

## MONROE AVENUE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Town of Brighton  
Building and Planning Department  
April 9, 1997

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## Executive Summary

### Goal of the Plan

The goal of the Monroe Avenue Comprehensive Plan is to address Town of Brighton regulations, policies, and actions related to physical design features and land uses along Monroe Avenue so that they better: 1) enable the successful commercial development of the avenue, 2) enhance the aesthetic appeal of private and public properties along the avenue and 3) ensure that proposed changes protect the interests of residential communities in the Monroe Avenue area.

### Need for a Plan

The following list summarizes the factors that led to the decision by the Town Board to authorize a study of the physical design and land use issues along Monroe Avenue.

- Historically the central artery in the Town of Brighton, Monroe Avenue has special significance to the Town, defining the character of the Town to both residents and visitors.
- Residents, property owners, business owners, and Town officials have commented on the aesthetic "deterioration" of the streetscape and the apparent increase in vacancies along Monroe Avenue.
- The commercial vitality of the businesses along Monroe Avenue is threatened by increasing competition from other areas and the aesthetic decline of the Avenue.
- The juxtaposition of commercial properties and residences in the Monroe Avenue corridor requires that special attention be given to permitted land uses (e.g. types of businesses) on Monroe Avenue to minimize negative impacts on surrounding residences.
- Many of the properties along Monroe Avenue do not conform to existing use regulations. Desirable businesses are discouraged from attempting to locate on Monroe Avenue because of the lengthy and difficult review process and the likelihood that after completing the process they will be denied permission to operate. These reviews also take time from the Zoning Board of Appeals and thus place unwarranted burdens on both the board and other applicants.
- Maintenance of the "neighborhood commercial" character of Monroe Avenue necessitates special consideration of permitted uses and landscaping and architectural design options.
- A proposal by the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation for the reconstruction of Monroe Avenue offered opportunities for streetscape improvements along the avenue that warranted investigation.

### Scope of the Plan

Regulatory and design changes are proposed for the entire length of Monroe Avenue but are

concentrated on those sections that provide the greatest land use challenges because of their existing use and physical constraints. The plan has five components:

1. A parcel inventory and market perspective prepared by Pyramid Brokerage Company, Inc.;
2. A streetscape design concept and impact analysis prepared by Environmental Design and Research, P.C.;
3. A survey of businesses and residents in the corridor prepared by Rochester Institute of Technology students and administered by the Town of Brighton;
4. Recommendations for Town of Brighton regulatory and signage changes, prepared by Phoenix Associates, Inc.; and
5. Public forums, through the creation of a Monroe Avenue Steering Committee (MASC), to provide property owners, business owners, and residents the opportunity to comment on the work of the consultants and to offer suggestions regarding the overall plan.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the consultants and the contributions of area residents, business/property owners and the Monroe Avenue Steering Committee.

1. Change use designation BE-2 to BE-F for Monroe Avenue addresses #1454 through #1520 (even) and #1457 to #1465 (odd).
2. Create a new Use District designation -BE-3, Office/Commercial-Mixed Use and designate Monroe Avenue addresses 1530 to 1688 (even) and 1485 to 1685 (odd) as BE-3. Standards for the BE-3 District to be designed to promote re-use of existing converted residential structures for office, personal and business service, and low-intensity retail and restaurant businesses. Structures and uses to be limited in square feet of floor area to reflect existing structures and uses. Other standards will maintain greenspace and control other negative impacts as described in Recommendation 3.
3. Revise BE-F District use regulations to:
  - a. Allow retail and service businesses as permitted uses subject to specific standards (to be defined).
  - b. Allow restaurants and other retail and non-retail food services as conditional uses subject to specific standards. These standards are to be defined in the regulations to be drafted, but shall include (but not be limited to) restrictions on lights, odors, refuse, traffic, setbacks to residential areas and hours of operation. Bars and taverns are not proposed to be allowed, and the regulations shall be drafted so as

to prevent the conversion of restaurants to such uses. The standards shall also ensure that the size of new uses, and of any new structures, are in keeping with the scale of existing structures.

4. Revise BF-1 and BF-2 District use regulations to allow restaurants and other retail and non-retail food services as conditional uses subject to specific standards (to be defined).
5. Investigate the formation of a Business Improvement District for Monroe Avenue
6. Revise parking regulations to:
  - a. Change parking standards for restaurants from one space per two seats or 100 sf of floor area to one space per three seats plus one for each three employees.
  - b. Ensure that parking use designations are consistent with uses permitted in district definitions.
7. Revise bulk regulations for BE-F, BF-1 and BF-2 Districts to allow greater building density and impervious coverage, reflecting the constraints of existing development. In no event shall new development be permitted at a greater density and/or coverage by impervious surfaces than the average of existing development. Generous setbacks to adjoining residential properties shall be maintained. Include minimum dimensional standards for streetscape and screen landscaping and ensure that greenspace is not reduced below the existing average.
8. Prepare a Monroe Avenue parking study .
9. Investigate improvements to Monroe Avenue from Westfall Road to Clover Street, including the 1-590 interchange.
10. Physical improvements within the Monroe Avenue right-of-way by the Town.
11. Incorporate streetscape design guidelines in district and site plan review regulations. Guidelines to offer specific options based on property location (e.g., corner lot) and layout (e.g., front-yard parking). Development of the guidelines to begin with a design charrette on February 15, 1997.
12. Revise regulations regarding permitted street address signage, the use of festive or decorative banners with a common theme or themes (but without business identification), and the sign permit process.
13. Revise District assignments of the former Post Office and the residentially zoned area of the parking lot at Brighton Commons.
14. Review non-conforming apartment uses to determine the appropriateness of existing zoning.

