

# Mont Pleasant Renewal Area

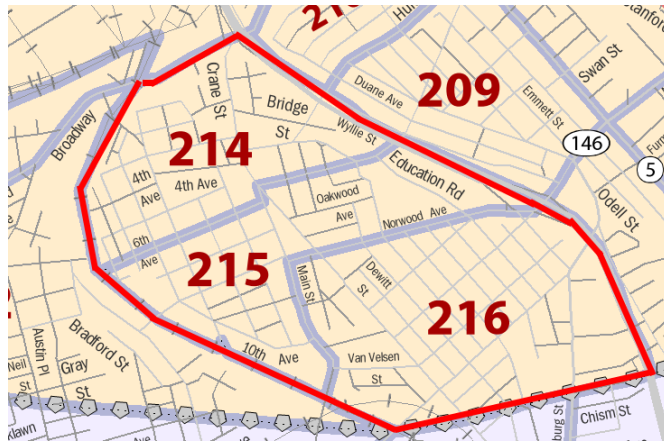
## Introduction

The Mont Pleasant Renewal Area is a project that intends to work in conjunction with other initiatives in the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood to target blight and vacancy within the neighborhood. The City of Schenectady and the City’s collaborative partners plan on investing significantly in revitalization efforts in this neighborhood over the next few years. Some of these projects include the Smart City Initiative and REV Demonstration Project in partnership with National Grid, New York Main Street project focused on the Crane Street Corridor and other significant capital projects, including the building of a new community library and the repaving of a large portion of the neighborhood. To ensure that these projects fulfill the City’s objective of the overall improvement to the neighborhood and lives of the residents of the neighborhood, the City of Schenectady plans on committing CDBG funds to demolish abandoned buildings, combat code violations and secure vacant city owned properties. This plan will address two objectives outlined in the City of Schenectady’s 2015-2019 Federal Consolidated Plan, Quality Affordable Housing Options and Strengthening Neighborhoods.

## Target Area

The target area for this project will be focused in the Mont Pleasant neighborhood of Schenectady County of Census Tracts 214, 215 and 216. The north side of the neighborhood follows Broadway until it intersects with the CSX rail line. The CSX rail line is the western border of the neighborhood until it reaches the City of Schenectady-Town of Rotterdam. Schenectady-Rotterdam border is the southern edge of the district until it reaches New York State Route 890. The eastern side of the neighborhood is comprised of NYS Route 890 northwards until it returns to Broadway. The combined area of the three census tracts is just over one square mile.

Mont Pleasant Renewal Area



\*extracted US Census Bureau Map for Schenectady County  
[https://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/tract/st36\\_ny/c36093\\_schenectady/DC10CT\\_C36093\\_002.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/tract/st36_ny/c36093_schenectady/DC10CT_C36093_002.pdf)

## **Initiatives within the Mont Pleasant Renewal Area**

Over the course of the next few years, The City of Schenectady along with various partners will be implementing a number of initiatives within the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood. The removal of blight will be critical to support these initiatives and to ensure the maximum impact of the resources being invested in the neighborhood. Below are a few of these initiatives that are and will be taking place within the neighborhood.

### **City of Schenectady Paving Program**

For the 2018 paving season, the City of Schenectady Engineering Department primarily focused on the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood. Of the 7.5 miles of streets the City is in the process of paving, over 4 miles of streets in the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood.

### **CDTC Linkage Study/Complete Streets Plan- City of Schenectady**

The purpose of the Craig-Main Complete Streets Study is to design a detailed master plan enhancing the connection between the Crane Street and Albany Street corridors along the Craig-Main corridor. This study will be used as the basis for future engineering and construction projects along these corridors. The impacts of the vehicular traffic to pedestrian and bicycle safety will be addressed with the goal of finding a solution that makes the area safer for all users without negatively impacting the existing transit systems. Investing in quality of life, mobility and public space is a known economic development generator and because this project is part of a larger investment plan along the corridor, it will incentivize further investment, opportunities and community development in the neighborhood.

