

## **CHAPTER V**

### **PLANNING ALTERNATIVES**

#### **SEQRA Compliance**

The preparation and ultimate adoption of this Comprehensive Plan requires the consideration of alternative actions and potential impacts of its implementation on the environment under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) as part of this Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). The public participation process which led to the preparation of this Plan extended over a period of approximately five years dating back to the late 1990's. At that time groups of individuals in the community came together to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that presently face the Village of Liverpool. This SWOT process, as it is called, and similar previous local planning initiatives, such as participation in the County's 2001 Settlement Plan, formed the basis and starting point for developing much of this Comprehensive Plan.

Segments of the Liverpool community participated in the development of Onondaga County's Settlement Plan during the period between 1999 and 2001 when the Settlement Plan was completed. Residents contributed to the pilot planning project for the Village of Liverpool that was a part of the Settlement Plan as discussed earlier in Chapter I. As a result of these initial planning initiatives, the Village decided in 2002 to move forward with preparation of a new Comprehensive Plan.

Documentation of public participation in this comprehensive planning process in Liverpool is provided as an Appendix to this document. This participatory process included the identification of a Vision Statement for the future of the community (see Chapter II), issues and challenges facing the community (also Chapter II and Chapter III), and realistic strategies and actions that will be undertaken to address and resolve those issues (Chapters IV, V and VI).

The Village is presented with an opportunity through this planning process to solve some very complex issues as a result of many of these initiatives. This Plan is based upon an extensive stakeholder and public involvement process which included Village officials, public agency officials and agency staff, elected officials from outside the Village, residents, merchants and property owners. Meetings and discussions were held with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA), the New York State Department of Transportation, the Onondaga County Department of Transportation, the New York Thruway Authority, the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, the U.S. Postal Service and the Onondaga County Parks Department among others.

The comprehensive planning process included an inventory and analysis of existing conditions within the Village as presented in Chapter III which included current land use, transportation, infrastructure, and community facilities. This Plan also documents Liverpool's planning goals, objectives, policies and strategies as action items to be implemented over time by the Village.

**No-action Alternative**

An obvious alternative for the Village would have been to continue on its present course and not proceed with undertaking the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan. The result of this no-action alternative would be a possible and probable worsening of some of the key challenges and issues facing the Village or, at the very least, stagnation and lack of action to resolve many significant issues.

These significant issues include worsening traffic conditions along the Oswego Street, Second Street and the Onondaga Lake Parkway corridors and connecting streets within the Village; a continuation or worsening of the unsafe pedestrian environment that results from high commuter traffic volumes along Oswego Street and Onondaga Lake Parkway; a continued erosion of the historic identity of the Village and its traditional central business district; continued physical and psychological separation from the many

opportunities presented by the Village's location along Onondaga Lake and Onondaga Lake Park; continuing changes in land use in some residential areas to other than single-family uses that potentially affect neighborhood stability and quality; possible stagnation or decline of the local business climate due to many influences on business activity from both within the community and from beyond its borders; and finally the possibility of a decline in the overall aesthetic character and quality of life in the community if these various challenges are not adequately addressed and resolved. The Village, therefore, determined that the no-action alternative was not acceptable and thus, resolved to prepare this Comprehensive Plan.

***Alternative Planning Strategies***

Alternative land use, transportation, and development scenarios in the Village were considered throughout the planning process as part of refining the community's vision for the future. The preferred visions and development scenarios for the five planning sub-areas in the Village are discussed in Chapter IV and illustrated on the accompanying Downtown Redevelopment Plan. These preferred development scenarios are seen as practical, realistic and achievable over the short-term (0-2 years), intermediate period (2-5 years) and the long-term timeframe (5+ years).

The Village of Liverpool is a mature, built-out community. As such, there are few opportunities and expectations of significant new development on previously undeveloped lands. Rather, in achieving its vision, the Village must rely on redevelopment opportunities, particularly in its business areas, in order to bring about these preferred development scenarios.

Alternatives to proposed changes in land use and redevelopment scenarios are limited in many instances by existing conditions on and around potential development sites and by economic market forces at work in the area. The existing business areas of the Village

present some of the greatest challenges and some of the greatest opportunities for achieving the desired vision for the community.