15. Investigate the possibility of the participation of N.Y.S.D.O.T. in right-of-way improvements, including the modification of intersections and the addition of and/or improvement to pedestrian facilities.
16. Form a long-term MASC committee to review progress toward goal.
17. Include a review of Monroe Avenue improvements in the annual budget process.
18. Incorporate architectural design guidelines in district regulations.

## Introduction

The Monroe Avenue Comprehensive Plan is a policy plan designed to articulate a vision of how Monroe Avenue can be successfully developed in ways that sustain the values of Brighton residents and protect residential neighborhoods from the negative impacts of development. The Comprehensive Plan makes basic policy choices and provides a flexible framework for adapting to real conditions over time.. The ideas in the plan were developed through discussion and debate and the creative thinking of Brighton citizens and business owners working with Town staff and elected officials.

### Premise & Vision

The Monroe Avenue Comprehensive Plan is based on a premise that:

- I. The most important function of the Monroe Avenue corridor is to provide appealing and safe commercial services for the residents of Brighton,
- II. To provide those services, Monroe Avenue must be commercially successful,
- III. Entrepreneurs can best decide, within the confines of good planning, which enterprises will succeed commercially and will reflect the desires of Brighton residents, and
- IV. Town government can minimize any conflicts between proposed businesses and Town residents and provide the infrastructure to allow Monroe Avenue to develop to the benefit of both residents and businesses.

Working from this premise, the strategies implemented once the plan is adopted will make it easier for businesses for which residents have expressed a desire to locate on Monroe Avenue, will minimize the potential negative impacts of those businesses on residents living close to Monroe Avenue, and will promote the functional and aesthetic improvement of the Avenue as a whole.

The Plan seeks to promote this vision of Monroe Avenue:

*Monroe Avenue is an area that the Town and its residents can be proud of. It is visually appealing, distinctive, safe and clean. It provides a healthy balance between a variety of activities that serve Brighton residents, respect the surrounding residential neighborhoods and exhibit an overall character that identify them as belonging to Brighton.*

### Goal of the Plan

The goal of the Monroe Avenue Comprehensive Plan is to address Town of Brighton regulations, policies, and actions related to physical design features and land uses along Monroe Avenue so that they better:

- 1) Enable the successful commercial development of the avenue,
- 2) Enhance the aesthetic appeal of private and public properties along the avenue, and
- 3) Ensure that proposed changes protect the interests of residential communities in the Monroe Avenue area.

### Significance of Monroe Avenue

Monroe Avenue has special significance for the Town of Brighton. It is the central business corridor of the town, with approximately 300 commercial, service and professional businesses along its two and one-quarter mile route; it is the focus of a well-established residential community, with approximately 190 apartment units located on the avenue and residential neighborhoods bordering on either side; and it is often called the "Gateway to Brighton," providing the image of Brighton that many visitors take with them when they leave.

### History

In the mid-twentieth century, Brighton began to develop as a "bedroom community" of Rochester, accommodating an influx of executives and professionals from the city. The introduction of streetcar and bus service along the avenue prompted the commercial development that exists today; however, the commercial development of Monroe Avenue did not take place in a coordinated manner. As the character of the avenue changed from residential to commercial, individual properties were developed as best fit the needs and budgets of individual property owners. This resulted in the intermingling of single family homes, retail strip plazas, single and multiple-family residences converted to commercial or office uses, office buildings, apartment complexes, gas and auto service stations, and motels. Structures range in age from newly built to one hundred and six years old, resulting in a disharmony of architecture and landscaping along the avenue.

The lack of development coordination has combined with increasingly tight public and private budgets and increased competition to have a negative impact on Monroe Avenue. Much of the streetscape is lacking in greenspace — parking lots often take the place of front yards. Some commercial properties suffer high turnover rates, and a few are chronically vacant.

The regulation of land uses on Monroe Avenue has also been difficult. Because of the generally small lot sizes along the avenue and the close proximity of residences, regulations along much of the avenue have not permitted restaurants and other uses with significant potential impact on surrounding residences. This restriction has impeded the development of a commercially appealing mixture of uses on the avenue and limited the appeal of the avenue to surrounding residents as an area for shopping and recreation.

