

1. Executive Summary

A. Project Description

The Town Board of the Town of Lloyd (hereinafter the Town Board) intends to adopt a *Comprehensive Plan*, under the provisions of § 272-a of New York State Town Law. The proposed *Comprehensive Plan* is the first set of comprehensive amendments to the Town's land use policies since the prior plan was adopted in 1966¹. The Town Board has sole authority to adopt the proposed *Comprehensive Plan*. The Ulster County Planning Department has review responsibilities under General Municipal Law 239-m, but no approval authority. The *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared by a Comprehensive Plan Committee, with assistance provided by GREENPLAN, Inc.

This Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) has been prepared under § 272-a of New York State Town Law and 6 NYCRR 617.10(b), the implementing regulations for the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). The Town of Lloyd is considered the study area for the DGEIS. Adoption of the proposed *Comprehensive Plan* would apply Townwide. The document has been prepared in a generic format because adoption of the proposed *Comprehensive Plan* will have a wide application, will affect many sites, and will have generic or common effects.

Adoption of the *Comprehensive Plan* will provide for a number of new and revised land use policies to guide conservation and development of the Town into the near future. It can provide a rational basis for future changes in land use regulations. However, the *Comprehensive Plan* does not change land uses or any of the Town's zoning requirements, nor does it have the authority that a zoning law has. Only the Town Board, by legislative action, may change zoning, and then, only after an environmental review under SEQR has been conducted. The *Comprehensive Plan*, however, makes suggestions for future

¹ An update to the 1966 *Development Plan* was prepared in 1981 but was never officially adopted by the Town.

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conservation and development in the Town and this information will constitute a substantial source of information that the Town Board can use in making future zoning decisions. Since adoption of the *Comprehensive Plan* does not, by itself, guarantee implementation of its recommendations, assessing the potential environmental effects of adoption of the Town's *Comprehensive Plan* are speculative since they constitute recommendations for action rather than the action itself. The DGEIS has been prepared based upon these limitations.

The proposed *Comprehensive Plan* is consistent with New York State Town Law's mandate that "*Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens*" [N.Y.S. Town Law § 272-a.1(b)]. The *Comprehensive Plan* reflects the wishes of Town residents, as expressed in a public opinion survey, at two broadly promoted community planning workshops, and numerous public meetings and public hearings held between 1997 and 2005, and the work of a *Comprehensive Plan Committee*, meeting regularly in open session for eight years. Thus, the scope of issues related to this DGEIS have been previously identified and discussed at length.

A broad consensus was reached from this extensive outreach process that certain actions needed to be taken to address development pressures in a manner that has a beneficial effect on the character of the Town, particularly its agricultural heritage, small town rural quality, and scenic resources, while accommodating economically viable businesses in the Town and the growing residential housing market. The *Comprehensive Plan* responds to residents' desires to achieve this broad goal. Readers are encouraged to consult the full text of the proposed *Comprehensive Plan* to obtain an understanding of the proposal.²

In addition to the public participation aspects of the planning process, the *Comprehensive Plan* is also based upon an examination of the most current and relevant socioeconomic statistics, existing land uses in the Town, sensitive environmental features, scenic areas and roads, open space and recreation, traffic and transportation, as well as the preparation and analysis of a series of maps identifying surface water resources, topography, water and sewer districts, and current zoning. In addition, a *Build-out Analysis* was conducted to determine the potential impacts of development on the Town under the current Zoning and the proposed land uses.

The *Comprehensive Plan* is necessary because: 1) the Town's current *Development Plan* is 39 years old; 2) the current *Development Plan* is based upon

² See Appendix A.

statistics and trends that are nearly 40 years old; 3) the current *Development Plan* does not meaningfully address protection of Lloyd's most important industry—agriculture; 4) New York State Town Law at § 272-a was amended in 1994, setting forth new procedures and guidelines governing comprehensive plans; and 5) the 1966 *Development Plan* document is not reflective of state of the art planning techniques developed during the past 13 years to deal with the increasing pressures of development in rural areas. Since the 1966 *Development Plan* was adopted, Lloyd has experienced rapid growth that has been transforming the Town from a predominantly rural-agricultural community to a suburban-residential community. Population increases in Lloyd have exceeded the countywide average. This is significant because, in recent decades, growth in Ulster County has consistently outstripped growth in the State as a whole. Most of the Town's new residential development is scattered. Agriculture, open spaces, and scenic roads have been particularly affected by this new growth.

B. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The DGEIS studies potential environmental impacts of the proposed *Comprehensive Plan* in the areas of land, water resources, plants and animals, agricultural land resources, aesthetic resources, historic and archaeological resources, open space and recreation, transportation, and growth and character of the community. All of the impacts identified can be considered beneficial with the exception of a possible impact on growth and character of the community. In this category, the *Comprehensive Plan* recommends that the zoning bulk regulations be revised to increase minimum lot sizes in the R-1, R-2 and Agricultural Districts. These recommendations would reduce overall density in these areas of the Town and could possibly have the effect of increasing the cost of single family dwellings. However, this impact will be mitigated by the proposed increase in Planned Residential Development (PRD) Districts, which would permit greater density in and adjacent to the hamlet of Highland and would encourage a diversity of housing styles, types and sizes to accommodate households of all ages, sizes and incomes. The *Comprehensive Plan* also recommends a number of strategies to encourage the development of affordable housing units in the Town. Finally, reducing the overall density in the Town will increase housing affordability by mitigating future potential impacts on the school district and local property taxes, as analyzed in the *Build-out Analysis* and as discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

C. Alternatives

The DGEIS analyzes one alternative to the proposed action. The “No Action” alternative would occur if the Town Board does not adopt the proposed *Comprehensive Plan*. The No Action Alternative would not achieve the community’s goals to protect Lloyd’s rural character and control the rate and configuration of new growth. As summarized in detail in Chapter 2 Subsection B, the *Build-out Analysis*, which was conducted during the preparation of the *Comprehensive Plan* (see Appendix A, front pocket), uncovered numerous inconsistencies in the Town’s current Zoning that will result in the regulations not meeting many of the stated goals of the *Comprehensive Plan*. For example, if a community priority is preserving open space and farmland but the Zoning regulations set density levels too high and permit residential uses to be spread out across farmland and other large land holdings, then farmland and open space are very likely to disappear and the goal will not be attained. Moreover, the current Zoning would potentially result in adverse impacts on the transportation network and on property taxes. The *Build-out Analysis* helps to measure the long-range effectiveness of the Zoning Law and allows for a visualization of the patterns of growth. It indicates that Lloyd’s current Zoning is not consistent with the goals stated in the *Comprehensive Plan* and continuation of the Town’s Zoning is likely to have significant adverse impacts on the Town over time.

D. Approvals and Advisory Reviews

The action consists of adoption of the proposed *Comprehensive Plan* under §272-a of New York State Town Law. This action requires legislative approval by the Town Board, which has sole authority to adopt the proposed *Comprehensive Plan*. The Ulster County Planning Department has review responsibilities under General Municipal Law 239-m, but no approval authority. No other local, state, or federal approvals or permits are required.