These economic market forces, and the challenges and opportunities they afford, were the focus of the separate, but interrelated, *Commercial Market and Retail Analysis* by Basile, Baumann, Prost & Associates, Inc. (BBP and Associates). BBP and Associates was hired as an economic development consultant to Liverpool. *The Commercial Market and Retail Analysis* and the follow-up *Traffic and Transportation Analysis* by BBP and Associates were conducted simultaneously with preparation of this Comprehensive Plan. Those studies are incorporated into this Plan in their entirety as an Appendix. As stated throughout this Plan, redevelopment of some of the business areas of the Village is seen as key to achieving the overall vision of a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly community.

It is very important to the future of the Village that its business community, and therefore, its non-residential tax base remain healthy, vigorous and prosper. Thus, much of the focus of this Plan, including the studies by BBP and Associates has been on the non-residential areas of the Village. The Village must retain a healthy, diversified balance between its residential and non-residential economic base. To deviate substantially from the focus of this Plan which is directed toward maintaining this balance could result in future expenditures for services provided by the Village that exceed tax revenues generated by residential and non-residential land uses.

Residential neighborhoods, on the other hand, are for the most part stable and well-maintained and do not present the same challenges and/or opportunities as the business areas of the Village. Significant issues do not exist at the present time, nor are any anticipated in most residential neighborhoods in the Village. Those that do exist in some areas are due to changes in neighborhood character resulting from conversions of single-family homes to multi-family and non-residential uses. It is part of the vision for the

community that viable single-family residential neighborhoods are kept intact and not allowed to convert to multi-family and non-residential uses.

*The purpose of this Plan is to present recommended courses of action to improve existing conditions by protecting the Village’s residential neighborhoods, enhancing business areas, re-establishing a true Village Center with a distinct identity, revitalizing waterfront opportunities, resolving significant traffic and pedestrian issues, and strengthening the economic base of the community.*

Significant adverse changes in land use development patterns in the Village resulting from this Plan are not anticipated. However, this Plan does recommend modifications to present zoning to create a better mix of land uses in existing business areas and changes to the present street network, ultimately affecting vehicular traffic flow patterns and reducing through traffic volumes and capacities. The accompanying Downtown Redevelopment Plan illustrates the vision for the future of the Village of Liverpool in conceptual form.

Key locations for redevelopment and traffic modifications include Oswego Street with connecting side streets and Onondaga Lake Parkway (NYS 370) where it enters the Village from the south. Other locations such as Second Street (NYS 370) where it enters the Village from the west and Oswego Street (Route 57) from the north need to maintain their residential character.

Zoning and roadway modifications will encourage desirable forms of land use and pedestrian activity particularly in surrounding business areas. These modifications are both necessary and warranted in order for the Village to achieve its vision for the future as a premier pedestrian-oriented, totally “walkable” waterfront community in Central New York.

The result of any roadway modifications will alter traffic volumes and vehicular circulation within the Village, particularly along those roadways identified above. These modifications, in whatever form they take, will affect traffic flow beyond the municipal boundaries of Liverpool, specifically affecting the Town of Salina and Town of Clay. In the future, any modifications that are implemented will result from consultation and coordination with state and county transportation agencies and affected communities.

The present traffic issues in the Village are complex and solutions will not be easy or readily forthcoming without input and cooperation by all affected communities. The result of roadway modifications to reduce through traffic in the Village will be an increase in traffic volumes elsewhere. Because the degree of change is impossible to predict at this point, the impact of changes in traffic flow and volume will need to be addressed in the future under SEQRA.

### **Thresholds for Change**

As a GEIS, this Plan must address the implications of change in the Village and surrounding areas. However, changes and their implications can only be discussed in very “generic” terms because no set courses of action have as yet taken place. As a GEIS this document complies with the intent of SEQRA and no further SEQRA action will be needed for the adoption of this Plan. Individual actions that may take place in the Village over the course of years, by either the Village, some other public entity or by the private sector may require additional SEQRA review, particularly if such actions are considered significant, may result in significant adverse impacts on the environment or community, and/or significantly conflict with the goals and objectives of this Plan.

