use updated signage.

As elaborated on by MJB Consulting later in the report, even the more heavily developed Eastern Gateway contains a number of “soft” sites that would be relatively easy to redevelop. Therefore, it is likely that for the foreseeable future, “strip,” auto-oriented retail will continue to locate in this zone.

Design/development guidelines would help to insure that “sprawl” does not impact this part of the undeveloped Main Street area, and also can be used to raise the quality of development within this area. Several of the buildings in the Eastern Gateway are in need of renewal, and the Town should encourage improvements in this area as well as the other two areas of the Main Street. Linkages to the Historic Hamlet area through signage, sidewalks and property improvements, are also critically needed and should be encouraged.

In the transition zone between the Eastern Gateway and the Historic Hamlet sections of Main Street are several commercial areas where disinvestment is occurring, and there is a gap between the commercial node near the intersection of Route 23 and 32 and the Historic Hamlet. Tourists and visitors to the community who are not familiar with the area are quite unlikely to travel through this section in order to reach the Historic Hamlet. Sidewalking the area (the former Villa Napoli lodge is being converted to apartments in this area, which will create more pedestrians and foot traffic) will not only accommodate foot traffic; it will serve as a traffic calming measure for this area. Finding ways, including potential State grants, to obtain outside funding to promote investment and support local property owners with properties in this zone, should be a major priority of the Town.

The Cairo Elementary School is the border between the Eastern Gateway and the Historic Hamlet, and is a critical resource for the Main Street. Almost 600 students attend school here each day, and the grounds are used after-school and on weekends by the Northern Catskill Youth Association soccer programs and other community groups. During the summer, the successful Cairo Market Days are held on the Elementary School lawn. The school also houses the Cairo-Durham School District administrative offices.

Sidewalks connecting the Eastern Gateway to the school would likely encourage students, school district personnel and school visitors to walk down to the shops just down the street. Currently, people drive, and once they start driving, they leave town.

Many properties in the Historic Hamlet portion of Main Street are also under-utilized (not necessarily vacant), or vacant/abandoned (out-of-business). Many buildings have storefronts being utilized for office and residential uses that disrupt pedestrian traffic, and detract from the ambience of the street. The vacant buildings also provide places for less-than-desirable elements of the community to “hang out” on the Main Street, serving as a further detriment to the area. There is little service retail on this section of Main Street, and as MJB Consulting points out in its report, it is unlikely in the near-term that much additional service retail will be attracted here. Other uses will have to be created to bring growth and investment to this section.



Existing streetscape has not been improved or enhanced.

One major asset in the Historic Hamlet is the Angela Canna Town Park, one of whose two entrance points is actually on Main Street. The Town Park is highly utilized for events such as the Greene County Youth Fair, and Cairo-Durham football games. Youth baseball uses the Town Park as well, and a portion of the Greene County offices remain in the County-owned building adjacent to the Park. The Cairo Chamber of Commerce also hosts well-attended weekly summer concerts and monthly car shows in the Town Park. The Town Park also fronts on the Shinglekill Creek, an under-utilized water amenity.

Creating new pedestrian-friendly linkages between the Town Park and the Main Street would encourage Town Park usage, as well as encouraging people to park their cars there in a central

location with considerable parking. Better signage from Main Street would be a major asset to the Town Park. Cairo has had some quality façade and interior restorations completed using Greene County Main Street Revitalization Program and New York Main Street funding, with the former Cairo Garage building shown below:



The existing Cairo Garage project is an example of an excellent Façade Improvement project in Cairo's Historic Hamlet.

More work of this quality is needed, though additional risk capital for business formation is critical for success here as well. The right-side of the building was rented to Living Structures Realty until the real estate office moved to owner-occupied quarters down the street (exactly the kind of process that should be encouraged on Cairo's Main Street), but has not been re-rented. The left side has largely been used as a workshop. The Town's local efforts need to assist this kind of property owner to fill his storefronts. Otherwise, other owners will not invest and their properties will continue to deteriorate.

Expanding the role of the local Chamber of Commerce to include more recruitment or nourishment of entrepreneurs to invest in the historic hamlet is critical to success.

Sectors that are appropriate for Cairo's development include restaurants, which can thrive as "pioneer" businesses and utilize some of the spaces which Cairo's Historic Hamlet area, and lodging facilities, which can utilize some of the larger historic houses to create unique lodging environments with excellent Catskill views and close access to a variety of outdoor recreation points. Underutilized historic buildings in the Historic Hamlet may provide an excellent opportunity for Bed and Breakfast-style development of overnight rooms.

The quality of the streetscape and parking is quite varied, with some good examples of pedestrian areas. All of these areas in need of improvements, particularly ones that create a unified aesthetic, and quality pedestrian environment for entire Main Street area. Unified

signage, street trees, plantings, sidewalk paving, benches, and night lighting should be developed, incorporating Cairo's main marketing theme when possible.



These kinds of historic houses are often re-utilized as Inns or Bed and Breakfasts in resort communities.

Encouraging the arts community to expand their presence on Main Street Cairo is another important step to increasing the utilization of storefronts in the Historic Hamlet and increasing the number of hours that the area is “open for business.” The Gallagher’s Banquet Hall space across from the Town Hall has been beautifully restored and would be a natural venue for a coffeehouse or jazz/classical music series, perhaps “incubating” an art gallery or theater that can fill a stand-alone storefront on Main Street. One of the Appendix items is an e-mail from the Greene County Council on the Arts that addresses Cairo’s potential as an arts location.

Encouraging the use of Gallagher’s for events that don’t fit well into the Town Hall/Town Library building across the street would also be a way to effectively use this venue, perhaps under a regular contract for the use of the space.

The area around the Cairo Post Office toward the end of the Historic Hamlet is one of the few congested locations along this Main Street. The Post Office, combined with the Town Hall/Town Library, just up the street, are both substantial trip generators. The Cozy Cup Deli located next to the Post Office, has been able to thrive in this location primarily by servicing this clientele. Ongoing rumors that the Post Office may move to a location outside the Historic Hamlet should be explored by the Town, as losing the Post Office would be another detriment to the Historic Hamlet’s revitalization.

Once you pass the Post Office, traditional retail quickly dies out. The True Value Hardware store remains in business just past the Post Office, primarily due to loyal clientele that have

been frequenting the business for many years. Other retail businesses have totally abandoned the area in recent years, with the pet grooming/supply business moving up the street next to Bank of America, and a tattoo parlor at the “point” where the turnoff for East Durham is having a very short run. Dominick’s Barber Shop maintains a location in this area as does O’Brien’s café, but neither use traditional Main Street storefronts.

One other retail operation seems to exist as a Christmas season store, but other storefronts in this area are either vacant or “converted” to office use. Given the seeming call of the market and coming decisions about land use in the Western Gateway, the Town might consider ways to allow re-conversion of some of these buildings into residential structures or office space that is more conducive to the environment. If the area is to be maintained as commercial at least as far as the Cedar Terrace resort, specific efforts to fill storefronts in this area need to be made, and the Town should not allow “conversions” to residential or office use that cover the existing storefront.

The Cedar Terrace resort is currently for sale, and offers the greatest number of rooms on Main Street Cairo. A town priority should be to ensure that the property remains in lodging, and hopefully in “stronger hands” that can reinvest in the property and improve it. The Cedar Terrace restaurant has not been open in recent years, and the property has not been as actively marketed as possible. When successfully operated, the Cedar Terrace has been a positive trip generator for Main Street Cairo.

The Western Gateway area of the Cairo Main Street has commercial uses such as a small pizza and liquor store plaza (which also fronts on County Route 85), a garage, and a senior housing development owned and operated by Catskill Mountain Housing Development Corporation. The large former Fair Grounds property (approximately 100 acres) is in this section, and remains a prime development site or a business park or large-scale housing development. The resolution of the Town’s water and sewer issues and the provision of infrastructure to this site would greatly enhance its economic development potential, and be a natural growth center for the hamlet area.

The edge of the Western Gateway has Toad’s Stereo, along with some houses and the former Stingray’s Bar and Grill, which burned down two years ago and is also considered a redevelopment site. This Gateway would also benefit from better signage indicating Cairo is nearby. Unlike the Eastern Gateway, there is no traffic light or other mechanism to alert traffic. Therefore it is easy to drive past this entrance and not be aware a town is there.

Part 2 – Documentation of Existing Conditions, including annotated photo survey

- a. Figure Ground Study
- b. Main Street District Identification Study

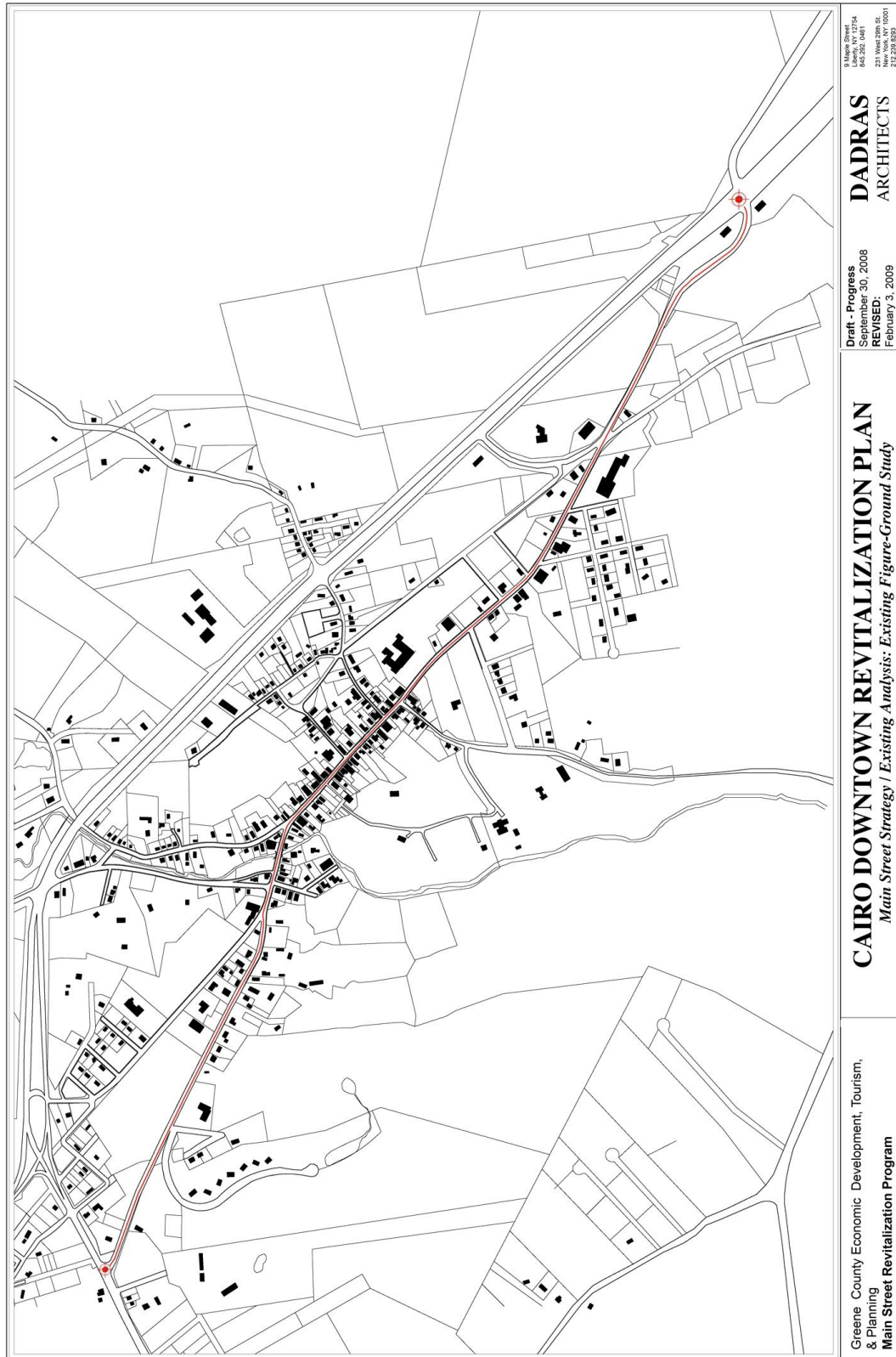
Dadras Architects performed several different field surveys in the development of the Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy, including walking tours; informal interviews with merchants; digital photography of existing buildings, streetscape, public spaces, properties, and existing conditions; and driving tours of the Main Street study area and surrounding areas. We also prepared Analysis Drawings, contained throughout this Strategy, which describe, and formally document the Existing Conditions that we observed and interpreted during our analysis process.

The Drawing of *Existing Figure-Ground Study* shows the existing buildings/structures and properties, throughout the Main Street study area. This analysis reveals that the existing Main Street fabric is rather clearly formed in three distinct patterns. The Historic Hamlet is distinctly characterized by numerous smaller buildings on smaller properties, grouped closely together, and surrounded by the Town Park and the Shinglekill Creek. This area has Town water and sewer throughout.

