

APPENDIX B

Additional Text Changes to the Draft Plan

Other components of *Wyandanch Rising's* Action Plan and Straight Path Corridor Concepts include creating more sitting places; providing bus stop shelters; creating on-street parking and buffer zones; building curb extensions or bulb outs; improving lighting; increasing storefront visibility; creating gateways or features in or near the street that greet people as they enter the community; and encouraging off-street parking to the side or rear of buildings.

In summer 2005, building on the goals and visions set forth in *Wyandanch Rising*, the Town dedicated newly installed lighting along Straight Path, marking a significant milestone in Wyandanch's downtown revitalization initiative to "foster economic development and beautify the hamlet of Wyandanch."¹ Other recent Town-implemented Straight Path improvements include traffic medians, tree planting, and new waste receptacles and planters.

BOA PROGRAM GRANT

In 2007, as part of the overall revitalization effort for downtown Wyandanch, AKRF, on behalf of the Town of Babylon, completed a blight study and an economic and market trends analysis for the project area. Those efforts were funded under the BOA Program grant, which also funded this Plan that is the subject of this GEIS/URP/BOA Nomination document. The blight study was conducted to document existing conditions in the project area and to support the determination that the project area is indeed blighted and in need of urban renewal. The economic and market trends analysis documented residential, retail, industrial, and office market trends in the project area and identified strategic opportunity clusters of land areas and preliminary redevelopment strategies for those locations. Those recommendations serve as the basis for the proposed redevelopment and revitalization strategies being put forth in this Plan as part of the proposed Urban Renewal Plan and Nomination. The key findings and recommendations associated with each of these important planning documents are summarized below.

BLIGHT STUDY

An assessment of physical conditions in the project area was undertaken in 2007 to determine if the area was substantially "blighted" based on a generally accepted range of factors and indicators, including but not limited to: deteriorated or structurally unsound buildings; inadequate, unsafe or unsanitary street conditions; vacant, abandoned and/or underutilized buildings; vacant and unsanitary lots; irregularly shaped lots; diversity of land ownership making it difficult to assemble properties for redevelopment; incompatibility of existing mixture of residential and industrial property; overcrowding in residential structures; high incidence of crime; and unhealthy or unsafe environmental conditions.

The 2007 blight study for downtown Wyandanch concluded that the project area clearly meets accepted criteria of a blighted area, due to numerous instances of substandard, unsanitary, deteriorated or deteriorating conditions within the boundaries of the area, including: 1) a significant number of buildings and sidewalks in poor to critical condition, 2) numerous vacant lots and/or vacant buildings, 3) substantial accumulation of trash and debris throughout the study area, 4) incompatible or underperforming land uses, 5) known or potential environmental contamination, 6) high crime, particularly drug-related crime, 7) inadequate or nonexistent sewer infrastructure, 8) outdated zoning regulations, 9) diverse property ownership, 8) and hazardous

¹ Town of Babylon, *Lighting in Wyandanch Sets the Tone for Further Redevelopment*, July 12, 2005, Accessed on November 13, 2006 at www.townofbabylon.com

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Inc.—an industrial use—and several residences owned by Weld Built. On the lots between S. 18th and S. 19th Streets are two auto repair lots, a bus storage lot, and several vacant parcels, as well as one residence in poor condition.

- **Strategic Site C:** This approximately 8.65-acres site is bounded by Grand Boulevard to the north, Commonwealth Boulevard to the south, Doe Street to the east, and Straight Path to the west. The site is generally occupied by vacant or partially vacant retail uses fronting Straight Path, with residential uses and vacant land behind. The site also includes a new U.S. Post Office on parcels fronting on Straight Path and Commonwealth Drive.
- **Strategic Site D:** This site occupies about 8.63 acres generally along Straight Path between Irving Place to the north and S. 22nd Street to the south. The lots on this site are generally either vacant or represented by underutilized retail uses.
- **Strategic Site E:** This 9.13-acre site is located in the southern portion of the project area and represents the southern gateway into downtown Wyandanch. The site includes lots fronting on Straight Path and along Booker and Garrison Avenues. The lots are generally associated with industrial uses including a cement manufacturing plant and oil tank services.
- **Strategic Site F:** This is an approximately 3-acre site fronting on Merritt Avenue, just west of Straight Path, occupied by vacant or partially vacant or otherwise underutilized retail uses and two vacant residences, adjacent to the Town’s Youth Center.
- **Strategic Site G:** This site includes about 3 acres fronting on the south side of Long Island Avenue, currently occupied by vacant, partially vacant, or otherwise underutilized commercial and industrial uses in blighted condition.