#### *Traffic*

Any significant increase in commuter (through) traffic volumes into the Village over existing levels, particularly along key routes and at key intersections in the Village as identified in this Plan, is undesirable and detrimental to community character, local

businesses, and the pedestrian environment. This Plan aims to achieve just the opposite by reducing traffic volumes and enhancing both the business and pedestrian environments. Key locations that may be adversely affected by any increase in traffic from current levels include Oswego Street, Second Street (NYS 370), Tulip Street, Vine Street, Old Liverpool Road and Onondaga Lake Parkway (NYS 370).

Increasing volumes of commuter traffic from outside the Village continues to impede the ability of the community to achieve desirable forms of land use that are not highway-oriented, but rather more pedestrian-oriented business and residential uses consistent with the objectives of this Plan. The ability to strengthen the economic base of the community through enhanced business development to maintain a healthy balance between residential and business uses will be significantly hindered by any increase in commuter traffic through the Village.

It is a primary goal of the Village to work with local transportation agencies to reverse the trend from increasing commuter traffic to the more desirable trend that would increase destination traffic and decrease through traffic into the Village to benefit local businesses. *The Traffic and Transportation Analysis by BBP and Associates* (provided as an Appendix) concluded that traffic could be reduced by up to 40% on Oswego Street without adversely impacting the local business community due to the fact that so much of the existing traffic is not “destined” to the Village, but rather passing through to somewhere else. This reduction would also result in potential increases of destination traffic on First and Second streets to the benefit of local businesses, assuming proper traffic flow modifications are made so the Oswego Street traffic does not just relocate elsewhere in the Village.

Existing through traffic on Oswego Street contributes only an approximate 6% to local business. Thus, it is this through traffic on Oswego Street that is adversely affecting local business and the pedestrian environment in the Village. The Village is supportive of

efforts to significantly reduce through traffic up to 40% or greater to achieve the visions, goals and objectives of this Plan without adversely affecting the local business community. The Village must work with the State and County DOT to determine the amount of reduction needed to benefit local businesses and property owners that is needed to facilitate turning movements onto First Street and access to properties elsewhere, particularly along Oswego Street.

Consistent with the *Commercial Market and Retail Analysis* by BBP and Associates there is an opportunity to increase the square footage of some forms of retail and entertainment establishments in the Village. This potential increase in retail and entertainment use of approximately 13,000 square feet or more will translate into more local destination traffic.

To increase destination traffic in the Village there must be a decrease in through traffic. It is the composition of local traffic that must be adjusted from through traffic to destination traffic in order to benefit Village businesses and pedestrian activity. Thus, in terms of future traffic generation any increase in local traffic through the Village caused by new development or redevelopment projects will exceed the existing traffic threshold and require increased scrutiny under SEQRA.

As envisioned conceptually by the Downtown Redevelopment Plan, approximately 100,000 square feet of residential space; 65,000 square feet of office space; 25,000 square feet of mixed retail, restaurant, entertainment space; and 20,000 square feet of retail only space could be developed. In fact, redevelopment of this scale may never take place in the Village. If it were to occur, however, the resulting increase in traffic would be approximately 2,500 daily trips and approximately 550 PM Peak Hour trips.

***A reduction in through traffic along Oswego Street is required to allow redevelopment to occur along First Street and Oswego Street as well as facilitate traffic circulation to***

*First Street and Second Street, increase pedestrian comfort and safety, and encourage desirable redevelopment interest in the Downtown area.*

*Population*

The Comprehensive Plan envisions the creation of new business and residential development in presently underutilized areas within the Village, particularly in and around the downtown area. The potential increase in population in the Village resulting from implementation of the land use and economic development recommendations in this Plan is not expected to be so significant as to negatively impact the Village or surrounding communities. The Village presently has a stable population as evidenced by census data over the past several decades and can absorb a reasonable increase in population as underutilized areas are redeveloped and as changes in land use that are consistent with this Plan occur.

Although conceptual, the Downtown Redevelopment Plan illustrates redevelopment opportunities that are realistic and perhaps achievable. Based on the approximate square footage of redevelopment areas, the resident population of the downtown area could increase by approximately 250 people. Based upon the Redevelopment Plan some assumptions could be made to estimate this increase.

