

Creekside Planned Development District
Analysis and Recommendations
November 3, 2014



Village of Cazenovia
Madison County, New York



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This report was prepared for the Village of Cazenovia Board of Trustees at their request in order to provide a public process and document that provides analysis and recommendation for a small but complex area in the heart of the village. This report makes recommendations for resolving land use issues, as well as approaches for park and trail development. It was developed through multiple field visits, which included stakeholder meetings, and public meetings, which provided for ample and important public discussion of the variety of issues facing this part of the village.

The Creekside Planned Development District is a potential district for development and redevelopment which would require possible rezoning, as well as opportunities for park and trail development. This report assesses the potential for each area of the proposed development district with recommendations. Based upon public input and analysis this study recommends a variety of measures to move forward with including zoning recommendations and a trail development plan.



The Creekside Planned Development District study area is comprised of three general areas for analysis as depicted on the map to the left:

1. The parcels South and East along Chittenango Creek,
2. Riverside Drive and Chittenango Creek Parcels
3. The Village parcel between Riverside Drive and Albany Street parcels including the library.

Each area has unique attributes and each affects the viability of the other whether for park development, or commercial or residential development. To the east of the district the Atwell Mill area includes a private drive with office and commercial uses. The center of the district includes a larger parcel owned by the village that has been contemplated for redevelopment and is currently used for parking. This parcel was formerly the site of the town highway garage.

1. South and East Creekside Parcels

The parcels to the south and east have commercial uses of primarily a professional office or service/commercial use. 4 Chenango St. is a professional office building with a balance of land

that is effectively wetland/natural areas associated with Chittenango Creek. This balance of the parcel has provided and still has the opportunity for public use along the creek and a trail linking this parcel with the other

properties in this area located on a private street and former railbed off of Albany Street known as the Atwell Mill. The dead end street continues on to Veteran's ballpark as an informal trail and NYSEG ROW. There is no direct vehicular connection between the commercial property on Chenango Street and the properties behind the Atwell Mill.

2. Chittenango Creek/Riverside Drive

This area includes Chittenango Creek, the dam, repurposed former mill buildings, Boy Scouts camp and undeveloped land along Chittenango Creek and is shown with the diagonal hatch lines in the middle of the Creekside PDD in the map above. This area is located entirely in designated floodplain, including the higher areas likely due to elevation of the floodplain by the dam.



The historic significance of this area and the former mill buildings and raceway are well documented and provide an opportunity for historical interpretation for a trail. The undeveloped land along the creek is not exceptionally natural as it is very likely fill material from the former industrial activities, but there is a mix of vegetation along much of the bank including some larger trees. It has very good fishing access and due to the lack of vegetation seems to make for easy casting.

Riverside Drive itself is rather narrow, with only 20 feet of paved width and coming very close to an apartment building. Twenty feet is sufficient for a village side street that is a dead end, or that has sidewalks. However this drive is the only access to the Creekside area as well as the public parking lot. At one time Riverside Drive continued to Albany Street. The ROW is still there, however vehicular access is blocked. Pedestrians and bicyclists use the former drive.

3. Undeveloped Village Lot

Between Riverside Drive and the parcels fronting along Albany Street is an undeveloped lot, formerly the town's highway department garage and now owned by the village. The lot is terraced into two portions. The upper serves as a public parking lot, and is effectively the parking lot for the Cazenovia Library and Museum. It is unpaved, but signage, lighting and some guiding parking structures have been put in place. There is a connecting sidewalk between this parking area and Albany Street. Almost the entire property



is included in some level of floodplain designation. The lower portion is dedicated to free all-day parking for the village and overnight parking by permit. There have been concerted efforts to develop the village parcel that have not come to fruition.

