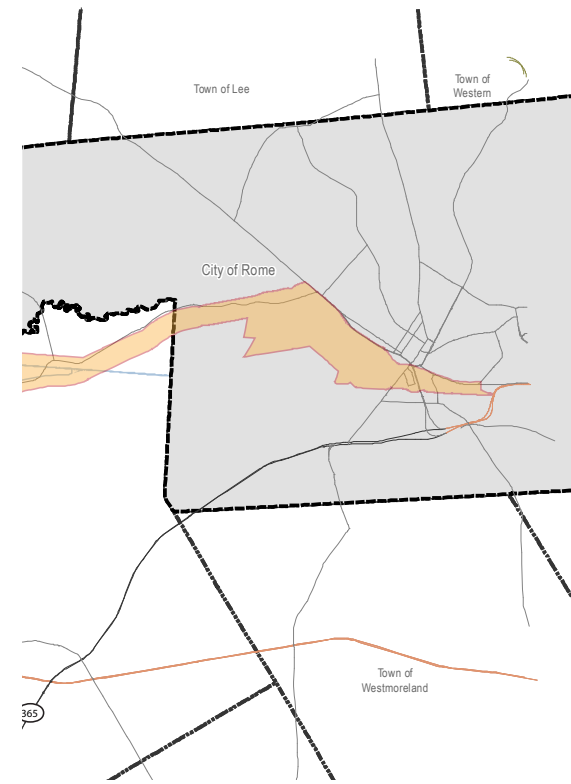


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DRAFT

# CITY OF ROME



## LOCATION AND CONTEXT

The LWRA boundary in Rome is about 6 miles wide from east to west and includes 1.8 miles of the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park on its western side. The official terminus of the State Park is found at the end of this 1.8 mile stretch, however the Empire State Trail extends beyond the park boundary, through the City of Rome, and continues east along the north edge of the Barge Canal. The LWRA boundary is irregularly shaped, reflecting the historical alignment of the Old Erie Canal. The boundary also captures several significant project areas in Rome including the State Park, Empire State Trail, the Mohawk

River Trail, the Barge Canal, major commercial and downtown centers, and two Brownfield Opportunity Areas. The eastern edge of the LWRA coincides with the eastern boundary of the City of Rome. This LWRA includes forested, rural, wetland, suburban, urban, canalfront, and wetland landscape types.

## HISTORY

The City of Rome in Oneida County was first settled by Jedediah Phelps and Judge Dean in 1784 following the cession of Oneida lands through the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1784). Rome's central location within the county and its proximity to nearby waterways elevated it to a site of importance. Rome served as a portage point, where travelers carried their boats over land from one stream or creek to another. Through these creeks, travelers accessed Oneida Lake, Lake Ontario, and western lakes and river systems. Early Dutch and English inhabitants referred to the portage as "Trow Plat" and "the Great Carrying Place," respectively (Wager, 1896).

Rome was formed from Steuben on March 4, 1796. In 1797, the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company was authorized by the New York State Legislature to construct a canal to connect the Mohawk River and Wood Creek in Rome. This project was succeeded by the Erie Canal, which formally broke ground in Rome on July 4, 1817. The significant "first shovel of dirt" of the Erie Canal should be celebrated, and has the potential to become an attraction if it is pointed out in the landscape. Despite the existing route of the Western Inland Lock, the Erie Canal was built a half-mile from Rome (Jones, 1851; Wager, 1896).