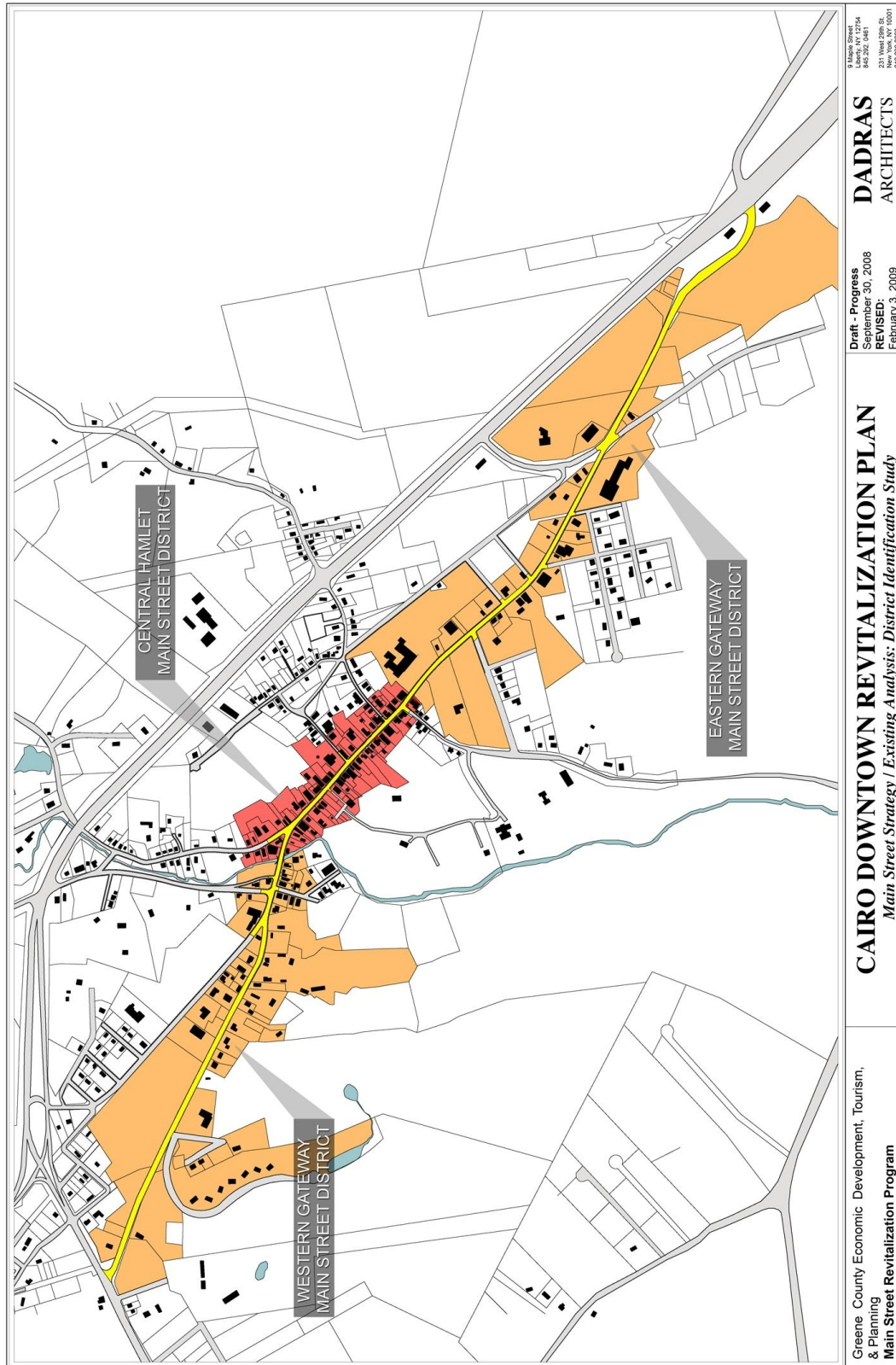
The *Existing Figure-Ground Study* also shows the clear contrast between the Eastern Gateway portion of the Main Street study area and the other two sections. The Eastern Gateway is characterized by almost all of Cairo's newer developments (and also planned new developments) and contains larger, and more individual buildings, generally on larger property sites, with a distinctly more modern and auto-oriented environment. Built environment features include no sidewalks for pedestrians, buildings set back beyond parking lots, and parking in front of the buildings. There is no on-street parking in this section. Not all of this area is serviced by Town infrastructure, but the portion up to Route 32 is.

The *Existing Figure-Ground Study* also shows the different patterns of what we are calling the Western Gateway section. This "Western Gateway" is characterized by more individual buildings and properties, on larger property sites, including several potentially large development sites. The Fair Grounds site, and a former resort site stand out as potential redevelopment sites for large-scale projects.

Drawing One: Figure-Ground Study of Entire Main Street Study Area



Drawing Two: Identifications of Three Main Street Sub-Districts



C. Eastern Gateway Main Street District

The following aerial views and the drawing of the Eastern Gateway Main Street District, followed by select annotated photographs, describe and document the section's existing conditions.

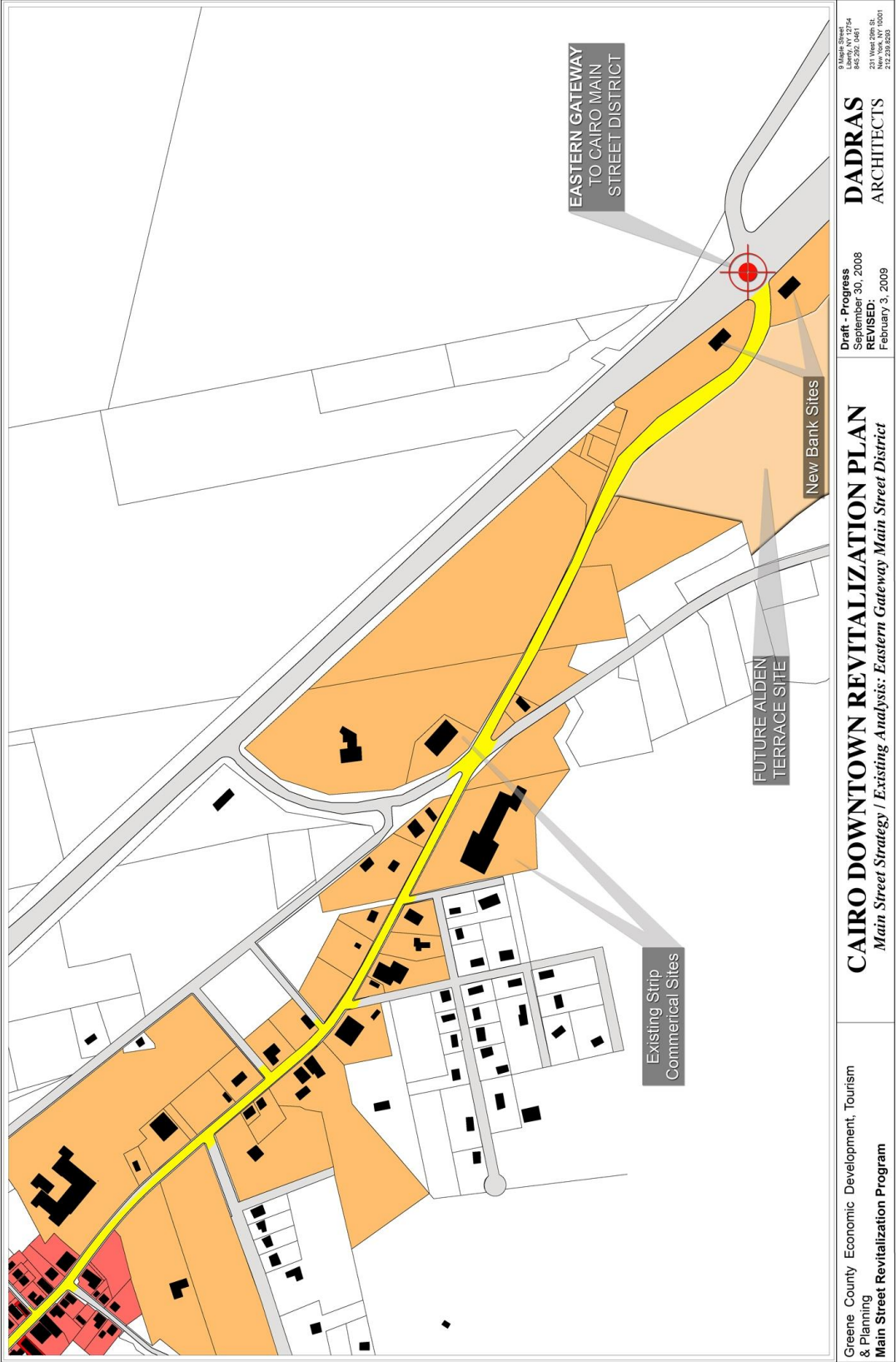


Aerial view of Eastern Gateway Main Street District – Retail / shopping (provided by Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning)



Aerial view of Eastern Gateway Main Street District –at Route 23 – Entry/Banks, & Alden Terrace Site (provided by Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning).

Drawing Three: Eastern Gateway Main Street District





- a. **Entry to Cairo Main Street from the Eastern Gateway. From the East, the landscape is dominated by new auto-oriented development such as the Bank of Greene County and the National Bank of Cocksackie buildings shown above. There are no sidewalks and this is not a pedestrian-friendly environment. The two newly developed banks set a positive example of “quality development.”**



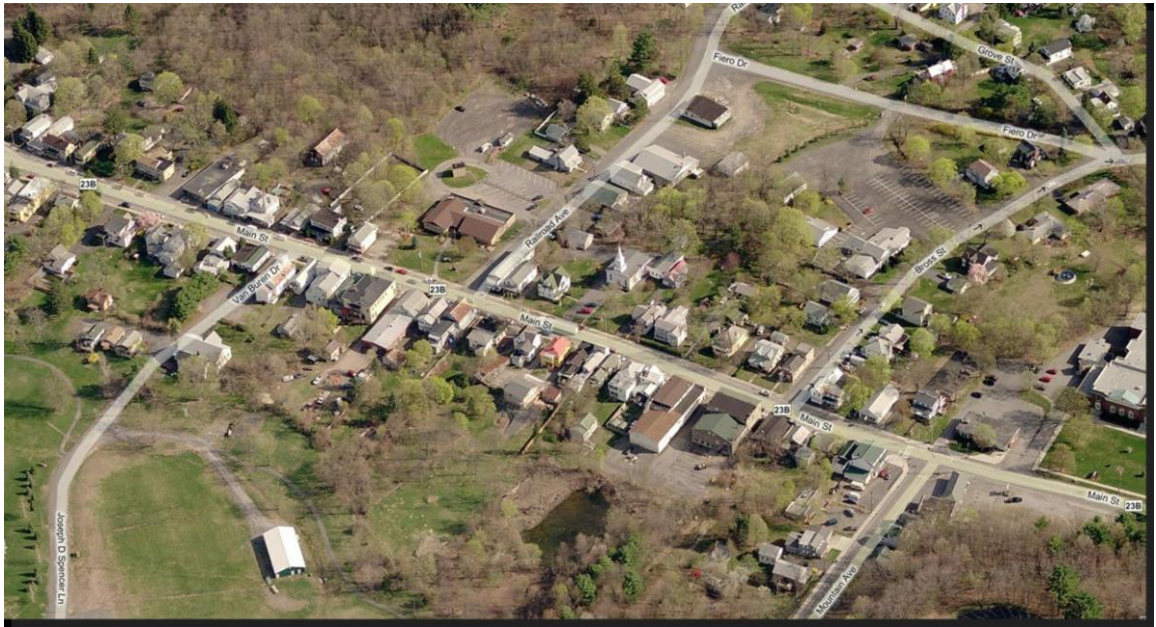
- b. **Potential site for new Visitor Center Facility at the heavily-travelled Route 23/Route 32 intersection. This key intersection is at the center of the “Eastern Gateway Main Street” area, and is the current hub of existing service retail. The landscape here is also currently auto-oriented and not a pedestrian-friendly environment.**



- c. **The Eastern Gateway is dominated by auto-oriented environment, contains many potential development sites (both vacant and under-utilized sites), and may require specific guidelines to achieve the desired future built environment. As this gateway is the primary entry point into Cairo, design guidelines that support the desired “image” and vision of Cairo Main Street, and prevent “sprawl”/undesirable development while promoting quality development would benefit the community.**

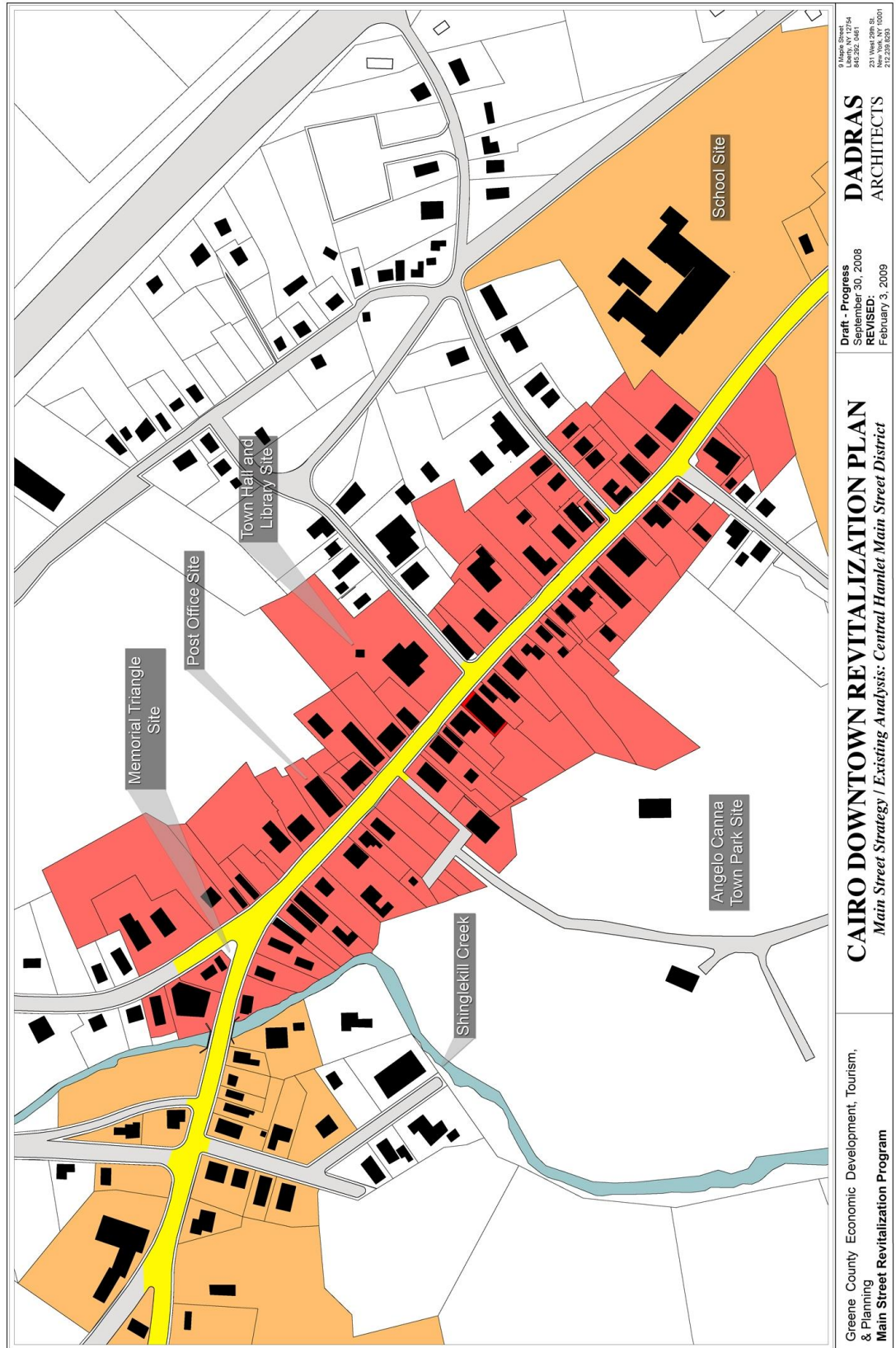
D. Historic Hamlet Main Street District

The following aerial photo provided by Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, the drawing of the Historic Hamlet Main Street District, followed by select annotated photographs, describe and document the existing conditions of this portion of the Strategy study area.



Aerial view of Historic Hamlet Main Street District.