#### Background of the Plan

The Town has recognized for years the unique design and land use challenges in the Monroe Avenue area. In 1970 a streetscape design study of Monroe Avenue and West Henrietta Road was completed by Raymond, Parish, & Pine, Inc.. That report was built upon by the Town of Brighton Master Plan (Master Plan), adopted in 1990. The design issues discussed in the 1970 report and the Master Plan are still relevant today, and proposed changes, such as continuous rear-yard parking, island park enhancement, and replacement of highway guard rails with more attractive separators, have been implemented on individual properties along the avenue. The avenue as a whole, however, still suffers from a lack of design coordination and the deterioration of existing structures.

One reason for the aesthetic decline of Monroe Avenue is that some of the existing land use regulations act as a barrier in some areas to the location of businesses that would provide a desirable and successful commercial mix along the avenue. This means that property owners have difficulty competing for tenants, which affects the rents they are able to obtain, which affects their incentive to improve their properties. This barrier is exemplified by some of the older structures in retail plazas along the avenue: these were built specifically for retail use but are currently restricted to office use, which is incompatible with their design. Many of the existing retail businesses along the avenue are ""non-conforming" (not permitted by Town regulations). While an existing non-conforming business is allowed to operate, its replacement with a new non-conforming (e.g., retail) use requires a decision by the Town Zoning Board of Appeals that the proposed new non-conforming use will be in closer compliance with the provisions of the Comprehensive Development Regulations than the previous use. This is often not the case or is difficult to prove, so the Board is legally prevented from granting many of the applications for these "use variances." The large number of these applications in recent years led the Zoning Board of Appeals to request the investigation of land use regulations regarding these structures and properties.

The design and land use issues mentioned above were recognized in the Master Plan and became the focus of a 1993 meeting held by the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation to discuss plans for major reconstruction work on Monroe Avenue (the D.G.T. plan has since been indefinitely postponed). As part of the 1994 Final Master Plan Evaluation Report, prepared by the Town Planning Board, a study of the Monroe

Avenue corridor was recommended, and in the fall of 1994 monies were allocated by the Town Board for this plan.

#### Geographic Area

The area under study is located in the Town of Brighton, a suburb of the City of Rochester, in western New York State. Monroe Avenue (State Rte. 31), a four-lane street, runs approximately 2.25 miles through Brighton and is bounded by the Rochester city line (near Highland Avenue) and the Pittsford town line (near Clover Street). The study focuses on the avenue itself, the properties along the avenue, and the residential properties in the immediate vicinity.

## Planning Process

The process being used to create this plan includes specific actions that are designed to make it comprehensive in scope. These include the identification of issues affecting Monroe Avenue, investigation of alternative solutions, recommendation of specific strategies, strategy revision based on public review, implementation of adopted policies and evaluation of the impact of those policies over time.

Issue identification has been accomplished through:

- Meetings sponsored by the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation In 1993, the DOT held public meetings in the Town to discuss proposed improvements to Monroe Avenue, including a widening of the street. This project has been indefinitely postponed, but the discussions during the meetings focused on the existing challenges facing the avenue and led to the formation of the Monroe Avenue Steering Committee (MASC).
- Meetings of the Monroe Avenue Steering Committee. Formed in 1994, MASC is composed of approximately 50 representatives from Town government, the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, the D.O.T., Monroe Avenue property and business owners, neighborhood associations, and residents in the Monroe Avenue area. Since its formation, MASC has taken the lead role in reviewing the plan as it develops.
- Contact with individuals in the Monroe Avenue area. Two surveys were conducted that obtained the opinions of approximately 550 residents, business owners and property owners in the Monroe Avenue Area. Also, throughout the process, letters and other communications from individuals have been collected.

Investigation of alternative solutions has been primarily the responsibility of the following three teams of expert consultants, recruited by the Town to develop solutions to the identified issues.

1. Pyramid Brokerage Company, Inc. — Responsible for a parcel inventory and market perspective.
2. Environmental Design and Research, P.c. — Responsible for developing a streetscape design concept and an impact analysis of the proposed D.O.T plan.
3. Phoenix Associates, Inc. — Responsible for providing the Town with recommendations for regulatory changes.

Regulatory and design changes are proposed for the entire length of Monroe Avenue in Brighton, but are concentrated on those sections that provide the greatest land use challenges because of their existing use and physical constraints.

The strategies recommended by the plan will be reviewed at public meetings to be held in December, 1996; comments on the recommendations will also be solicited from the Town boards. After review, the recommendations will be revised as necessary for them to be adopted by the Planning Board and the Town Board. Implementation of the adopted strategies will begin early in 1997 and evaluation of their impact will take place regularly. Evaluation will be based on specific benchmarks so that the strategies can be adjusted to achieve the greatest impact.

## Existing Conditions

The successful commercial development of Monroe Avenue is constrained by physical limitations, such as lot size, and also by existing Town regulations intended to protect the interests of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The issues raised by these constraints are noted in the following examination of existing conditions on Monroe Avenue.