In 1844, the Enlarged Erie Canal was relocated

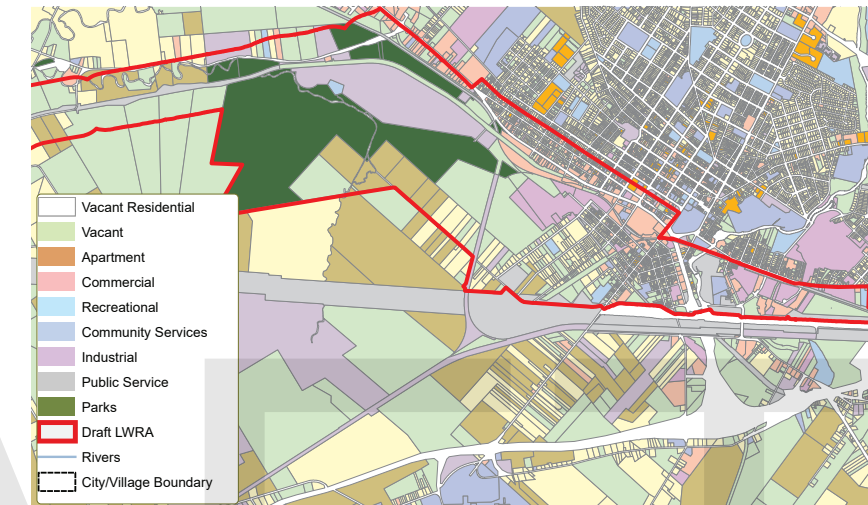
## CITY OF ROME LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS

ZONING WITHIN THE WRA	
OVERLAY DISTRICTS	YES
SUBDIVISION REVIEW	YES
SITE PLAN REVIEW	YES
DESIGN STANDARDS	NO
PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ALLOWED?	YES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	YES(2018)

within Rome. The Syracuse and Utica Railroad and the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad provided rail service to Rome by the 1830s. Black River Canal, a lateral (or branch) canal, was opened in 1850 to access markets south of Rome. Concurrently in the mid-nineteenth century, major roadways were improved to plank roads for easier transportation in and out of Rome (Jones, 1851; Horne, 2005).

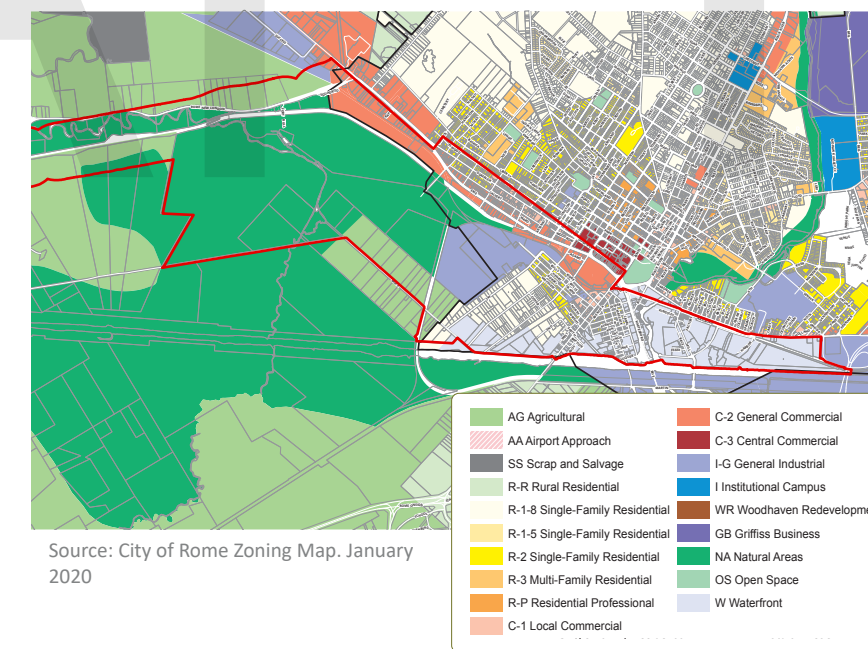
Rome incorporated as a city on February 23, 1870. By the late nineteenth century, Rome's prolific metal industry earned it the title of the "Copper City." The Rome Brass and Copper Company (originally Rome Iron Works) produced railroad iron and brass; it processed approximately ten percent of the nation's copper ore. Despite the decline of the Erie Canal and rail service, Rome's industries continued to flourish until World War II, including Electric Wire Works (1883), Rome Electrical Company (1904; later

