

Chapter V: Alternatives

The development of a comprehensive plan involves a process of evaluating alternatives. A plan begins community discussions and an inventory and analysis. It is given focus with a vision and a set of goals and objectives, and refined through the evaluation of alternative land uses and development scenarios.

The first alternative encountered during the process of plan development is the "no-action" alternative. The "no-action" alternative represents the impact (beneficial and adverse) of permitting development to continue under current land use and zoning regulations. Through the development of goals and objectives and the evaluation of the "no-action" alternative, alternative development scenarios were considered including the location and density of residential development, the location and density of non-residential development, alternative land uses and the preservation of open space.

A. No-Action Alternative

The "no-action" alternative represents the growth potential of the Town of Guilderland under existing zoning and land use regulations and identifies potential impacts related to this growth. Under existing regulations a variety of potentially adverse impacts related to land use will remain unchanged. Traffic movement will be severely impacted in a number of areas. The continued development of strip malls along Route 20 with numerous curb cuts and no access management will limit traffic accessibility and impact the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians through the area. Traffic issues related to truck traffic to and from the Northeast Industrial Park, particularly as it impacts Guilderland Center, will continue unchecked.

Existing problems regarding the ability of utilities to keep pace with demand will continue. The quality of service to existing customers may decline. Critical decisions regarding the location and timing of utility extensions would not be made. Land use patterns would continue to follow the locations of utilities and development pressure will grow in these areas.

The continued development of 1-5 acre lots throughout rural Guilderland will result in suburban sprawl and little protection of open space. Lots with limited frontage and their associated driveways will impact the rural character of existing roadways. The distinction between neighborhoods will continue to blur.

The "no-action" alternative affords limited protection to the Watervliet Reservoir. In order to protect this critical water supply additional growth management and environmental protection guidelines are necessary.

There is currently no plan for non-residential growth in the western part of Guilderland. Existing land use regulations do not address the issue of non-residential growth in this area. Build-out of this area under existing regulations would result in large numbers of residential units. Based on the result of the fiscal impact model, residential development could have a significant impact on the tax base, which in turn could impact community services.

B. Alternative Non-Residential Uses

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan process a number of alternative non-residential land uses were considered. Initially a Technology Park was considered for lands near Exit 23 of the Thruway due to its accessibility and perceived lack of development constraints. Based on further review of development trends, physical characteristics and the goals and objectives of the Plan, this recommendation was revised. The proximity of the Pine Bush to this area was a major factor on determining that this type of development would not be appropriate for this area. In addition the Town wishes to promote business development within the Guilderland School District. As this property is not within the Guilderland School District, the Town shifted its focus to other areas of the Town for the location of a business park.

Other potential locations identified for economic development included the Dunnsville area and locations along Route 158. Development of a technology park along Route 158 will require access from the Thruway and I-88 through the Town of Rotterdam. Both of these locations are within the Guilderland School District and would provide tax revenues to both the School District and the Town with fewer service demands than residential uses. Through much discussion, however, the disposition of these areas was determined to be best identified through further study of Rural Guilderland relative to the provision of water and sewer and the implications of development, including the identification of suitable sites for economic development.

C. Alternative Residential Land Uses

Originally, land use discussions for the Dunnsville area were considered in the style of a hamlet, comprised of a mix of commercial and residential uses. Commercial uses would be oriented to provide services to those people living in or near the hamlet. The potential for economic development in the Dunnsville area in the form of a business park was also considered. None of these development scenarios have been rejected, however, given the current lack of sewer and water and the need for dialogue with the adjoining municipalities regarding future development, it was determined that an evaluation of potential suitable sites for hamlet development for Rural Guilderland should be conducted if the provision of water and perhaps sewer is considered beyond current boundaries in the future.

Original recommendations for Rural Guilderland included limiting sewer and water to current service areas. Continued discussions resulted in the recommendation that a GEIS be completed in order to identify and evaluate the feasibility of sewer and water extensions in rural Guilderland. The GEIS will compile information to allow determinations to be made regarding resources, economics and land use goals as they relate to the potential extension of sewer and water. Currently, however, the recommendations are more reflective of the initial recommendations but strongly suggest that areas of poor groundwater quality and quantity in Rural Guilderland should be identified along with the potential solutions, which may include water line extensions. The outcome of this analysis will dictate the need for further work, such as a utility GEIS.