### Zoning

The existing zoning on Monroe Avenue includes categories BE-2, Office/Transitional District; BE-F, Office/Commercial-Mixed Use District; BF-1, Neighborhood Commercial District; BF-2, General Commercial District; and a small area of RLB, Low Density Residential in a section of the Brighton Commons parking lot at Twelve Comers.

Permitted and conditional uses in these districts are listed in Appendix A, Monroe Avenue Corridor Study: Zoning Approach, along with a description of their locations. Offices are presently the only widely permitted uses; retail, service, restaurant businesses and apartments are allowed to varying degrees as conditional uses (subject to restrictions), or are not allowed at all. Motivation for the adoption of existing regulations came from a desire to protect the interests of residents, but their restrictions limit the ability of businesses to locate near other, complementary businesses. They also restrict some businesses, such as restaurants, that area residents have expressed a desire to have on the avenue. A discussion of proposed changes to zoning regulations can be found in Zoning Approach (Appendix A) and Summary Report and Analysis: Upper Monroe Avenue Corridor (Appendix B).

### Non-Conforming Uses and Vacancies

Non-conforming uses are those existing uses that are not permitted by the Town code, but are allowed to remain because they were permitted when they were established.

Numerous properties along the length of Monroe Avenue are presently non-conforming. Motels are permitted on Monroe Avenue only in the BF-2 zoning district, but are currently located also in the BE-2 and BE-F districts. Apartment buildings and gas stations are not permitted in any zone on Monroe Avenue; but apartment buildings exist in the BE-2 and BE-F districts, and gas stations can be found in all districts except BE-2.. Restaurants are currently permitted only in the BF-1 and BF-2 districts, but one is currently located in the BE-F district and another in the BE-2 district.

Retail sales are the most common non-conforming uses on the avenue. While retail establishments can be found in all zoning districts, the BE-F and BF-1 districts narrowly define the types of retail businesses permitted, and the BE-2 district permits no retail uses at all. Only in the BF-2 district are a wide range of retail uses allowed.

In the spring of 1996, there were an estimated 17 business vacancies on Monroe Avenue out of approximately 300 locations. Several structures along the avenue are chronically vacant and detract from the image of the avenue because of the deterioration of their lots and/or buildings: some properties, like the former Post Office building in Brighton Commons, present challenges regarding their appropriate future use.

The large number of non-conforming uses and significant number of vacancies along Monroe Avenue make clear the conflict between existing land use regulations and the current nature of the commercial market. As was mentioned in the introduction, this conflict inhibits the location of successful businesses on the avenue, contributes to the deterioration of properties and places significant burdens on applicants for business permits in general as well as Town boards and staff.

#### Adjoining Uses and Buffers

From Highland Avenue to Westfall Road, the rear yards of almost all of the properties on Monroe Avenue are adjacent to single family residential neighborhoods. Approximately 70 of these properties have paved parking areas located in the rear yard, making buffering between the properties on Monroe Avenue and the residences an important consideration. Existing buffers range from extensive (lawn, shrubs, closely-spaced trees) to non-existent, with practically no property line delineation. Typical buffering consists of a wood slat fence, one to three trees and/or some shrubbery. Buffering fences vary widely in their state of maintenance.

Because of their close proximity and use of side yards for parking or driveways, there is typically little or no buffering between the properties on Monroe Avenue. Adjoining uses on the avenue have not been coordinated, and commercial, office, restaurant, and other uses are liberally mixed. The remaining eight single family residences on Monroe Avenue adjoin office/ commercial/ and personal service uses/ along with a dry cleaning establishment, apartment houses, and a mortuary.

Existing rear buffers are insufficient to permit increased intensities of use on many of the commercial properties on Monroe Avenue without affecting the neighboring residences. However, increasing the intensity of use of some commercial properties would open them up to a wider range of desirable businesses, which would help to achieve the goal of this plan. The report by Phoenix Associates (Appendix A) recommends a strategy to strike a balance between increased intensity of use and requirements for buffers that would allow increased intensity while decreasing the existing impacts on residences.

### Signage

There are seven existing free-standing commercial signs on Monroe Avenue, three of which are located east of Rte. 590, in the BF-2 zoning district. Existing signage regulations allow building-face signs and address signs, but do not allow free-standing business identification signs for any of the uses along Monroe Avenue. Free-standing signs are an issue on Monroe Avenue because of the conflict between their accepted value as a commercial marketing tool and their potential aesthetic impact. The frontage lengths along Monroe Avenue (typically 50 to 100 feet) and the desire to retain the residential character of the area are the primary reasons for the existing restrictive regulations.

Apart from the physical restrictions on signage, the procedure for applying for a sign permit is sometimes seen as an impediment to development. Applications for a new sign or an alteration to an existing sign must be reviewed by both the Planning Board and the Architectural Review Board. Even if a design is approved as presented to the boards, the process can take five to six weeks-for new businesses this can mean a delayed opening or reduced initial traffic if the owner is not prepared for the delay. Discussion of signage design and regulation can be found in Streetscape Design and Zoning Approach (Appendices B& D).

