

A. INTRODUCTION

The traditional Village “Main Street” development pattern of Attica’s central business district and its historic residential neighborhoods are perhaps the community’s strongest assets. The historic vernacular architecture, the tree-lined streets and the compact and walkable nature of the Village combine to make it a visually attractive place for residents and visitors alike. Important visual features including positive and negative, natural and manmade, and historic and new elements, are shown on Figure 2.5-1, “Visual Features.” In addition, specific features are depicted in a series of photographs below.

B. VISUAL FEATURES**POSITIVE VISUAL FEATURES***NATURAL FEATURES**Watercourses*

The Tonawanda Creek corridor is an important visual resource for the community. Tonawanda Creek runs in a north-south direction through the Village of Attica just east of Market Street, traversing the westerly side of the Village. As seen in Figure 2.5-2, the waterway and the adjoining green space along its bank provide a striking visual amenity as viewed from the Main Street, bridge or the back of the Village Hall Park.

Topography

As discussed in Chapter 2.5, “Environmental Features,” Attica includes steeply sloped lands, with the portion of the Village lying west of Route 98 and Tonawanda Creek rising to elevations of 1,200 feet. This is a roughly 200-foot elevation change from the portion of the Village west of Route 98 and the Creek. As a result, there are substantial fluctuations in the topography in areas such as High Street and West Main Street (Route 354). In the downtown area, the slope drops off towards Tonawanda Creek, with a grade change of roughly 15 to 25 feet down to the creek bed. There is also a noticeable difference in grade heading north on Prospect Street from Main Street to the creek.

Vegetation

The Village of Attica contains a number of public green spaces. These include Village Park, with its well-maintained, playing fields, gazebo, benches, floral plantings, and playground (see Figure 2.5-3). Village Park is a visual resource for the immediate neighborhood and to those who attend use its facilities special events held there. However, because of its location past the railroad tracks on Exchange Street, the park is not visible from the central business district and is likely to be unnoticed by visitors to the Village.

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As discussed above, Tonawanda Creek creates provides a greenway corridor in the Village Center. However, there are only limited views of the creek and its green corridor from public viewpoints in the Village. Figure 2.5-4 shows views of the creek from the Village Hall parking lot on Water Street.

MANMADE FEATURES

Traditional Village Center

The Village of Attica possesses a past rich in history and can capitalize on its historic roots to maintain and enhance its own unique cultural and visual identity. The Village Center is a place where people live and conduct business, children attend schools, and cultural and public institutions function. It is a special area within the Village that exhibits characteristics and amenities important to the village's past. The Village Center has a critical mass of traditional "village" elements including such prominent civic buildings as the Stevens Library, the Village Hall, the historic U.S. Post Office, and a number of interesting and locally significant buildings including churches and prominent commercial structures. The Attica Hotel is a notable and locally significant visual resource (see Figure 2.5-5), as is the former Opera House. The photo also illustrates how landscaping could help to soften the harsh concrete environment of the downtown commercial street.

The distinctive visual character of the Village center stems from its traditional "Main Street" design elements, including the strong street edge definition created by buildings uniformly built up to the sidewalk line. One of the most attractive intact blocks is Exchange Street between Main Street and the railroad tracks. Banners line Market Street in the Village Center. For the most part, signs in the Village are appropriately-scaled.

Residential Areas

The Village boasts attractive residential streets laid out in a typical, tradition village pattern, with smaller lots, uniform setbacks, sidewalks, porches, and mature trees (see Figure 2.5-6) Prominent church buildings, including those on Prospect Street provide visual focal points and serve as keystone buildings for the community (see Figure 2.5-7).

NEGATIVE VISUAL FEATURES

VILLAGE CENTER

Although overall a strong positive visual and community character feature, the downtown area contains a number of visual shortcomings. Negative visual elements in the downtown area are unwelcoming to residents and visitors alike, and detract from Attica's strength and character as a traditional 19th century village center.

Vacant and/or Blighted Buildings

Main Street contains a number of prominent vacancies and neglected properties. These buildings are characterized by "vacant for sale/lease" signs, peeling paint, leaving a general feeling of disinvestment in the area. Just north of the rail tracks, Exchange Street contains a number of neglected buildings in need of adequate property maintenance.