Analysis and Recommendations

Through review of the history of the parcels, village initiatives for development and meeting with stakeholders it is clear there are several objectives for each area and the performance of the area as a whole. Because the area as a whole is small, specific strategy with regard to development and redevelopment potential is warranted. The proposed PDD serves several pivotal roles in the village such as central parking, parks, trails, historic preservation, stream and wetland conservation, infill development, and beautification. All of these roles and their ability to be played out affect the viability of the other.

1. South and East Creekside Parcels

4 Chenango Street is a professional office building consisting of doctor's offices and offices for a telecommunications company. Plans for expansion have been delayed because the use is pre-existing and non-conforming in a residential zoning district. Mill Street leading away from the village center, and then turning to Chenango Street are primarily residential in character with larger older homes increasing in lot size



relative to distance from the village center. The creek and topography combined with lush vegetation, mature trees and private preserves creates a quiet green corridor. The use at 4 Chenango Street as a professional office is likely due to the former industrial uses that dominated the area along the creek. The dam on the property creates a pleasing sound as water cascades over the spillway and serves as a reminder of the industrial heritage. The “front” of the building is primarily toward the dam and the creek. This orientation allows some vegetation to the south of the building and creates a natural buffer to the residential parcels neighboring to the south. This natural buffer could be improved and enhanced to provide a further buffer to neighboring properties.

Future Land Use

The owner of the parcel has applied for a planned development district, which includes the expansion of the building for office use. This proposal also includes designation of the creekside area as some type of public space including improving and formalizing a trail that connects to the commercial area along the creek to the east. The parcel appears to have coexisted with the neighboring residential uses and the PDD application includes other improvements to the property to increase these buffers. Professional office uses are generally

accepted as compatible with residential uses with appropriate lighting and buffers and limited hours all of which this property generally complies with and any improvements will further improve.

Current Condition

The building and grounds at 4 Chenango are in good condition and blend into the neighborhood. It is not likely the property's use will change in the near future. However, regarding compatible future uses, it would be an attractive residential setting for apartments, condominiums or townhomes as well.

Possible Approach

The village should pursue some means of allowing an expansion of use on the site, and accept the owner's offer to formally convey rights for public space along the creek. This would allow for a more formal trail along the south side of the creek connecting to the private development and the informal trail to Veteran's Park. It would also give the Planning Board the opportunity to mitigate any impacts or issues the business is having on the neighborhood. Without this type of review, these issues may never be mitigated and current buffers may deteriorate rather than improve.

There are different ways of converting this property's status to a permitted use rather than a pre-existing non-conforming use. One way would be to allow for professional office as a use by special permit in a new zoning district. Another would be to examine and possibly alter the village's pre-existing non-conforming language.

Special Use Permits

Special use permits are sometimes referred to as those uses allowed in a zoning district, but not everywhere in a district. The primary concerns of a Special Use Permit have to do with the impact on the neighborhood. This can either be written into a new planned development district zone, or the pre-existing non-conforming use language might be altered to allow expansion of current uses by Special Use Permit. By carefully assessing uses at the time of expansion, the special permit process allows for mitigation of issues, while at the same time giving the owner a reason to improve the property.

Pre-Existing Non-Conforming Uses

Another means of allowing the expansion of the use is through reconsideration of the village's pre-existing non-conforming use language. The altering of the current language would require analysis with regard to the number, type and possible improvement or expansion of current pre-existing non-conforming uses village wide. The reason that many laws limit expansion or improvement is due to an assumption that the parcel's use will conform over time. In reality the uses persist, but in a limiting state, and without any means of addressing issues with incompatibility. This often results in chronic deterioration of properties, tension between residents and business owners and negative effects on everyone's property value.

In this case, at this time, it appears that creation of a new zoning district allowing the use, or expansion of the current use, through a special use permit is the more reasonable option. Altering the pre existing non-

conforming language would require a village wide study, and specific outreach to several areas and many properties in the village.