Drawing Four: Historic Hamlet Main Street District





- a. **Historic Hamlet Main Street District consists of historic buildings, sidewalks, and a pedestrian-friendly environment. Many existing buildings have vacant retail storefronts, office space, and/or residential. Streetscape and many of the facades need improvement, in keeping with the new Cairo “image” and vision for Main Street.**



- b. **Historic Hamlet Main Street District photo. Residential units with entries at street level do not enhance the Main Street environment because they cut up the retail/commercial environment. The public streetscape, besides the historic lightpoles, needs much improvement with renovation and new fixtures where appropriate. A number of the commercial buildings are in need of façade improvements, and streetscape enhancement such as concrete curbed sidewalks instead of the asphalt sidewalks with no curbs.**

- c. **Center area of Historic Hamlet Main Street District: A very good example of a (previously completed) quality façade improvement project. The use is professional office space for Kaaterskill Associates, an architectural and engineering firm based in Cairo.**



- d. **Center of Historic Hamlet Main Street District contains many historic buildings with quality architecture. The area is worth preserving, and a Historic District should be considered. Uses compatible with the preservation and re-development of these historic structures should be identified and promoted, including Bed & Breakfasts, lodging, and appropriate other uses.**



- e. Uses compatible with the preservation and re-development of these historic structures include office space, restaurants and artists' galleries. Gallagher's (top right picture, tan building) is an example of an excellent restoration and preservation project that should serve as a model for Cairo's revitalization.



- f. Center area of the Historic Hamlet also contains many civic and cultural assets that should be reinforced and enhanced as the public space (and civic space) of Cairo Main Street. The existing Post Office is an asset, but improvements, including streetscape with a better-delineated cross-walk or other traffic-calming measures, should be considered.



- g. Center area of proposed Main Street also contains many civic and cultural assets, which should be reinforced and enhanced as the public space (and civic place) of Cairo Main Street. The existing Town Hall & Library is an asset, but in much need of upgrade and design improvements.

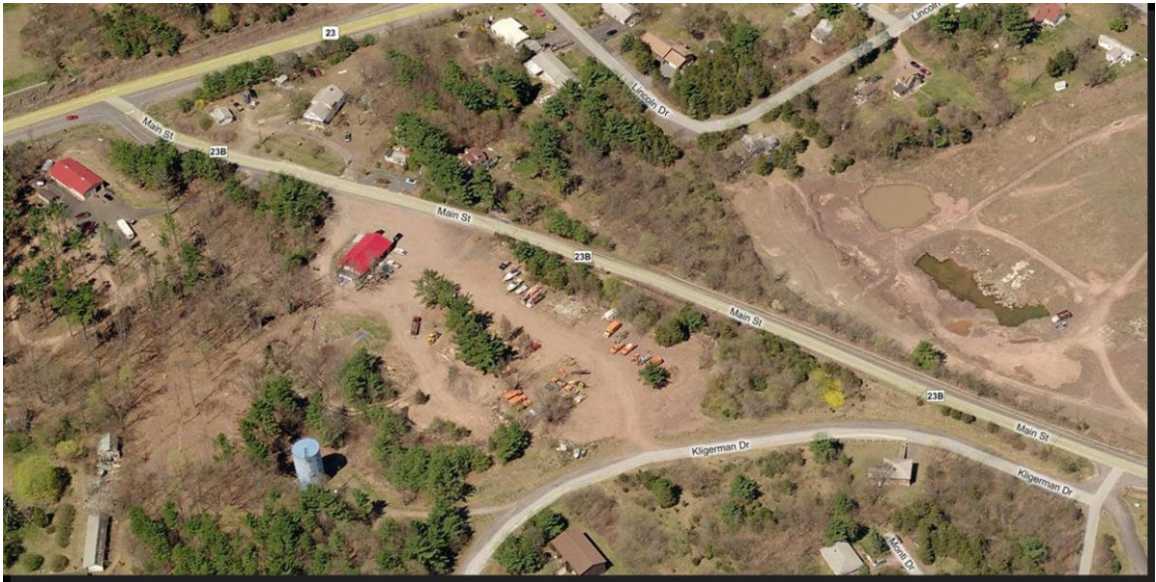
- h. Intersection of Mountain Avenue and Main Street, where the commercial portion of the Historic Hamlet begins. The Town should develop Design Guidelines to create a standard for development in the area to help improve its physical appearance, and development of this area. Historic service station at the intersection at Mountain Avenue, which is in need of improvement, marks the eastern entry point into the historic center of the hamlet.



- i. The western edge of the Historic Hamlet area of proposed Main Street District: the historic “Memorial Triangle” location.

E. Western Gateway Main Street District

The following aerial photos, and the drawing of **Western Gateway Main Street District**, followed by select annotated photographs, describe and document the existing conditions of this portion of the study area.



Aerial view of Western Gateway Main Street District



- a. **Western Gateway of Cairo Main Street, includes old resort properties such as the Cedar Terrace, which should be incorporated into the new vision and strategy for development of the entire Main Street. Cedar Terrace could serve as an important source of upscale visitors for Main Street shops.**

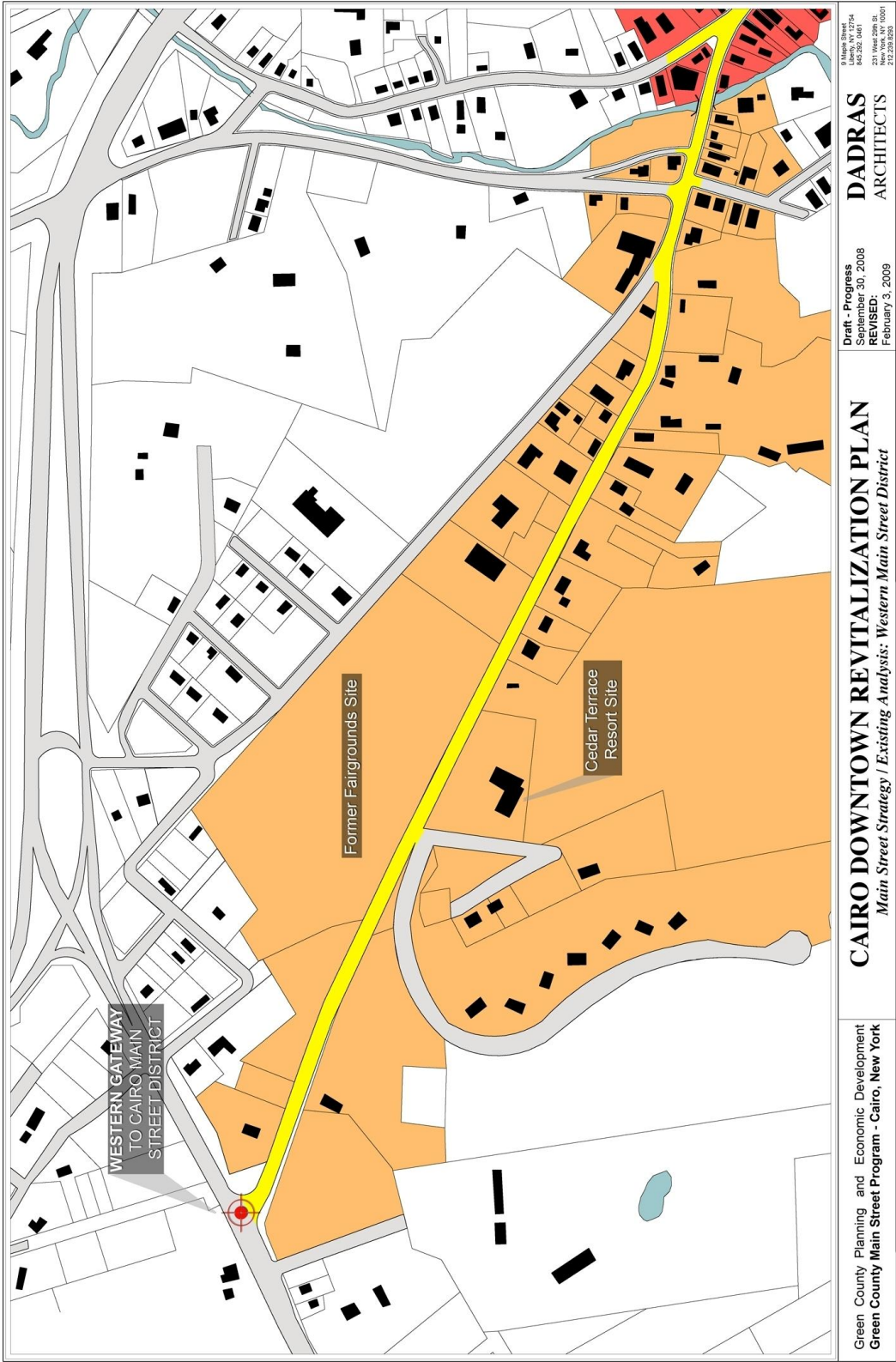


- b. **Western Gateway of Cairo Main Street: The old Fairgrounds is a major potential development site which should be a prime focus of Cairo's planning and development efforts to ensure quality development in conformance with the needs of the Town.**



- c. **Western Gateway of Cairo Main Street: This is the intersection and entrance from New York State Route 23 into the Main Street district from the west. Signage, wayfinding, and a physical design "presence" is required at this point to let motorists know there is a town here.**

Drawing 5: Western Gateway Main Street District



C. Review and Synopsis of Previous Information and Reports

The following previously prepared information and reports, furnished by Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning and the Town of Cairo, were reviewed as part of the process of completing the Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy. These studies, combined with this Main Street Strategy, should be consulted as a basis for moving forward with Cairo's revitalization.

- **Town of Cairo Sidewalk Study, July 2007:**

An 18-page study, which examined the possibility of extending the pedestrian sidewalk from the existing area in the center of the hamlet along Main Street to the intersection of New York State Route 23 and Route 32.

- **Executive Summary: "First Impressions", by the Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI), 2004:**

A five-page summary of community comments about the "perception" of Cairo, by "partner" Town of Sharon Springs volunteers.

- **The Town of Cairo Zoning Commission:**

A two-page memo announcing the establishment of a Zoning Commission, to review and draft new regulations to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004, but zoning was not adopted at that time.

- **Cairo Build-out Analysis, 2003:**

A seven-page memo describing the process of creating a build-out analysis for the Town of Cairo's current land use regulations.

- **Town of Cairo Updated Comprehensive Plan – DRAFT November 2003:**

A 51-page draft, of Town Comprehensive Plan, containing Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, Cairo's Vision, and Goals and Recommendations.

- **Appendix: A Profile of the Town of Cairo:**

A 68-page appendix to the Comprehensive Plan, containing detailed data used to prepare the Comprehensive Plan document.

- **Preliminary Market Analysis: Development Site Route 23 and 32, July 2007:**

A 38-page document prepared by the shopping center developer for the site.

D. Analysis of Existing Conditions- Cairo, NY

Cairo's Assets and Opportunities/ Issues and Challenges

Cairo's Assets and Opportunities:

The following is a list of observed assets that provide opportunities for existing and current improvements to the character of Cairo's Main Street Strategy study area. These assets have been identified through a series of meetings, interviews, and visioning sessions with the community and the Town Revitalization Committee.

- 1. Existing Service Retail and Community Functions:** Cairo does have successful service retail on its Main Street. Examples of successful service retail include the Cozy Cup Deli, the True Value Hardware, and several private business offices. Many important community functions also take place on Main Street, with the Town Hall, Town Library, post office, and Cairo Elementary School all located directly on Main Street. The Angelo Canna Town Park is located directly behind Main Street.
- 2. Tourism:** Cairo does have an active tourism effort in place, with several successful nearby inns and resorts, as well as an active Chamber of Commerce that organizes and promotes several successful festivals and operates a Visitor Information Center.
- 3. Within the Town, there are existing accommodations and existing former hotel/motel sites:** Cairo has a successful Bed and Breakfast on its Main Street. The Cedar Terrace resort, also on Main Street, could benefit from renovation.
- 4. Cairo's successful businesses at its Gateways.** Cairo has successful businesses at its Gateways. The Eastern Gateway has a successful supermarket and pharmacy, and many successful smaller chain stores. There are also some successful locally owned businesses, such as the Slater's Smart Shop in the Eastern Gateway, and Toad's Stereo at the Western Gateway entrance.
- 5. The Angelo Canna Town Park has enormous potential, and the former Fair Grounds has potential for good development:** The Angelo Canna Town Park is very well-sited behind the Main Street, providing enormous potential to attract visitors and accommodate additional recreational opportunities for Town residents and visitors alike and create a "sense of place" for Cairo. The former Fair Grounds has potential for good development, including commercial and residential possibilities.
- 6. Cairo's Historic Architecture:** Cairo has historic architecture on its Main Street and also in adjoining residential areas. The opportunity exists to preserve Cairo's historic architecture, and the original historical context of those buildings. A Town-created Historic District, along with Design Guidelines for the Main Street District, is a step that can be taken to assist in their preservation.

- 7. Civic and Cultural Spaces:** The Town Hall building, along with its front lawn, provide public gathering spaces for Cairo right on its Main Street. The Christmas parade and events are held here, for instance. The nearby Angelo Canna Town Park provides a nearby venue for larger events that cannot be accommodated on the front lawn. This civic center of sorts reinforces a “sense of place” on Main Street Cairo.
- 8. Cairo has room for expansion to its Main Street district and its adjacent residential areas:** Cairo’s Main Street, while quite historically intact, also provides opportunities for future development without impacting the historic structures or the character of Cairo. The residential areas adjoining Main Street also have room for growth, providing opportunities for quality, smart development that support the Main Street commercial core.
- 9. Parking:** Cairo has a good amount of existing parking, on and off Main Street. There are also opportunities to add to parking, and improved striping and signage for the existing parking would help the Main Street.
- 10. Existing Studies & Reports:** Over the last five years Cairo has had many good, thoughtful reports written to develop and support issues related to redeveloping the town and its Main Street. Prioritizing action steps is now critical for the Town.

Cairo's Issues and Challenges:

The following list of current issues and challenges are ones that need to be addressed in order to improve the character of Cairo's Main Street. These issues have been identified through a series of meetings, interviews, and "Visioning Sessions" with the community and the Town Revitalization Committee.