### **Crane Street Façade Improvement Program/Building Feasibility Studies-Better Neighborhoods Inc, Capital District Land Bank, Metroplex**

The Crane Street Building Feasibility Study was a study completed by Stacher, Roth and Gilmore Architects to assess the façade improvement needs of individual businesses along the Crane Street Corridor. Nine businesses were assessed and recommendations were made for each business. Eventually this study will assist the partners involved in the Crane Street improvement program in replicating the success of other commercial corridors in the City of Schenectady along the Crane Street Corridor.

### **Boys and Girls Club-New York State, Boys and Girls Club**

The 13 million dollar project, funded through a combination of New York State funding and funds raised privately through the Boys and Girls Club of Schenectady, is going to be 39,000 square feet youth services center in Quakenbush Park in Mont Pleasant. Included in this project is a 4,000 square foot teen center that will have a commercial learning kitchen, large game rooms, technology centers, program rooms and a gym with bleachers. Once completed, the new center is expected to serve over 300 youth daily, from 2:15PM to 9:00 PM, 362 days a year.

### **Orchard Park- City of Schenectady, Capital District Land Bank, New York State**

The City of Schenectady with the support of a New York State Parks Grant and the Capital District Land Bank, plans on investing \$550,000 in the upgrade and expansion of Orchard Park. Plans include the demolition of 5 vacant, city owned properties to add .85 acres of additional green space to the park, the installation of playground equipment and new lighting, and the reconfiguration of and modification of the landscaping of the park. This project will assist in adding additional park space to a section of the neighborhood that is lacking in park space.

**National Grid SMART REV Demonstration Project-City of Schenectady, National Grid**

The project is a collaboration between the City of Schenectady and National Grid. Phase 1 of this project includes all lighting infrastructure south of State Street. Eventually, 4,200 company-owned streetlights will be upgraded with advanced LED lighting that will be retrofitted with controls and smart city technologies. These upgrades will make city operations more efficient; technology attached to the streetlights will improve asset management capabilities by enabling real-time data analytics and lighting controls.

**Thriving Neighborhoods Challenge- Schenectady Foundation, City of Schenectady**

This initiative led by a The Schenectady Foundation, with the support of the City of Schenectady is pledging up to \$250,000, to support revitalization projects proposed by residents of City neighborhoods.