Other Land in the South and East Creekside Parcels

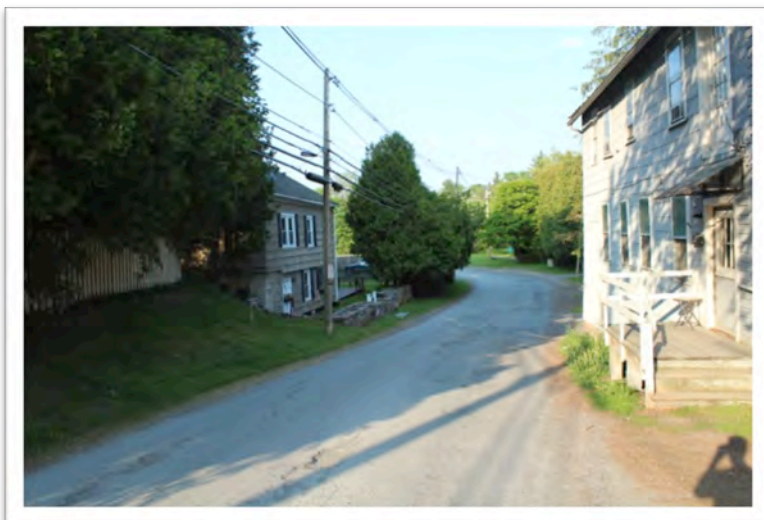
The Atwell Mill area on the east side of Chittenango Creek is developed and land use changes don't appear to be necessary. The private drive along the utility Right of Way leads to an informal trail to Veteran's ballfield on Chenango Street, and the potential trail from 4 Chenango Street leads to this right of way and the private street. Right of way easements should be established to the Veteran's Ballfield and Albany Street, and a plan for signage and any paths should be developed. Establishing the ROW easement for a trail is recommended but the trail should have an outlet that is legally accessible by the public. An overall recommendation for trail development is provided in the trails section below.

2. Chittenango Creek and Riverside Drive

The Chittenango Creek and Riverside Drive area, as described above, is largely designated as floodplain. This is more severe for the portion along the creek and to the north. At the corner of Riverside Drive and Mill Street, the parcels sit much higher than the lower section of Riverside Drive. The lot at the corner of Mill and Riverside is used as a warehouse and although is adjacent to the dam does not include most of the dam according to tax maps.



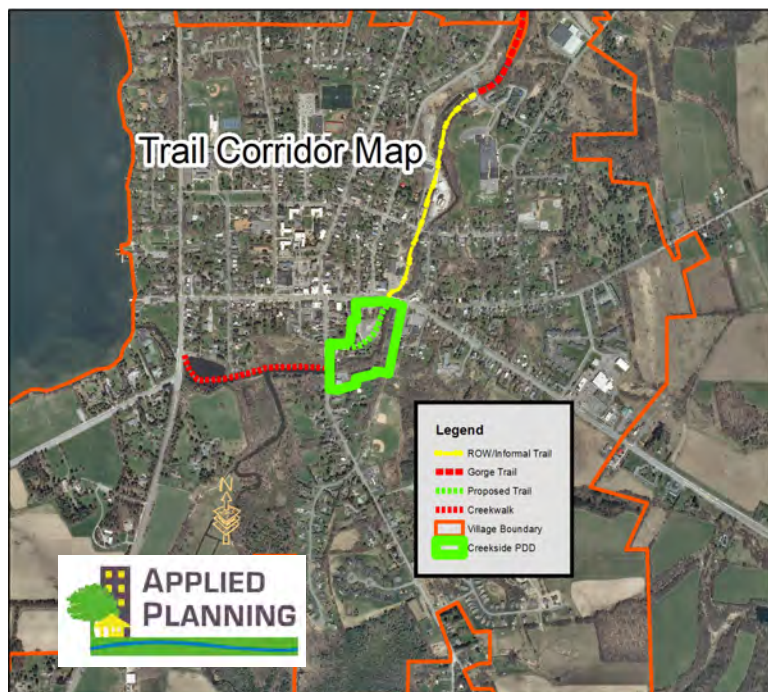
The warehouse property is a relatively small lot. Although it has a higher elevation than the properties on lower Riverside Drive, its proximity to the dam causes it to be in a designated floodplain. The dam's presence increases the flood risk by elevating the floodplain which greatly complicates any redevelopment. Ideally, it might be possible to have an attractive building of 2-3.5 stories of a similar footprint to the existing that might contain apartments or condominiums and incorporate parking in the building and increasing green space.