OTHER PLANNING INITIATIVES

In addition to the initiatives undertaken previously in the Wyandanch area, or as part of the BOA process, a number of other initiatives undertaken by government agencies have recognized the obstacles to development in Wyandanch, and are actively complimenting and/or supporting the Town’s ongoing efforts, as described in more detail below.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

For example, The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently awarded the Town funding for brownfield assessments in Wyandanch. The Town has utilized this grant funding to prepare numerous site assessments on Town owned properties in Wyandanch, to determine any necessary site remediation activities that may need to be undertaken at these locations.

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

The Town also recently received a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant to complete a feasibility study for an Intermodal Transit Facility in downtown Wyandanch. The study was completed in June 2008 and includes recommendations for traffic and transit enhancements, consolidated parking, streetscape improvements, pedestrian and bicycle safety features and amenities, and the integration of mixed-use development. Subsequently, the Town applied for and received a follow-up grant from the FTA to fund the preliminary design of the proposed Intermodal Transit Facility, and to conduct the associated required environmental analyses for that project. The preliminary design and environmental work is now underway.

TOWN OF BABYLON TOWN BOARD

In addition to the initiatives described above, the Town Board, in coordination with EPA, awarded funds for assessing the feasibility of extending the local sewer district infrastructure to Wyandanch. Currently, Wyandanch is not served by public sewers. Rather, sewage is handled by on-site septic systems, a requirement that can be cost-prohibitive to potential developers and a potential source of groundwater contamination and that can limit the density of development allowed in an area. The sewer feasibility study was recently completed and one of the most important recommendations of this Plan is to implement the recommendations of the feasibility study to allow for public sewer connection in downtown Wyandanch in order to accommodate the proposed development scenarios.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This Plan builds on those findings and recommendations from *Wyandanch Rising*. Existing conditions in the project area were assessed and analyzed, and appropriate land uses and implementation strategies, such as zoning amendments, infrastructure improvements, and property acquisitions, aimed at redevelopment and revitalization of the area, were identified.

STATEMENT OF PROPOSED LAND USES

The recommendations made in this Plan are intended to promote a mix of uses that foster a balance between residential, commercial, and community uses; attract residents and visitors to the downtown, create a vibrant, 24-hour/7-days-a-week community; improve shopping opportunities and amenities; reduce commuting time and distance for local employees and business owners; reduce vacancy and blight; reduce criminal activity; provide connectivity within the project area; improve both pedestrian and vehicular safety conditions; improve aesthetics in the project area; and leverage federal and state funding for various downtown improvement projects.

To meet the Town's overall goals of rehabilitating and revitalizing downtown Wyandanch, this Plan proposes a number of land use recommendations for the overall project area, as follows:

1. **Smart Growth and Transit-Oriented Development.** Smart growth principles such as TOD; zero lot line buildings; parking in the rear or side of buildings; and mixed residential, retail, and office uses are encouraged. Mixed uses, such as multifamily residential units with ground floor commercial uses, are proposed to strengthen the tax base while promoting smart growth. The zoning code should be revised to allow for mixed uses, greater density, and reduced parking requirements appropriate for TOD uses.
2. **Vacant Lots.** Vacant lots along Straight Path should be given priority for infill development.
3. **Vacant Buildings.** Existing vacant buildings are encouraged to be filled and/or redeveloped.
4. **Green Buildings.** New buildings and the redevelopment and rehabilitation of dilapidated and/or vacant buildings should include contemporary and environmentally-friendly design and building practices. Buildings should be constructed to provide a long life span and a flexible design to accommodate future uses. Green building designs should be promoted in conformance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards.

F. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

This Plan analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project on a range of technical analysis areas include land use, zoning, and public policy; infrastructure and energy; hazardous materials (brownfield, abandoned, and vacant sites); traffic and transportation; socioeconomic conditions; visual character; community and emergency services; cultural resources; geology, soils, and topography; water and natural resources; air quality; noise; stormwater; and construction impacts. In order to assess the potential impacts of the proposed project, this Plan analyzes a conservative estimated projected redevelopment scenario, which was calculated based on market conditions and other conditions expected to be in place by the time the proposed Plan would be fully implemented in 2020, should it be approved and implemented (see **Table S-1**, above).