- 1. Retail struggling on Main Street:** Retail is struggling on Cairo's Main Street, with a high percentage of vacant retail storefronts, particularly in the Historic Hamlet. Some of the reasons given for the vacancies include: rents are reportedly too high, properties appear to be in poor condition with a large investment required to accommodate new businesses, there are property owners on the Main Street that do not appear invested in its success, businesses are scattered seemingly randomly about the Main Street, and there is no central idea-theme-direction to attract new visitors to Main Street. While the scattering may be because those are the "ready-to-rent" storefronts on the Main Street, it does make it harder for businesses to survive and compete. There is a lack of variety, quality, and "family-style" restaurants, as well as a lack of tourism-related items.
- 2. Main Street does not attract tourists spending money in large numbers:** Cairo has no formal tourism strategy in place. People visiting the region pass by but mostly do not stop or travel through the Main Street area, stopping only at McDonald's or one of the gas stations. Other issues include: there are relatively few places to stay, the Visitor Information Center is in a poor location, tourist signage on Route 23 is hard to read and in poor condition, and the Chamber of Commerce does not have the funding to pursue aggressive marketing of the Town.
- 3. Many accommodations need updating, and should integrate their recommendations to Main Street businesses:** There is a lack of quality hotel rooms, motel rooms and bed and breakfasts in Cairo that connect to the Main Street and provide accommodation to the upscale traveler that is likely to support higher-end businesses of the type recommended in this report.
- 4. Cairo's gateways are unattractive, particularly from Route 23 where a visitor would make a decision about stopping in town:** Cairo's gateways are unattractive. Contributing to this problem are the following: the shopping center buildings are unattractive, there are a number of un-utilized or poorly utilized spaces in the area between the Historic Hamlet and the Great American Plaza, and there are several other entrances to the Main Street with aesthetic challenges.
- 5. The Angelo Canna Town Park and former Fair Grounds properties are not engaged in attracting people to the community.** The connection between the Angelo Canna Town Park and Main Street is poorly developed, and better signage to the Town Park from Main Street would be extremely helpful. The former Fair Grounds site is presently undeveloped, and its development could provide a major benefit to the

Main Street in residential or commercial use. There is also poor access to the Shinglekill Creek, which could be a significant tourist draw.

- 6. Some of Cairo's historic architecture is in poor condition:** There are historic properties in Cairo that are in poor condition, both on Main Street and in adjoining residential areas. No Historic District designation exists, and neither does a systematic program to assist property owners with funding for rehabilitation.
- 7. No Community Gathering Place on Main Street:** No Cultural Center/ public gathering space exists in Cairo, particularly an indoor one for the winter months. Such a location would help create a "sense of place" for the community local residents, week-enders, and visitors, as well as potentially incubate a business or two.
- 8. The Cairo hamlet is not fully built out, and there is no plan for further expansion of retail, institutional, and residential that is "ready to go.":** Cairo is in need of making itself a more walkable community with additional high-quality, dense housing to support the Main Street core that already exists . Planning is required for possible new residential neighborhoods with connections to Main Street consistent with the style that already exists and many upscale communities are trying to recreate.
- 9. There is a perception of a lack of parking, and no plan for parking in the future:** There is the perception that there is not enough parking in and around Main Street. Pedestrian access from existing parking lots to Main Street is difficult and not well-signed. Parking with safe access to the post office appears to be an issue, and congestion has been a consideration in the potential re-location of the Post Office, which would be a major negative for the Historic Hamlet.
- 10. No Cairo Business and Retail Strategy, or Effective Recruiting Tools:** The town of Cairo currently has no business and retail strategy to help attract or recruit new businesses and development. The Town also does not have a loan fund for business development, or a systematic database of properties for sale with their condition and potential uses.

III. MAIN STREET STRATEGY - ISSUES and PROPOSALS

Detailed Descriptions of Ideas:

- A. *Retail Positioning Strategy for Main Street/Downtown Cairo*
by MJB Consulting**

- B. Strategy Issues and Proposals:
Main Street Revitalization Strategy – Final Report
by Dadras Architects**

A. Retail Positioning Strategy for Main Street/Downtown Cairo by MJB Consulting

The following offers our preliminary observations and recommendations on *general* retail positioning and strategy for Main Street/Downtown¹ in Cairo, NY.

Please note that this is *not* based on a full-length analytical effort, but rather, a far more abbreviated scope-of-work, involving just a one-day site visit that included a walk of the study area, a brief survey of the nearby competition and a meeting with the Steering Committee, as well as internal discussions within **DADRAS ARCHITECTS –with MJB Consulting**, review of basic demographics from Richard J. Lampert Real Estate Consulting and Market Research's market study for the Alden Terrace site². A more definitive and detailed rendering of the retail potential in this case would require a much more extensive study and larger budget.



¹ For the purposes of this study, "Main Street/Downtown" is to refer to the stretch of Main Street roughly between Mountain Avenue and the SR 23B / CR 41 fork, corresponding to the Town's historic core, as contrasted to the stretch of Main Street between SR 23 and Mountain Avenue, characterized by automobile-oriented strip development.

Furthermore, as a general retail positioning/strategy piece, the following does *not* offer tenanting recommendations for specific spaces, estimates for the necessary build-out costs, suggestions for appropriate incentives, nor guidance on the recruitment process more generally. We agree that, in order for the study to prove useful, further detail is needed in this regard, but again, that would require a far larger budget than has been made available.

We Would Need More Budget For...

- A full-length market analysis.
- Tenanting recommendations for specific spaces.
- Estimates for the necessary build-out costs.
- Suggestions for appropriate incentives.
- Guidance on the recruitment process more generally.



² "Preliminary Market Analysis: Development Site, Route 23 and 32", July 2007, prepared by Richard J. Lampert Real Estate Market Research and Consulting, provided by Warren Hart and Karl Heck from Greene County's Economic Development, Tourism & Planning.

Any strategy designed to enhance the retail mix on Main Street/Downtown must start from the understanding that the "Main Street" in Cairo today -- inasmuch as retail is concerned -- is the stretch at and near its intersection with SR 32. With anchors that include Slater's Great American, CVS and Family Dollar, that is where most tenants interested in this sub-market will want to be. And since there is no shortage of "soft" sites there, they should be able to find opportunities rather easily.

Main Street/Downtown, on the other hand, has little to no relevance today as a retail location. Among other problems, it is, in contrast to its chief competitor (above), too far removed from the SR 23 and SR 32 traffic flows, and its larger traffic generators -- Cairo Town Hall, the United States Post Office, Angelo Canna Town Park and Cairo Elementary School -- are not true retail anchors.³

One is not surprised, then, to find, with notable exceptions like Bank of America and strong operators such as Cozy Cop Delicatessen, a rather weak market for ground-floor space. The challenge, of course, is to identify a niche or "positioning" that can help to make Main Street/Downtown relevant once again, something that puts it (back) on the radar screen. And given what already exists at and near Main Street/SR 32, that niche must focus on something other conventional mass-market retail.

Finding a viable role for Main Street/Downtown can seem like a tall order. However, to make the task more manageable, it helps to think just in terms of starting with a few tenants, a few concepts that can create some buzz. It undoubtedly felt the same way to many of those who were working to reinvigorate Main Street Catskill, but then Functional Sculpture Tile Shop arrived as the pioneer, others followed, and now the street is a regional success-story.

Main Street Catskill is instructive. No doubt its revival owed something to locals, but like so many main streets across the Catskills, it also benefited greatly from an influx of a higher-income contingent, largely from downstate, buying second homes and primary residences, many priced out of East Bank communities like Hudson that had already traced the same arc of gentrification.

As consumers, these newcomers behave very differently than the typical long-time Greene County resident, with a particular focus on arts and culture and a willingness to spend on the home. The tenant mix on Catskill's Main Street, with its numerous art galleries and up-market home stores, is a reflection of these tastes and sensibilities.

Judging from an assessment of the merchandise mix at Slater's, these kinds of consumers can already be found in significant numbers within the catchment area, and not just on summer weekends but year-round. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that rents on Catskill's Main Street might be rising to the point where prospective tenants could be looking for a less expensive alternative. Athens, with its riverfront setting and historic architecture, presents some competition in this regard, but it has yet to "pop".

³ The True Value Hardware is more of a traditional retail anchor, yet discussions with the proprietor indicate that the store is struggling mightily.



In terms of a short-term strategy for Main Street/Downtown itself, comparison-goods concepts (e.g. clothing, shoes) are at this point simply not viable: they would not have the foot traffic needed to survive. Once the momentum starts to build, these sorts of categories might become more plausible, assuming the operators think in terms of niche (rather than mass-market). But even then, the burden will still be very much on the individual entrepreneur to create exposure and generate traffic for herself.

The home category is often an exception, able to survive even in the pioneering early stages because of the expenditures of those who are outfitting their newly-purchased residences. But while it played a pioneering role in the case of Catskill's Main Street, the strategy might not be so sensible here, just because the cluster already nearby in Catskill would exert such a pull on any prospective tenants. Put simply, an aspiring home-furnishings or kitchen-wares entrepreneur, ready to invest his life savings, would probably prefer to take that risk in Catskill versus Cairo.

Retail Site Location 101

Retail site location is not just about what the consumer needs (i.e. the "demand" side). It is also about what the tenant wants, and what other alternatives are available (i.e. the "supply" side). In other words, a retailer does not judge a given business district on its merits, but rather, vis-à-vis the others under consideration. Your main street might offer certain advantages, but the other corridors or centers might be still more compelling.

Art galleries have also played a significant role in other resurgent upstate main streets, like, for instance, Beacon and Catskill, although they too stand a far better chance of commercial viability if/once Cairo first establishes some sort of cultural anchor and thereby gains a foothold in the minds of the target customer/home-buyer.

So what does that leave Main Street/Downtown? Food and drink has often served as that initial, trail-blazing use in emergent business districts. Partly this is because diners are often willing to travel significant distances -- to areas that are "off the beaten path" or even downright scary -- just for a unique and/or particularly high-caliber restaurant. Such a strategy makes particular sense given the virtual absence of sit-down restaurants in Cairo presently.

The key words here are unique and high-caliber. A restaurant opening on Main Street/Downtown cannot be a "commodity", offering a dining concept that could just as easily be found on U.S. 9W: the cuisine must be distinctive, the quality first-rate, the atmosphere different. Otherwise, the diner will simply choose the one with the superior visibility, the easier access, the cheapest prices, etc., or might just eat at home.

More Than Just Good Ideas

It is not enough just to propose types of retail that Main Street/Downtown "needs" or "should have". In the end, someone has to be found to run these stores; someone has to be willing to put their money on the line. If this effort is to bear fruit, if it is to move from the realm of good ideas to the level of real possibilities, specific operators will need to be identified and approached, and they will have to be convinced of the opportunity. Do any come to mind?



The next step, then, is to identify specific operators. Often the best candidates are ones that are not national -- since they are very unlikely to be interested -- or first timers -- as they have no track record -- but rather, what the industry calls "multi-concept operators" (MCO), restaurateurs who already run eateries elsewhere and who would be intrigued by the opportunity to open a new concept here.

The Catskills, with its many gentrified main streets, would seem to offer no shortage of MCO possibilities. The restaurateurs of particular interest in this case are the ones who have been willing to take chances in the early stages of revitalization. Incentives might be necessary, yet top chefs and dining impresarios can immediately make the expenditure worthwhile just with the free publicity that they can generate for Cairo in key periodicals.

If unable to attract an MCO, the next place to search, just an hour away in Hyde Park, is the Culinary Institute of America. Upon completion of the program, many CIA graduates look for opportunities to open their own restaurants in the Hudson Valley. The challenge, of course, is that these often under-capitalized, unknown operators might be in even greater need of funding assistance.

Phase One Checklist for Re-branding Cairo

- Cultural anchor
- Buzz-generating restaurants

In the short-term, of course, the economic climate is bound to have an impact on all of this: less homebuyers, less spending among the ones already here, fewer fund-raising opportunities for cultural attractions, fewer restaurateurs able to find financing. But the underlying dynamics have not changed, just slowed temporarily; the cultural crowd will

ultimately return. And the point of the new few years -- indeed, the opportunity that this current slowdown presents -- is to lay the groundwork so that Cairo can take advantage of the trend once it does revive.



Yet, while downstaters and culture might offer the clearest long-term path to a re-energized Cairo, that should not be the sole focus. An entirely different demo/psychographic lives and works within the Town and catchment area, and it deserves a place in this conversation as well. Indeed, to the extent that this contingent is included in plans going forward, it might help in allaying the inevitable class tensions and allowing for a smooth transition to a new, more diverse future.

Speaking in the most general terms, the psycho-graphic characterizing the lion's share of the residential population has, in comparison to the downstater contingent, less sentimental attachment to the main street format, places a greater emphasis on price and convenience and is more willing to patronize large chains. As a result, the retail catering to it is most likely to locate on SR 23 or at or near the Main Street / SR 32 intersection.



It has also been suggested that, with improved connectivity to Main Street/Downtown, Angelo Canna Town Park could be a larger driver for retail sales than it has been. Steiner's Sports, a local chain-let catering to sports enthusiasts, has been suggested, but it would likely require more visibility and higher shopper volumes than such a location could provide. And while fast-food concepts might be more realistic, certain ones would be difficult to sustain year-round (e.g. ice cream), while others, to the extent that they are successful, could pose a danger to existing operators elsewhere in Cairo (e.g. a pizzeria).

Having said that, the viability of fast food (as well as the afore-mentioned coffeehouse) grows as the base of potential customers increases. The County has already played a role in the resurgence of Catskill's Main Street; it could have a similar impact on Cairo's by returning the rest of its old office building in the Town Park to active use, thereby adding more feet on the street as well as making a statement about both the County's commitment to Cairo and the forward direction of Main Street/Downtown.

One non-food possibility would be the Muddy Cup, a local chain-let with nine locations across the Hudson Valley. Not only are all of its cafes in traditional downtown storefronts, but also, Muddy Cup has opened on a number of the region's resurgent main streets, like, for instance, Beacon's Main Street, Hudson's Warren Street and Catskill's Main Street.



Muddy Cup might not be ready to take a chance on Main Street/Downtown just yet, but it is worth keeping in mind for the longer-term, as a "cross-over" business that can draw across socio-economic and psycho-graphic lines. As a purveyor of caffeine, it would most certainly attract daytime workers -- the location in Catskill is directly across from the County Office Building -- but also, with its interest in embracing the local arts community, it would appeal to the newer downstate contingent as well.

The idea of "cross-over" retailing, so relevant to Cairo's demo/psycho-graphic blend, might also be applied to certain kinds of restaurants. Indeed, food is the category where mixing of different classes and cultures most often occurs, assuming, of course, the price point is sufficiently moderate. Take, as an example, Dinosaur Bar-B-Q, the wildly-popular upstate barbeque chain-let. And while Dinosaur might not be realistic for Cairo -- it tends to focus on larger cities -- other such concepts could be pursued in addition to the higher-end, more exclusively downstater-oriented ones suggested above.

Phase 1 Checklist for Catering to "Locals"

- Moderately-priced family restaurant
- Full-line auto parts chain
- Re-tenanting of County-owned office building
- "Cross-over" dining concepts

B. Strategy Issues and Proposals:

Main Street Revitalization Strategy – Final Report by Dadras Architects

1. Create Main Street Commercial Retail Clusters:

Retail is struggling on Main Street in Cairo. There are several factors attributed to this situation: rents are reportedly too high; properties appear to be in poor condition so that large investments are required to accommodate new businesses; there are many absentee landlords; businesses are scattered seemingly randomly about the Main Street which hurts foot traffic; and there is no central idea-theme-direction (or strategy) to attract customers to the Main Street. There is also a lack of variety, quality, and “family-style” restaurants. There is also a lack of tourism-related merchandise to be found in Cairo.