### Parking, Density and Lot Coverage

Parking, density (square feet of floor area per acre) and lot coverage (the percentage of a lot covered by buildings and pavement) combine to present the greatest potential conflict between the needs of business owners and area residents. The existing use restrictions, discussed above, are in large measure the result of this potential conflict. Because of the small lot sizes on the avenue and the close proximity of residences to businesses, existing use regulations limit the impact of automobile noise and fumes by prohibiting businesses with a need for extensive parking areas and/or those whose density or coverage would necessitate parking near a residential lot line. Even with such restrictions, many lots, particularly those with residential buildings converted to business use, are so small that parking must be provided in the front of the building, creating a negative aesthetic impact on the streetscape.

The need for an increase in available parking spaces along the avenue is an issue that has been raised repeatedly at MASC meetings and at other meetings between Town officials and business owners: it was also cited as a significant issue in the study completed by Pyramid Brokerage Company (Appendix B) and by respondents to the survey of business owners (Appendix D). An approximation of parking demand vs supply, derived using the inventory of properties compiled by Pyramid Brokerage Co. and existing Town parking regulations, was made for retail properties between Highland Avenue and Westfall Road (with the exception of Brighton Commons and 12

Comers Plaza) by Town staff. The results, which will require verification, indicate a possible deficit of approximately 50 spaces. The precise number and location of parking spaces needed will be determined during the implementation of the plan, but the perception of a need for increased parking spaces is one that is shared by the Town and proposals to increase available parking are included in the consultants' reports.

The need for parking, combined with often narrow street frontages, has also meant that curb cuts, needed for entrance/exit, are often closely spaced. This presents hazards to both motorists and pedestrians, and contributes to traffic congestion on the street. The issue of curb cuts and proposals for decreasing their number are discussed in the Pyramid Brokerage and Environmental Design & Research reports (Appendices B& C).

#### Sidewalk/Parking Lot Separators

The fact that many parcels, particularly between Highland Avenue and Elmwood Avenue, have parking lots in the front yard makes the design of parking lot/curb separators an important aesthetic and safety issue. There is currently no "typical" separator being used-some properties have no separators at all. Designs of separators in use include railroad-tie planters, wood rail fencing and steel pipe. Design suggestions for parking separators that would improve the aesthetics and continuity of the streetscape, along with other streetscape improvements, can be found in the Monroe Avenue Streetscape Study, in Appendix C.

## Report Findings

Preparation of the plan included the investigation of issues and potential solutions to those issues by three professional consultants, and the preparation of two surveys to obtain the opinions of Monroe Avenue area residents and business and property owners. The findings of the separate reports are summarized below.

### Monroe Avenue Corridor Survey Report

*Rochester Institute of Technology/Town of Brighton*

Two surveys were conducted, one of residents in the Monroe Avenue area and one of business and property owners along Monroe Avenue. The 43% response rate (449 responses) from the resident survey should mean that it is a fairly good predictor of the opinions of the residents in the survey area (1/2 mile on either side of Monroe Avenue). The lower 23% response rate (98 responses) from the business/property owner survey make the results of that survey less reliable as predictors, but they are still valuable in that they highlight areas that deserve further investigation. The survey report, along with response totals for individual questions, can be found in Appendix D. General observations based on the survey results are described below.

- **Business/Property Owner Survey**

Responses indicate that, in general, business and property owners are satisfied with the way that the Town responds to their needs. However, in three areas more than 36% of respondents indicated that their needs were being met either "slightly," or "not at all." These areas were: parking needs, signage needs, and Town regulations.

When asked if they got a lot of walk-in customers, 53% said "no", and 34% said "somewhat". This may indicate that the avenue is not as desirable a place to walk as it could be.

Respondents were asked to prioritize needed improvements on Monroe Avenue in five areas: off-street parking, tree plantings, sidewalks, guard rails, and street address display. Off-street parking was ranked as a top priority by 49% of the respondents, next was street address display, with 39%.

Thirty-three respondents answered the question, *What possible business on Monroe Avenue would complement your business*. The top categories of responses (in order) were retail business, service or professional business and restaurants. Thirty-six suggestions were given for ways in which the Town could help to improve the avenue; 19 dealt with aesthetics and 8 mentioned promotions (festivals, banners, etc.).

- Resident Survey

Respondents reported being generally pleased with the way both businesses on Monroe Avenue and the Town met their needs in 13 categories. Responses of "totally" or "somewhat" totalled at least 80% of respondents to the question in 10 of the 13 categories. The highest "not at all" percentage in any of the categories was 6%, in the category "advertising of events".

The most frequent responses to a question asking what types of businesses were desired on Monroe Avenue were: retail non-food stores (43%), restaurants (34%), and retail food stores (34%).

As mentioned above, some businesses apparently felt that the Town was not doing enough to respond to their needs for parking. The resident survey does not indicate parking as a problem-88% of the respondents to the question *To what degree do businesses on Monroe Avenue respond to your need for parking?* answered either "totally" (43%), or "somewhat" (45%). They were similarly satisfied with the Town's response to their needs for pedestrian access and vehicular access.