In addition, this Plan considers the No Action Alternative, as required by law, and one as-of-right alternative, which would redevelop the area in the absence of zoning changes and the implementation of the preliminary site layouts for the project area. Summaries of unavoidable adverse impacts, growth inducing aspects of the proposed project, and irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources are also included.

The proposed project would not be expected to result in significant adverse environmental impacts. Site specific review could be performed for planning board or Town Board review for any developer proposals that may have the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts and that may require additional studies of potential impacts.

Implementation of the proposed project would be expected to result in numerous beneficial impacts for the Town of Babylon and the Wyandanch community, as summarized below.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

LAND USE

The proposed project would redevelop vacant and underutilized land and buildings on the strategic sites with active, tax-generating uses, such as mixed housing, retail, and commercial uses, or community-oriented uses. The proposed land uses area compatible with the existing surrounding uses in the project and study areas, such that no significant adverse impacts are expected. The proposed project would also serve to eliminate underperforming or inappropriate land uses.

ZONING

A revised zoning code including the proposed new zoning districts would allow for mixed-use development that is compatible with existing platted lots in Wyandanch, encourages higher density and TOD, which is typical of a downtown area. Rezoning portions of downtown Wyandanch would facilitate the redevelopment and revitalization in the project area, consistent with the intent of the proposed Plan. The proposed rezoning would be expected to result in positive impacts including increased local community use of the train station and the resulting decreased auto dependence and traffic congestion; create a pleasant, safe, pedestrian-friendly environment in the project area that encourages walking and cycling, in addition to transit use; concentrate institutional uses in the vicinity of the existing Youth Center, which would promote neighborhood pride and identity; create more economically viable retail footprints downtown; increase commuter spending in downtown Wyandanch; and provide a range a housing options

SANITARY SEWAGE

The estimated sewage generation is approximately ~~255,369~~ 350,000 gpd, ~~assuming sewage generation would amount to 75 percent of the projected water demand.~~¹ according to information received from Suffolk County Department of Public Works (SCDPW) and based on Suffolk County Health Department standards.

Wyandanch is not connected to a public sewer system. This is a critical factor in the lack of a commercially viable downtown and why this issue was being examined in another recently completed study while this project progresses. At present, the community depends on independent on-site wastewater treatment systems. This raises major issues of potential groundwater contamination, and that such on-site systems can be cost-prohibitive to potential developers; a disincentive for capital investment in Wyandanch. On-site wastewater treatment also requires compliance with Suffolk County Department of Health Services regulatory requirements, which limit the opportunity to provide the density necessary for economic development.

The nearest public sewer system is the Suffolk County Southwest Sewer District #3, operated by the SCDPW. ~~In recent years, \$273 million has been invested in the Southwest Sewer District to prepare for the sewage district expansion to Wyandanch. A 2002 report prepared by the SCDPW indicated that four hamlets could be connected to the district at a cost of \$273 million.~~ Provision of public sewers in Wyandanch would facilitate redevelopment of the area and reduce the potential for groundwater contamination from existing septic tank-serviced areas. However, according to ~~Sustainable Long Island's Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study (2004)~~ the 2002 SCDPW report, it would cost \$1,500 per home for sewer connection, an amount that could be cost-prohibitive to many households, which may hinder a large expansion plan. A letter from SCDPW to the Town Supervisor dated August 25, 2008 indicated that the cost estimated in the 2002 report is outdated and projected that cost upwards to \$3,000 per home per year. This projected cost was specific to a smaller area that was evaluated using a limited amount of information to develop an approximate cost. The immediate need identified for sewer service in the area is along the Straight Path corridor, which would be most beneficial for redevelopment and protection of groundwater; matching federal funds will be sought for the project. A feasibility study of extending the local sewer district infrastructure to Wyandanch was recently completed. One of the most important recommendations of this Plan is to implement the recommendations of the feasibility study, to allow for public sewer connection in downtown Wyandanch in order to accommodate the proposed development scenarios.

