

## V

# Visual & Historic Resources

Residents of Brighton have often expressed the importance of Brighton maintaining its residential character, and it is important that the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan also promote that objective. There are many components to a town's character, and other parts of the Comprehensive Plan address land use, transportation, and other factors that influence character.

One of the most important determinants of the perceived character of a place is the way it looks - its visual character. Visual character is influenced greatly by the amount, form and location of natural areas and the type, placement and form of development - including building age and architectural style, street patterns and landscaping. As Brighton develops, it becomes increasingly important to try to identify the elements that are most important to preserving the residential character valued by residents and to preserve and incorporate them into new development.

### Visual Character

Brighton's visual character is defined by:

- Its natural resources. Natural resources that enhance the character of the town include sites of scenic beauty, such as Corbett's Glen, the varied nature of its open space areas (the forested spaces of western Brighton, the grass and scrubland areas of central Brighton and the hills of central and eastern Brighton, especially Pinnacle Hill), and the Erie Canal, Genesee River and small creeks that wind through town.
- Its residential development; the varied architecture and building materials found in its houses, the winding street patterns and mature trees found in residential neighborhoods, and the use of converted residential structures for commercial activities along Monroe Ave. and in other parts of town.
- Its commercial and institutional development. The auto dealers on W. Henrietta Rd., Monroe Community College, and Tops Brighton Plaza (formerly Loehman's Plaza) are examples.

Recent development has added new elements to the visual character of Brighton. Large-scale office complexes and senior living developments have been introduced, storm water control ponds are prominently featured, and formalized landscaping has replaced natural areas. Some new office buildings, both in complexes and free-standing, have responded to the residential

nature of the surrounding area by incorporating residential architectural elements. Often, though, the proposed use and/or scale of new buildings has made it unfeasible to reflect residential characteristics in the architecture of the building.

Brighton has several appointed boards whose duties include the review of the visual characteristics of new development. The Planning Board's review can affect the design and scale of structures, landscaping, screening, and other visual elements of proposed projects. The Architectural Review Board examines development plans for "excessive uniformity, dissimilarity or inappropriateness or poor quality of design in the exterior appearance of buildings and signs." The Conservation Board was created to advise other town boards and the Parks and Recreation Department "on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural and built features and conditions of the Town of Brighton insofar as aesthetics, quality of care and maintenance, biological integrity and other environmental factors . . ."

The 1990 *Master Plan* included a commercial design chapter that recommended the development of design standards for commercial areas, particularly Monroe Avenue and East and West Henrietta Roads. The recommendations addressed issues such as front yard parking, the architectural integrity of buildings, street tree plantings, overhead utility lines, and the lack of common visual elements between districts. In addition to these recommendations, the "Brighton Theme" subcommittee of the 1990 *Master Plan* Steering Committee made recommendations for elements to visually unite the various geographic areas of the town and create a town theme. Their recommendations included the development of seasonal plantings; uniform, distinctive street signage and "Welcome" signs providing visual impact at designated perimeters of the town.

In response to potential development impacts on the visual character of Monroe Ave., the *Monroe Avenue Design Plan, Guidelines & Standards* were adopted in 1999. This plan examined the natural and built visual assets of Monroe Avenue and developed guidelines and standards for public and private improvements and development that are intended to respond to the residential character of surrounding neighborhoods and many of the structures on Monroe Avenue. As the first plan of this nature adopted by the town, the Monroe Avenue plan has the potential of serving as a template from which to develop plans for other commercial areas in Brighton.

## Historic Assets

The importance of Brighton's historic assets to the maintenance of the town's character was recognized in 1995 with the creation of the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission. The commission was created in conjunction with the adoption of historic preservation regulations intended to (from *Comprehensive Development Regulations*):

1. Safeguard the heritage of the Town of Brighton by protecting and enhancing the landmarks that represent cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history.
2. Foster civic pride in the beauty and history of Brighton through education;.
3. Protect and enhance the attractiveness of Brighton to home buyers, visitors, shoppers and residents and thereby provide economic benefits to the town and its citizens.
4. Conserve and improve the value of property within Brighton.
5. Foster, encourage and advise the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of structures.