#### Summary Report and Analysis: Upper Monroe Avenue Corridor:

##### *Pyramid Brokerage Company, Inc.*

Pyramid's stated goal in producing their report (Appendix B) was "To provide reasonable recommendations to the citizens of the Town of Brighton as to how the commercial frontage on Monroe Avenue could be made more economically viable while at the same time provide a broader range of goods and services to the citizens, with a strong emphasis on limiting the impact on adjacent residential properties." The focus of their report was the upper end of Monroe Avenue, from the City of Rochester line to Glen Ellyn Way, a residential side street. This section of the avenue is approximately 2/3 of a mile in length and contains a mix of office, professional, retail, personal service, restaurant, single-family residential, and apartment uses. It is zoned BE-2 for much of its length, with the beginning of the BF-1 sector near the end of the southern segment. It has two vacant properties and seventeen non-conforming uses.

Pyramid used a process of inventorying existing uses and features of the area, and then brainstorming to arrive at recommendations for "enhancement of subject properties regarding use and the potential for site improvements." Their recommendations were broken down into specific recommendations for the south side of the street, specific recommendations for the north side of the street, and general recommendations: these are quoted below.

#### *Specific Recommendations, South Side*

- Maintain current land use regulations on the south side of the avenue from the Town line south to South St. Regis Drive.  
*Comment:* The “gateway” users should remain transitional through the gateway, and the current presence of extensive green space provides an appealing streetscape.
- Change land use regulations to allow a wider range of commercial uses on the south side from South St. Regis Drive to the border of the current F-1 zoning.  
*Comment:* Based on our first recommendation, a nice transition zone will be maintained. Allowing increased use flexibility will allow greater potential economic return and a greater range of tenant choices for the property owners. These increased in opportunity and economic viability, in our view, are positive and will allow land owners greater options for improvements.

#### *Specific Recommendations, North Side*

- Change land use regulations to allow a wider range of uses from 1454 Monroe Avenue south to the border of the current BF-1 zoning.  
*Comment:* In looking at the properties in this section of the north side, we believe the primary use is and should be retail, with the secondary use being office. 1454-1464 Monroe Avenue is retail. 1470-1482 and 1492-1496 Monroe Avenue are mixed use. In each of these properties, we believe the highest and best use is retail and land use regulations should reflect the same, while still allowing office uses. The exception would be the green space at the St. Regis Drive intersection which should remain.

#### *General Recommendations*

- Integrate planning and development control features in any new regulations, primarily concerning lot coverage, set backs from residential, buffers, etc. Require food permits so that food uses require special approvals.
- Consider realignment of intersections, which will increase green space. This should include the St. Regis Drive and Glen Ellyn intersections. A more problematic location which should still be considered is realignment of the intersection of Oak Dale at Sylvan.
- Allow one curb cut per property without special variance or permit. Encourage cross easements to assist in expanding parking and reducing ingress and egress points on the avenue.
- Develop a uniform. "flexible" sign criteria and provide enforcement. The criteria

- should take into account size, type, color, positioning, height, lighting, etc.
- Consider limited acquisition of strategically located properties for the development of municipal parking.

### Monroe Avenue Streetscape Study

#### *Environmental Design & Research, PC*

Environmental Design & Research's (E.D.R.) involvement with the study was to produce a report, the intent of which, as stated by E.D.R., was to, "... 'provide a definitive design scheme for Monroe Avenue' so that when it is 'accompanied by regulatory recommendations' it 'can guide future reuse redevelopment.' The production of the report was based on a "review and analysis of the Monroe Avenue Corridor from Highland Avenue to Clover Street, the identification of anticipated impacts from the proposed N.Y.S.D.O.T. improvements, and the development of a design concept for the corridor." Community involvement in the report was provided through meetings at key points with the Monroe Avenue Steering Committee.

The product of the report was a design concept for Monroe Avenue, with graphic examples given of alternatives for several parcels on the avenue. The recommended design concept is quoted below: the full report, including examples, can be found in Appendix C.

#### *Recommended Design Concept*

1. Build upon the image of a "tree-lined" street that already exists in some sections of Monroe Avenue.
2. Encourage two-story residential scale structures to emulate the historic residential character of the Town.
3. Reduce the number of curb cuts where it can be shown to increase safety and off-street parking.
4. Maximize green space at residential intersections to establish a residential identity.
5. Develop a signage system that would permit attractive commercial signage at the public right-of-way. The system would be a predesigned system with strong controls.
6. Concentrate investments at key locations, creating impact areas (i.e., brick pavements, street furniture) that make a strong statement for the community.

## Monroe Avenue Corridor Study: Zoning Approach

*Phoenix Associates, Inc.*

This report, based on direct observation and the results of the three other reports, recommends changes to development regulations affecting Monroe Avenue properties. The proposed changes are intended to:

1. Decrease the number of vacant properties, non-conforming uses, and variance requests along Monroe Avenue;
2. Allow a wider range of permitted commercial uses desired by area residents and consistent with the residential character of the avenue; and
3. fucorporate regulatory changes designed to protect the interests of residents in the Monroe Avenue Corridor.