Lack of Street Amenities

- The Village Center along Main, Exchange, and Commercial Streets has very few street trees. As seen in Figure 2.5-8, the lack of street trees creates a harsh and unwelcoming atmosphere. There is also an absence of street trees along Market Street.
- There is an overall lack of sufficient landscaping, including decorative flower plantings, shrubbery, or other features to offer shade, shelter, or a softening of the appearance of the street.
- Many of the sidewalks are cracked, patched, or otherwise in need of repair or replacement,
- There is a lack of public street furniture and amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, historic lighting fixtures, rest rooms, and community bulletin boards.
- The tourist information office is most often closed and is only in fair condition (see Figure 2.5-9).

Breaks in the Street Wall

Interruptions in the continuous “street wall” created by the uniform setback of buildings to the sidewalk line detract from the cohesive visual character of Main Street. The lack of street line continuity also contain buildings that are varying building setbacks, sizes, and styles; large, unlandscaped parking lots fronting on the street; Examples include the parking lot in front of the car dealer shown in Figure 2.5-10.

Architectural Patterns

The downtown is an eclectic mix of styles, height, fenestration, setbacks, and other architectural features. The intersection of Market and Main Streets, currently occupied by an interim parking lot, is the location of an important visual focal point for travelers through the central business district that is in need of improvement. In certain cases, new construction is not contextually compatible with the downtown fabric (see Figure 2.5-8, above).

Development along the northern portion of Prospect Street is a highway-style strip commercial pattern with signs, wide curb cuts, parking in front, and lack of crisscrossing of utility wires (see Figure 2.5-11).

Utilities

The downtown area is crisscrossed by numerous overhead telephone and electrical utility lines and poles. These lines create clutter and a haphazard and an unattractive, “messy” look. Figure 2.5-12 shows the oversized “Cobra” lights that are currently in use on Main Street. This lighting is out of scale and out of character with the downtown. In addition, these lights, designed for highway use, are pointed only at vehicular traffic side and not the sidewalk side. As a result, they provide poor lighting for pedestrians and little sense of comfort for nighttime pedestrians.

Transportation Elements

Negative visual elements related to the traffic and circulation system include the overly wide roads in the downtown area, particularly Market Street. The road width is not warranted by the low traffic volumes, and also creates a wide swath of uninterrupted concrete and asphalt in the center of the downtown with ill-defined and redundant curb cuts. The railroad overpass on Route 98 is only in fair condition and is also a visual obstruction (see Figure 2.5-13).

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Signs

The downtown area contains some businesses which have fluttering signs, plastic banners, and flags and/or temporary plastic box signs with moveable letters. These types of signs create a chaotic look, are distracting, and are often poorly maintained. There are no billboards in the downtown area.

INDUSTRIAL AREAS

The industrial area on West Avenue contains newer auto-related development with out-of-scale signage, as well as the interesting and architecturally attractive Godfrey Milling Co. building (see Figure 2.5-14).

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

There is a need for housing rehabilitation and/or improved housing maintenance in certain residential neighborhoods in the Village. As in any community, there are also other scattered homes throughout the Village which are in need of repair.

PARKS AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Village parks provide green space near the Village Center, and overall are a visual and recreational asset to the community. At the same time, the Village's existing parks contain a few elements which could be improved to enhance their appearance. These include the use of cyclone fencing at Village Park, un-landscaped and undefined parking areas, graffiti on structures, structures with peeling paint, and cracked sidewalks (see Figure 2.5-15). There is also a lack of screening between the Village storage piles off Exchange Street and Village Park, which detracts from the visual appearance of the park.

OTHER VISUAL FEATURES

GATEWAYS

The major entrances for visitors to the Village are Market, Main, Exchange, and Prospect Streets. As the photograph in Figure 2.5-16 indicates, although there is signage at these entrances to the Village, the signs and their environs do not create a sense of arrival at a special place. The signs themselves, while adequately maintained, there is no landscaping and the signs are not designed in coordination with an overall Village Center theme. There is no coordinated signage program for the Town and Village which ties the various elements of the community together or serves to draw visitors into the Village from State and County Routes.

VIEWS AND VISTAS

There are attractive views of Tonawanda Creek as one approaches and crosses the creek on Main Street (see Figure 2.5-2). This is the only readily available area providing a view of Tonawanda Creek from a publicly accessible location such as a street or park.