The Historic Preservation Commission has, to date (1/1/00), designated 17 structures as historic properties based on their historic and/or architectural significance. These are:

1. The James Hartley House — 1981 S. Clinton Ave.
2. The Timothy Wallace Residence — 2169 S. Clinton Ave.
3. The Clover Street Seminary — 1550 Clover Street
4. 1211 Crittenden Rd.
5. The Stone Tolan House — 2370 East Ave.
6. 3108 East Ave.
7. The Abbey-Taylor House — 245 Edgewood Ave.
8. Former District School #9 — 484 French Rd.
9. The Stoneburner-Corbett House — 139 Glen Rd.
10. The John Hagman House — 895 Highland Ave.
11. The Carl Paul House — 896 Highland Ave.
12. The Cobb-Meagher House — 1100 Highland Ave.
13. The New Tryon House — 421 Landing Rd. North
14. The Former Brighton Town Hall — 1795 Monroe Ave.
15. The Carey-Harper House — 1438 Winton Rd.
16. The Warrant Homestead — 1956 W. Henrietta Rd.
17. The Sears Roebuck Catalog Home — 2176 Westfall Rd.

Brighton’s Historic Preservation regulations require that any exterior alteration, restoration, reconstruction or new construction of or to a designated property must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission. The review of the commission is to ensure that alterations are compatible with the properties historic character.

**Focus Group Report**

To solicit public input regarding perceptions of Brighton’s community character and issues important to the Comprehensive Plan, seven Community Character Focus Groups were held September 21, 1999 at the Town Hall. Groups and attendees were as listed below.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Attendees</u>
Businesses	13
Church/Civic Groups	8
Seniors	8
Young People	5
Recreation Interests	9
Environmental Interests	10
Neighborhood Groups	<u>15</u>
Total	68

Following is a synopsis of the views expressed at each meeting.

**BUSINESS FOCUS GROUP**

Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- Trees
- Services (e.g., road maintenance, snow plowing, refuse collection)
- Easy access to city, cultural facilities
- Parks
- Diversity of land use - Town should not just be a bedroom community

Issues and Concerns Expressed

- The Town should try to make it easier for businesses during the site plan review process. It is trying too hard to protect neighborhoods and one or two individual residences at the expense of businesses.
- Rustic Village is trying to put in sidewalks. Would like help from the Town in getting answers from the State.
- Brighton has three distinct areas with different character - West Brighton, Central Brighton and East Brighton. Suggests that the Comprehensive Plan should identify and enhance the character of each.
- Building permitting process takes too long.
- Industrial areas should have relaxed standards regarding fences around outdoor storage.
- East Henrietta Rd. should have sign standards which permit signs to be seen from cars.

### **CHURCH/CIVIC FOCUS GROUP**

#### Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- Brighton's neighborhoods and community feeling
- Green spaces
- Cultural, religious and land use diversity
- Small businesses and the personal relationships with business owners
- People feel safe
- Well-maintained property
- Brighton Recreation Program
- Brighton Police Department
- Monroe Avenue plan to unify appearance of avenue should be extended to other areas of Town

#### Issues and Concerns Expressed

- Would like more retail in Brighton, especially restaurants
- Regarding Monroe Avenue, concerned about speed of traffic, especially when school children are walking back and forth and during evenings and weekends. Broken parking

- rail fences should be fixed. The town should give business owners incentives to clean up properties.
- Question if we need all the office space being developed along Westfall.
- Trucks should not be permitted to park in residential neighborhoods.
- Can seasonal Menorah be placed in a more attractive setting, perhaps on the triangle at 12 Corners?

### **SENIOR CITIZEN FOCUS GROUP**

#### Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- Excellent school system
- Sense of community; community-minded spirit
- Mix of ethnic groups
- Proximity to city, cultural facilities and rest of metro area
- Great place to raise a family
- Trees and green space
- Good town services, e.g. plowing, senior citizen program
- Erie Canal

#### Issues and Concerns Expressed

- There is too much traffic on Westfall. Would prefer more single-family homes and fewer office buildings. Westfall should not be widened - favors diversion of traffic onto Keating Blvd.
- We need more trees, landscaping and flowers along Monroe Ave. and in other commercial areas. Suggests senior citizens and garden clubs could help with planting and maintenance.
- Town should develop Persimmon, Stowell and Corbett\_s Glen Parks.
- Twelve Corners needs to have more of a sense of being the center of the town.
- Do not rezone residential areas into commercial.
- Brighton needs a permanent senior citizen center.
- Paths along the Canal should be further developed.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS GROUP**

### Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- \_ Schools
- \_ Fabulous Police Department

### Issues and Concerns Expressed

- \_ Brighton does not have a real center. Twelve Corners area should be enhanced for this purpose, including benches, landscaping.
- \_ We need places for young teenagers to hang out. Town should have more bike paths to parks and schools and be more pedestrian friendly, including better control of traffic on Monroe Ave.
- \_ Town closes down too early, needs more night life: bistros, outdoor cafes.
- \_ Town needs better playgrounds for young children. Large wooden playground suggested.
- \_ Need place to ice skate. Canal suggested.
- \_ Town needs larger outdoor pool and better indoor pool.
- \_ Concerned about robberies.