Cairo has a relatively long retail area, including its historic Main Street. Because the retail is spread out over this great distance and is broken up by houses, and “civic uses” such as the Town Hall and Elementary School, one idea is to create Main Street commercial clusters. These clusters of retail activity would group, as much as possible, similar types of retail, so that they might benefit from the synergy that compatible retail offers. These clusters could include: Restaurant Clusters, Service Retail, Sports Outfitters (including ski shops), Office/Town Hall/Library/School, Cultural/Arts, and clusters with other related retail.

A. Create a Restaurant Cluster: The following are several different ideas, for restaurants, that might be located in the restaurant cluster. These ideas represent suggestions that have come out of several meetings with the community:

- 1. More variety in restaurants-** The public has requested more choices in the types of foods served, varying price ranges, and in more interesting ways. The idea of restaurants creating a “dining experience” was also requested.
- 2. More restaurants of higher quality-** Currently the restaurants located on Main Street Cairo offers restaurant goes a more reasonably priced menu. Although the quality of the food offerings is good, the community on many occasions has expressed an interest in at least one “higher-end” priced restaurants.
- 3. Restaurants for business/client meetings-** There was an interest in a restaurant that residents could bring their business associates to. It was expressed that this might be a medium-priced restaurant.
- 4. “Family-Style” Restaurants-** Although there are some restaurants that exist in Cairo that might fit in this category, residents spoke of the lack of appropriate seating capacity and expressed an interest in restaurants

that have nicer interior and exterior aesthetics.

5. **Restaurants that provide music and entertainment-** The Town should investigate the potential of developing a quality café/restaurant, with evening activities on Main Street, to help it become a destination place. Restaurants on Main Streets can often complement galleries and antique shops. All of these business types have traditionally served as anchors and destination attractions. These businesses should be encouraged to locate in the district, while complementing existing local businesses. A guide should be developed to highlight these businesses that traditionally act as anchors and destination attractions (www.greenedining.com).
- B. **Create a Service Retail Cluster:** Cairo already has many businesses that would fit into this category. One idea would be to locate other, non-competing new businesses near these existing businesses, making it easier for full-time residents, and part-time residents (“Weekenders” and “Snowbirds”) to park once, and then have easy access to many related businesses.
 1. **Businesses Oriented to Full-Time Residents-** Although all businesses will be supported by most consumer groups, some businesses appeal more to year- round residents. The goal would be to cluster these service retail businesses together.
 2. **Businesses Oriented to Part-Time Residents and Tourists-** Residents that are commonly referred to as “Weekenders” and “Snowbirds” might have special needs that the full-timers might not have (or might not have yet). It would be a good idea to also cluster these businesses adjacent to each other. It is also noted at this time that all residents may have similar interests and needs in businesses that cater to both groups.
- C. **Create a Sports/ Outfitters/ Ski shops Cluster:** Cairo should consider creating a cluster that caters to tourists heading into the Catskill Mountains for its renowned ski hills and hiking trails. The idea is to be more traveler-related, possibly as part of a theme to be a “Gateway to the Catskills Mountain Recreation Areas”. This area could include outfitters for recreation, and other outdoor theme activity retail.
- D. **Office/Town Hall/Library/School/Post Office:** The fact that all of these important civic functions already exist on Main Street is a very positive thing, and that they are relatively close to each other is a wonderful reality. This “Civic Center” brings many residents on a daily basis to Main Street and reinforces an important “sense of place.” All of these functions should be encouraged to stay and grow on Main Street, in the Historic Hamlet.

- E. **Culture and the Arts:** It is important to continue to integrate the arts, history, and culture onto Cairo's Main Street, both as an economic development tool and to utilize buildings, particularly in the Historic Hamlet. Potential businesses include galleries, spaces for artists, and venues for music and entertainment, including the improved utilization of the Gallagher's space for this purpose. A long-term goal of constructing a new theater building and Performing Arts Center should be considered to attract regional theatre and film.
- F. **Other Retail:** Retail that doesn't fit into the categories listed above should also be accommodated, with the idea that certain locations might help these new businesses considerably. A case in point would be to locate a store that might be a regional tourism attraction, or a store that sells tourist-related items/souvenirs, near or in the Restaurant Cluster, so that it might benefit from their retail traffic coming to those businesses. Along with the idea of becoming a retail "Gateway" providing outfitters for recreation and outdoor needs, themed, destination retail stores for their trip into the mountains, Cairo could become the home of a tourism-related anchor store (similar to Cape Cod's original "Christmas Tree Stores" and the themed "Cuffy's" t-shirt stores). This type of store might be a good fit and create a unique destination that people would come to the Main Street to shop at.
- G. **Main Street Business Matrix:** The Greene County Department of Economic Development, Tourism, and Planning has developed a very useful matrix that lists all of the parcels in the Strategy area with their status and pertinent information. It is located in the Appendix.
- H. **MJB Study:** Observations and recommendations by Michael Berne from MJB Consulting, about the retail in Cairo, appear in this report. These recommendations should be helpful to start the process of redevelopment.

2. Visitor Information Center/ Tourism Attraction effort: While studying Cairo, the lackluster connection to existing regional tourism was discovered. It was also noted that no Town tourism strategy exists, which is surprising given tourism historically has been important to Cairo's local economy.

Several other problems exist for capturing the tourism dollar on Cairo's Main Street: Firstly, thousands of people pass by on Route 23 every day, and most do not stop on Main Street, or even consider stopping in Cairo. Secondly, the Cairo Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center was relocated to a poor location, and does not have proper signage. Thirdly, the Chamber of Commerce appears to be under-funded and does not have an aggressive business development strategy.

New York State Department of Transportation data for Route 23 shows that the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) for the segment of Route 23 east just before the Cairo Main Street District turn-off is 11,170 vehicles per day. The count for Route 32

south just north of Cairo is 4,196 vehicles per day, and in the segment between Route 32 and Route 23 is 8,434 vehicles per day. Therefore, Cairo is “capturing” approximately 2,700 vehicles per day based on NYSDOT data. Capturing more of that traffic may be possible with the improvements recommended in the Strategy.

- A. Establish a new Visitor Center:** A small regional Visitor Center should be created to attract visitors to Main Street, create a natural “stop-off point” and to establish Cairo as a regional gateway to the Catskill Mountains.
 - 1. Visitor Center to be located on Main Street:** An indoor, year-round Information Center in a prominent location with public bathrooms should be constructed by the Town that will help to highlight and promote area attractions and diverse businesses 12 months of the year.
 - 2. Visitor Center to be located in the Eastern Gateway:** A location in one of the community’s already existing buildings in the Eastern Gateway with visibility to the main roads, should be considered.
 - 3. Sharing services and space:** The Town might consider leasing out space in this new building to the Chamber of Commerce for use as its offices and meeting rooms. Staff and services might be shared, reducing the cost to the Town. The Visitor center could also become a new depot for both the commuter buses and future tour buses that might visit Cairo.
 - 4. Future location of the existing Visitor Center building:** Once a location for the Visitor Center is purchased, the existing visitor center building could be used as a temporary center on this new site until the new center is completed. After that the structure might be used in the park as a seasonal structure dedicated to tourism promotion.
- B. Tourism Strategy:** A new Tourism Strategy needs to be developed for Cairo, reflecting the realities of today’s Catskills tourism. It is understood that a vibrant tourism business still exists outside of Main Street Cairo, in places like the Mountaintop region of Hunter/Windham, Round Top and in some of the traditional all-inclusive resorts around the county.

Even though the tourism business in Cairo is currently struggling, it remains an important industry for the Town and its Main Street. Once this strategy has been completed, Cairo can once again start to grow its historically important Catskill Mountain tourism business. The Greene County Department of Economic Development, Tourism, and Planning should be consulted when developing this strategy, as well as the County’s Overall Economic Development Plan, which has considerable data on the tourism industry

3. A Cairo Main Street Bed & Breakfast and Small Inn District:

As stated above, Cairo's connection to existing tourists and to regional tourism is in need of serious improvement (see strategy item #2). Along with several other tourism related problems, if someone wanted to spend a night on Main Street Cairo, they would find there are very few places to stay.

This current number of hotel rooms, motel rooms, and Bed and Breakfasts makes it difficult to generate "critical mass" for events large enough to generate noticeable new business on Main Street Cairo. A lodging room renovation program should be developed if Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) or other economic development funding becomes available for such a program. A Bed and Breakfast/ Small Inn district should be also be developed in the Historic Hamlet Main Street District. It should be noted at this point that a very nice B&B currently does exist on Main Street Cairo:

- A. Develop a Bed and Breakfast/Small Inn District-** A Bed and Breakfast/ Small Inn district should be developed in the Historic Hamlet section of the Main Street. Encouraging more Bed and Breakfast's and small inns in a more formal, organized way, will encourage more of this type of accommodations on the Main Street, which generally brings a more upscale, sophisticated traveler.

A program that addresses the preservation and restoration of the many historic homes on Main Street should be considered, based on the availability of appropriate funding and/or the utilization of Historic Preservation Tax Credits. Cairo's Main Street has many buildings that would be suitable for this type of development, and could be woven into the retail fabric while providing an additional customer base for current and new businesses.

- B. Develop a Lodging Program-** Many of the remaining accommodations business in and around Cairo need physical improvement. As talked about before in this report, the current need to upgrade hotel, motel, B&B's, and small inn rooms could be met by instituting a "Lodging Room Renovation Program." A lodging room renovation program large enough to tackle this critically important, pressing problem, should be targeted at Main Street Cairo to help existing accommodations improve their offerings, modernize their facilities and encourage new investment in a place whose name was once synonymous with tourism. A room renovation program designed to encourage redevelopment of existing structures and facilities; should be developed along with an incentives program to encourage new accommodations on the Main Street.

It should be noted at this point that a very nice B&B does exist and is well located, which could act as a model for future development as B&B's tend to benefit from clustering together, like in Ogunquit, Maine or Cold Spring, NY.

- C. **Lodging off Main Street-** Cairo should develop a plan to attract visitors to the region who stay in accommodations located off Main Street. Attracting these visitors to Main Street should be a goal in order to increase the economic benefit and quality of their stay.
- D. **New Lodging Facilities-** A careful study of locating new lodging facilities in and near Main Street Cairo should be conducted (at a minimum, there should be appropriately accessed and serviced land in the Town's comprehensive plan and any zoning document to support such construction). Locating these new structures near Main Street might be beneficial to the shops and restaurants, but if not executed correctly could compete too heavily with the new B&B's. Locating a new accommodation adjacent to the Historic Hamlet could work if no historic buildings were affected, and the new structure respected the historical context of the hamlet.

4. **Cairo Gateway Project; "A Gateway to the Catskills Recreational Area:"**

Creating new and attractive gateways to Cairo is important, in order to create pleasant "Points of Arrival" for everyone entering the community and encourage them to stop and spend money while they are there. When a visitor enters at either end of the Main Street district, the areas of first contact become vitally important in conveying to the visitor what the community is like and what the visitor might expect to find there.

Cairo's Main Street gateways are currently unattractive. There are many vacant or under-utilized properties in both Gateway areas leading to the Historic Hamlet Main Street area. Specifically, a number of the unutilized or poorly utilized spaces in the area between the Historic Hamlet and the Great American Plaza, at the eastern gateway district, are in need of repair or removal. The existing shopping center's building could also be made to look more attractive and re-designed to fit better into Cairo's historic context. There are also several other entrances with aesthetic challenges in Cairo that should be addressed.

Improving both Gateway areas is one effective way the Town can serve more of the 11,000 vehicles per day to come off Route 23 and onto Main Street Cairo. Along with the more typical carved wood signage and gateway area plantings, other interesting gateway gestures might be considered to set Cairo apart from other communities, such as a Community Bulletin Board or more effective business direction signage.

A. **Definition of the Cairo Main Street District: "23-to-23":**

The goal of the Strategy is to create a revitalized Main Street for the Town of Cairo, one that serves as an interesting and economically vibrant destination, both for residents and visitors. By redeveloping the Main Street District and the adjoining areas the whole community will benefit. The following are specific ideas to improve the gateways to the Main Street:

1. **Create Formal Welcoming Gateways-** Once the Main Street Strategy is adopted, creating more effective Gateways should be one of the first action items implemented. Similar to the idea of “Points of Arrival”, the formal entrances to the community of Cairo and the areas of first contact with the new visitor are very important. Conveying the visitor Cairo’s new image and vision starts here. Gateways should be enhanced at each Route 23 entrance (East and West). Clear way-finding signage to the town’s Historic Hamlet will also be important, as well as to the Angelo Canna Town Park.
2. **Define the three distinct areas of the Cairo Main Street:** During the process of developing this strategy, three distinct areas were defined:
 - a) **Eastern Gateway Main Street District–** Generally an auto-oriented strip shopping area containing most of Cairo’s service and convenience retail. This area does not have sidewalks, and new development is occurring, including the proposed Alden Terrace project.
 - b) **Historic Hamlet Main Street District –** The Historic Hamlet is pedestrian-oriented, with sidewalks and historic traditional Main Street buildings. Most of the Town’s civic and governmental uses, along with the Town Park entrance and two churches, are in this section of the Main Street. Many of the retail establishments are vacant and in need of façade and building renovation.
 - c) **Western Gateway Main Street District –** There is a mix of development and residential buildings here, including a resort (Cedar Terrace), another former resort, a church, and the area’s largest vacant parcel with highway access.

B. A Gateway to the Catskills Recreational Area:

A regional gateway can also be interpreted by a visitor to gather information about the region. It can also be a place to purchase certain items that might not be as available to the visitor, once at their destination. The Cairo Main Street can become a kind of a retail gateway: a place visitors can satisfy specific needs before proceeding up the mountain and into the Catskill Park. This gateway vision would help to define the possible new theme/vision for Main Street Cairo. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:

1. **An Outfitters/Hiking/Camping Store–** located on Main Street, this type of store would need to both sell outfitting equipment and be able to organize trips and tours, have boat and equipment rentals, and work with the Shinglekill Creek to promote kayaking and boating. The recent closing of Rip Van Winkle Outfitters in Tannersville leaves an opening in the market for this type of store.

