

2. Description of the Action

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.

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 SEQRA has been conducted. The *Comprehensive Plan*, however, makes suggestions for future conservation and development and this information will constitute a substantial source of information that the Town Board can use in making future zoning decisions.

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-

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

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. A summary of the *Comprehensive Plan* recommendations appears in Table 1.1 of the *Plan*. 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 the 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.

B. Background and History

New development patterns over the past two decades have rapidly changed Lloyd's rural environment. Although portions of Lloyd, particularly Illinois Mountain, are protected from intense development by severe environmental constraints, throughout much of the remainder of the Town subdivisions have proliferated. Unlike the traditional rural landscape, new development is focused along the existing road network and on former agricultural lands rather than around the hamlet of Highland.

Lloyd's new growth is part of a regional pattern. In the last three decades, from 1970 to 2000, Ulster County's population has consistently outstripped that of New York State, and Lloyd has seen a greater percent increase than the

² See Appendix A.

County. Between 1980 and 1990, Lloyd's population increased 17 percent, and during this time Lloyd was one of the fastest growing towns in Ulster County. Between 1990 and 2000 the Town experienced an additional 7.7 percent increase in population.

This rapid growth is part of a regional trend. Since World War II, growth has steadily moved outward from New York City, initially in Westchester, Bergen and Nassau Counties and more recently on to a new ring of suburbs, located 45 to 75 miles away from Manhattan. Ulster County, as well as Orange, Putnam, Dutchess and eastern Suffolk Counties, are situated within this ring, and these are the areas that experienced most of the region's growth during the 1980s and 1990s. Semi-rural areas such as Lloyd have experienced market pressure for residential growth from people who work within commuting distance of New York City and wish to live in areas where open space is still the norm. This trend is expected to continue as people seek a quieter lifestyle and safer environment. The *Comprehensive Plan* addresses these changes, but it will only be effective if its recommendations are implemented.

In 2003, the Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted a *Build-out Analysis*.³ A build-out analysis estimates the potential impact of growth on a community once all developable land has been converted to uses permitted under the Zoning. The analysis can help to measure the long-range effectiveness of zoning laws and visualize the pattern of growth such laws will produce. It also demonstrates the impact development may have on infrastructure and community resources. The *Build-out Analysis* was conducted for two scenarios: the existing Zoning, and the land uses proposed in the *Comprehensive Plan*.

The Town of Lloyd has a total of approximately 4,491 acres of land zoned for residential use that are currently vacant and considered buildable. The *Build-out Analysis* estimates that if all the buildable land were developed as currently zoned, this would result in the addition of 4,620 new residential units, and 14,275 additional residents. The implication of this build-out is that the Town could have a 143 percent increase in population to 24,216 people, an additional 3,696 students in the school district, 224 acres devoted to new roads, an additional 46,200 vehicle trips per day on local roads, an additional 2,194,500 gallons of water needed per day, an additional 2,194,500 gallons of sewage to be disposed of per day, and the need to add 14 new police officers and 14 new firefighters.

While a fiscal impact analysis was not conducted as part of the build-out analysis, the effects of the projected growth on community services like education and fire protection was assessed based on current and comparable figures. The Highland Central School District estimates that single family

³ See Appendix A, front pocket.

residences generate 0.8 school-aged children per unit, at a cost to local taxpayers of \$7,871 per child.⁴ Thus, the projected build-out based on the current Zoning would result in an additional 3,696 school age children, resulting in a cost to local taxpayers of \$29,091,216. Similarly, the need for an additional 14 new fire fighters could result in the Town requiring fully paid fire protection. In the City of Poughkeepsie, the cost of fully paid fire protection is approximately \$664 per structure. Thus the estimated cost for fire protection for a total of 6,711 dwelling units in the Town of Lloyd would be \$4,456,104.

In comparison, if the existing Zoning were changed to increase the required minimum lot sizes (for example from 1 to 2 acres in the R1 District, and from 1 to 3 acres in the Ag District⁵), the total population, school-aged children and infrastructure impacts are reduced as compared to the above figures as follows: there would be potentially 2,272 new units, and 7,019 new residents. This represents a 70 percent increase in population to 16,960 people, with an additional 1,818 children in the school district, 213 acres devoted to new roads, an additional 22,720 vehicle trips per day on local roads, an additional 1,079,200 gallons of water per day, and the need to add 7 new police officers and 7 new firefighters.

