

FINAL REPORT

CLARENCE HOLLOW IMPROVEMENTS STUDY



September 2003

Clarence Hollow Improvements Study

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Clarence Hollow Improvements Study

Background

Clarence Hollow is a rural hamlet in the Town of Clarence, characterized by a mix of residential, retail, office and personal service uses in a variety of small-scale structures. The hamlet functions as a local employment center for residents from Clarence and the surrounding Towns of Lancaster and Newstead. The goal of this study was to prepare a streetscape concept plan to establish a vision for Clarence Hollow, zoning code revisions to create a new zoning classification to protect the unique character of the Hollow area, and a Hamlet Revitalization Strategy to support and assist businesses. The Clarence Hollow Improvements project grew partly out of recommendations contained in the Town of Clarence Master Plan 2015, adopted in August 2001. A specific goal of the Master Plan is to preserve and protect the historic character of Clarence Hollow and other hamlets in the Town. The Plan calls for the development of a new Traditional Neighborhood zoning district for Clarence Hollow and the other hamlets, in order to protect the small-scale setting and mix of uses found in these areas, and to support traditional neighborhood-style design principles for new development or redevelopment in these areas.

The recommendations of the Master Plan have attained greater urgency with the initiation of roadway reconstruction along New York State Route 5. Route 5, or Main Street, is the primary travel route through Clarence Hollow, and the location of most of the businesses in the hamlet. Over the next two years (2003-2004) the New York State Department of Transportation will be reconstructing this roadway and installing sanitary sewer lines through the Hollow. This roadway project presents both an opportunity and a threat to the area. It presents an excellent opportunity to upgrade the streetscape through the Hollow, improving the functionality and the aesthetics of the area. It also presents a concern that the disruptions of the roadway reconstruction may be harmful to small businesses. Furthermore, the Town is concerned that the introduction of sewers to this area may lead to increased development pressures. Therefore, it is important that the goals and priorities for the Clarence Hollow hamlet area are clearly articulated, and that the zoning regulations developed for this area will encourage and support the development that is in concert with the character of the area.

The Clarence Hollow Improvements Study consists of three interrelated elements. The first is a Streetscape Improvement Concept Plan. This Concept Plan was prepared to ensure that the streetscape improvements included in the plans for the Route 5 reconstruction through the Hollow are compatible with the Town's vision for this area, and will help to support and preserve the unique character of the area. The second component includes two new zoning classifications; one to establish a Traditional Neighborhood District (TND) for the hamlets in the Town, and one that outlines design standards specific to Clarence Hollow. Once adopted, these new regulations will encourage new development that is in character with existing uses, and help to protect the Hollow from incompatible uses and design styles. The final component sets forth a hamlet revitalization strategy for the Clarence Hollow area to help maintain the vitality of the business district.

4.0 Streetscape Concept Plan

A. Existing Conditions

Clarence Hollow hamlet, for the purposes of this study, runs east along Main Street, from Winding Lane to Davidson Road, and is varied in appearance, characteristics and land uses. From Winding Lane to the Town Park the appearance is one of strip commercial development. A few older two-story stone and clapboard houses and out buildings are

intermingled with more recent single-story wood and masonry commercial buildings in this area. Most of the buildings are set back 40 to 50 feet from the street right-of-way and have asphalt parking lots between the street and the buildings.

Physical features, which make this area distinctive, include old stone walls along Main Street and many mature shade trees, which lend character to the streetscape. The stone walls, constructed by the early farmers who settled the area, are considered to be synonymous with Clarence Hollow.

The section of Main Street, from historic Clarence Town Park to Davidson Road, constitutes the original hamlet business district. The buildings along this stretch, with a few exceptions, are generally older two-story structures. The exteriors of the buildings are constructed of a variety of materials including stone, brick, wood clapboard or a combination of materials. Most of these buildings were originally constructed as residences. Many have been converted to commercial uses, including antique shops, professional offices, restaurants, a bank, a filling station, a bed and breakfast establishment and other commercial uses. A church is located at the east end of the Clarence Hollow business district, along with several residences and some commercial properties. Many of the shops have second-story residential space. Most of the buildings along this section of Main Street are oriented closer to the road, with some situated partially within the right-of-way. With many of the buildings close to the road, on narrow lots, most off-street parking is located on the sides or to the rear of the buildings.

This part of Main Street differs from the westerly section of Clarence Hollow, which lacks the quaint and historic village-like appeal. The easterly section of Main Street also has mature street trees, stone walls and picket fences, which lend character to the streetscape. Power poles, overhead lines and a variety of advertising and State highway signs detract from the visual quality of this area; although, the old street trees, which are very plentiful along this stretch of Main Street, tend to soften the impact of these features. Some of these trees, however, may be removed as part of the roadway reconstruction project, making the utility and infrastructure features more apparent.

B. Future Development along Main Street

Main Street in Clarence Hollow is undergoing substantial change as the roadway work gets underway. New concrete walks, curbs (or gutters), precast concrete paver snow storage strips, road pavement, cross walks, traffic signals, shade trees, sanitary sewers, storm sewers, water mains, power lines and related appurtenances will all be installed. The work, exclusive of private utility work, is to be completed under two NYS Department of Transportation contracts, with one (Main Street at Sheridan Avenue to Hillcrest Drive), which is essentially complete. The second contract continues the work from Hillcrest Drive east to Davidson Road. Construction on this second phase commenced in April of 2003.