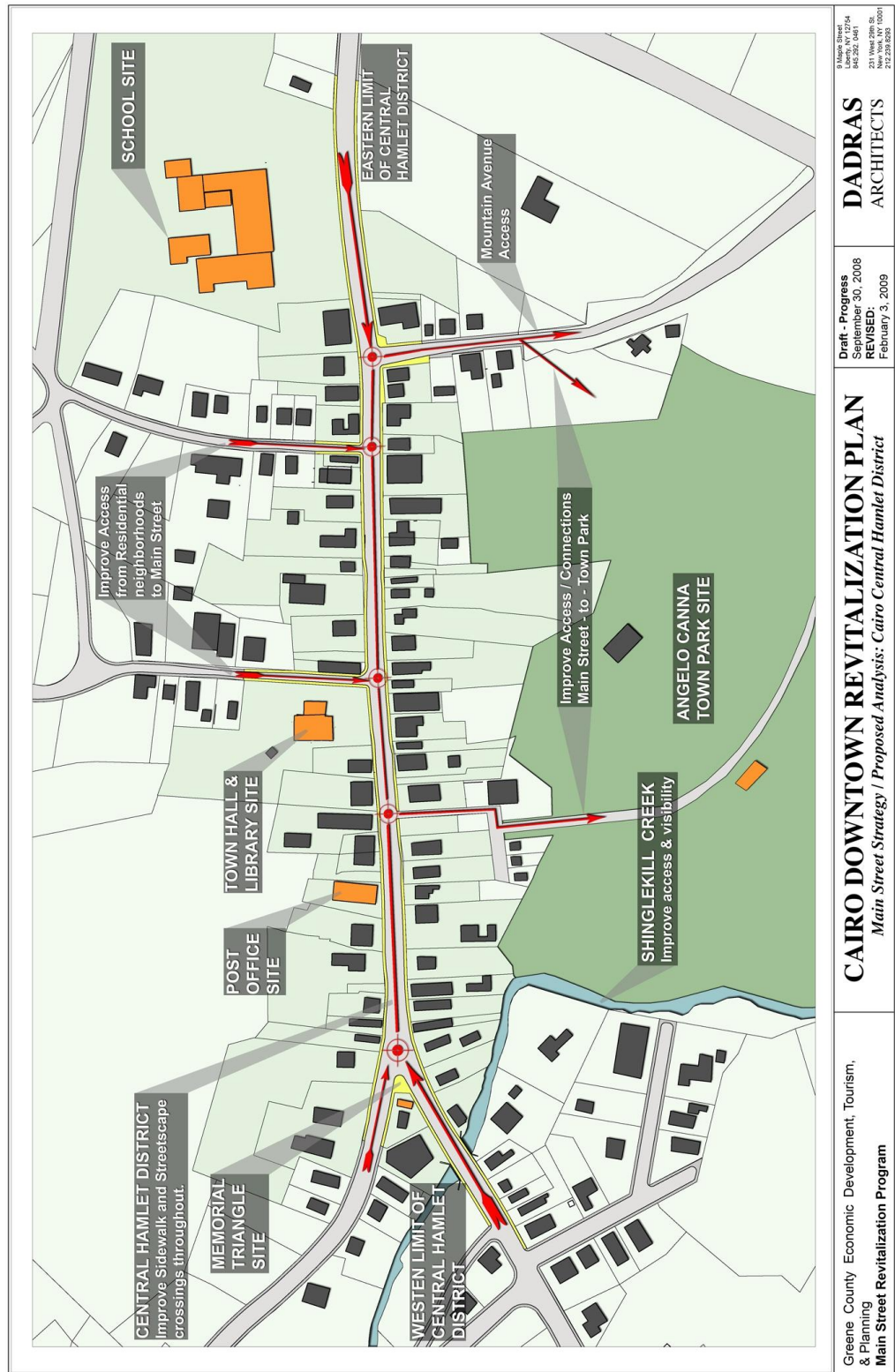
2. **Ski Rental Stores**– to take advantage of proximity and entrance to Hunter and Windham Mountain areas.
 3. **Food Specialty Shops**- Shops or departments in larger stores to fulfill specific needs for visitors coming from more urban places.
- C. **“Welcome” Signage & “Wayfinding” Signage:** Newly-constructed New York State D.O.T. road signage should be considered for Route 23 & Route 32 to help attract visitors to the Cairo Main Street district. After several projects are in place, new informational signage will be an important part of the campaign to attract new visitors. Once visitors make the decision to visit Cairo and exit the highway, additional way-finding signage will be required to help guide them to the Historic Hamlet part of Main Street.. This new signage will help them locate area attractions, such as a Visitor Information Center, cultural attractions, the Angelo Canna Town Park, parking areas, and Main Street businesses and accommodations.
5. **The Angelo Canna Town Park and former Fair Grounds property:**
The Angelo Canna Town Park in Cairo is well-sited and has enormous potential. The former Fair Grounds property has potential for future development. While the Canna Park hosts a number of tourist-oriented festivals and events each year, as well as community functions such as the summer concert series, Cairo-Durham football and Little League, more can be done in this location, particularly in regards to winter cross-country skiing and improving access to the Shinglekill Creek.

An opportunity for a Rail-trail project may exist in Cairo along the historic railroad bed, and should be investigated and researched.

A. Angelo Canna Town Park: The Angelo Canna Town Park is a major asset to the community. The Town should continue to expand its offerings for both residents and to visitors. A site plan should be commissioned to guide its future development to make maximum effective use of the space, respecting the outdoor environment while including plans for Cairo’s future recreational needs. As the Town Park is further developed, the access to the Shinglekill Creek and the connection directly to Main Street should be strengthened and emphasized. A direct and walkable connection from the park directly to Main Street is also very important for its utilization and traffic flow.

B. The former Fair Grounds site: The former Fair Grounds site is also a major asset to the community. The town should plan to develop this site as a way to act as a stimulus to Main Street, either through new residential development, new industrial or office development, a major visitor attraction or some combination thereof. A plan including design guidelines should be commissioned to guide its future development, and that plan should ensure the linkage to Town infrastructure and a physical connection to Main Street.

Drawing 6: Proposed Strategy: Historic Hamlet Main Street District



Drawing 7: Proposed Strategy: Aerial View – Historic Hamlet District



6. **The Historic Architecture of Cairo:**

Often communities think that their older buildings are not historic. They often think that this discussion is best kept for older, more affluent places. Cairo has important historic architecture on its Main Street and in adjoining residential areas. Cairo has a wonderful collection of both nineteenth and early twentieth century residential and commercial structures. Everyone involved, was impressed with the quality and diversity of the town's historic architecture.(see: the "Brief History of Cairo." by Robert Uzzilia, Cairo Town Historian, in the appendix)

- A. **Creation of Cairo Historic District:** Cairo should start to identify and register buildings on Main Street, as a first step toward their preservation, protection and restoration. A Historic District designation should be considered for the appropriate portions of the Historic Hamlet section of Main Street.
- B. **Historic Elements:** Historic elements and details on Main Street building in the Historic Hamlet should be preserved and where possible restored, including but not limited to: bluestone sidewalks, wrought iron fencing, wind vanes, and authentic wood shutters with appropriate historic hardware. The Town should support this effort with historically appropriate improvements in the public right-of-way.
- C. **Walking and Driving Tour Information:** The Town should create one or more walking/driving tours that highlight the architecture and natural scenic beauty of Cairo, along with places to stop and spend money and time along the way. Such tours should be available in multi-media and Web formats.

The pamphlet could serve as an "Architectural Walking Tour Guide" booklet and be distributed throughout the region to help promote the town's architecture and serve to begin to build an identity in Cairo for architecture and historic buildings. Examples could include the unique, rich ethnically diverse regional history, with existing historic hotels and attractions, as well as locations from the past.

- D. **Identify compatible uses and encourage proper re-development:** Cairo may wish to showcase its historic architecture in additional ways. Historic architecture is a very big attraction to visitors, sometimes often cited as the main reason for one's visit to a community. It is also an important part of the quality of life issue discussion for those looking to relocate to a particular community. Brochures, ads, and the town's web site are among just a few examples of how this inclusion could be accomplished.
- E. **Main Street Pictometry Pictures:** The Greene County Economic Development, Tourism, and Planning has developed a very complete photo survey of the existing structures on Main Street. These "Main

Street Pictometry Pictures” could help to start the building restoration process of Main Street, and become the first step in inventorying the Main Street for the Historic Register process. The Town should ensure that it keeps and maintains aerial and ground pictures at regular intervals to be able to better monitor property conditions and observe changes in the community’s built environment.

- F. **Main Street Program:** The maintenance and continued utilization of the Greene County Main Street Revitalization Program should be encouraged. The County’s Main Street program is responsible for many of the successful building restoration projects that have occurred on Main Street in the last six years, and could continue to fulfill this need. Seeking outside funding through New York Main Street, and making affirmative steps to maximize private property owner participation, need to be emphasized.
- G. **Gateway to the Thruway:** The historic road to Cairo from Catskill, now County Route 23B, should be preserved so that its historic character won’t be threatened. It is an important transportation artery from the New York State Thruway and should be treated as such by the Town.

7. A Community Gathering Place on Main Street:

Cairo could become a place for culture and the arts, with an emphasis on the interests of the Town’s residents. This new Main Street District should also appeal to the surrounding population of Greene County. A civic gathering place on Main Street could also attract visitors and tourists creating a cultural destination attraction.

- A. **A gathering place for civic and cultural uses:** A new community space in Cairo could help to contribute and further develop the already existing “Civic Center.” Once a possible location is decided on, and with permission of the current land owner, a feasibility study should be commissioned. The goal of this study would be to see, if in the near future, a center that would function as a multi-purpose Community/Arts Center might be possible for Main Street Cairo. This new center would complement the existing efforts that already take place throughout the community and in the park, and needs the direct involvement and resources of the cultural and arts community to make it happen. This new space must be located on the Main Street and be integrated with use consistent with Cairo’s new theme and vision.

- B. **To create a “Sense of Place”:** One goal in creating this community gathering place is to help create a “sense of place” for Cairo. Creating new “community spaces” within the Main Street District is important in helping the town create a true destination. Areas in these community spaces should be set aside for outdoor cafés, music, entertainment, and public art. Allowing for these cultural/entertainment-type public interactions to occur, the main street will help to foster opportunities for “spontaneous interactions” and provide new reasons to increase foot traffic. Successful main streets often find that residents, weekend visitors, and tourists come back again and again in search of this kind of experience, typically only found in larger urban places. Art galleries would also be good complementary business activities, and involving the cultural and arts community to occupy and renovate Main Street buildings. The town might consider creating special incentives and guidance for people working to enhance Main Street cultural life.

- C. **_____ Main Street Cultural Anchors:** Many opportunities exist in Cairo to create and improve on cultural “anchors” to bring people to the community. The business community and the Cairo Chamber of Commerce should look to form a better partnership with the Historical Society and with other Cairo cultural organizations. Along with creating cultural attractions for the community, an additional goal would be to better capitalize on the thousands of visitors that travel to and through the area every day. As mentioned before, the town should investigate the potential of developing quality café/restaurants and evening activities on Main Street to help it become a destination place.

8. Main Street Urbanism in Cairo:

The Town of Cairo should start to identify all available developable land within the town. All available land within the town that might be eventually developed into new residential lots should be developed to reinforce the goals of the Main Street. A study of potential zoning and land use regulations should be performed, not only to protect and preserve but also to reinforce all the goals and the new vision for Cairo. The Zoning Commission has been created by the town of Cairo to address this important issue.

- A. **A Walkable Community:** The Town of Cairo should continue to be developed and redeveloped as a walkable community; with very pedestrian friendly residential neighborhoods. Cairo should guide all new development and re-development of new housing adjacent to the Cairo hamlet to directly connect to the existing Main Street, both physically and with programmatic uses:
 - 1. **Main Street Retail-** All future commercial development should be studied to protect the existing character of Cairo.

2. **Cairo Elementary School-** The Cairo Elementary School is in an excellent location to support the Main Street and the hamlet. As the rest of the residential lands are planned, continued easy access to the school should be its goal, with one benefit being that higher-density housing near the Elementary School will help to control future school transportation expenditures.
 3. **Civic and other Cultural Uses-** Cairo's civic and other cultural uses should also reinforce the Main Street redevelopment ideals and this new vision for the town's future.
- B. Some new higher-density housing near Main Street:** While considering creating Main Street Urbanist communities, all new residential development in Cairo should only be developed in such a way that it will support and reinforce the original, existing qualities and character of the town. These wonderful qualities need to be preserved. All new housing and development of new communities in and near the Cairo hamlet should be of a style, scale, and pattern that will connect directly to the existing Main Street area. Cairo should consider well-placed, higher-density housing to help create and encourage more diverse uses where appropriate and desired, directing some of the growth in the Town to reinforce this core.
- C. Enhanced Parks and Recreational Areas:** Cairo needs to reinforce the Town Park's connection to both the Main Street area and to the adjacent residential areas. Future planning needs to integrate sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycle pathways, and other open space networks into the whole community, with a special emphasis on the Town Park. Along with connections to Cairo's Town Park, safe connections need to be established to the Shinglekill Creek, and immediately surrounding trails and access points.
- D. Utilize State and National Resources:** Cairo should refer to available sources of information, including the CNU (the Congress for New Urbanism), the USGBC (The U. S. Green Building Council), and SHPO (the State Historic Preservation Office).
- E. Develop New Pedestrian Connections:** All future residential development in and around the Hamlet area should emphasize direct connections to the Main Street district, with pedestrian pathways (walkability) and direct access to shops and services on the existing Main Street. Vehicular traffic and parking areas should also be coordinated in this effort. Special consideration should be taken with the design and integration of bicycle routes, jogging pathways, and open space. Special emphasis should be given to connections with the Elementary School, the Town Park, the Main Street, and existing shopping area.

F. **Guidelines required for all future development:** Currently, there is no zoning in the town of Cairo, though the Town has enpaneled a Zoning Commission to consider zoning and enhanced land use regulations. As guidelines are drawn up, the town of Cairo should consider the following ideas. Main Street should be understood as three distinct areas:

1. **Eastern Gateway Main Street District** - Cairo should work with future developers to integrate all of the above suggestions to protect from future “sprawl” and future strip commercial developments, which are NOT in keeping with the character of Cairo. As noted in the MJB Consulting Report, this portion of the Main Street will continue to be attractive for development.
2. **Historic Hamlet Main Street District** - The goal here is to protect Cairo’s historic buildings and character, and specifically the idea of “building a front street wall” while working to increase the number of viable businesses and storefronts. Parking lots should not be located right on Main Street, rather set back off the street wall. Requirements for this type of building design should be drafted, particularly in areas currently or anticipated in the future to be served by sidewalks (see Parking section of this Report).
3. **Western Gateway Main Street District** – The goal in the under-developed West Main Street area should be protection from low-density “sprawl” development of the type found in the Eastern Gateway, as well as the attraction of appropriate larger-scale development that supports the Main Street and the hamlet. As in the Eastern Gateway Main Street area, Cairo should work with future developers to integrate all of the above suggestions to protect the area from poorly planned future “sprawl” and future strip commercial developments.

