This system addresses both the contributions and impacts of institutional uses, including federal, state, county, and local government, colleges and universities, health care facilities, and authorities. As major employers and stakeholders, Albany’s institutions play a key role in shaping the City’s economy, land use pattern, and culture.

In addition to the City of Albany, institutions in Albany include the federal and state governments, Albany County and the City of Albany; colleges and universities (e.g., University at Albany, College of Saint Rose, Union University, Sage Colleges); health care facilities (e.g., Albany Medical Center, Albany Memorial Hospital, Albany Veteran’s Hospital, St. Peter’s Hospital); and authorities (e.g., Capital District Transportation Authority, Albany Housing Authority).

As the State Capital, Albany is home to multiple layers of governmental bodies, education institutions, hospitals, authorities and state-wide non-profits. They impact the City’s landscape, as seen here with the gothic SUNY administration headquarters, and also the City’s economy, quality of life and infrastructure.
3.8 Institutions

The key components of Albany’s institutional system are: relationships and partnerships, facilities and projects, and fiscal impacts.

RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS
Albany’s concentration of institutions is one of the City’s greatest strengths. While there are existing connections between the City’s institutions, strengthening and creating new relationships and partnerships is essential to the reaching the 2030 Vision for Albany.

Goal:
Foster relationships and create new partnerships among the different levels of government (i.e., local, regional, and state), surrounding municipalities, and institutions that focus on cooperative planning for growth and development.

Strategies and Actions:
- RP-1 Work together to attract and support businesses and start-ups.
- RP-2 Create, implement and expand regional plans for multi-modal transportation, open space networks, and green infrastructure.
- RP-3 Create and maintain open lines of communication between institutions.
- RP-4 Position the City as a leader in regional cooperation.
- RP-5 Work together to revitalize downtown and key neighborhood mixed-use nodes.
- RP-6 Enhance data-sharing partnerships with institutions.

Institutions Key Issues
- Education, health care, and government are major employment sectors in the Albany MSA. Between 1990 and 2008, the number of jobs in education and health services increased, while government jobs decreased.
- The government sector is projected to continue its decline, while education and health service jobs are projected to increase.
- Albany’s nine higher education institutions provide many positive impacts, including spinoff enterprises, young creative residents, and diverse employment opportunities.
- Issues related to Albany’s colleges and universities can include tensions between neighborhood residents and students and their tax-exempt status.
- A high percentage of land in Albany is tax-exempt: 12% of the total number of properties is tax-exempt; 58% of the total acreage in Albany is tax-exempt. (Albany County Dept. of Management & Budget GIS)
RP-1 Strategy: Work together to develop a strategy for attracting and supporting businesses and start-ups and providing job training, education, and employment. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy EMP-4, INV-4, INV-5, DIV-2; Social ED-2, ED-3; Housing and Neighborhoods NS-3; Institutions RP-3, RP-4)

Actions:

a. Implement the institutional recommendations of Capitalize Albany (the City’s economic development strategy), including strengthening relationships with state government and other institutions to foster development and neighborhood revitalization.

b. Partner with organizations in major employment growth sectors (e.g., Albany NanoTech), Capitalize Albany Corporation, and Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce to attract and support related businesses and start-ups. This may include implementing incentives such as reduced city fees or the development of business incubator space.

c. Develop partnerships between higher education institutions (e.g., University of Albany, College of Saint Rose), major employers, and the Albany City School District to increase opportunities for job training and retain college graduates.
RP-2 Strategy: Work together to create, implement, and expand regional plans for multi-modal transportation, open space networks, and green infrastructure. (Interrelated Strategies: Transportation MM-2, PED-2, BIC-2; Natural Resources NH-1, OS-1; Institutions RP-3, RP-4)

Actions:

a. Support New Visions 2030, a regional multi-modal transportation plan, in partnership with the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), the Capital District Transportation Authority, and local governments, to prioritize regional multi-modal transportation networks. As a component of Albany’s Vision that extends beyond the City limits, creating early regional partnerships will improve the likelihood of implementing and funding projects.

b. Support Tech Valley Trails, a regional open space network plan, to prioritize green networks (e.g., greenways, habitat, trails, riparian buffers, open space, etc.) in partnership with the CDRPC, local and state governments, and local conservation organizations.