## **RECREATION FOCUS GROUP**

### Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- \_ Recreation and sports programs
- \_ Senior citizen program

### Issues and Concerns Expressed

- \_ Town very badly needs more outdoor play fields, especially for soccer. Baseball, lacrosse also need fields. Ideally 2-3 fields should be located together.
- \_ Play fields should be tied in to bike trail system so children can access them without need for car pooling.
- \_ Town should address need for skateboarding and roller blading areas. Indoors is best for safety and can generate revenue to support activity.
- \_ Town should start bocce league for senior citizens.

- Town and school district should get together to plan for a better indoor pool, ideally a 50 meter Olympic pool. Need to address how to involve areas of town not in Brighton School District.
- Need Canal boat house for crew.
- Need additional shelters at parks and lodge facilities. Lodge at Brighton Town Park is an excellent facility, but often booked.
- Corbett’s Glen should be available for camping and fly fishing. Suggests shelter at Corbett’s Glen. Corbett’s Glen should be tied into bike system.
- Need green space for seniors.
- Trail system need connection from Town Hall to Canal and Meridian Park.
- Suggestions made for parkland acquisition: land along Winton Rd. north of expressway for open space character; land along Canal for expanding Meridian Park; Pinnacle Woods as the only high elevation in the town; additional land in the Gonsenhauser Farm area to provide ball fields, replacement for recreation center at Brookside, preservation of agricultural past.

## **ENVIRONMENT FOCUS GROUP**

### Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- Residential areas and landscaping
- Neighborhoods and schools
- Diversity of people, ideas, ethnic background
- Safety
- Stability - people here their whole lives
- Open space
- Trees

### Issues and Concerns Expressed

- Open space should be used for passive recreation, not just play fields.
- Monroe Ave. should have additional plantings in the right-of-way.

- Trees should be preserved. Suggestion that Town require a permit to remove trees. Suggestion that dead trees should not necessarily be removed as they provide habitat for birds, animals.
- Brighton should be as bike-friendly as possible.
- Town should preserve habitat at Pinnacle Hill, Gonsenhauser Farm and Corbett\_s Glen.
- Land use plan should identify environmental limitations.
- Scenic viewsheds should be preserved.
- Linden Tech area in Brighton should not be developed.
- Town should develop sidewalks all over town.
- Town should develop trail system to provide connections to Canal and commercial centers
- Reduce light pollution.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS FOCUS GROUP**

### Aspects of Brighton Particularly Valued

- Excellent schools
- Neighborhoods
- Central location and proximity to city, airport, cultural events, all aspects of metro area
- Tree-lined streets
- Sports facilities
- Open space
- Churches, synagogues
- Recent improvements on Monroe Ave.
- Diversity of types of housing, types of families

### Issues and Concerns Expressed

- Dumpsters in commercial area should be fully enclosed

- Development Districts should be set up to pay for transportation improvements made necessary by development. Improvements should include purchase of vans to pick up employees, to cut down on the numbers of cars.
- Browncroft: neighborhood suffering from excess traffic. Mercy Park project should be developed in such a way as not to create excess traffic.
- Monroe Meadows: Traffic uses neighborhood as a bypass.
- Westfall Heights: West Brighton should be included in Brighton School District. Stowell park could be a working farm.
- Brighton Meadows: In the vacant areas adjacent to Brighton Meadows, new development should be confined to residential development and open space. The area should have sidewalks, especially S. Clinton.
- In the West Henrietta Rd. area, the plan should permit commercial (office) uses on the West Henrietta Rd. frontage parcels. The interior streets should remain residential.
- Bike lanes should be provided.
- David/Howland area: feeling of community is eroding; worried about disappearing open space and proliferation of commercial uses.
- Ambassador/Sandringham area: concerned about speeding on residential streets - need to raise consciousness level among neighborhood residents on this issue, particularly among young people.
- Meadowbrook area: impacted by traffic (people trying to use neighborhood as a cut-through). Concerned about domino effect of non-residential uses started when house next to fire house was developed. Town should guard against too many new offices - should emphasize reuse of existing structures. Concerned about danger of conversion of tax-paying commercial uses to non-tax-paying institutional use, through change in ownership.
- South Landing Rd. area: Town needs more playfields.
- West Brighton Fire Department should not be merged with other fire departments.
- Tarrytown Rd.: We should support existing businesses and fill empty buildings with new businesses, but also need to make sure there is a transition to residential use.