In this case, the building is maintained but the use is incompatible and detracting from the neighborhood. When viewed in contrast to the stately homes on Mill and Chenango Streets, the natural

setting of the creek and the private parks and trails, it seems a relic of former land uses. Similar to 4 Chenango St. the incentive to improve the property beyond basic maintenance is lacking.

Lower Riverside Drive has an interesting mix of buildings, mostly former mill buildings that have been converted to other uses. The first neighboring the warehouse is a former mill building that has been repurposed as an apartment building. It is interesting in its close proximity to the street and that it spans along the slope, exposing the foundation. This is a curious building and is important to the character of this area. It is a direct example of the former mill activity, and is the type of older building that lends character to a village. A redevelopment proposal that sought to use both this building and a newer one on the corner might prove to be very interesting.



The three remaining parcels with buildings on upper Riverside Drive are not available for redevelopment. The first is a camp/studio building and is located on the creek. As a preexisting building it is compatible, but redevelopment other than a single family home would be extremely difficult and unlikely due to the proximity to the dam and the creek and being in the lowest part of the floodplain. An elevated building might be possible, but is cost prohibitive. The next building downstream is the Boy Scout camp. This is even lower in the floodplain, and is directly on the creek and is likely a former mill building. There is a restrictive covenant on the property that requires that it revert to an estate if it does not continue as a Boy Scout camp. Both of these parcels are fairly green and in keeping with the natural setting of the creekside area. The third property is a single family home and not available for any type of redevelopment.

A complication or opportunity in this area has to do with the lot lines and the village street. The residence on the north side of Riverside Drive also includes an odd shaped parcel along the south side of Riverside Drive adjacent to the Boy Scout camp and the upper storage parcel. If the

owners are willing it would make sense for the village to purchase that odd lot to include as part of a linear park and trail.

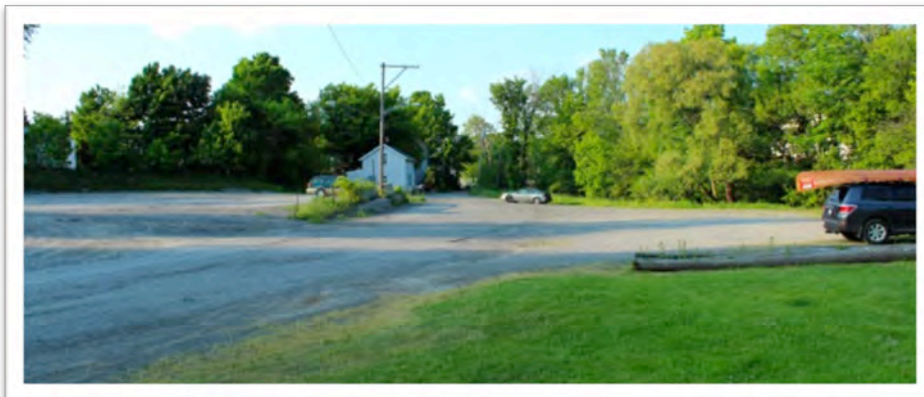
General Recommendations for the Chittenango Creek and Riverside Drive Area:

- Develop a plan for trail development and design and creation of a linear park along the creek,
- Revise code to reflect redevelopment of the warehouse site based upon a realistic build out analysis,
- Encourage maintenance and preservation or redevelopment of the apartment building,
- Encourage maintenance and current uses for the remaining three buildings,
- Purchase by the village of the odd shaped lot for a trail/linear park.