RP-3 Strategy: Create and maintain open lines of communication and cooperation between and among institutions. (Interrelated Strategies: Institutions RP-1, RP-5, RP-6, FP-1, FP-2, FP-3, FP-5)

Actions:

a. Develop a regional government coordination group that includes representatives of the City of Albany, nearby municipalities, county, and state government to discuss regional trends, economic development, and other issues.

b. Strengthen communication between institutions and City government and seek ways to collaborate on strategies (e.g., brownfield redevelopment, preventative health measures, access to healthy foods, college/public school mentoring, etc.).

c. Increase coordination and partnerships between universities and the City of Albany to support the City’s sustainability and revitalization strategies (e.g., planning and technology departments of local universities and city departments).
RP-4 Strategy: Position the City as a leader in regional cooperation. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy DIV-3; Social SS-6; Institutions RP-1, RP-2, FP-2, FP-5)

Actions:

a. Form a regional Task Force with the Capital District Transportation Committee, Capital District Regional Planning Commission, and other municipalities to improve regional planning and implement regional multi-modal transportation, open space, and sustainability plans. As the largest municipality in the Capital District, the City of Albany can take a leadership role in the cooperation efforts, including the convening of this regional government coordination group.

b. Identify opportunities for shared services with local governments, state agencies, not-for-profits, and institutions.

RP-5 Strategy: Work together to revitalize downtown and key neighborhood mixed-use nodes. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy INV-4; Housing and Neighborhoods NI-3, NI-4, PS-5, NS-1; Institutions FP-1)

Actions:

a. Support and encourage institutional investment in downtown and key neighborhood mixed-use nodes through incentives and public-private partnerships.

b. Explore the creation of a Downtown investment fund to support revitalization efforts.

Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships emerge as the University at Albany evolves and expands.
RP-6 Strategy: Enhance data-sharing partnerships with institutions. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy DIV-1; Housing and Neighborhoods NI-5; Utilities and Infrastructure COM-1, COM-2)

Actions:

a. Identify City and Institutional data needs and opportunities to share data to reduce replication and error.

b. Formalize data-sharing opportunities with local institutions.

c. Work together to analyze data in order to develop City and institutional strategies to achieve mutual goals.

FACILITIES AND PROJECTS

Albany’s concentration of institutions includes numerous facilities (e.g., university campuses, hospitals, and public buildings) that serve as centers of learning, provide community services, and offer employment opportunities to the community.

Goal:

Work together to ensure that government and institutional facilities and projects promote mutual benefits.

Strategies and Actions:

FP-1 Communicate the benefits of development and growth in the city.

FP-2 Coordinate with State, County, and regional agencies in the development review process.

FP-3 Work together to reduce potential negative impacts of institutional projects.

FP-4 Improve public access to institutional facilities and open spaces.

FP-5 Work with institutions on climate change planning.

FP-6 Encourage Institutions to locate in, remain in and revitalize City of Albany neighborhoods including Downtown.
BEST PRACTICES: BOSTON PILOT TASK FORCE

In 2009, the City of Boston created a Task Force to study the relationship between the city and tax-exempt institutions (e.g., major universities and hospitals). In Boston, most tax-exempt, land-owning institutions make a voluntary payment in-lieu-of taxes to the City to help cover the cost of police, fire, and snow removal. However, contributions varied widely between institutions. The Task Force found that the core principles of a fair and balanced program are transparency and consistency. The group recommended keeping the voluntary system, applying a PILOT Program to all non-profit groups (with an exception for small organizations), basing contributions on the value of real estate, recognizing and qualifying PILOT Credits for community benefits, and phasing in the system.

http://www.cityofboston.gov/assessing/PILOT.asp

FP-1 Strategy: Communicate the ways in which development and growth in the City benefit or impact all institutions, levels of government, and surrounding municipalities. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy INV-2; Institutions RP-3, FP-2, FP-6)

Actions:

a. Study and share information about the costs and benefits of proposed government and institutional projects. As the impacts of potential projects are determined, work with institutions and surrounding municipalities to reduce negative impacts.

FP-2 Strategy: Coordinate with State, County, and regional agencies in the project review procedures of developments and projects likely to cause land use, transportation, and environmental impacts beyond the political boundaries in which they occur (i.e., developments of regional impact or DRIs). (Interrelated Strategies: Economy INV-2; Institutions RP-4, FP-3)

Actions:

a. Form a Task Force of City, State, County, and regional agencies that meets on an as-needed basis to review developments of regional impact.

FP-3 Strategy: Work together to reduce the possible negative impacts of institutional facilities and projects on their surrounding community. (Interrelated Strategies: Housing and Neighborhoods NI-4, Institutions RP-3, FP-2, FP-1, FP-3)

Actions:

a. Create neighborhood-level forums to address potential plans and impacts of institutions on adjacent neighborhoods. Encourage institutions to work with the City and community stakeholders early in the project planning phase to address potential concerns. Potential negative impacts include conflicts between institutional expansion and surrounding neighborhoods (e.g., traffic concerns, higher density adjacent to lower density neighborhoods).

b. Work with the State Office of General Services (OGS) to encourage state offices to locate in existing downtown buildings and consider adaptive reuse/opportunities for historic preservation. Currently many employees at Albany’s major employment centers (e.g., SUNY, Albany Nanotech Complex, Empire State Plaza) have little incentive to patronize businesses outside of their office complexes. However, when buildings are integrated into the existing urban fabric, there are opportunities for employees to support nearby retailers and restaurants at lunch and after hours.
c. Integrate the development of Harriman Research and Technology Park and the proposed Albany Convention Center with the surrounding urban context of Downtown, historic neighborhoods, and nearby institutions. These large economic development projects provide the opportunity to establish linkages between downtown and new employment centers, encourage spinoff development, and create employment opportunities.