**Mont Pleasant Library- Schenectady County, Metroplex, Schenectady IDA**

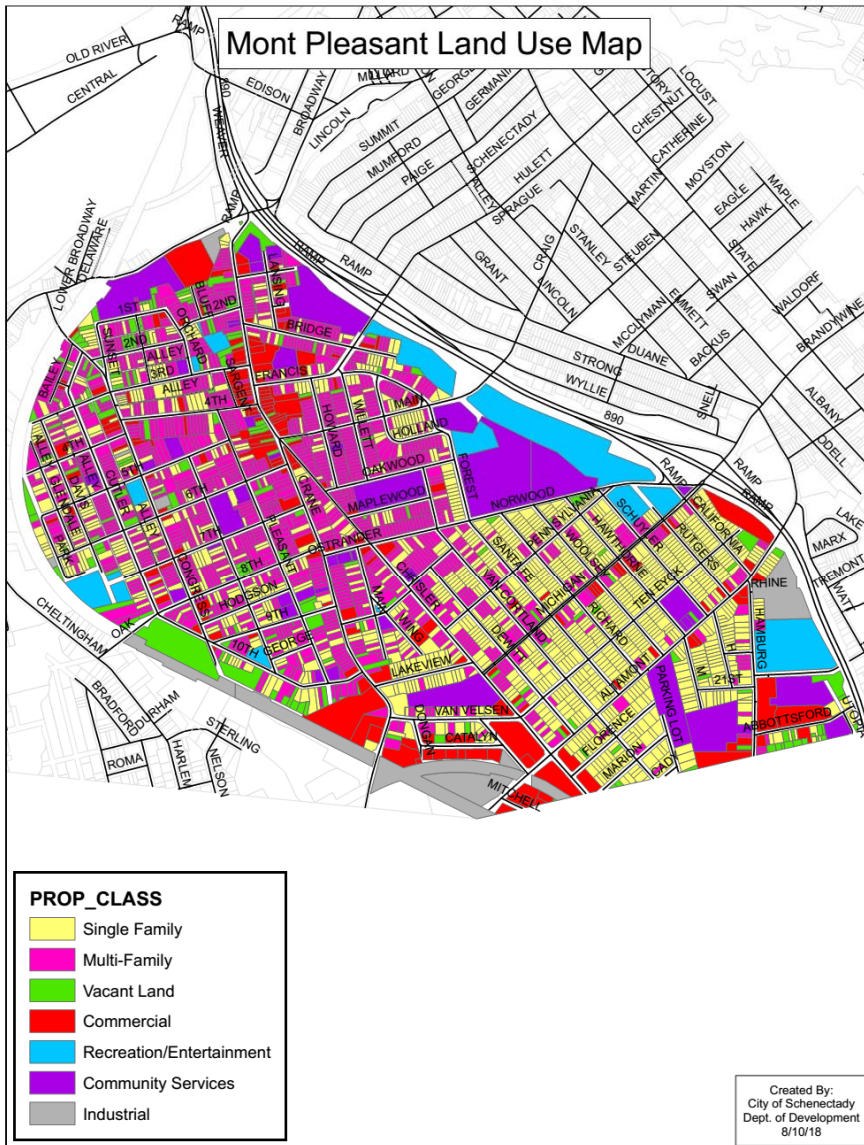
In Spring of 2018 Schenectady County, with the assistance of Metroplex, Schenectady IDA and a number of private donors began construction of a 5,000 square foot, 3 million dollar new library in Mont Pleasant. This new library is expected to be completed by spring of 2019.

**Habitat for Humanity Home Build- Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County, City of Schenectady, Capital District Land Bank**

Starting in early 2020 Habitat for Humanity of Schenectady County in conjunction with the City of Schenectady and Capital Region Land Bank is planning on investing significant resources into the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood. Plans include targeting a few blocks within the neighborhood for the building of up to 10 single family owner occupied homes.

## Land Use within the Neighborhood

Within Mont Pleasant, the majority of parcels are residential with a much smaller but significant percentages of vacant land, commercial parcels and various other classes of parcels. According to data gathered by the City of Schenectady, in 2016, 84% of the parcels are residential, almost 7% are vacant land, 6.4% are commercial and various other uses, including government and parks are 2.4% of parcels. It should be noted that almost 28 percent of the parcels classified as commercial are apartment buildings.



## Conditions of the Neighborhood

The census tracts included in this area meet New York State Municipal Redevelopment Law and HUD's conditions for a blighted area. New York State Municipal Redevelopment Law at 970-c (a) state that,

*"Blighted area" means an area within a municipality in which one or more of the following conditions exist: (i) a predominance of buildings and structures which are deteriorated or unfit or unsafe for use or occupancy; or (ii) a predominance of economically unproductive lands, buildings or structures, the redevelopment of which is needed to prevent further deterioration which would jeopardize the economic well being of the people.*

In addition HUD24 CFR 570.208(b) defines a blighted area as one that meets the following conditions:

*(ii) The area also meets the conditions in either paragraph (A) or (B):*

*(A) At least 25 percent of properties throughout the area experience one or more of the following conditions:*

*(1) Physical deterioration of buildings or improvements;*

*(2) Abandonment of properties;*

*(3) Chronic high occupancy turnover rates or chronic high vacancy rates in commercial or industrial buildings;*

*(4) Significant declines in property values or abnormally low property values relative to other areas in the community; or*

*(5) Known or suspected environmental contamination.*

*(B) The public improvements throughout the area are in a general state of deterioration.*

Based on the age of the properties, value of the housing stock, vacancy rates and the code enforcement activities in the area, this target area meets both of these definitions.