The streetscape concept, which is part of the Clarence Hollow Improvements Study, was developed over a period of several months in close cooperation with the Clarence Hollow Association, the Clarence Community Development Department, the Clarence Town Board, public and the NYS Department of Transportation. The concept evolved and was refined over this time period, and many of the ideas have been incorporated in the NYS Department of Transportation plans for Main Street.

C. Clarence Hollow - Streetscape Concept

The Clarence Hollow Streetscape Concept Plan is based on the future vision for Clarence Hollow, as articulated by the residents, the Clarence Hollow Association and elected officials

through ongoing meeting, as well as a public meeting that was held in October of 2002. The vision for the Hollow is centered on the following goals:

- encouraging future development that respects the history and historic elements of the Hollow;
- fostering a pedestrian friendly environment along Main Street;
- providing adequate on and off-street parking to accommodate the many business establishments;
- insuring that vehicular traffic moves in a safe and orderly manner to minimize conflict with pedestrians and bicycles; and
- providing elements that will give Clarence Hollow a stronger identity so as to make residents and visitors feel welcome.

To accomplish this vision the streetscape concept lays out a plan to guide short and long-range private and public investment along Main Street and areas immediately adjacent to Main Street. Elements of the streetscape include sidewalks, decorative paving, landscaping, seating areas, stone walls, pedestrian lighting, street furniture, uniform signage and other recommendations for aesthetic improvements. As the second phase of the Main Street reconstruction progresses, the features of the streetscape plan will materialize to achieve the vision. Copies of the streetscape plans are included in the appendix.

5.0 Zoning Recommendations

The streetscape improvements will help to substantially improve the visual quality of the Clarence Hollow area. However, to protect the character of the area it was determined that additional efforts would be required. In particular, focus was placed on the zoning to implement the recommendations of Master Plan 2015 and to put standards and guidelines in place to achieve the vision for this area.

Based on the Scope of Services for this project, meetings with the Town, and a review of the Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan, the following assumptions and ideas about the zoning in this area were developed:

- The Comprehensive Plan calls for the frontage uses along Route 5 to be mostly, if not all, mixed use.
- The future zoning map in the Master Plan identifies the Clarence Hollow area as a Traditional Neighborhood District (TND), along with the hamlets of Clarence Center, Swormville, and Harris Hill.
- The hamlet area is presently zoned mostly Commercial, with some minor areas of Restricted-Business, Residential-A, Residential-B, and Agricultural zoning.
- The existing land uses are a mixture of small commercial and residential uses along the highway, surrounded by mostly residential uses, and some agriculture and community facilities uses further north and south of Main Street.
- The Master Plan indicates that higher residential density would be permitted in the Traditional Neighborhood Design districts.
- The Master Plan includes some general principles for the Clarence Hollow TND, as well as issues that are better addressed through a zoning overlay district.
- The TND should be developed in a more generic fashion for use in each of the hamlet areas. Overlay districts should be designed to focus on the unique and individual character of the hamlets.
- The Comprehensive Plan also talks about creating an historic commercial zone in Clarence Hollow (Strickler to Town line) to encourage re-use of existing structures and discourage demolition. It also supports minimum architectural standards. This could be incorporated into the zoning overlay and in the TND for this area.

Follow up meetings with the Town were effective for focusing in on specific standards for Clarence Hollow. It was determined that the coverage for the TND for the Hollow area would include those properties that front along Main Street. The Clarence Hollow Overlay district would include the residential neighborhoods situated north and south of Main Street, to ensure that residential, as well as commercial, development and redevelopment is undertaken in a manner consistent with the goals for the Clarence Hollow area (see Section 1.C). This overlay area would consist of two sections, one being the properties that front along Main Street, which are zoned TND and constitute the central business district, and the remaining residential hamlet area that surrounds the business district.

Both districts would have a purpose/intent section, permitted and special exception uses, accessory uses, site design (bulk) requirements, and parking and other aesthetic standards. The overlay district would also include restrictions on subdivision, landscaping and additional architectural and site design requirements such as lighting, loading/service, dumpsters, fencing, access issues, etc.

The intent of the Traditional Neighborhood Design District is to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan in order to:

- Provide incentives to encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures;
- Allow and encourage a mix of uses and mixed use structures;
- Accomplish and continue a sense of community;
- Provide a walkable, pedestrian friendly environment;
- Respect and preserve unique natural features within the district;
- Provide design regulations that encourage compatible building arrangements, bulk, form, character and landscaping to establish a livable, harmonious and diverse environment;
- Discourage the demolition of existing structures that possess significant historic and other essential elements that contribute to the character of the district; and
- Create a small town, historic style business district that limits large-scale commercial development that is out of character with the area.