The full report can be found in Appendix A. In summary, the recommendations are:

1. Change the land use designation of the existing BE-2, Office/Transitional District (for Monroe Avenue addresses only) to BE-F, Office/Commercial□Mixed Use. The exception to this recommendation is the south side of Monroe Avenue from the Town line to South St. Regis Drive, which is to remain BE-2.
2. Change permitted and conditional uses in the BE-F district to:
  - Allow apartments as permitted uses (currently a limited conditional use);
  - Allow retail sales and personal service activities as permitted uses, subject to defined standards (currently limited conditional uses); and
  - Allow restaurants, delis, bakeries, etc. as conditional uses (currently not permitted).
3. Revise density, lot coverage, height and landscaping/buffering standards to better accommodate commercial uses and make commercial uses more compatible with surrounding residential uses.
4. Define architectural and guidelines so that development maintains the residential character of the avenue.
5. Consider alternatives for facilitation of improvements and long-term maintenance, such as the creation of a Business Improvement District.
6. Consider allowing free-standing signs for businesses that share curb cuts, subject to design standards.

## Strategies and Implementation

The stated goal of this plan is to address Town of Brighton regulations, policies, and actions related to physical design features and land uses along Monroe Avenue in the Town of Brighton so that they better: 1) enable the successful commercial development of the avenue, 2) enhance the aesthetic appeal of private and public properties along the avenue and 3) ensure that proposed changes protect the interests of residential communities in the Monroe Avenue area.

The following strategies, based on the findings of the consultants' reports and the contributions of area residents, Town staff and boards and the Monroe Avenue Steering Committee, are intended to begin the process of accomplishing the goal through the institution of specific changes that are attainable in the short term, and continue the process by constructing a system to review proposed changes that cannot be immediately instituted to ensure that they are "on the table" in the future. Some of the strategies that involve regulatory changes can be accomplished as soon as they can be written, reviewed and adopted. Others, including physical improvements by property owners or the Town, must occur as monies become available or new development takes place, and the specific changes will depend on the environment at the time. Professional consultants may be used to implement strategies that require specific expertise and/or to ensure that implementation takes place in a timely fashion.

### **Strategy I.**

Change use designation BE-2 to BE-F for Monroe Avenue addresses #1454 through #1520 (even) and #1457 to #1465 (odd).

*Effect:*

1. Bring long-standing retail development into conformance with Comprehensive Development Regulations.
2. Increase property values to promote maintenance and enhancement of properties.
3. Provide Brighton residents with desired services.

*Budget Year:* 1997

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

## **Strategy II.**

Create a new Use District designation -BE-3, Office/Commercial-Mixed Use and designate Monroe Avenue addresses 1530 to 1688 (even) and 1485 to 1685 (odd) as BE-3. Standards for the BE-3 District to be designed to promote re-use of existing converted residential structures for office, personal and business service, and low intensity retail and restaurant businesses. Structures and uses to be limited in square feet of floor area to reflect existing structures and uses. Other standards will maintain greenspace and control other negative impacts as described in Strategy III.

**Effect:**

1. Create an orderly transition along Monroe Avenue (and, in the future, other areas of Brighton) between the low-intensity "Entrance to Brighton" area near Highland Avenue and the high intensity commercial area near Cover Street.
2. Enhance property values to provide an incentive for the maintenance and enhancement of properties.
3. Provide Brighton residents with desired services.

*Budget Year: 1997*

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board,

*Adoption* — Town Board

## **Strategy III.**

Revise BE-F District use regulations to:

1. Allow retail and service businesses as permitted uses subject to specific standards (to be defined).
2. Allow restaurants and other retail and non-retail food services as conditional uses subject to specific standards. These standards are to be defined in the regulations to be drafted, but shall include (but not be limited to) restrictions on lights, odors, refuse, traffic, setbacks to residential areas and hours of operation. Bars and taverns are not proposed to be allowed, and the regulations shall be drafted so as to prevent the conversion of restaurants to such uses. The standards shall also assure that the size of new uses, and of any new structures, are in keeping with the scale of existing structures.

*Effect:* See Strategy I

*Budget Year: 1997*

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

## **Strategy IV.**

Revise BF-1 and BF-2 District use regulations to allow restaurants and other retail and

non-retail food services as conditional uses subject to specific standards (see strategy III).

*Effect:* Attract eating establishments to areas that are primarily commercial.

*Budget Year:* 1997

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

### **Strategy V.**

Investigate the formation of a Business Improvement District for Monroe Avenue.

*Effect:* Encourage and coordinate physical improvements to and maintenance of streetscape and facades and resolve parking issues.

*Budget Year:* 1997

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Monroe Avenue Steering Committee

*Adoption* — Town Board

### **Strategy VI.**

Revise parking regulations to:

1. Change parking standards for restaurants from one space per two seats or 100 sf of floor area to one space per three seats plus one for each three employees.
2. Ensure that parking use designations are consistent with uses permitted in district definitions.