FP-4 Strategy: Improve and enhance public access to institutional facilities and open spaces. (Interrelated Strategies: Social CHR-8, SS-6; Institutions RP-2, FP-2)

Actions:

a. Increase opportunities for comfortable public gathering areas and plazas adjacent to or within institutional facilities (e.g., Empire State Plaza, educational campuses) through signage, programming, greening or enhanced amenities.

b. Improve connections (e.g., sidewalks, signage, trails, bicycle paths, etc.) between institutional facilities, surrounding neighborhoods, and the waterfront.

c. Expand access to the existing network of community facilities and strengthen linkages between health care and social service organizations. Albany has a strong network of health care providers and hospitals. Health care organizations should connect with and support social service providers to improve access to services for residents (e.g., housing assistance, family counseling, preventative health services, etc.) and more efficiently serve a wider audience.

FP-5 Work with institutions on climate change planning. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy INV-5; Institutions RP-4)

Actions:

a. Work with institutions to establish greenhouse gas reduction targets and climate action plans.

b. Work with institutions to evaluate emergency preparedness plans and how to cooperate with the City’s emergency preparedness plan. Evaluation may take the form of scenario planning.

c. Work with institutions to help them reduce their climate change-related impacts and adapt to climate change through information sharing, data collection, and initiatives, such as a Green Institutions Challenge.
Map 13 Institutionally Owned Properties
FP-6 Encourage Institutions to locate in, remain in and revitalize City of Albany neighborhoods including Downtown. (Interrelated Strategies: Economy INV-2; Social ED-1; Housing and Neighborhoods NI-4; Institutions RP-5, FP-1)

**Actions:**

a. Identify institutional space and facility needs and match them with underutilized properties in the City.

b. Identify opportunities for the re-use of underutilized properties for educational purposes associated with regional institutions.

**FISCAL IMPACTS**

The fiscal impacts of institutions addresses tax-exempt properties, payments in-lieu of taxes, and recognizing and qualifying the community benefits of different organizations. See Map 13 for a map of tax-exempt properties in Albany.

The City has the burden of being an undercompensated seat of government and an undercompensated urban area; while at the same time providing a high level of services to a largely tax-exempt property base andshouldering the cost of city services centrally so that they are available to all who need them.

**Goal:**

Address the positive and negative impacts of government and institutional expansion on the City’s tax base.

**Strategies and Actions:**

- **FI-1** Work together to establish a comprehensive system for implementing PILOTs.

- **FI-2** Communicate how development and growth in the city benefit or impact all institutions.

- **FI-3** Assess and lobby for appropriate recommendations outlined in the 2010 Capital Punishment: an analysis of the fiscal impact of State government policies and tax-exempt properties on the City of Albany.
FI-1 Strategy: Work together to establish a system for implementing PILOTs (payment in-lieu of taxes) agreements. (Interrelated Strategies: Institutions RP-3, FP-2, FP-3)

Actions:

a. Partner with the state government, higher education institutions, and other tax-exempt institutions to design a comprehensive and fair approach for implementing PILOTs. PILOTs are federal, state, or institutional payments to local governments to help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable properties. Agreements are often negotiated between the tax-exempt organizations and local government. Such a system helps to compensate governments for loss of property tax revenue due to a property’s tax-exempt status.

FI-2 Strategy: Communicate the ways in which development and growth in the City benefit or impact all institutions, levels of government, and surrounding municipalities. (Interrelated Strategies: Institutions RP-3, FP-2, FP-1, FP-3)

Actions:

a. Study and share information about the fiscal impacts of tax-exempt institutional development (e.g., loss of taxes from converting residential property to institutional uses compared with job growth).

FI-3 Assess and lobby for appropriate recommendations outlined in the 2010 Capital Punishment: an analysis of the fiscal impact of State government policies and tax-exempt properties on the City of Albany. (Interrelated Strategies: Institutions FP-3, FP-1, FP-2)

Actions:

a. Lobby New York State for appropriate AIM Equity Payments, Empire State Plaza and Harriman PILOTS and Capital City service agreements to reduce the fiscal burden on the City.