Trail Connection and Development

This area of the village is a broken link in a chain of potential linear resources in the village. There is a great opportunity to tie these resources together with a Creekside trail that would continue an existing trail on Cazenovia Preservation Foundation property to the west and through to the Gorge trail to the north. Currently, the ROW for the trail are established in different forms north of Albany Street. However the path is very informal, and is not signed or improved at all. A formalized trail would link the lake with the rural areas to the north and connect recreational, cultural, and natural resources along the creek corridor in the village. This would also provide a significant linear park with multiple opportunities for cultural and recreational resources along its length. Reportedly, the corridor is promised through the village on various properties from Riverside Drive to Clark Street where the Gorge Trail begins. The goal is to have a connective pedestrian corridor linking the lake (Lakeland Park), Carpenter's Pond/Creekwalk, Riverside Drive (library, parking, village center, Chittenango Creek), and the Gorge Trail and beyond.

Linear Park Along Chittenango Creek with Interpretive Features



The area along Chittenango Creek has the highest potential as a public park on either side. This is due to the restrictions on this area being in the floodplain and the degree to which it is already used as a park and fishing access. Also, a park would align well with the Boy Scouts use

along the creek on the north side. On the south side, the presence of the dam, and the wooded area with the pond form a natural park like feel near the parking lot for the parcel at 4 Chenango Street.

A Trail Plan

There is a definite need for the village to create a trail plan. The amount of detail does not need to be high, but high enough to base general decisions on, as well as form the basis for future funding requests (funding discussed below). This is also a good way to gain public support of the trail, as well as inform the public of the potential and establish the level of use and preliminary design.

Challenges

Although there are some design challenges to establishment of this trail, namely road crossings, there may also be some policy/funding challenges.

The only non-private funding sources at this time are federal sources. This funding is very limited and competitive. It also may double the ultimate cost of a project with very strict design and process requirements. The other factor with using federal funding is that the trail must meet a high level of public use. That is, most, if not all, federally funded trails require handicap accessibility which means a higher level of paving and development. This means a simple rough path is not eligible or acceptable.

What this means is that in order to utilize larger federal funding sources, the community will need to develop an overall vision for the trail corridor, and its “level of use” through development of a trail plan for the corridor. Alternatively, the village and Cazenovia Preservation Foundation may find it easier to work together to raise funding for improving each section using local resources. Development of a Trail Plan would facilitate that decision making process.

Road Crossings

As a part of this study, Mill Street and Albany Street were assessed for possible trail corridor crossings. Each



street can accommodate a safe trail crossing, which will at the same time provide traffic calming. However, the funding for the Albany Street crossing should be included as a Transportation Improvement Project for the region, which will require some effort on the part of the village and should be studied in a trail plan.

The Mill Street Trail crossing would occur at the bridge over Chittenango Creek on the north side. The pavement would ideally be narrowed, either physically or with paint, to form bulb-outs on both sides which reduces the distance of the crossing, and provides a queue for cyclists and pedestrians waiting to cross. This type of crossing is a growing trend and has been successfully installed around the state.

After crossing Mill Street, the east side will need a specific design to enhance the sidewalk to Riverside Drive. Redevelopment of the SE corner of Riverside Drive and Mill Street should include and require accommodation of the trail around the corner.

Along Riverside Drive the trail would have to be on the road for a short distance between the apartment building and Mill Street using signage and street paint to indicate as much until there is enough ROW width to install a formal trail on the side. The trail would help define the creekside park and make its way to Albany Street. A connection should be included in parking and development plans to connect the trail and creekside park to the library and path to Albany Street for pedestrians with good bike parking provided in the parking lot for the library.