*Effect:* Make parking requirements for restaurants reflect demand and make parking requirements easier to interpret.

*Budget Year:* 1997 (subsequent to the completion of the parking study).

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

### **Strategy VII.**

Revise bulk regulations for BE-F, BF-1 and BF-2 Districts to allow greater building density and impervious coverage, reflecting the constraints of existing development. In no event shall new development be permitted at a greater density and/or coverage by impervious surfaces than the average of existing development. Generous setbacks to adjoining residential properties shall be maintained. Include minimum dimensional standards for streetscape and screen landscaping and ensure that greenspace is not reduced below the existing average.

*Effect:* Permit a wider range of commercial uses while maintaining residential protection.

*Budget Year:* 1997/1998

*Responsible Parties:*

Preparation -At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works  
Review and Recommendation -Planning Board  
Adoption -Town Board

### **Strategy VIII.**

Prepare a Monroe Avenue parking study.

*Effect:* 1. Define the locational need for parking on Monroe Avenue to meet existing and predicted future demand.  
2. Determine the feasibility of developing off-site, front yard and side street parking.  
3. Determine the feasibility of developing additional parking by the modification of intersecting side streets, or by permitting the use of front yards (with screening).

*Budget Year:* 1997/1998

*Responsible Parties:*

Preparation — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works  
Review and Recommendation — Planning Board, MASC

### **Strategy IX.**

Investigate improvements to Monroe Avenue from Westfall Road to Clover Street, including the I-590 interchange.

*Effect:* Continue improvements to Monroe Avenue.

*Budget Year:* 1997

*Responsible Parties:* N.Y.S.D.O.T. Quality Team

### **Strategy X.**

Physical improvements within the Monroe Avenue right-of-way by the Town.

*Effect:* Create focal points from which improvements can spread and/or improve traffic flow.

*Budget Year:* FY 1997

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Adoption* — Town Board

### **Strategy XI.**

Incorporate streetscape design guidelines in district and site plan review regulations. Guidelines to offer specific options based on property location (e.g., corner lot) and layout (e.g., front-yard parking). Development of the guidelines to begin with a design charrette on February 15, 1997.

*Effect:* Improve aesthetics and continuity along Monroe Avenue.

*Budget Year:* 1997/1998

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

### **Strategy XII.**

Revise regulations regarding permitted street address signage, the use of festive or decorative banners with a common theme or themes (but without business identification), and the sign permit process.

*Effect:* 1. Help to create a Brighton identity along Monroe Avenue and in other areas of Brighton.

2. Reduce the time necessary to obtain a sign permit.

*Budget Year:* 1998

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

### **Strategy XIII.**

Revise District assignments of the former Post Office and the residentially zoned area of the parking lot at Brighton Commons.

*Effect:* Improve use designations in 12 Comers area.

*Budget Year:* 1997

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

#### **Strategy XIV.**

Review non-conforming apartment uses to determine the appropriateness of existing zoning.

*Effect:* Rational approach to multi-unit residential development

*Budget Year:* 1999

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Planning Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

#### **Strategy XV.**

Investigate the possibility of the participation of N.Y.S.D.O.T. in right-of-way improvements, including the modification of intersections and the addition of and/or improvement to pedestrian facilities.

*Effect:* Financial and expert assistance with physical improvements.

*Budget Year:* Ongoing

*Responsible Parties:* N.Y.S.D.O.T Quality Review Team

#### **Strategy XVI.**

Form a long-term MASC committee to review progress toward goal.

*Effect:* Ensure effective implementation.

*Budget Year:* Ongoing

*Responsible Parties:* At the direction of the Town Board

#### **Strategy XVII.**

Include a review of Monroe Avenue improvements in the annual budget process.

*Effect:* Ensure effective implementation.

*Budget Year:* Ongoing

*Responsible Party:* Commissioner of Public Works

**Strategy XVIII.**

Incorporate architectural design guidelines in district regulations.

*Effect:* Improve aesthetics and continuity along Monroe Avenue.

*Budget Year:* 1999

*Responsible Parties:*

*Preparation* — At the direction of the Commissioner of Public Works

*Review and Recommendation* — Architectural Review Board

*Adoption* — Town Board

## Evaluation

For a plan to be successful, the strategies implemented must be evaluated. This evaluation is most valuable when it is based on criteria that can be measured over time to indicate the effectiveness of the strategies-strategies that are found to be ineffective can then be altered. Measurement of progress toward the goals of the Monroe Avenue Comprehensive Plan will include the following procedures:

- I.     Accumulation of benchmarks
  - 1.    Number of vacancies in December, 1996
  - 2.    Number of variance requests in 1995 and 1996
  - 3.    Number of sign permits issued in 1996
  - 4.    Number of new uses in 1995 and 1996
- II.    Annual end-of-year comparison with benchmarks
- III.   Analysis of progress by MASC committee