October 18, 1999

Submitted by the Brighton Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee on Community Character,

Ellen Nutter, Chairperson

## Recreating a Center

The opportunity exists within the next ten years to give greater definition to the central section of Brighton.

The historic loss of land during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from the Town of Brighton has created an area devoid of a village-centered appearance. “Brighton Village,” which contained the Town Hall building, cemetery, church, school, business district, post office, taverns and train station was annexed by the City of Rochester in 1905.

While the re-creation of a traditional village center may or may not still be possible, a central area with a unified appearance is possible. A new definition can be formulated if there is a considered effort by all decision-making organizations in the town to formulate a unified goal and work to establish this central view.

The definition of the area to be considered the “center” is beyond the scope of this plan, as is the development of the theme that would define it. Offered here are ideas to be considered in the development of a central Brighton theme.

- Areas in central Brighton that may be developed soon need the guidance of a town-centered plan. The development of lands in central Brighton should be compared to the goal for the establishment of a town center that gives definition to Brighton.
- The area of central Brighton shown in Fig. 11 is the approximate geographic center of Brighton and contains much of the land noted above that may soon be developed. It incorporates “12 Corners,” which is now commonly considered the center of Brighton, the town government offices, a Brighton Fire District fire station, the headquarters of Brighton Volunteer Ambulance, Brighton High School and Middle School, McQuaid High School, the town’s recreation department at Brookside School, commercial and office development, neighborhoods and large open space areas. The areas outlined in white in Fig. B are open space areas owned or leased by the town: the areas outlined in orange are recommended for acquisition.
- A “center” can be thought of as an area that provides ready access, by various modes of travel, to uses that meet multiple needs of the community. The area shown in Fig. B includes uses that meet the needs of the community, but is considerably larger than the traditional village center. While further development of the “center” concept may relocate or resize this area, it should also be possible to fit this area more to the concept. For example, acquiring the recommended areas and improving and promoting pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the neighborhoods, commercial areas, office areas, schools and recreation/open space areas would help to make the area cohesive. If rights could be obtained for a public trail from the Town Hall to the expressway or canal, it could become a defining feature of the entire town.

- This area contains the majority of the town-controlled active and passive recreation area in the town, which may provide a theme to be built upon to define the area and highlight an important town resource.
- Establishing coordinated landscaping and signage along the major streets in the area would help to define it. Future street reconstruction might provide opportunities to enhance the aesthetics of the streets, as has been done in Rochester on Elmwood Ave., as well as to improve pedestrian facilities.

As mentioned above, the definition of a town center is beyond the scope of this plan. The intent of this section is to encourage the detailed analysis required to develop the concept of a town center for Brighton that its citizens can be proud of and that will help to define Brighton's vision of the future.

# Central Brighton Theme

## Potential Defining Features

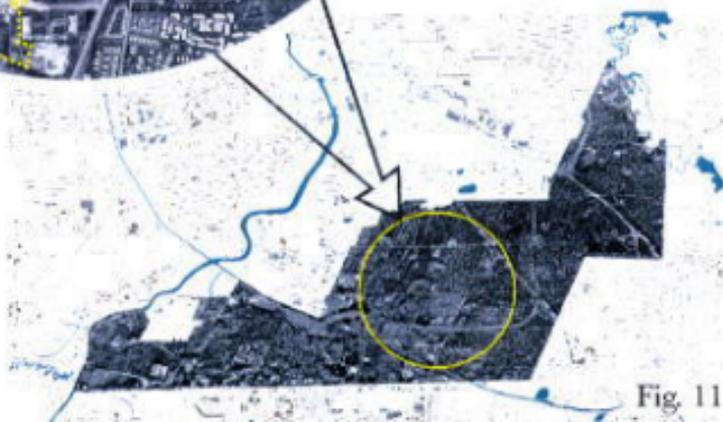


Fig. 11