The intent of the Clarence Hollow Overlay District, which complements and builds upon the TND, is to:

- Preserve the character of the Clarence Hollow community as a hamlet, with mixed uses set in an historical context;
- Encourage and enhance the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), which calls for a mixture of uses, improved walkability/connectivity, enhancement of neighborhood appeal, preservation of community character;
- Continue and complement the design elements associated with the streetscape design for Main Street;
- Maintain and improve the traffic conditions and the walkability and pedestrian circulation of the area as development and redevelopment take place;
- Ensure that new buildings or building modifications are harmonious with surrounding structures in their use, scale and design;
- Encourage the preservation of existing building and sites in a manner that maintains the historic and distinctive character of the hamlet;
- Minimize the removal or disruption of historic, traditional or significant structures or architectural elements in the hamlet; and
- Allow for a mixture of uses that would allow many existing parcels of land and structures to be utilized without the need for a zoning variance.

Copies of the draft zoning districts are included in the appendix.

6.0 Hamlet Revitalization Strategy

This report summarizes the third element of the streetscape project. The Town of Clarence wanted assistance in devising a hamlet revitalization strategy for the Clarence Hollow area. The Town is committed to maintaining the vitality of the Clarence Hollow as a business district. This hamlet revitalization strategy assists in this endeavor by summarizing the issues and concerns facing the hamlet, and determining a priority list of actions.

It should be noted that the recommendations associated with the physical "streetscape" types of improvements and the new zoning regulations are an important part of the hamlet revitalization strategy. The changes recommended in the other two phases of this study will result in positive benefits for the present and future vitality of Clarence Hollow. However, the Town is concerned that the proposed DOT roadway reconstruction may have significant impacts on the small businesses that are integral to the character of the Hollow. For the goals of the new zoning district and the streetscape improvements to be successfully implemented, it is essential that the Town support and help these businesses, and encourage and assist them to remain in the area. Without thriving businesses, the physical improvements alone will not result in a healthy and vital business district in the Hollow. This report addresses those issues that are not physical in nature, and therefore cannot be addressed through the streetscape or zoning revisions.

E. Project Area

As previously noted, Clarence Hollow is a rural hamlet located in the Town of Clarence, Erie County, New York. The Hollow is characterized by a mix of residential, retail, office and personal service uses in a variety of small-scale structures. Although the hamlet is an unincorporated place with no official boundaries, it is a community with a strong sense of place and significant historic character and importance. The Town of Clarence is the oldest municipality in Western New York, and Clarence Hollow was one of the first areas of Clarence to be settled. This history and tradition is a defining characteristic of the hamlet, and the Town recognizes the importance of the Hollow to the character and vitality of the Town. The Clarence Hollow is also an important local business center, with its shops and businesses providing important services to local area residents.

For the purposes of this component of the improvements study, the project area includes a 1.8-mile stretch of Main Street (NYS Route 5) that fronts on 246 separate tax parcels totaling 274 acres of land. The project boundary extends along Main Street from Winding Lane at the western end to the Town of Clarence eastern border with the Town of Newstead. Business activity is focused primarily along Main Street, although the boundaries of the hamlet extend into the residential areas along the side streets.

F. Objectives

The Town is very committed to maintaining the character and stability of the hamlet. As noted above, one of the goals in the Town's Comprehensive Plan specifically identifies Clarence Hollow as worthy of protection, stating that the Town should maintain and promote the historic character of Clarence Hollow, Clarence Center and Swormville as well as historic landmarks not located within these districts.

In the course of this study, several more specific objectives related to this goal emerged. It is clear that in addition to its historic importance, Clarence Hollow serves as an important business district for the Town. Its shops and businesses provide goods and services, employment opportunities and a sense of community and identity for residents of the surrounding area. The following goals have been identified as important goals to help preserve and revitalize the Clarence Hollow area:

Goals for Clarence Hollow

- *Promote business revitalization and growth in Clarence Hollow in a manner consistent with its existing character as a mixed-use hamlet of residences and businesses*
- *Preserve and protect important historic buildings and the historic ambience of Clarence Hollow*
- *Preserve important features and provide additional amenities to help develop a stronger identity and image for Clarence Hollow*
- *Encourage adaptive reuse of existing structures, and discourage demolitions*
- *Ensure that development is compatible with existing character in terms of style, scale and siting*
- *Promote the "walkability" of the hamlet area by providing better accommodations for pedestrians and ensuring new development is pedestrian-friendly*
- *Maintain high-quality design standards for all improvements*
- *Encourage visitation by people from outside Clarence (tourism)*

G. Existing Conditions

Demographic Profile

The Town of Clarence had a population of 26,123 in 2000. Census figures for Clarence Hollow itself are not available, but basic demographic information can be approximated using block level Census Tract data. Census Tract 147.02 covers the southeastern corner of the Town of Clarence, including the areas of Clarence Hollow and the southern part of Clarence Center. Within this Census Tract, two block groups roughly correspond to the developed hamlet area.¹ (See attached map)

The following statistical discussion addresses the Clarence Hollow neighborhood (by block groups), and also the entire Census Tract (southeastern Clarence). The wider area represents a market area of approximately 3.5 miles surrounding the Hollow. Also, not all information is available at the block level yet, and Census Tract data provides an indication of trends in the area.