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan, for example, illustrates approximately 50,000 square feet of residential only redevelopment. At approximately 2.5 people per dwelling unit and 1 unit for each 1,000 square feet of space, 125 residents could be accommodated. In mixed-use areas that may be combinations of office, commercial and residential uses another 100,000 square feet could be developed resulting in another 125 residents if one assumes a 1/3 office and 2/3 resident split in available space. This increase in residents of approximately 250 individuals would not adversely impact the Village, but rather be beneficial in supporting local businesses.

*Zoning, Land Use and Community Services*

Through the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan, the Village is considering amending its present Zoning Ordinance in several ways as discussed below.

1. The Village may establish a Downtown Overlay District (Figure IV-1) that would place additional criteria on site development beyond present zoning requirements. These criteria, which would be part of design and development guidelines and standards (Chapter IV) to be established by the Village, would include site design, building orientation and building design, construction materials, parking lot design, landscaping, streetscaping, public amenities, lighting and signage. The result of establishing such an overlay district(s) and design and development guidelines and standards will not have an adverse impact on the environment. On the contrary, the establishment of an overlay and/or design and development criteria (guidelines are non-regulatory while standards are enforceable requirements) will have a net positive effect on community character and aesthetics.
2. The Village may amend its zoning to encourage mixed-use types of development that allow commercial, office and residential uses within the same structure or same parcel. This mix of uses may result in greater redevelopment and build-out potential in the Village than would otherwise be possible through conventional zoning that does not accommodate mixed-use development. This change in zoning would not adversely impact the environment and in fact has many benefits to the community including increased density of development that is consistent with Smart Growth principles.
3. This increased build-out potential may result in increased local destination (non-commuter) traffic, additional parking needs and increased municipal

services such as police, fire, sewer and water. However, this is considered an acceptable cost of redevelopment within the Village which is needed to increase its tax base and residential population in the downtown area.

Allowing for mixed-use development in the Village is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on the environment or community.

Projects that may be proposed in the Village that would meet the criteria for Type I or Unlisted Actions under SEQRA, but otherwise consistent with the objectives of this Plan would need to address potential impacts on the environment and community at the time such actions are undertaken by a private developer.

4. The Village will amend its present zoning map to be consistent with the Future Land Use Map (Figure IV-1) provided in this Plan. The Future Land Use Map illustrates a shift from present zoning in some neighborhoods from multiple family uses to single-family and to mixed use in the Downtown area. This emphasis on single-family residential use and mixed use is consistent with the desires of the Village to protect and stabilize its single-family neighborhoods from non-single family, non-residential uses and increase residential use in the Downtown area. This change in zoning is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on the environment or community.

*Economic Development and Business*

The *Commercial Market and Retail Analysis* completed by BBP & Associates indicates that the Village could absorb approximately 13,000 square feet of new retail space under present market conditions. The development of this new business space would increase local tax base in the community and afford new retail and business uses and opportunities to the Village. It is not anticipated that such an increase in local business opportunities

would negatively impact the community. This assumes that the destination traffic that results from this development is accommodated on Village roadways by a decrease in through traffic.

In addition, if implemented as mixed-use projects, future redevelopment has the potential to create new residential units in underutilized areas of the Village. These redevelopment areas are centered along the north side of Oswego Street between Old Liverpool Road on the east and Tulip Street on the west, and along First Street between Onondaga Lake Parkway and Vine Street. The number of potential residential units that could be created in these areas will depend on real estate factors such as developer interest, market attraction and financial considerations. The number of units ultimately created is not anticipated to be so significant, as discussed previously as to adversely impact the community or the environment. Community services and local utilities have capacity or expansion capability to meet the needs of anticipated growth and redevelopment as illustrated on the Downtown Redevelopment Plan. In fact, as this Plan indicates, the introduction of more permanent residents in the downtown area is desirable since these individuals will support local businesses for their daily needs.

Implementation of further action items presented in Chapter VI of this Plan is not anticipated to have adverse impacts on the community or the environment. As actions are undertaken consistent with the recommendations of this Plan, associated impacts on the community, surrounding communities and the natural environment will be considered. If such actions are determined by local officials including the Village Mayor, Village Board or Planning Board to exceed the thresholds and/or be inconsistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan then additional SEQRA review will be undertaken by the Village.