Albany Street

Crossing Albany Street where the current Riverside Drive is blocked off is challenging but certainly not insurmountable. Alternatives such as going under Albany Street at the bridge over Chittenango Creek, and even routing the trail along the eastern bank and crossing on the east side of the bridge were given consideration. Crossing at the end of Riverside appears to be the more feasible option. Creating a median of some type in Albany Street just west of the bridge deck will be necessary to make the crossing safe, and cause traffic to both slow and



be aware that there is a crossing at this location. The median would simply consume the excessive middle turning lane that seems to serve no useful purpose at this location. Ideally, the median crossing would not cross

the road directly, but rather turn to the right forcing trail users to look more directly at oncoming traffic. This would also better define the left turn into Buyea's for traffic moving east and also further require that left turns into the gas station parking lot be executed further to the west.

Creekside Park

The Village should continue to develop and expand a creekside park along Chittenango Creek. There appears to be some opportunity for acquiring some odd shaped lots adjacent to the village owned lot. The park with a trail has great opportunities for a variety of activities related to the creek, the historic mills, and the museum. The unique layout of this area and topography forms a natural amphitheater, and this could be enhanced in order to create a venue for plays, music and other activities.



3. Undeveloped Village Lot

The core of this development district is the lot owned by the village, formerly the town garage and adjacent parcels along Albany Street and Riverside Drive. The hope for development of this area for a variety of purposes has proved economically infeasible on a grand or wholesale context. Also, with an expanding public library, and new issues of overnight parking for Albany Street residents as second and third stories are developed as apartments, these hopes need to be realigned with a more realistic expectation.



The site has constraints in the way of floodplain designation, lack of access, some contamination, and proximity to the creek. The site's current state of appearance as an empty lot is not a real incentive to propose incremental development on adjacent lots on Albany Street, or consolidation of lots to create a viable development parcel or parcels. So the existing uses persist with little improvements here and there.



It is often the hope of communities that a developer will propose a grand scheme for a lot or area such as this and that is still possible here. Alternatively, the board may decide that the development potential should be better balanced with other public resources such as an improved public parking area primarily serving the library, businesses and residents of Albany Street, the proposed park and trail and any proposed development.

Wholesale Development

In a similar case, the village of Marcellus experienced a wholesale redevelopment of a former woolen mill site where the Upper Crown Mill was completely redeveloped. This was a successful development that was adjacent to a creek, in the floodplain and even had a dam involved where the spillway was removed to alleviate the flood risk. The site boasts a somewhat large condominium building with underground parking, a public library building, and restoration of a wreck of a building into a professional office. The site was not without its issues, but does show what is possible. The village could revisit the RFP process for specific types of development with requirements for retaining public parking, parks, and trails. This would allow development interests to perform the calculus necessary to propose the number and types of units, building sizes and orientation to make the site profitable and provide the necessary public amenities to make the sale of public property worthwhile with respect to public interest.

Alternatively, the village could seek to develop the public amenities, parking, park, trail, improved access, that would then refine and better define the potential development areas. This would require a specific plan and coordination with adjacent land-owners to decide how much parking, in terms of both number of spaces and area, trail right of way, park areas along the creek and some type of pedestrian/linear park connection to the library and Albany Street access, a plan and commitments and consent from adjacent landowners on improved vehicular access from and to Albany Street, and internal site circulation of vehicles and pedestrians.

These are the common themes whether the village or a developer takes the initiative to improve the area:

- Public Parking,
- Connection of Creekside Park with Albany Street Access at the Library via a path,
- Access and Internal Circulation,
- Adjacent Landowner Consent/Cooperation

Public Parking

Any future plan for this area must include enhancement of the current parking area. Currently, some relatively impermanent improvements have increased the organization and utility of the parking area directly behind the library. Because of the slope of the site and the proximity to the sidewalk connection to Albany Street the upper area is the most used area for parking.