### Age of the Properties

The overwhelming majority of housing stock, of the target area, was built prior to 1970. Of the 1,622 structures in Census Tract 214, 90.9% were built before 1970, of the 1,501 structures of Census Tract 215, 90.9% of structures were built before 1970 and of the 1,694 structures of Census Tract 216, 95.5% were built before 1970, according The Census Bureau's 2016 American Community Survey. There are many health and safety issues related to housing stock built before 1980. Unless remediation has been done, there is high risk that properties built before 1978 will have lead contamination. Older properties often suffer from out dated electrical and plumbing systems that are not up to modern code and efficiency standards.

### Housing Units Built Prior to 1970

Subject	New York		Schenectady County, New York		Schenectady city, New York		Census Tract 214, Schenectady County, New York		Census Tract 215, Schenectady County, New York		Census Tract 216, Schenectady County, New York	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Built 1939 or earlier	2,664,995	32.5%	26,230	38.4%	18,383	58.0%	1,154	71.1%	1,094	72.9%	1,058	62.5%
Built 1940 to 1949	694,929	8.5%	7,069	10.4%	3,020	9.5%	79	4.9%	88	5.9%	285	16.8%
Built 1950 to 1959	1,220,670	14.9%	10,136	14.9%	2,971	9.4%	84	5.2%	81	5.4%	191	11.3%
Built 1960 to 1969	1,024,312	12.5%	5,483	8.0%	1,688	5.3%	55	3.4%	80	5.3%	65	3.8%
Built 1970 to 1979	820,469	10.0%	6,133	9.0%	2,051	6.5%	102	6.3%	16	1.1%	19	1.1%
Total Prior to 1970	6,425,375	78.4%	55,051	80.7%	28,113	88.7%	1,474	90.90%	1,359	90.6%	1,618	95.5%
Built after 1970	1,766,193	21.6%	13,185	19.4%	3,563	11.3%	148	9.10%	142	9.5%	76	4.5%
Total	8,191,568	100%	68,236	100.1%	31,676	100.0%	1,622	100%	1,501	100%	1,694	100.0%

\* Based on Data extracted from American Community Surveys  
[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_13\\_5YR\\_DP04&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_DP04&prodType=table)

### Value of the Housing Stock

The average value of houses within Mont Pleasant is significantly lower than the average value of houses within the City of Schenectady, County of Schenectady and New York State as a whole. The median housing values within the census tracts are as follows Census Tract 214, \$76,900, Census Tract 215, \$96,500 and Census Tract 216, \$91,800. By comparison with in the City of Schenectady the median housing value is \$112,900, in Schenectady County the median is \$165,000, and within New York State, as a whole, the median is \$286,300. Mt. Pleasant has a significantly higher percentage of owner occupied structures that are valued below \$100,000 (71.89%) then the City of Schenectady ( 38.6%), Schenectady County(16.6%) and New York State (16.6%).

### Home Owner Occupied Home Values

Subject	New York		Schenectady County, New York		Schenectady, City		Mont Pleasant	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Less than \$50,000	215,987	5.50%	1,276	3.40%	688	5.90%	213	13.52%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	432,845	11.10%	4,888	13.20%	3,821	32.70%	920	58.38%
Total less than 100,000	1,087,621.00	16.60%	6,164	16.60%	4,509	38.60%	1,133	71.89%
Total more than 100,000	3,245,781.00	83.40%	30,833	83.40%	7,159	61.00%	443	28.11%
Total Owner-occupied units	4,333,402.00	100%	36,997	100%	11,668	100%	1,576	100%
Median (dollars)	\$ 286,300.00	(X)	\$165,000.00	(X)	112,900.00	(X)		