On this basis, the population of Clarence Hollow was approximately 2,940 in 2000, representing about 11 percent of the population in the Town of Clarence. There are approximately 1,000 households within this area. Clarence Hollow has a lower vacancy rate than average for the Town of Clarence, and a significantly higher proportion of renters. Within Clarence Hollow, nearly one-third (32.6 percent) of units are occupied by renters. This proportion is much more similar to the Erie County average (34.7 percent) than the Town of Clarence figure (12.2 percent), or even the southeastern Clarence area (18.7 percent). In fact, while Clarence Hollow represents 11 percent of households in the Town, it contains 29 percent of all rental units in the Town of Clarence.

The following table summarizes basic demographic information for the Town of Clarence, southeastern Clarence (Census Tract 147.02) and Clarence Hollow.

¹ Block group 2 extends from Shisler Road to Davison Road, corresponding to the project boundaries along Main Street, and incorporating the adjoining residential neighborhood to the south of Main Street. Block group 1, located north of Main Street, extends from Kraus Road on the west and Salt Road on the east.

Demographic Profile, 2000			
	Clarence Town	Southeastern Clarence (Tract 147.02)	Clarence Hollow
Population	26,123	7,129	2,936
Households	9,154	2,562	1,002
Housing Units	9,497	2,639	1,027
Vacancy	3.6%	2.9%	2.4%
Owner Occupied	87.8%	81.3%	67.4%
Renter Occupied	12.2%	18.7%	32.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Population Trends

Clarence is one of the fastest growing communities in Erie County. The Town gained over 6,000 residents between 1990 and 2000, during a decade where Erie County had a net loss of over 18,300 residents. Much of this growth occurred in the Clarence Hollow area, which added over 700 residents, an increase of close to 32 percent.

Population and Household Trends				
Clarence Town	1990	2000	Number chg.	Percent chg.
Population	20,041	26,123	6,082	30.3%
Households	6,967	9,154	2,187	31.4%
Southeastern Clarence				
Population	5,832	7,129	1,297	22.2%
Households	2,109	2,562	453	21.5%
Clarence Hollow				
Population	2,230	2,936	706	31.7%
Households	814	1,002	188	23.1%

Source: US Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000

Income Profile

The Town of Clarence is an affluent community. Median household income in the Town for 1999 was just over \$68,000. Approximately two-thirds of all households earn \$50,000 or more annually. These income levels translate into a significant amount of disposable income within the Town. Income statistics for Clarence Hollow are not available, but figures for southeastern Clarence show that this area of Town has somewhat lower incomes than are typical on a town-wide basis. However, income levels are still very high, with a median household income of \$64,750 for southeastern Clarence. (Income figures for block groups are not yet available) In comparison, median income for Erie County was \$38,567. Erie County's median income is only about 57 percent of the median income for the Town of Clarence and 60 percent of the median income for southeastern Clarence. Per capita income figures, or total income in the area divided by all persons, show similar trends. Southeastern Clarence residents have slightly lower per capita incomes than residents town-wide, but figures are still significantly higher than the Erie County average. The following table illustrates income figures for the Town of Clarence, southeastern Clarence, and for Erie County.

Annual Household Income, 1999			
	Clarence Town	Southeastern Clarence (Tract 147.02)	Erie County
<i>Income Distribution</i>			
Less than \$25,000	12.5%	20.5%	32.8%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	21.2%	18.7%	29.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21.4%	20.8%	18.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16.1%	16.5%	9.8%
\$100,000 or more	28.8%	23.5%	9.4%
Median Income	\$68,003	\$63,750	\$38,567
Per Capita Income	\$32,717	\$31,290	\$20,357

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Population Characteristics

Age distribution in Clarence is similar to that of Erie County, with a few distinctions. Clarence has a slightly higher proportion of school-aged children and significantly more adults in the 35 to 54 year age bracket that are likely to be parents of school-aged children. This is likely due to the excellent reputation of the Clarence School District, which attracts families with young children. This is not the case in southeastern Clarence, however, where there are relatively few children, and a higher proportion of elderly residents. Only about 26 percent of the residents of southeastern Clarence are under the age of 20, compared to over 30 percent for the Town. Conversely, 21 percent of the residents of the southeastern Clarence are over 65, compared to 14.5 percent for the Town. The median ages of the communities reflect this trend. The median age for southeastern Clarence is 42.6 years compared to 39.8 years for the Town.

Age Distribution, 2000			
	Clarence Town	Southeastern Clarence (Tract 147.02)	Erie County
Less than 5 years old	6.3%	5.4%	6.1%
5 to 19	23.8%	21.0%	20.8%
20 to 34	11.8%	11.2%	18.6%
35 to 54	34.0%	31.2%	29.5%
55 to 64	9.6%	10.2%	9.1%
65 or older	14.5%	21.1%	15.9%
Median Age	39.8 years	42.6 years	38.0 years

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

Residents of Clarence are very highly educated. Nearly all residents aged 25 or older are high school graduates, and a significant proportion hold bachelors degrees or higher. Residents of the southeastern Clarence tend to have lower educational levels. This is mostly likely due to the higher concentration of older residents in this area of Town. Educational levels are still significantly higher than those for Erie County.