According to *Wyandanch Rising*, 95 percent of the housing units in Wyandanch use on-site systems composed of a septic tank with either a leach field or cesspool to provide wastewater treatment. Many small businesses also use septic systems to treat wastewater. According to EPA, the functioning life of septic systems is typically 20 years or less. Eighty-five percent of the homes in Wyandanch were built before 1980, with over 2000 housing units in Wyandanch potentially using sewage treatment systems that have outlived their useful life. Many of the original septic systems and cesspools are likely to require rehabilitation or replacement. Failing septic systems are a common source of water pollution and a potential public health issue. To avoid pollution, allow greater density, and stimulate economic development, the provision of public sewer service along the Straight Path corridor or the installation of modern, efficient on-

¹ Nathanson, Jerry A. *Basic Environmental Technology*, Fourth Edition, 2003.

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site wastewater treatment systems will be necessary. It is noted that connecting to a public sewer system is likely to be the least costly option for new construction.

~~The mainland portion of the Town of Babylon south of Southern State Parkway¹ is located within the Southwest Sewer District 3 and sanitary wastewater is conveyed to Most of Babylon sends its sewage to the Bergen Point Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) located in West Babylon. This plant has a permitted capacity of 30.5 million gallons per day (mgd) of wastewater influent. According to the Hamlet Plan, the plant is at or near capacity. Therefore, sewer line extension to Wyandanch would have to be coupled with aggressive measures to reduce inflow and infiltration to the sewer system and/or create water conservation programs.~~

~~The proposed project is expected to generate sewage that amounts to less than 1 percent of the design capacity of the Bergen Point STP. It is assumed that public sewer service would be extended to downtown Wyandanch by 2020 to accommodate the proposed development scenario such that no the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts associated with on-site septic systems would occur. With the installation of a public sewer system in downtown Wyandanch, there would be a disruption in traffic due to the construction, which would most likely involve dewatering activities as well as open trenches and also lead to short-term nuisance conditions of noise and dust. However, a Maintenance and Protection of Traffic Plan will be prepared for these construction activities. This will include temporary changes to traffic flow and control to ensure safe conditions for workers and motorists. In terms of construction activities, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be prepared as well as dust and noise control measures to minimize the impacts of the construction activities. Dewatering will be undertaken in accordance with Town of Babylon, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and, if any, County of Suffolk requirements. The upgrade of the Bergen Point Wastewater Treatment facility is the subject of a capital project that is currently in the engineer report phase and does have funding in 2010 for an expansion. Similarly, measures would be in place to upgrade capacity at the Bergen Point STP.~~

SOLID WASTE

Based on industry standards, the proposed project is expected to generate an estimated 16,602 pounds (8.3 tons) of solid waste per day.² Solid waste generated from the proposed project would be managed by the Town of Babylon Sanitation Department. Non-putrescible waste materials would be recycled in accordance with local recycling ordinances. The relatively small amount of waste generated from the proposed action (about 1 percent of the approximately 750 tons per day of solid waste processed at the Covanta facility that serves the Town of Babylon) is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts to solid waste handling and disposal services.

¹ Segments of the Southwest Sewer District in Babylon include two areas north of Southern State Parkway. One segment runs north along NYS Route 110 into the Town of Huntington for the purpose of serving a major business corridor. The other location is a small area just north of the Southern State Parkway along NYS Route 231 at North Babylon.

² Tcholbanoglous, George, McGraw-Hill Series in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering, *Integrated Solid Waste Management*, 1993.

ENERGY

Energy service would be obtained from LIPA and National Grid. The proposed project would require an extension of existing utility services in the area to provide new electric and gas service to the vacant subject sites. Projected energy demand for the proposed developments is based on loads for heating, ventilation, air conditioning, lighting, and auxiliary equipment, such as elevators and pumps. It is estimated that the proposed project would result in an annual energy demand of 215,155 million British Thermal Units, equivalent to about 63 million kilowatt hours. A letter was sent to LIPA to inquire about the potential for any impacts, but a response was not received in time for publication of this Plan. However, it is not expected that this additional load would be a problem for LIPA's existing facilities and any necessary service connections would be made. In addition, all applicable proposed projects under the Plan would meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification and ENERGY STAR standards, to ensure the development of environmentally responsible, energy-efficient buildings. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts on infrastructure and energy systems are expected to result from the proposed project.