\* Based on Data extracted from American Community Surveys

### Vacancy Rates

A major issue within the neighborhood is the number of vacant residential properties. Forty eight percent of housing units within Census Tract 214 are vacant, within Census Tract 215, 30.5% are vacant and within Census Tract 216, 25.6% are vacant. This is higher than the City of Schenectady (26%), Schenectady County (19%) and New York State.<sup>1</sup> When combined, 35% of housing units within the three Census Tracts are vacant. In addition, the City of Schenectady currently owns approximately 130 residential and commercial properties in Mont Pleasant.

### Vacant Housing Units

Subject	New York		Schenectady County, New York		Schenectady city, New York		Census Tract 214, Schenectady County, New York		Census Tract 215, Schenectady County, New York		Census Tract 216, Schenectady County, New York		Mont Pleasant	
	Est.	Pct.	Est.	Pct.	Est.	Pct.	Est.	Pct.	Est.	Pct.	Est.	Pct.	Est.	Pt
Total housing units	8,191,568	-	68,236	-	31,676	-	1,622	1,622	1,501	-	1,694	-	4817	-
Occupied housing units	7,266,187	88.7%	55,027	80.6%	23,284	73.5%	838	51.7%	1,043	69.5 %	1,260	74.4%	3141	65.21%
Vacant housing units	925,381	11.3%	13,209	19.4%	8,392	26.5%	784	48.3%	458	30.5%	434	25.6%	1676	34.79%

\* Based on Data extracted from American Community Surveys

### Code Enforcement

While vacancy is an issue, another issue is the general state of many of the properties within the neighborhood. In recent years there has been a disproportionately higher need for code enforcement activities in this neighborhood in comparison to the city on the whole. Of the 12,009 codes violations issued by the City of Schenectady between August 1, 2013 and August 1, 2018, approximately 23 percent were issued in Mt. Pleasant.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, Mt. Pleasant contains approximately 13 percent of the parcels within the City of Schenectady<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Based on data gathered through City of Schenectady's MUNIS software

<sup>3</sup> Based on data gathered through City of Schenectady's RPS software

## **Community Needs**

By designating this neighborhood for blight removal, this plan will help address needs that have been raised by the community and help to meet goals outlined in the 2015-2019 City of Schenectady Consolidated Plan. In the development of the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan, the need for the removal of blighted properties was an issue that was raised. To address this issue, the Consolidated Plan included blight removal in two goals, Quality Affordable Housing Options and Strengthening Neighborhoods. In the goal of Quality Affordable Housing Options, Rehabilitation/Removal of 60 vacant housing units was an outcome that was outlined. Within the goal of Strengthening Neighborhoods, the demolishing of and/or clean up of 50 foreclosed, abandoned and/or vacant properties was included as one of the outcomes. In addition, the 2017 City of Schenectady Community Needs Assessment, a two year collaboration, between the City of Schenectady, HUD and Cornell Cooperative Extension involving extensive community outreach, determined that addressing dilapidated properties was a significant need of the community.

## **Action Plan**

In conjunction with other efforts within this neighborhood, the City of Schenectady intends to address the problems outlined above by using CDBG funds. These funds will be utilized to support three projects within the neighborhood. The first project will be the clearance of blighted buildings. The city intends to use CDBG funds to demolish the eight most distressed properties within the neighborhood. To help prevent any further deterioration of properties within the neighborhood the City of Schenectady's Office of Code Enforcement will target rental properties in Mont Pleasant with up to 1,000 code violations a year. This will help ensure that rental properties within the district are properly cared for and maintained. The final project will be the use of CDBG funds to stabilize and secure city foreclosed homes. This aspect of the project will be necessary to ensure that City owned properties do not deteriorate and cause additional blight in the neighborhood.