Educational Attainment, 2000			
	Clarence Town	Southeastern Clarence (Tract 147.02)	Erie County
HS graduation rate	94.4%	92.5%	82.9%
College graduation rate	41.7%	36.1%	24.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

In general, the area around Clarence Hollow represents excellent market demographics. Residents have relatively high income levels and significant disposable income. Educational levels are high, and the area is experiencing population growth, lending stability to the market area. Town-wide, the population is characterized by young families with school-aged children, although the area closer to the Hollow differs from town-wide trends, in that it has a significant proportion of older residents and renters. However, the population base for Clarence Hollow is fairly small, and it is clear that businesses in the Hollow must rely on attracting additional market share from outside the immediate Hollow area.

Physical Conditions

Clarence Hollow, for the purposes of this study, runs from Winding Lane to Davidson Road. This area, while cohesive as a neighborhood, can be divided into two distinct areas. The eastern portion of the study area is the actual "Hollow". The east and west hills provide a distinct sense of arrival, and development is concentrated in the valley, or "hollow". This area of Town is characterized by smaller, older structures, many of which have historic significance. Many of the buildings were originally built as residences, some of which have been converted to commercial and retail uses. A number of the buildings are very distinct and lend character to the area. The eastern portion of the project area has a quaint, "village" atmosphere, with parking to the side or rear of the businesses, or along the street.

At the western end of the project area (west of Town Park), the area is more modern. Many of the businesses are more suburban in character and tend to be larger than the buildings at the eastern end of the project area. Parking is more prevalent and evident, with parking areas typically located in the front of the businesses. There are some older residential style buildings, but the western part of Clarence Hollow is predominately commercial. Businesses located west of the actual project area also identify with the Clarence Hollow area, and many members of the Clarence Hollow Association, the business association for the area, are businesses that are physically outside of the defined project area for this study.

Survey Results

The Clarence Hollow Association (CHA) conducted a survey of residents in the Clarence Hollow area. A total of 1,200 copies of the survey were mailed out, and over 354 were returned by the deadline date, representing a response rate of over 29 percent. This high response rate shows a commitment on the part of local residents toward their shopping district in Clarence Hollow, and should be taken as a positive sign of community support.

The survey ascertained demand from local residents for various types of shops and services, and also asked questions designed to prioritize various features of the area. The largest gap in the retail mix in the Hollow, according to the survey respondents, relates to eating and drinking establishments. When asked to check the type of business desired on Main Street, the highest response rate was for a coffee shop/café, which was preferred by 70 percent of respondents. The second and third most frequent responses were for a bakeshop (68 percent) and a family restaurant (67 percent). Very high percentages of respondents indicated that they would patronize casual dining and sidewalk cafes. Demographics suggest

a population that eats out of the home on a regular basis. Based on the survey results, there appears to be a demand for a wider range of eating choices close to home.

Other responses suggest that the community has a specific image of the Clarence Hollow retail area, and that they want it to remain true to that character. Bookstores and boutiques were desired by 58 and 57 percent of the respondents, respectively, while antique shops were cited by 51 percent. Convenience retail is also a need. Fifty-six percent of respondents wanted a pharmacy in the Hollow, while medical services were cited by 47 percent. These preferences probably also reflect the age distribution of the area, with a relatively high proportion of older residents. Larger types of uses, such as a fitness center or office supplies store, and more intensive uses, such as fast food, were *not* popular and rated as not appropriate in the Hollow by most respondents.

Resident Demand for Shops and Services			
Most Popular Shops/services		Least Popular Shops/services	
Coffee shop/Café	70%	Office Supplies	7%
Bake shop	68%	Fast food; fitness center	11%
Family Restaurant	67%	Dance Studio	12%
Book Store	58%	Laundromat	14%
Boutiques	57%	Day care	16%
Pharmacy	56%	CPA's	20%
Antique shops	51%	Financial; convenience store	23%
Medical services	47%	Music studio; insurance	24%
Florist	44%	Health clinic	25%
Variety Store	36%	Toy Store	27%
Law offices	33%	Dress Shop	30%

Source: Clarence Hollow Association survey of residents

The table on the previous page summarizes the responses to the types of businesses checked by survey respondents in response to the question "Check all of the types of business [and professional services] you would like to see on Main Street." They are ranked, with the most frequently chosen responses on the left column, and the least popular responses in the right column.

The survey also asked a series of questions designed to determine what type of activities they would support. The results suggest that residents are overwhelmingly supportive of increasing the amount and the variety of activity in the Hollow. Eighty-nine percent would like to see additional businesses, and 92 percent would support a Farmer's Market. The idea of sidewalk cafés is popular with 80 percent of respondents, and 75 percent would like to have more opportunities for casual dining. There is also interest in events such as musical concerts (69 percent) and arts and crafts festivals (68 percent). There was less support for a performing arts theatre, with 58 percent indicating that they would patronize a theatre, and there is a sense that there is enough formal dining, with only 47 percent wanting more.