## LAND USE



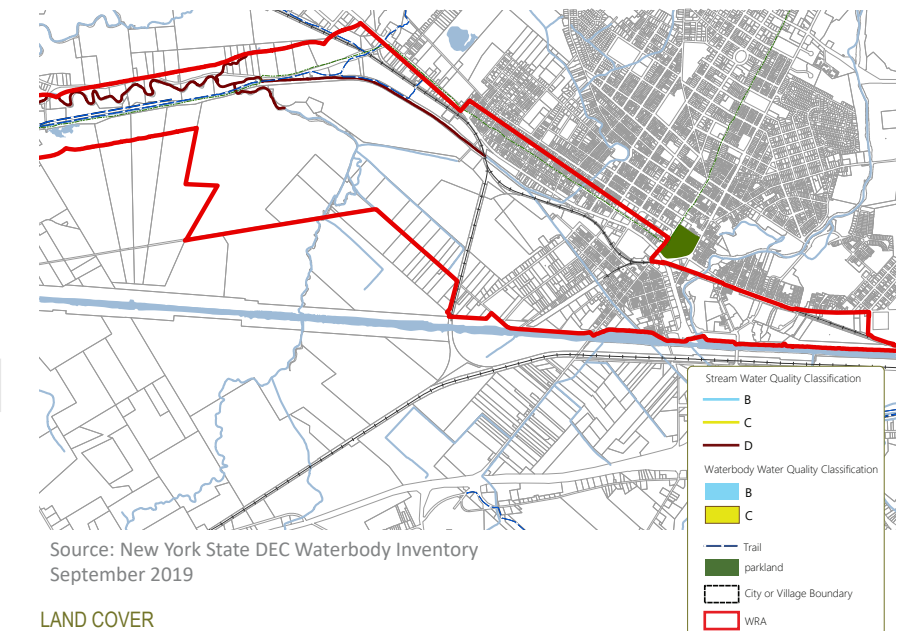
Source: EDR based on Oneida County Planning Parcel Data. January 2020

## ZONING



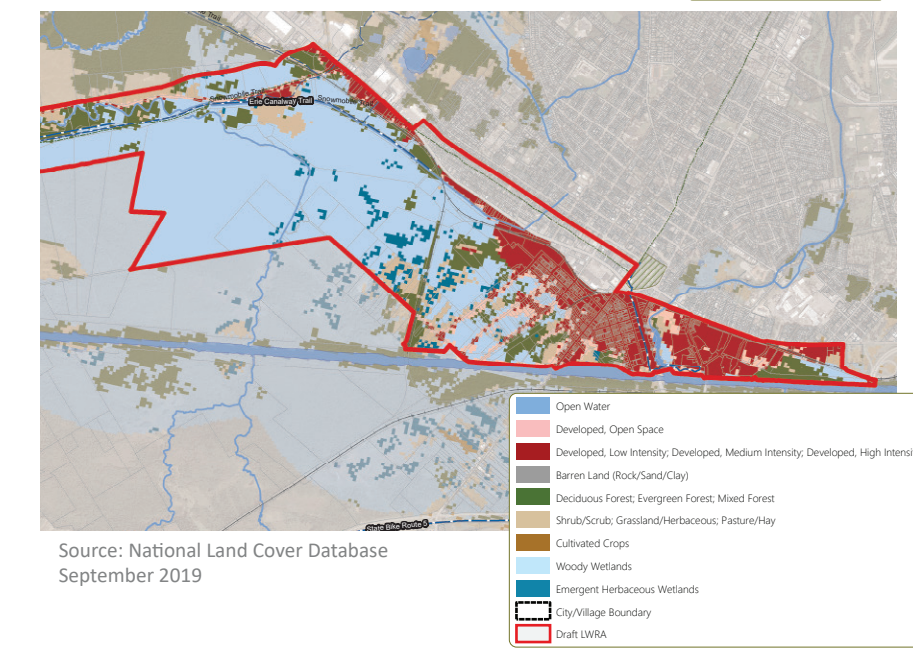
Source: City of Rome Zoning Map. January 2020

## WATER QUALITY



Source: New York State DEC Waterbody Inventory September 2019

## LAND COVER



Source: National Land Cover Database September 2019



General Cable Corp, 1927), and Revere Copper and Brass (1929) (Wager, 1896; Horne, 2005).