There is a need for a variety of parking at this location. The library drives most of the need, but the village hall and businesses along Albany Street would benefit from a fully developed, attractive and secure public parking lot as would any future park and trail along the creek. Improvements such as lighting, paving, striping, curbs, stormwater management, landscaping furniture such as benches, trash receptacles, sidewalks etc. could be funded through parking fees. Some of these fees could be through metered parking, but also a fee schedule for the library and any other resident that may need overnight parking which would be designated to a few parking spots. From a higher perspective, it may make more sense to form a special district to pay for a variety of improvements in the village center area. Fees for parking, unless collected at meters, can be difficult to establish in what is perceived as a fair manner. The addition of parking meters would obviously be very difficult to establish in a village that doesn't currently include them. The fact is that "free" parking is very expensive to the general public (see "The High Cost of Free Parking" by Donald C. Shoup) and some way of making up for that cost should be born by the area it serves.

Challenges

The challenge is to develop enough area for useful parking, but reserving space for development and creating a meaningful connection between the sidewalk to Albany Street and the creek/trail. This may require a reorientation of the site, addition of fill, and possibly a new alignment of Riverside Drive.

The cost of funding improvements and maintenance of a parking lot is a challenge in and of itself. Unlike a path or trail that has a much longer useful life, parking lots carry heavy vehicles and require much more attention to the base and surface binding.

Access and Internal Circulation

Another challenge is access to and from the Riverside Drive area and internal circulation. Currently all access occurs on Riverside Drive, which as described above has limited width adequate for vehicles, but struggles to accommodate more than that. Increased regular traffic and the addition of a trail alignment that will likely see increased use as the trail is improved will put further pressure on this limited width street. Because of this, the possibility of creating an access point on Albany Street has been studied and appears to be very possible. This analysis does not include a map of that area as the details are still being pursued.

There is an ideal location on the western property line of the Red Apple store's lot leading directly into the village lot. This access could be oriented as one way in, or out or ideally as a two-lane driveway. The parking lot and future development would provide internal flow and circulation. This driveway would provide much

better exposure to the existence of a parking area behind Albany Street properties, as well as the trail and creekside park. It would also allow for better multiple modes of travel on the narrow segment to Mill Street.

The proposed trail would consume most of the Riverside Drive ROW to Albany Street with only emergency vehicle access and a shared drive for the two residences in this area.



Zoning Recommendations

1. Create a new Creekside PDD zoning district as shown on the map.

Allowed uses might include:

- Residential
- Single Family Home
- All other residential by Site Plan Review
- Professional Offices by Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review
- Museums by Special Use Permit
- Municipal Uses
- Appropriate Recreational Uses

2. Incorporate the residential property next to the village lot into the neighboring R-6 residential zoning district.

3. Designate the land to become parkland, and probably the Boy Scout Camp as an Open Space District. This may require conservation easements or other

restrictions held by the village, and concurrence by landowners.

Summary

The Creekside/Riverside Drive area has seen a variety of proposals for its transformation over the last ten years. Starting with the decommissioning of the town garage, and transfer to the Village of Cazenovia grand plans have come and gone and the market's support for such plans has withered. The environmental constraints of the site match the envisioned opportunity and while not enough to completely dismiss any development, they are certainly enough to cause hesitation.

The demands on the property will only increase in the future; parking, development, parks, trails. These amenities will require investment on the part of the village, and will hopefully increase the likelihood for private investment. Instead of a gradual project-by-project improvement strategy, what is suggested here is a concerted effort to design and implement amenities and leave room for private investment. This includes a Creekside park, trail, public parking and connectivity to the surrounding resources.

The other challenges in this area are the properties along Mill and Chenango Streets that awkwardly interrupt an otherwise residential setting. The intent here is to encourage investment and reinvestment while at the same time helping these properties blend into and better integrate into the neighborhood.

Finally, a systematic trail development strategy is critical. The piecework network of rights of way (promised or established), former streets, and underdeveloped corridors presents a great opportunity. The time is right for unifying those resources into a systematic network that serves a higher level of public interest.