Survey Responses			
Are you in favor of:	Yes	No	No Answer
Additional business in Clarence Hollow	89%	11%	0%
A Farmer's Market	92%	8%	0%
More casual dining	75%	10%	14%
More formal dining	47%	49%	4%
Sidewalk Café	80%	17%	3%
Performing Arts Theatre	58%	34%	8%

Arts & Crafts Festivals	68%	29%	3%
Music events	69%	25%	6%

Source: Clarence Hollow Association

It is clear that residents value the historic character of Clarence Hollow. Eighty-nine percent of respondents feel the Hollow's small town atmosphere and historic charm are important, with 70 percent of that number believing it is very important. Some respondents were neutral, but no one rated the area's atmosphere as not important. Greenspace and trees were even more highly rated. Three-quarters of respondents (76 percent) felt trees and greenspace in Clarence were extremely important, and an additional 15 percent rated them as important. As in the case of atmosphere, no one felt that trees and greenspace were not important. Historic buildings earned the third highest rating: 81 percent of respondents feel that the historic buildings in the Hollow are an economic asset to some degree, and only 5 percent did not agree with that sentiment. There is also a strong majority (89 percent) who feel that "franchise signature" style buildings, such as the "Golden Arches" are not appropriate for the Hollow. This feeling relates back to the strong identity that Clarence Hollow has as a historic hamlet of small, local shops.

Ratings on Issues						
	Not Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important	No Answer
Small town atmosphere and historic charm	-	-	2%	19%	70%	9%
Historic buildings as an economic asset	2%	3%	9%	25%	56%	5%
Enforcement of property upkeep	4%	3%	13%	20%	52%	8%
Importance of trees and green space	-	-	4%	15%	76%	5%

The comments provided on the surveys underscore how much residents value the history and character of the Hollow. They support having the Hollow grow into a more vital business district with a wider range of businesses and activities, but they also feel strongly that its historic character, quaint charm and "small town atmosphere" are what they value most about Clarence Hollow. Other features that are highly valued include the stone fences, the trees, and the shops, many of which were cited by name. The most frequently cited problem identified by survey respondents was a need for better maintenance and upkeep, particularly on specific properties. Based on the number of comments about maintenance, this is a major issue. There were frequent comments that the area needs to be more pedestrian-friendly and easier to negotiate by foot or by bike. Traffic related problems (parking, speeding and truck traffic) were also mentioned frequently. Residents are supportive of efforts to improve the ability to walk around the hamlet area, including winter sidewalk snow removal. Seventy-one percent of respondents favor a municipal program for sidewalk snow removal in the Hollow.

Opinions on Specific Issues			
	Yes	No	NA
Do you think "Franchise Signature" style buildings should be allowed in Clarence Hollow (i.e. Golden Arches)?	10%	89%	1%
Do you favor a municipal program for sidewalk snow removal in the Hollow?	71%	26%	3%

Source: Clarence Hollow Association

Several comments referred to a need for a greater diversity of shopping opportunities, although it is clear that residents have a clear idea of what types of uses are appropriate in Clarence Hollow. A number of comments referred to the need for new development to "fit in". This pertained to both buildings and signage. People clearly support more business activity--many comments noted a need for more shops and small businesses. However, they also want businesses to be compatible in style and character to the existing character of the Hollow, with no big box stores, no fluorescent signs, and privately owned businesses preferred over franchise establishments. The prototype is a traditional "village" downtown, with East Aurora, Orchard Park and Williamsville cited as examples of what is desired.

H. Recommendations

Clarence Hollow has a wealth of assets and a number of competitive advantages that should be supported. At the same time, there are some issues that should be addressed in order for the area to achieve its full potential. A critical issue is the mismatch between the zoning and the type of development and redevelopment that is desired in the hamlet. Under current regulations, new development must conform to setbacks, lot sizes and parking requirements that were designed to regulate typical suburban style shopping strips, not historic hamlet style developments. This issue is being addressed in the proposed Traditional Neighborhood Design district and Overlay district prepared for the Clarence Hollow area as part of this study. The proposed zoning changes also help support reuse and redevelopment over new construction, and establish some basic design standards and guidelines for development.

The Streetscape project will be another important asset for the community. It will help define the physical limits of the hamlet, and make it stand out as a specific, identifiable and attractive destination. The aesthetic improvements will enhance the physical appearance of the Hollow and increase its appeal as a place to go, particularly for non-residents. This "sense of place" will also help distinguish the community as a location along Main Street, particularly for travelers who tend to drive through without noticing what is available. The project limits for this study were determined to a large degree by the NYSDOT project limits, and as noted above, there are businesses outside these boundaries which consider themselves part of the Clarence Hollow business community. To the extent that the Town is able to extend improvements to the west to incorporate these businesses, that will help improve the image and character of that portion of the Town.

The streetscape will also improve how the Hollow functions as a business district. It will provide better pedestrian accommodations, with improved sidewalks, crosswalks, benches and amenities throughout the project area. This issue is clearly a concern on the part of many residents. Many of the comments on the surveys indicated that people want to be able to walk around the Hollow more easily. Traffic speeds and the difficulty in crossing Main Street are also problems. Many of the elements of the streetscape will help provide some

"traffic calming", hopefully addressing some of the speeding issues. Clearly defined and signalized crosswalks will facilitate pedestrian movement across Main Street.