## LAND USE AND ZONING

The maps on the previous page provide an overview of the land use and zoning context of the WRA within the City of Rome.

The LWRP boundary enters Rome with little noticeable change in land use, as the area is primarily vacant forestland with a few small residential parcels. Here, the canal and LWRP boundary follow a forested and generally wet area that mirrors the winding path of Wood Creek. Near the western LWRA boundary line, Fort Bull is located on the North Side of Rome-New London Road. It is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is open by guided tour only. About ¾ of a mile before Route 46 intersects with Erie Boulevard, the Canal itself is re-watered at the site of the former “Erie Canal Village”. The village is no longer actively managed but was once the site of a historic interpretive center focused on agriculture and life along the Old Erie Canal. The site is over 200 acres, though much of it is forested and/or wetland. Current ownership and future plans for the site are both uncertain. The Rome Sports Hall of Fame is a modest museum attractive to visitors interested in local sports culture which activates the trail during operating hours. A large portion of vacant land which includes an abandoned parking lot in this area is owned by the City of Rome. The City is currently working on developing new trail connections in this area with a plan for connecting with the Empire State Trail along the Barge Canal at Bellamy Harbor Park. A combination of City of Rome owned property, National Grid property, and Muck

road are being looked at for this trail connection, which would provide a much-needed off-road link between the Old Erie Canal Trail and the Barge Canal Trail, both as part of the Empire State Trail. A large portion of the eastern LWRP boundary in this area ends on Erie Boulevard, which is one of Rome’s major commercial/industrial corridors. There are many commercial businesses in this area which include: auto repair, healthcare, hardware stores, restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores, and much more. The Erie Boulevard corridor also includes a number of active or abandoned industrial sites, which include Worthington Industries and Owl Wire and Cable. The area between South James Street and South Jay Street is largely residential of medium density, although that density increases in the areas around Matthew Street, Henry Street, Ridge Street, and South George Street. Gryziec Field is one of the larger parks in the area and it is located off of South James Street. The density of residential development is high in the stretch of the WRA boundary between South James Street and Erie Boulevard (adjacent to the Mohawk River). In addition, there are interspersed retail stores in this area, as well as some industrial uses between Canal Street and Erie Boulevard. Here, the LWRP boundary extends eastward across the Mohawk River and encompasses the area between East Dominick Street to the north and the Barge Canal to the south. This area primarily consists of industrial uses both active and inactive, a National Grid substation, the City of Rome DPW, and a large and growing park complex (Bellamy Harbor Park) along the NYS Barge Canal waterfront. This area is actively being redeveloped by the City and is the subject of their recently adopted “Bellamy Harbor Waterfront Revitalization District” zone.

The Old Erie Canal State Historic Park is adjacent to the “Agricultural” zone and “Natural Areas” zone through the City of Rome. The corridor extends into the City of Rome and includes parcels zoned “Waterfront District”, “General Commercial”, “General Industrial,” “Single-Family Residential,” “Multi-Family Residential” and “Natural Areas.”

## WATER QUALITY AND LAND COVER

The Old Erie Canal is also known as Wood Creek in the final segment before it enters the Barge Canal in Rome. Wood Creek, which holds a Class C designation, was included on the NYSDEC Priority Waterbodies List which notes that aquatic life and recreational uses are stressed. Nutrients and silt/sediment from agriculture and stormwater runoff from urban areas are listed as factors contributing to the impaired water quality conditions. Other possible sources are listed as construction, streambank erosion, and discharges of sanitary waste. Two regulated point sources, Rome Strip Steel Co. and Owl Wire and Cable Inc., hold permits to discharge to Wood Creek.

## PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

For 1.8 miles in Rome, the Empire State Trail is within the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park. This stretch of park feels remote as the trail passes through both forested and rural settings, with occasional glimpses of Rome-New London Road. South of the trail, the Old Erie Canal is barely visible in places due to overgrown vegetation and the dry conditions of the canal itself. Maintenance of the State Park ends at a re-watered section of the canal just over a weir, located just west of the

Erie Canal Village/Rome Sports Hall of Fame site. From here, an existing NYSDOT paved trail heads northeast to Erie Boulevard. From this point, the City of Rome has also been working on a safer, off-road option which cuts across a fairly large, currently underutilized parcel and continues to follow the Old Erie Canal to a recently installed crosswalk at South Charles Street, which crosses to W. Dominick Street. At this crossing point, the Old Erie Canal and Empire State Trail diverge, as the Empire State Trail is on-road through the City of Rome. The City has plans to enhance Dominick Street as part of the Erie Boulevard BOA. From Dominick Street, the Empire State Trail continues onto James Street before becoming off-road again on a paved trail along the Barge Canal. The biggest challenge to this route is that it is on-road, which can be difficult for certain types of trail users, particularly families with young children. An advantage is that it brings travelers through the downtown, where there is access to restaurants, amenities and attractions including Fort Stanwix National Monument and the West Dominick Arts District. The Rome Amtrak Station is located south of Bellamy Harbor Park on the south side of the canal and is easily connected via Mill Street and the Mill Street Bridge. Although the opportunities here are not well developed, the concept of long distance cycle leisure travel using Amtrak to connect destinations has been popularized in recent years. Pedestrian and alternative transportation accommodations are especially important in this location, as visitors arriving by train may choose or need to travel by methods not involving automobiles.

In addition to the new extension to the Charles Street Crosswalk, the City has future plans to continue extending the off-road trail farther south, as an alternative for trail users who would otherwise

be forced to travel on-road at Dominick Street. The planned extension is included in the Erie Boulevard BOA, and would follow a National Grid property east to Muck Road, eventually ending at Gryziec Field. It would then join the paved portion of the Empire State Trail along the Barge Canal. While this route would not contain the opportunities to access food and amenities, it is an important option for trail users who wish to remain off-road. It also allows for more looping options between different trail segments.

The paved portion of the Empire State Trail along the Barge canal contains several canal related properties and opportunities. Bellamy Harbor Park features prominently on the Barge waterfront and hosts events as well as accommodations for boaters and community members who arrive by car, bike or on foot. The City has recently installed a new pavilion

with public picnic, shower and restroom facilities for boaters. The Mohawk River Trail connects to the Empire State Trail around this location and follows the Mohawk River north through the city for about 2.5 miles utilizing both on- and off-road segments.

## TRANSPORTATION + UTILITY CROSSINGS

The Old Erie Canal State Historic Park crosses Seifert Road and goes over the Mud Creek Aqueduct, shown below, before terminating just south of Erie Boulevard in Rome. At the Erie Canal Village, trail users can choose to travel north to Erie Boulevard to stay on the on-road section of the Empire State Trail, or they can follow an informal trail along Wood Creek. This trail eventually joins the road network at Liberty Street, however multiple planning efforts have identified the value of extending the off-road trail it to the barge canal.



Mud Creek Aqueduct

STRUCTURE NAME	TYPE	OWNER	MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY
Seifert Road	Bridge	City of Rome	NYSDOT
Mud Creek Aqueduct	Aqueduct	NYS Canals	NYS Canals



# SPOTLIGHT: Rome Planning Initiatives

The City of Rome has multiple ongoing planning initiatives that build upon the historic alignment and development patterns of the Old Erie Canal as well New York State Barge Canal. These plans and projects include two Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Studies, a Downtown Revitalization Area Strategic Investment Plan, the Waterfront Village Project, and several individual streetscape, waterfront, and site development projects. While the plans reflect an array of scopes and scales, they all include components that acknowledge the potential of harnessing the Erie Canal to catalyze meaningful development to improve the City.