9. New Parking/ Streetscape Enhancements, with better access to existing Parking:

A Parking Study of existing parking areas on and around Main Street should be incorporated into all future Main Street planning and zoning. The Town should inventory all currently available parking spaces in the Main Street area, and ensure that all public spaces are properly striped, signed and available for use by the general public. The Town should also ensure that any new zoning and land-use regulations for the Main Street do not require parking such that it will destroy the street fabric of the Main Street.

The following are additional ideas to help address parking issues today and in the foreseeable future:

- A. A Parking “One-Stop”:** The idea of a parking area that acts as a “One-Stop” is that retail customers only have to park once, and then have easy access to many stores and services. A Parking Study incorporating the idea of the retail clusters would be a valuable tool for the Town. One location of one of these parking areas should be in the Historic Hamlet.

Another could be at the Eastern Gateway Main Street commercial area(s), but this concept needs to be designed to accommodate all of the complex factors that come with this part of town.

Creating a working plan to better accommodate festival and event crowd and encourage pedestrian flow through the hamlet would be beneficial.

- B. Pedestrian Character of the Historic Hamlet:** The pedestrian character of the Historic Hamlet could be improved dramatically by enhancing the existing streetscape; including the sidewalks, the planting, and the lighting. Main Street’s pedestrian crossings should be improved by using “traffic calming” measures in order to make street crossings safer, such as bumpouts and proper striping of crosswalks. As stated before, additional pedestrian connections need to be studied and developed from the parking areas to the park, the school, and to the residential neighborhoods adjacent to Main Street.

- C. Town Parking Lot Locations:** If the parking study shows that additional parking is required in and around the Main Street district, the Town should prioritize implementation in the following manner.

- 1. Ownership of the Lots-** Cairo should first try to locate new parking lots on existing town-owned land, and make every effort to increase utilization of parking in the Town Park during non-event times. New parcels of land may have to be acquired by the community to accomplish the goal of providing parking that satisfies future demand created by a healthy, active, and revitalized Main Street.
- 2. Enhancements to the lots-** If ample parking exists in and around the Main Street area, the issue becomes the improvement of the quality of existing parking, and improving the connections between the Main Street and the existing parking.

- D. Street Lighting-** Cairo does have period street lighting along the historic section of its Main Street. There have been questions raised throughout the process about improving and possibly refurbishing the street lighting. The following are suggestions to improve the aesthetics of the fixtures:

1. **Globes-** The globes now are made of plastic, and are starting to show their age. Other options for them may be readily available from the original manufacturer to upgrade the lighting globes.
 2. **Color of fixture-**The fixture's pole section, now painted green, is starting to show its age. One suggestion would be to change the color to black to reflect the original color of the historical fixtures. Another suggestion is to choose a new signature color that corresponds with the Town's new theme and branding to reinforce these new ideas.
- E. **Parking on Main Street:-** This section addresses other parking issues and potential solutions.
1. **Study current situation-** Additional parking capacity exists in and around Main Street. One example would be church parking lots, use of which could be negotiated for non-church times, such as during events.
 2. **Increase efficiency of existing parking-** The design of the layout of the on and off-street parking could be made more efficient throughout an analysis of the parking. If a parking study is conducted, the efficiency of the space should be examined in detail.

10. Cairo Business and Retail Marketing/Branding Strategy:

Developing a "theme" or a coherent vision for the town's revitalization should be based upon Cairo's specific existing strengths and its uniqueness of character. This process is vitally important to the process of carefully changing and further developing the image of Cairo, and turning it into a "brand" that can be marketed. The branding becomes important in all aspects of creating a new Main Street community, but is pivotal in attracting new investment to Town to fully realize all future growth and potential.

- A. **Cairo Business and Retail Marketing Strategy:** Observations and recommendations in this report by Michael Berne of MJB Consulting, should help start this process. A more detailed analysis may have to be performed at some point in the redevelopment process to further assist Cairo with specific needs.
- B. **Cairo Business and Retail Branding Strategy:** The issue of "capturing" the tourism traffic from the Route 23 corridor and the Thruway presents a challenge and a great opportunity. A point by point, detailed, tourism capturing strategy should be considered.

- C. **Creating a New Brand:** The existing brand, “Come Grow With Us,” will need to be assessed to see if it is adequate to represent this new theme. If not, then a new logo with a new or revised slogan will have to be developed. Cairo should work with an experienced consultant with a successful track record in main street promotion and in branding communities to develop a new logo image for the community. This new brand will play an important part in the new identity for Cairo. After the brand has been designed, a more regional based branding consultant could then collaborate with the help of a qualified and experienced local graphic designer to further tailor the town’s new image and vision.
- D. **“Gateway to the Catskill Mountains”:** One possible approach could be to develop the idea of “Gateway to the Catskill Mountains” theme, which incorporates many of the positive assets that were related to our study team, by the community during the preparation of this strategy.

IV. HOW to PROCEED

A. Timetable for Strategy:

1. First Steps for Action
2. Next Steps for Action
3. Long-Range Steps for Action

B. Implementation Techniques:

1. Development Regulations

C. Potential Funding Sources:

1. Financing Programs

A. Timetable for Strategy: first-next-long

The Main Street Revitalization Strategy for Cairo, NY as described in this Strategy, can only be achieved by the consistent and careful implementation of the elements included in this Report.

We recommend that the Town Board, encourage the revitalization of the Main Street by implementing the Strategy with a Timetable consisting of three related schedules:

1. **First Steps [immediate]:** Immediate actions to be taken within the **first 90-120 days**.
2. **Next Steps [short term]:** actions to be taken within a short timeframe of approximately **one to two years**, maximum.
3. **Long Range Steps [longer term]:** more complex actions, to be taken within a **three to five year** framework, and beyond -to fully develop the revitalization and redevelopment Strategy.

We recommend the following timetable, based on the above schedule of actions:

A. First Steps:

We recommend that the following immediate actions should be taken, within the **first 90-120 days**, in order to begin the revitalization process as described in this Report.

1. **Principles and Recommendations:** Adoption of the principles and recommendations of this *Main Street Strategy*. by the Town of Cairo Town Board; including designation of a Main Street [Re-Development] District, as described. The designation of the entities responsible for implementation of the Strategy should also be confirmed at this time.
2. **Identify and physically define the Cairo Main Street District**, including improvement of the Eastern and Western Gateways, as described.
3. **Begin the process of Creating Commercial Retail Clusters**, as described.
4. **Establish a new Visitor Information Center**, to be located on Main Street, and begin development of a Town Tourism Strategy, which should be coordinated with Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning
5. **Designate a Bed and Breakfast / Small Inn District**, as the first step in helping to encourage this development.

B. Next Steps

We recommend that the following actions should be taken within a short timeframe of approximately **one to two years** (maximum).

1. **Create formal Gateways** (“Cairo Gateway Project”) as described, and plan for both improved physical definition and current and potential retail and service use improvements.
2. **Begin to plan for improvements and future development opportunities for Angelo Canna Town Park**, including strengthening links to Main Street and enhancing recreational opportunities.
3. **Commission a Study/plan for the former Fairgrounds site:** Create a plan with appropriate suggested uses, Architectural Guidelines and a Corridor Comprehensive Plan to guide construction/re-development. Work on obtaining grants to provide infrastructure to the site, as well as potentially working with the IDA to obtain an option on the property to ensure site control during the planning period.
4. **Identify and Register Historic Buildings**, to be registered, protected and preserved. Consider creation of a Cairo Historic District, as described.

C. Long Range Steps:

We recommend that the following, more complex actions, should be taken within a **three to five-year** framework, and beyond, in order to fully develop and implement the Town of Cairo Main Street Strategy.

1. **Study the establishment of a new multi-purpose Community Center / Arts Center**, as described. Integrate with efforts in the development of arts and recreation, and attempt to work with weekenders and second-home owners in Cairo who may be involved in the arts.
2. **Develop a “Corridor Comprehensive Plan”** for urban design guidelines to reinforce the creation of “sense of place” (public spaces) on Main Street.
3. **Develop Zoning and specific Design Guidelines** towards the goal of reinforcing Main Street Urbanism in Cairo, as described. All future development in the hamlet area must reinforce these existing qualities of “walkability”, and connections to the Town Park and natural resources. Development of sidewalks, pedestrian pathways, and bikeways in an integrated effort to encourage non-vehicular movement in the Main Street District. Zoning and specific architectural guidelines should be adopted to properly guide all anticipated future development in Cairo.
4. **Commission a Parking Study** to be used by the Town to improve traffic flow and vehicular access, as well as incorporated in all future planning efforts, as described. Management of existing parking, and development of future parking needs will be integral to successful future development.
5. **Begin the process of creating a Cairo Business and Retail Marketing / Branding Strategy**, as described. Development of the Town’s coherent vision and future development character is the next important step to fully realize future growth potential.

B. Implementation Techniques

The following implementation strategies may be considered, as part of a plan to realize the proposals contained in this Report:

1. Development Regulations

- A. Create an effective Zoning Ordinance for the Town of Cairo, with specific Architectural Guidelines for the Main Street District, as outlined elsewhere in the Strategy.
- B. Institute Historic Preservation Ordinance for the identified and adopted Cairo Historic District area.
- C. Adopt Architectural and Urban Design Guidelines, using the existing Greene County Façade Guidelines as a starting point.
- D. Create a Special Overlay District for historic preservation.
- E. Consider Transfer of Development Rights in the future to encourage additional dense development.
- F. Consider Retail Caps on the size and mass of new retail establishments.
- G. Consider Sustainable Sites Initiative, a national initiative for voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices.
- H. Consider Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for neighborhood development.

*Coordinate all Regulations and Main Street Plan/Strategy to facilitate Revitalization and Re-Development.

C. Potential Funding Sources

The following sources for potential funding may be considered in order to implement the Proposals contained in this Strategy:

1. Financing programs

- A. **Federal and State Grants:**
 - 1. transportation
 - 2. infrastructure
 - 3. open space
 - 4. *New York Main Street Program grant.
- B. **Tax-Increment Financing (TIF)** (not really operative in NY)
- C. **Business Improvement Districts (BID);**
 - 1. Special District
- D. **Special Assessment District**
- E. **Historic Preservation Tax Credits**
- F. **New Markets Tax Credits**
- G. **Facade Loan and Grant Programs**
- H. **National Trust Loan Fund (NTLF)**
- I. **Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit**
- J. The Town of Cairo could consider leveraging the technical assistance provided by NYS Department of Housing and Community Renewal with other grant opportunities available. Specifically, the Town might seek funding from the following sources:

2008-2009 Title 11 of the New York State Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program: The following grant categories are being considered in this year's round:

- Visioning and development of local or regional revitalization strategies
- Downtown and hamlet revitalization
- Creating a blueway trail
- Adapting to climate change

K. New York State Council on the Arts Architecture, Planning & Design

The purpose of the Architecture, Planning and Design Program is to stimulate and promote excellence in design and planning in the public realm for the benefit of all New Yorkers. The Program aims to increase awareness and appreciation of the designed environment of New York State and to advance innovation in the design and planning fields. For more information, see <http://www.nysca.org/>.

L. Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council Grant Programs

The Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council helps communities develop a vision for their future and provides tools to achieve it by balancing economic development and resource protection objectives. The Council also administers the "Greenway Compact Grant Program" to provide grant funding and technical assistance to assist counties in the development of the Greenway Compact, a regional planning strategy for the Hudson River Valley. Grant information can be found at: <http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/funding/funding.htm>.

V. APPENDIX

1. The Greene County Economic Development, Tourism, and Planning's "Main Street Matrix" of parcels and buildings in the study area.
2. Cairo Community (Public) Meeting Notes, October 27, 2008.
3. Addendum to: "II. Existing Study" Section:
"1. documentation of existing conditions
-annotated photo survey"

While not part of the written report, the PowerPoint presentations used in the public meetings, picture set, and meeting minutes are also available separately on the Town web site.

**Summary of Public Meeting Notes – Public Information Meeting, October 27,
2008, Gallagher’s Banquet Hall:**

present: (from sign-in sheet)

Notes and Suggestions from the Public (written on boards in the meeting):

- Parking in the center of town is inadequate. Locate future parking sites – street behind Kaaterskill Associates, by the park.
- Ice skating pond this year.
- Cedar Terrace Resort.
- “23 – to – 23” District definition.
- Re-route traffic onto 23B off of 23 coming from/going to Windham, at both ends.
- Slater’s area is a mish-mosh of different uses (Slater’s to school).
- Sense of place.
- Spectacular Park (“Angelo Park”) and trout stream.
- Workforce housing at Alden Terrace development (having people exiting from commercial plaza travel through Main Street).
- Strategic location: State Route 23, State Route 145 (20, I-88), County Route 23B.
- Better demographics than Catskill for national chain restaurants.
- Resort town – can we fix up and aid the existing tourism motels, hotels, inn.
- Nowhere to sleep.
- Round Top resort area is a big draw, potential customers.
- Tourist passing through.
- Tourists in Cairo area.
- Park could be a major draw.
- Nothing for teens (kids) to do.

- Drive-In in Tannersville is closed.
- Catskill Game Farm is closed.
- Carson City is closed.
- Zoom Flume still open.
- Convert old gas station into possible visitor's center.
- Catalytic projects.
- September 1, website to be launched for town (link to this process)
- Public participation is key.
- Shops for people on their way to Windham.
- Want a store to buy clothing (underwear)
- Not just resorts, day-trippers tourism.
- Apple Harvest, Renaissance, and other festivals, can be more.
- "Trying to keep the agriculture we have"
- Maple.
- Organic farm.
- Building in the Park, built for 4-H Cornell that can be used for Farmers Market.
- Crossroads / Gateway of the County.
- People moving in – looking for quality of life.
- "Great School" – state of the art, great facilities, great music program, great/competent teachers
- Lifestyle is unique.
- Biking and walking, golf, trout fishing.
- Trails up in the State Park.

- Restaurant – upscale diner, to bring a business client, family restaurant, cyber café.
- Yonkers building, on corner (current E-Z Café), to be re-made.
- Arts (not like Catskill with all of their galleries) – Music, music in the park, No venue for music on Main Street.
- Community Center doesn't exist yet.
- “Come Grow with Us” is the slogan –on bumper stickers.
- St. Edmund's Chapel (Acra) – owned by town.
- Nature Center (by Bernie O's).
- Arts – community arts.
- Parents bringing their kids to lessons.
- County building in the Town Park. (Highway garage, training center)
- County Farm brick building, might be up for grabs.
- Diner in the park – to be used as diner.
- Cairo Historical Association.
- “Ratty looking buildings”
- Residences / one and two family.
- Highest trip generation of a Main Street in Greene County.
- Old railroad through town.

Notes:

The approximately 70 community participants were asked to give their “Vision” – Issues and Opportunities, to be discussed by all. Their comments included the following:

- Requested that Cairo should have a new Post Office (“like Leeds has”), because the existing Post Office on Main Street has “safety issues” (on street, in front of building).
- Parking in the center of town is perceived as inadequate.
- Natural Resources are a positive: parks, trails, etc...