Better accommodations for pedestrians will also help promote increased use of local shops by residents within walking distance. The lack of good pedestrian linkages between the Hollow and the surrounding neighborhoods remains an issue to be resolved. Particularly on major roads, such as Salt Road or Strickler Road, it is difficult and often dangerous to attempt to walk to local shops. The bike path will alleviate this issue to some degree, but better linkages between the central business district and the residential areas surrounding it are still needed.

The streetscape project will also provide improved parking and bikeway linkages. Parking will always be an issue in a shopping district like Clarence Hollow, which was built in a pre-automobile era. Provisions in the proposed zoning amendments deal with the location, screening and design of parking. The streetscape improvements should help to encourage people to park their cars in one location and walk between stores, helping to alleviate the pressure for more and more parking. The new bike path will also encourage residents to use bicycles instead of cars for short trips, further helping to alleviate traffic congestion and parking problems.

A key asset of Clarence Hollow is its scenic setting and authentic historic character. These characteristics lend the area unique charm and character, and should be preserved. Its historic buildings, the distinct stone walls that have come to typify Clarence in general and the mature street trees throughout the project area should be preserved wherever feasible. These features help ensure that the Hollow retains a distinct and identifiable image, which distinguishes it from the many other retail options available throughout the region.

In terms of specific sites which should be preserved if possible, there are a number of buildings that have historic importance to the Town. These buildings are highlighted in a walking tour prepared for the Hollow and available in the Clarence Hollow Association's brochures and on their website. A listing of these buildings is attached to this report. The Town, in conjunction with the Town Historian, should determine if additional significant buildings should be added to this list.

While it should be a policy to encourage the reuse of existing structures wherever feasible, the listed buildings have particular importance to Clarence Hollow. Many of these buildings, such as the Meeting House, the Asa Ransom House, and the Odd Fellows Hall, have been successfully redeveloped, and are actively used. Every effort should be made to encourage their owners to maintain them in good condition. Any renovations or alterations should be made in a style that respects the architecture of the buildings, and preserves their historic integrity.

The Spoor's Hotel, also known as the West Shore House, is the most threatened historic structure in Clarence Hollow. This building, located at the corner of Main and Salt Roads, is a key parcel, and it should be considered a priority. The building is currently vacant and in need of repairs. It is one of the oldest, most visible and recognizable buildings in Clarence, and is located on a key intersection near the center of the historic Hollow area and adjacent to the new bike route. The building is currently for sale, and every effort should be made to ensure the new buyers understand its importance to the Hollow. Ideally, an appropriate new use should be identified for this structure, and incentives provided to help ensure its redevelopment. Given its state of disrepair, the Town may want to consider financial incentives of some sort to help subsidize the cost of renovation for potential new tenants. At a minimum, efforts should be made to ensure minimal maintenance and upkeep is made on the building to prevent "demolition by neglect".

Clarence Hollow has many vital businesses. It has a reputation as a center for antiques, and also has a number of gift stores, studios and other miscellaneous retail outlets. Businesses attract both local and visitor/tourism markets. Several of the businesses can be considered "destination retail" outlets, which means that potential customers make a point of going to these shops, sometimes from long distances. This wide market area draw increases the numbers of customers coming to the Clarence Hollow area as potential patrons of other businesses in the area, and represents an additional potential market source. It should be a priority to try to capitalize on this, making it more convenient and attractive for these customers to frequent other businesses in the area. The streetscape improvements will accomplish this to some degree, by making it easier and more appealing to walk through the Hollow, and by improving parking access. The Town should also support additional appropriate in-fill development and more activity throughout the Hollow to help encourage visitors to stroll from business to business. Customers will walk longer distances if there are intermediate destinations, such as other businesses, pocket parks or other amenities (benches, etc.). The result will be to encourage more "cross-over" shopping.

Clarence Hollow benefits from a strong and active merchants association. The Clarence Hollow Association (CHA) has made impressive progress in promoting the area. They have begun the process of "branding" the area, creating an identifiable and marketable image for the business district. They have cooperated on many joint efforts, including signage, a website, joint promotions and marketing efforts, and events. Their outreach efforts have contributed to the health of the area. The survey that was recently completed is another valuable tool the CHA has to refine their efforts. The Town should support the efforts of the Clarence Hollow Association, and work cooperatively with this group in their marketing efforts. For example, the Town may consider being a co-sponsor of additional events. The CHA is also a good conduit to assess business needs for potential Town economic development services, such as a façade program or a low-interest revolving loan fund for business activity, and tailor their offerings to meet demand.

In the case of a façade program, the Town should establish appropriate design guidelines prior to offering such a program to ensure that improvements are compatible with the character of the area and the specific building that is being renovated. We do not recommend dictating a particular style. Clarence Hollow has an eclectic mix of architecture, and this variety adds to its charm. However, all design should be of a very high quality, with simplicity and historic integrity being guidelines. For example, the Town should not prescribe specific window styles, but window size and placement should respect the original design and style of the building.