The City has two active BOAs whose boundaries are shown on the Issues and Opportunities Map on the following spread. The east BOA, known as the Downtown Rome BOA, is a 513 acre triangle made up of 991 parcels which includes two miles of barge canal frontage from James Street to Route 49. Sixteen strategic sites have been identified through this plan. The eastern canal-adjacent sub-area has been identified as Waterfront Greenspace, while the western canal-adjacent sub-area (South James to Western Boulevard) has been identified as the Waterfront Village Project, a comprehensive

neighborhood concept within the BOA plan. The Waterfront Village Project aims to improve public access to the canal through a bulkhead and dock system, public walkways, seating areas, utility infrastructure, stormwater management practices, and streetscape upgrades. It includes a component referred to as the Erie Canal 'Clinton's Ditch' Rewater Park and Open Space which will restore sections of the canal and original towpath for the community to access and visit. An important water gateway is included at the confluence of the re-watered canal and the barge canal.

The west BOA, known as the Erie Boulevard BOA, is shown to the right. It is described as "an area for redevelopment planning to transform this area of

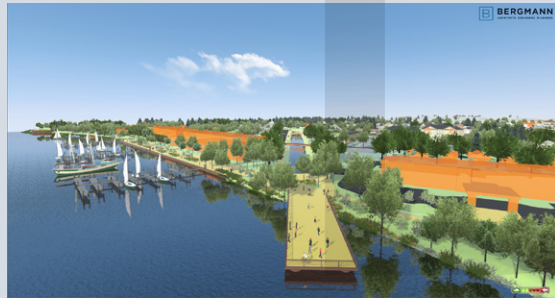
the City into a place for business, recreation, and quality living." The plan includes an implementation framework to assist pursue funding.

The master plan developed for this project focuses on a 575-acre area in the City, encompassing the downtown core as well as land adjacent to the Erie Canal. It includes a mix of residential, industrial, commercial, and recreational land uses.

Several projects identified in this plan work to enhance or build on the historic presence of the Old Erie Canal including the Clinton's Ditch Trail, Canal Landing Enhancements, New Rail-To-Trail Connections, and W. Dominick Street Enhancements.