C. Public Need for the Project

The proposed *Town of Lloyd Comprehensive Plan* will meet the public need to protect Lloyd's rural character, natural environment, and quality of life. As the *Build-out Analysis* demonstrates, the Town's current zoning is not consistent with the goals stated in the *Comprehensive Plan*, and implementation of the Town's current Zoning is likely to have adverse impacts on the Town over time, particularly in light of recent development trends. New York State Town Law requires that "all town land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan" (§278-a.11). Thus, in order for the Town to achieve its goal of protecting Lloyd's rural character and quality of life, it must adopt a new *Comprehensive Plan* with policies and recommendations to amend the Zoning.

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 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

⁴ This figure does not include State Aid.

⁵ The proposed *Comprehensive Plan* recommends that minimum lot size in the A District be increased to four acres per unit for conventional subdivisions and be calculated at two acres per unit for cluster subdivision. The Build-out Analysis assumes 3 acre zoning in the A District.

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 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.

D. Objectives of the Project Sponsor

The objective of the project sponsor is to adopt a new *Comprehensive Plan* to respond to the public charge to protect Lloyd's rural character and quality of life. That charge was evidenced in numerous public participation techniques, outlined in Chapter 1 Subsection A, which began in 1997 as part of the planning process for development of the Town's *Comprehensive Plan*.

E. Benefits of the Action

The proposed action will provide the following public benefits. It will establish policies to:

- Preserve the Town's rural character and quality of life.
- Maintain the Hamlet of Highland as the Town's center of commercial, institutional and cultural activities.
- Maintain agriculture as a viable economic industry and ensure that it continues to contribute to the Town's rural character and quality of life.
- Enhance the efficiency and safety of the Town's transportation networks, specifically by reducing density and by promoting alternative forms of transportation.
- Preserve and enhance the scenic quality of rural roads.
- Protect and enhance the quality of the Town's natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources.

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- Protect environmentally sensitive areas such as steep slopes, wetlands and floodplains.
- Ensure an adequate supply of groundwater for present and future generations.
- Encourage economic development consistent with Lloyd's small town character to stabilize the tax base.
- Protect the visual quality and aesthetic character of the Town.
- Plan for adequate recreational land and facilities to address the needs of a growing population.
- Encourage a diversity of housing styles, types and sizes to accommodate households of all ages, sizes and incomes.
- Provide landowners greater flexibility and a wider variety of options for developing their land in a way that also preserves significant open space.
- Preserve ridgelines, scenic features, and neighborhood character.
- Allow for traditional neighborhood development that extends greater opportunities for traditional community living, working, housing, and recreation to all residents of the Town.
- Improve the visual appearance of the community.
- Stabilize the rate of residential growth and thereby slow the demand for community services, which will have a beneficial effect on local property tax rates.
- Permit housing developments designed to meet the special needs and habits of senior citizens.
- Streamline the review process for all development proposals by providing Design Standards that illustrate the types of development the Town is seeking.
- Streamline the environmental review process and reduce project review timeframes for development proposals that comply with design thresholds established in a GEIS that enhance the Town's rural character and visual environment.

F. Project Location

The proposed *Comprehensive Plan* will apply Townwide within the Town of Lloyd, Ulster County, NY, as shown on Figure 1.

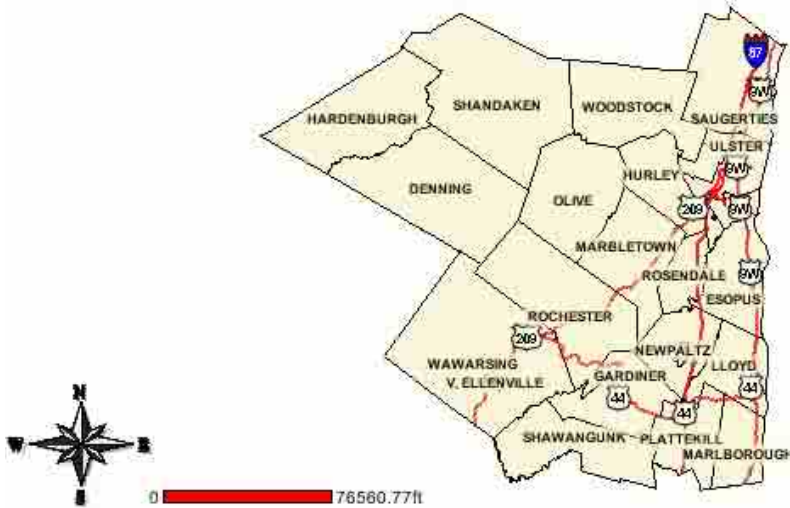


Figure 1: Town of Lloyd Location Map

G. 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.