Clarence Hollow is located near an affluent, educated population base. Main Street (Route 5) is a major thoroughfare with relatively high traffic counts. The local population represents strong market potential, but there is a sense that there is "leakage" or lost sales opportunities, with residents driving to other shopping locations rather than patronizing local shops, and travelers through the Hollow not choosing to stop. It appears from survey responses that local residents would like to patronize shops in the Hollow on a more frequent basis. Reasons for not doing so include the difficulty in walking, the need to have more shopping outlets, and a desire for a more aesthetic atmosphere. The streetscape project will help improve the aesthetics of the area and "walkability". The Hollow would also benefit from having more retail outlets and a diversification of the retail mix. Residents support more retailers, and a greater variety of outlets, as long as the businesses are in character with existing businesses. In particular, there appears to be significant demand for coffee shops and other types of casual dining. Additional eating and drinking establishments would also help encourage shoppers to extend their stay in the area, and perhaps do additional shopping, thereby supporting tourism efforts.

Clarence Hollow is perceived as being out in the "country", but it is relatively easily accessible for much of the eastern suburbs. However, it is not so conveniently located that it will

become a major shopping district for general retail shopping. The Hollow should concentrate on its existing strength as a niche market, focusing on specialty retail, like antiques and unique gifts, supplemented with convenience retail-type outlets for the local market area and tourism support services such as additional eating and drinking establishments.

Signage is an issue that was raised in the Streetscape portion of this study as a problem. Survey results confirmed this finding, and the recommendations bear repeating here. It is recommended that the Town of Clarence consider retaining a signage consultant that could design a uniform signage treatment for Clarence Hollow and perhaps other hamlet areas in the Town. A consistent sign treatment helps reinforce "sense of place", which assists in efforts to attract increased visitor traffic. It also helps alleviate problems with inappropriate or unattractive signage. The Town should also review its existing sign ordinance to assess whether it provides appropriate protections and standards.

Another priority should be the issue of property maintenance. It is clear from the survey results that many residents feel there needs to be better upkeep of properties in the Hollow. This is a difficult issue, because unless it is a health or safety issue, it is difficult for the Town to force property owners to maintain higher upkeep standards. However, improved maintenance and clean-ups would support business efforts by making the Hollow a more attractive place to be. The new streetscape improvements are likely to encourage higher standards by example. Enforcement of existing standards should be a priority, and the Town should consider creative methods to encourage a higher standard of maintenance. These efforts could be coordinated with the Clarence Hollow Association.

On a related note, the Town should investigate the feasibility of a municipal snow removal program in the Hollow. It is clear that residents support the idea in the abstract, but these responses were made without knowing the costs of such a program. (This fact probably resulted in the relatively high non-response rate to that question). The Town should determine what the costs of such a program would be, and determine whether property owners are willing (and able) to pay for these costs. If it is financially feasible, such a program should be a priority.

Finally, there is a sense that the Hollow could benefit from additional tourism activity. This would bring in additional shoppers and help provide additional market support to the businesses in the Hollow. There is not a sufficient population density around the Hollow to support a business district without attracting shoppers from outside the area, and the Town should support efforts to bring in additional visitors. The Town could help by providing tourism information to local and state tourism agencies, such as the "I Love New York" program through Empire State Development. Clarence Hollow, with antique and specialty shopping, its historic atmosphere and other nearby attractions (e.g. Antique World, Pumpkinville, etc.) could be packaged and marketed as a side trip to visitors to the Buffalo-Niagara area, or as a day trip for residents of Western New York. The Town of Wyoming has been very successful in this regard. As noted above, encouraging the development of tourism support services, such as coffee shops and more restaurants, will help in this effort.

The Town Park is an underutilized asset in regard to potential tourism development. The Park is currently officially open to Town residents only. Particularly for residents of Western New York that live outside of Clarence, this policy discourages visitation. The Town should consider making the Town Park and its facilities available to all visitors, not just residents. The Town Park could also become a component of a tourism package, including stops at the Historical Society and other attractions in the vicinity.

Special events can also help promote additional tourism activity in the area. This is an area where a more open policy toward the Town Park could be beneficial, with the Park serving as the venue for some types of special events. Events can also be effective at helping to develop community spirit and encouraging local residents to come to the Hollow and

patronize its merchants. Making the Hollow more attractive to visitors from outside will have the spin-off benefit of making it more appealing to local residents also.

In conclusion, the business district in Clarence Hollow benefits from a number of advantages that place it in a much better position than many of the small business districts throughout Western New York. It has the beginnings of an identifiable image, and it has a strong business association that is actively working toward improving its condition and market share. It is in an affluent and growing area, characterized by families with incomes significantly higher than the County's average. Furthermore, the streetscape project, while it will be disruptive over the course of construction, will result in a number of important physical improvements to the area that will increase not only its attractiveness, but will also improve how it functions. The recommendations in this report provide some guidance as to other types of activities that can help promote increased activity in the business district. They represent important first steps in what should become an ongoing effort to support Clarence Hollow and its business district as an important asset in the Town of Clarence.

Appendix