Downtown Rome BOA Sub Area Map



Waterfront Village Drawing of Re-Watered Old Erie Canal



Rome Waterfront Village Concept Drawing



Erie Boulevard BOA Project 25-Clinton's Ditch Trail



Erie Boulevard BOA Project 25-Clinton's Ditch Trail

## MASTER PLAN

- DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**
- 1 MIXED-USE INFILL DEVELOPMENT (163-187 W. DOMINICK STREET)
- 2 MIXED-USE INFILL DEVELOPMENT (239-257 W. DOMINICK STREET)
- 3 227 W. DOMINICK STREET RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION
- 4 CAPITOL THEATRE APARTMENTS
- 5 LIBERTY/GEORGE MIXED USE
- 6 LIBERTY/JAMES GARAGE IMPROVEMENTS
- 7 FREEDOM PLAZA INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- 8 ROMIE INDUSTRIAL PARK DEVELOPMENT
- 9 COLD POINT DEVELOPMENT
- 10 INDUSTRIAL REDEVELOPMENT
- 11 INFILL DEVELOPMENT (328 RIDGE STREET)
- 12 INFILL DEVELOPMENT (119-203 RIDGE STREET)
- 13 INDUSTRIAL REUSE
- 14 RESIDENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- IMPROVING THE USER EXPERIENCE**
- 15 CITY HALL / CITY GREEN IMPROVEMENTS
- 16 DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION
- 17 CAPITOL EXPANSION
- 18 W. DOMINICK STREET STORY WALK
- 19 COPPER CITY COMMONS
- 20 FREEDOM PLAZA PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS
- 21 ROMIE CABLE TOWER RE-IMAGINING
- 22 ERIE BLVD ENHANCEMENTS
- 23 ERIE BLVD PEDESTRIAN CROSSING
- 24 GATEWAYS
- GREENWAY CONNECTIONS**
- 25 CLINTON'S DITCH TRAIL / INTERPRETATION
- 26 S.MADISON STREET PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS
- 27 S. GEORGE STREET PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS
- 28 CLINTON'S DITCH INTERPRETIVE PARK
- 29 NEW MULTI-USE TRAIL CONNECTION
- 30 NEW MULTI-USE TRAIL - MUCK ROAD
- 31 NEW RAIL-TO-TRAIL CONNECTION
- 32 INDUSTRIAL PARK GREENWAY CONNECTION
- RECREATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS**
- 33 GRZYCIEC FIELD IMPROVEMENTS
- 34 CANAL LANDING ENHANCEMENTS
- 35 TRAILHEADS
- NEIGHBORHOOD UPLIFT**
- 36 CREEKSIDE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
- 37 NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL DEVELOPMENT (VARIES)
- 38 W. DOMINICK STREET ENHANCEMENTS

**ERIE BOULEVARD BOA**





The Wood Creek Trail Extension could be enhanced to provide an off-road alternative route to the Barge Canal



Construction of the Old Erie Canal was officially commenced in Rome on July 4, 1817



Wayfinding signage along the trail near a city-owned parking lot helps trail users understand the option to branch off and follow a trail on Wood Creek, or continue North to Erie Boulevard



## CITY OF ROME ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The map to the right provides an overview of the context of the WRA in the City of Rome.

- + During the construction of the original Erie Canal in 1917, the “first shovel of dirt” was dug at an unknown location in Rome. This significant event is of interest to canal enthusiasts and the general public, and could be acknowledged and celebrated in the landscape.
- + Many on-road sections of the Empire State Trail, such as West Dominick Street and James Street, have planned enhancements through the Downtown and Erie Boulevard BOAs and through other city initiatives. These should be carried out and extended to accommodate the entire on-road network of the Empire State Trail.
- + The Erie Boulevard BOA identifies a new rail-to-trail connection which would extend the off-road trail option at Wood Creek where it currently joins the city road network at Charles Street. This new trail would bring trail users south to Muck Road along an old rail line. It would then follow Muck Road east to a new trailhead and enhanced trail at the Barge Canal, before joining with the Empire State Trail at James Street. These improvements would significantly improve the range of options and experience of trail users.
- + The Rome Sand Plains are a DEC Unique Area located a few miles north of the Empire State Trail. This natural attraction may be of interest to some trail users, and its presence should be indicated along the trail.

- + The City of Rome has made investments in developing the Mohawk River Trail and connections to the Empire State Trail should be highlighted wherever possible. *(Are there plans to extend the Mohawk River Trail to the north?)*
- + Opportunities to interpret and open access to the original canal, which runs through a residential area in Rome and connects into the barge canal, such as the Clinton’s Ditch Park, should be explored and pursued.
- + Bellamy Harbor Park is an important node of canal activity and enhancements here would have multiple positive impacts for the city, waterway, and trail.
- + The intersection between the Old Erie Canal and the Barge Canal presents an opportunity to see and experience the new and old canal. Projects here, such as the Canal Landing Enhancements project in the Erie Boulevard BOA, are supported by this LWRP.
- + A prominent and attractive gateway sign at the eastern terminus of the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park would help to celebrate this important part of the park.
- + Opportunities to redevelop Erie Canal Village should be explored.
- + The USGS Hydrological study ended in New London, but this section would also benefit from a better understanding of water processes which could ultimately help improve water flow and the aesthetics of this section.