- Town should extend the sidewalks, for pedestrian safety, further down Main Street.
- Traffic safety is an issue, especially the speed of cars.
- A combination of local (service) and tourist retail would be desirable.
- There needs to be a new Chamber / Visitor Center location.
- There needs to be a facility for youth activities – perhaps a Community Center on Main Street.
- Diversity – tourist attraction.
- What is there to DO?, in Cairo?
- A craft co-op would be a good idea.
- There needs to be “linkages” (pedestrian), so that driving everywhere is not required.
- Is RETAIL the answer?
- We “need to fix the ‘sore eyesights’” (but NOT increase taxes).
- What (if any) service retail is currently missing, from Main Street? – a fabric store.
- Code enforcement is currently lacking.
- “Quality” is important, in everything that we propose to do.
- Potential of “Outlet” mall / shopping.
- * Tourists want: natural – outdoors; hiking & biking; dining & entertainment; cross-country skiing.
- Expand the Town Park.
- Skating Rink? (at Town Park).
- Perhaps create a cinema, and/or live theater.
- Biking: add bicycle racks, and trails, etc.

Absentee landlords, and “undesirables”, are a problem in Cairo.

- Who is going to? / we MUST “Follow-through” on these ideas!
- Rail trail – potential?
- Perhaps develop / encourage Bed & Breakfasts, on Main Street.
- Historian mentioned the architectural aspects of Town, and that façade improvements were required, to existing buildings
- An antique co-op might be a good idea.
- A food co-op –coordinated with the existing Town’s Agriculture/ organic Farming community would be a good idea; a Farmers Market?
- “How to get people off (Route) 23?”
- The existing creek is a beautiful, and underutilized asset. Access, and visual recognition is sorely lacking.
- Integrate recreation and the arts.
- What to do with the old resorts? Study possible senior housing, or assisted living potential?
- Themes of outdoors, adventure, mountain-biking would be a draw.
- Promote new industry / jobs.

ADDENDUM II. EXISTING STUDY”

Selected annotated photos of existing conditions and issues (a full picture set is available on the Town web site):



- a. **Center area of proposed Main Street District consists of historic center of Hamlet:**



- b. **Center area of proposed Main Street District consists many historical buildings, with quality architecture. The setback/front lawn is a more residential streetscape environment.**



- c. **Center area of proposed Main Street District contains many issues which can be improved, including Facades in need of restoration, streetscape improvements, and many “gaps” in the streetscape/fabric which might be enhanced (or re-developed) –but need careful design guidelines – to help assure compliance with the new Cairo “image” and vision).**



- d. Center area of proposed Main Street District contains many issues which can be improved. Narrow sidewalks, and non-commercial street level uses are an existing issue which must be considered, and addressed – to help assure compliance with the new Cairo “image” and vision).



- p. **Center area of proposed Main Street District contains many issues which can be improved, including Facades in need of restoration, streetscape improvements, and many “gaps” in the streetscape/fabric which might be enhanced (or re-developed) –but need careful design guidelines – to help assure compliance with the new Cairo “image” and vision).**



- q. Center area of proposed Main Street District contains many issues which can be improved. These buildings are the “commercial-intense” portion of the historic center, and are in much need of façade and streetscape improvements – to help assure compliance with the new Cairo “image” and vision).



- r. Center area of proposed Main Street District contains many issues which can be improved. Existing streetscape (residential in use) creates barriers to pedestrian-friendly environment.





Brief History of Cairo

Robert Uzzilia, Cairo Town Historian

(submitted: November, 2008)

As the Continental Congress was drafting exciting documents of liberation for an emerging America, the central region of Greene County (then Albany Co.), was already occupied by hearty pioneers. Water sources, previously hunted and fished by the Iroquois, Esopus and other native tribes, were now of interest to white settlers. Large tracts of arable land and a sustainable way of life were being exchanged for the new immigrants' money, firearms and spirits. As early as 1751 clear title to the Hardenburg Patent had been obtained and Colonial districts established. At the close of the Revolution, however, a mass migration of mostly Connecticut farmers and tradesmen began. In 1780 Frederick Schermerhorn built a log cabin in the area of present-day Round Top and by 1787 Wessel Salisbury had located just east of Cairo Village on the Mountain Road.

Likely the only settler to improve a large tract of land during this early period was James Barker, who in 1765 brought his wife Elizabeth Woer and twenty-three tenant families from London and settled along the Catskill Creek. He named the settlement Woodstock after the English manor house in which he

was born. Barker left high social standing as an attorney to begin a new life in a rugged wilderness. Despite relative isolation and many physical hardships, Barker and his group would sustain themselves for many years. The construction of the Susquehanna Turnpike in 1801 created a conduit for goods and people from New England to the interior of New York State and beyond, spurring new growth along the route.

Critical industries emerged, utilizing the water power of the Shinglekill and Catskill Creeks and other tributaries. Enoch Hyde and Benjamin Hall from Litchfield, Connecticut set up an Iron Forge in 1788 at Shinglekill Falls. They used high-quality charcoal iron, shipped from Ancram in Columbia County--and forged it into bars to be hammered down by local blacksmiths into horseshoes, wheel "tires" and other useful objects for the fast-growing community.

Many other small but essential businesses followed. The bark of the abundant hemlock tree would provide the tannic acid needed to process hides for tanning leather. Eventually the prosperous tanneries of Daniel Sayre, Ira T. Day and others, succumbed, having exhausted their main resource.

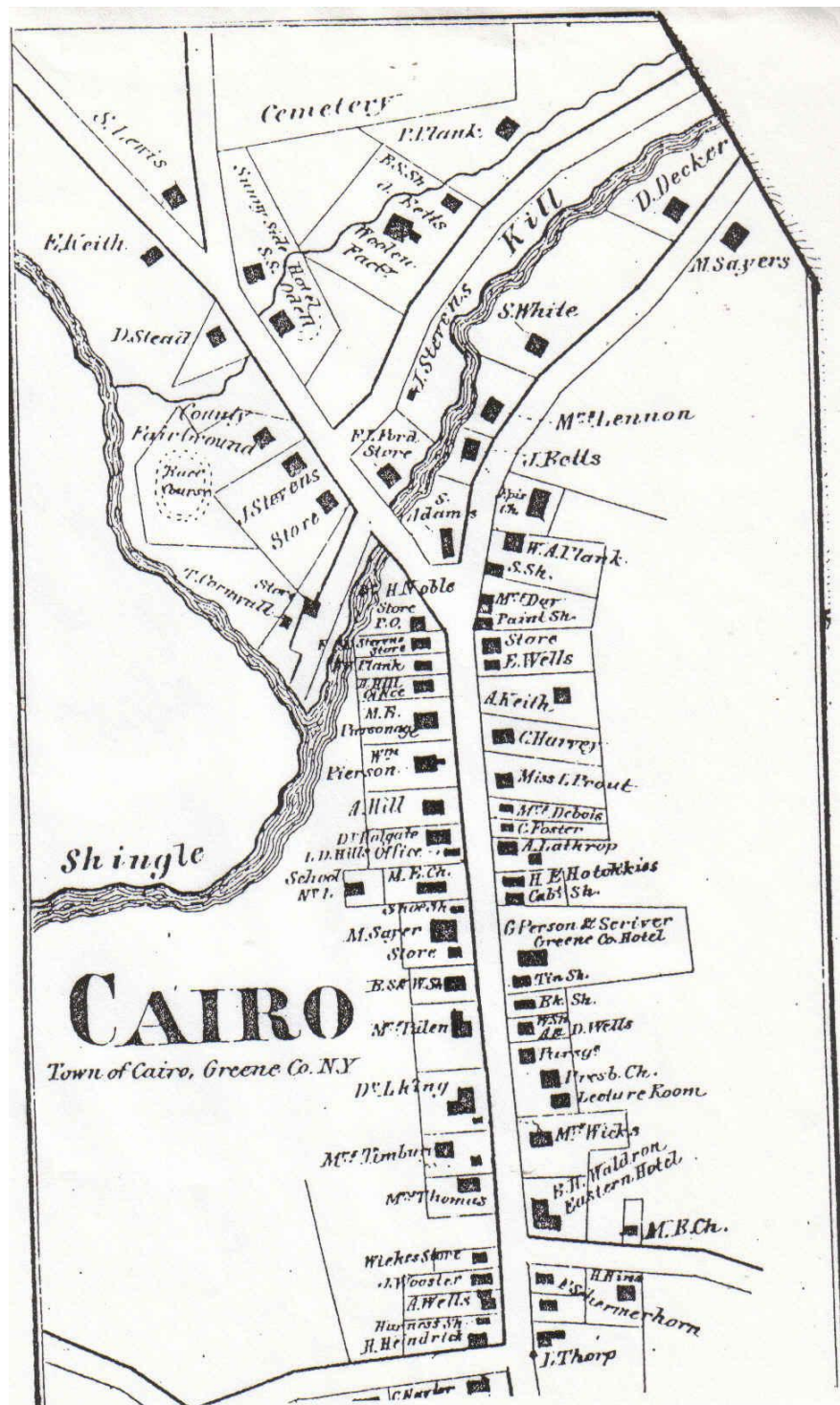
Board lumber and shingle production developed to meet the increasing need for building materials. Additional businesses that sprang up included Montgomery Stevens' distillery (1811), Judge Moses Austin's wool factory (1816), grist mills and factories for producing grain cradles, cut-nails, spinning wheels, furniture, clocks and even sleigh bells.

Farming was, of course, the predominant occupation. The Greene County Agricultural Society established a County Fair here by 1819, with horse racing the main form of entertainment to supplement the judging of livestock, produce and baked goods.

Greene County, comprised of the townships of Freehold, Coxsackie, Catskill and Windham, was formed March 25, 1800 from a southern portion of Albany County and a northern portion of Ulster County. In 1803, Greene County redrew boundaries, creating new townships of Canton and Greenfield from the lands of Freehold, Coxsackie and Catskill. On April 6, 1808 Canton was re-named Cairo upon the suggestion of Ashbel Stanley, a prominent merchant, who had removed from Coventry, Connecticut about that time. Though the name was originally pronounced to mimic its' Egyptian namesake, the local version has since been Anglicized to "C-air-o" (Just remember to keep the air in the middle of Cairo.) Theories differ on the choice of the name. Some believed that the profile of the Blackhead Mountain Range resembled the appearance of the mighty pyramids. Others believed it was simply a popular idea to name early towns after

ancient cities of prominence. Cairo's original name of Canton might have been inspired by the Chinese city famous for its export tableware to the American market. Speculation on why the name of "Canton" required change suggests the attempted establishment of a post office here revealed an existing "Canton" in St. Lawrence County, already established in 1805. With a scattering of about two-hundred early settlers, New England families such as the Allertons, Brewsters and Olmsteads became influential. The town quickly grew to over two thousand inhabitants by 1810. The education of our early settlers was limited to a few months a year in a primitive village facility built in 1795. Religious services and town meetings were held in private homes until structures were built for each of these functions. A post office was established in Cairo village in the early 19th century near the present-day Memorial Fountain. Original officers elected by the townspeople include Daniel Sayre the first Supervisor and James Gale, Town Clerk. The town's first annual meeting took place at the home of Widow Mary Carbine on March 26, 1803. By 1825 Cairo, because of its central location and available land, became the chosen location for a county-run Poor House.

Despite the early success of small manufactories, farming in the fertile lowlands continued to dominate local commerce well into the 19th century. Eventually the technological advances forged from the Civil War allowed the rapidly-growing rail industry to encroach west from the Hudson River shoreline. Although the pioneer Canajoharie and Catskill Railroad brought small numbers of passengers and freight near the village from about 1838-1840, mechanical limitations, competition from Albany interests and subsequent lack of financial support caused its premature demise.



Eventually, the more modern Catskill Mountain Railroad established a branch running from Catskill Landing west to Cairo. The directors of the railroad saw the Cairo extension as a means of tapping business in bluestone, hay and fruit. While the line opened for business in June 1885, sustaining business did not arrive until 1894 with the formation of the Catskill Shale Brick Company. The shale rock would come from sidings

near Cairo and represent a major portion of the CMRR's freight revenue until the shale brick plant closed in 1914. This improved transportation mode lessened the time distance between the New York City area and the Catskills. Tourism increased as a result. The area already made famous by artists, poets and writers would begin to see seasonal prosperity to supplement the agricultural base. Many hotels and boarding or "rooming" houses were either established or expanded during the post-railroad era. Henry Whitcomb could accommodate 60 guests at the Winter Clove House in Round Top and Elisha Blackmar welcomed as many as 50 at his Catskill Creek House on the Susquehannah Turnpike in South Cairo. This pattern continued until the early 20th century saw the gradual decline of horse-drawn transportation and replacement by the automobile. The "horseless carriage" would forever change the way Americans lived and Cairo would see much growth from this newfound mobility.

But this situation proved fatal to the railroad industry as mounting financial losses brought about by improved "auto" roads, forced the termination of service on the Cairo line following the end of the 1919 season.

Tourists now arrived in individual cars, spawning the growth of filling stations and roadside souvenir stands. During the summer months the long-established Cairo Fair continued to draw the crowds. Farmers, while still active in their agricultural pursuits, were finding the additional income from providing boarding space beneficial, and some eventually gave up farming altogether, expanding into full-fledged resorts, such as Glenbrook Farm in the hamlet of Round Top.

After victory in the Second World War, soldiers returned to a robust and growing home front. Larger families were raised during this prosperous period. This led to expansion of services from an improved tax base. Even the small hamlets of South Cairo, Acra, Purling, Round Top and Gayhead remained active during this period, enjoying the benefits of a summer population that was often double the norm. Many boarding houses were built during this period to meet the demand. An influx of Italian and German proprietors gave the resort community an international flavor. A Chamber of Commerce was established and prospered with many members and a strong voice in local affairs. Two all-night diners, a movie theatre, department store, shoe store, meat market, fish store and other specialized outlets all shared the economic success of the period. Even after a small shopping center was built on the edge of Cairo Village in the late 1950's, economic equity continued during the 1960's and early 70's. A wide, divided

state highway project was completed in the mid 1960's, paralleling the original State Route 23 (now 23B). Some applauded the removal of sometimes heavy truck traffic through the village. Others declared it the death knell for the community's businesses.

Hindsight now tells us that outside forces, such as the influx of large franchise retailers, were working to diminish the effectiveness of the "mom and pop" store on a national level. Also, the face of tourism was changing. Contemporary visitors wanted more value for their dollar. Their vacation options increased in quantity and quality, with competitive travel rates, the establishment of large amusement parks, casinos and other attractions.

Constant during the last 200 years has been the outstanding natural beauty of the town and the friendly nature of its' inhabitants. It is with optimism we endeavor to maintain these assets while continuing to balance improvement and growth.