BROWNFIELD, ABANDONED, AND VACANT SITES HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Potential impacts from hazardous materials during construction on brownfield, abandoned, and vacant sites, would be avoided by performing investigation and construction activities in accordance with the following protocols:

- A comprehensive asbestos survey of the areas to be renovated/demolished would be conducted that included the sampling of all suspect materials to confirm the presence or absence of asbestos. Based on the findings of the survey, any ACMs identified would be removed and disposed of in accordance with all federal, state, and local regulations. Appropriate engineering controls (e.g., wetting and other dust control measures) to minimize asbestos exposure are required to be implemented prior to and throughout demolition/renovation.
- Any renovation or demolition activities with the potential to disturb LBP would be performed in accordance with the applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. If lead-coated surfaces are present, an exposure assessment may be needed to determine whether lead exposure would occur during the demolition. If the exposure assessment were to indicate the potential to generate airborne dust or fumes with lead levels exceeding health-based standards, a higher personal protection equipment standard would be employed to counteract the exposure. In all cases, appropriate methods to control dust and air monitoring, as required by the appropriate OSHA regulations, would be implemented during demolition activities.
- If disposal of electrical or hydraulic equipment is required, all federal and state requirements relating to PCBs would be followed. Suspected PCB-containing equipment (e.g., transformers, electrical feeder cables, hydraulic equipment, and fluorescent light ballasts) may need to be surveyed and evaluated prior to building demolition or utility relocation. PCB-containing equipment that would be disturbed by the work would be removed and disposed of in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations. Unless suspected PCB-containing equipment is labeled to be "non-PCB," it must be tested or assumed to be PCB-containing and disposed of at properly licensed facilities.
- A subsurface investigation (Phase II Environmental Site Assessment) ~~may~~ will be performed at the strategic brownfield sites for which site assessment funding is granted. Based on the

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in 1981 and has been a Certified Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) in the Town of Babylon since 1994 and in the State of New York since 2002. WCDC staff and its Board of Directors are members of the Wyandanch community and are active in housing initiatives throughout the community. WCDC was a sub-recipient of the Town of Babylon Community Development Block Grant.

This document, entitled “Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan,” was prepared on behalf of the Town Board of the Town of Babylon and serves as the proposed Urban Renewal Plan (see Appendix J for a complete description of the Urban Renewal Plan), Nomination under the State’s BOA Program, and Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. Therefore, the document has been prepared in accordance with Article 15, “Urban Renewal,” of the New York State General Municipal Law; New York State’s *Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program Guidance for Applicants* (February 2006); and Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law and the implementing regulations promulgated in 6 New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR) Part 617 by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The Town Board of the Town of Babylon is the lead agency for the purpose of SEQRA review for the proposed project. This chapter describes the proposed project and establishes the historical, environmental, and regulatory context in which it takes place.

B. STUDY AREA

The project is regionally located in the hamlet of Wyandanch (i.e. the “study area”), north-central Town of Babylon, western Suffolk County, Long Island, New York (see Figures S-1 and S-2 in the Executive Summary).

This plan assesses a study area to provide a context for evaluating the proposed project’s potential effects on the surrounding area, and for describing the relationship of the project area to the surrounding community. The study area, which is shown in Figure S-3 in the Executive Summary, is generally bounded by Nicolls Road to the north, Cumberbach Street/Wyandanch Avenue to the south, the Carlls River to the east, and Little East Neck Road to the west; and includes the project area along the Straight Path (County Road 2) corridor. The study area is approximately 961 acres and incorporates about 3,450 tax parcels designated on the Suffolk County Tax Map (2006). The study area includes those entire tax parcels that are fully within both the Wyandanch/Wheatley Heights zip code boundary (11798) and the Wyandanch UFSD boundary, but excludes the community known as Wheatley Heights (generally north of Nicolls Road, south of Huntington Town Line, east of Little East Neck Road, and west of the Carlls River).

The project area is defined by a single boundary as both the designated URA and the proposed BOA. As shown in Figures S-4 and S-5 in the Executive Summary, the approximately 105-acre project area largely comprises the downtown area of Wyandanch hamlet extending approximately 300 feet east and west of Straight Path from N. 9th Street on the north to Garrison Avenue on the south, and several lots along Long Island Avenue roughly stretching from Elk Street on the east to 22nd Street on the west. The project area includes 281 tax lots designated on the Suffolk County Tax Map (2006) (see Appendix A). The project area was selected because it contains the majority of the hamlet’s potential brownfields and encompasses the central business corridor along Straight Path (CR2) and Long Island Avenue, which were the focus of the *Hamlet Plan* and the *Wyandanch Rising* visioning process.

BOA PROGRAM GRANT

In 2007, as part of the overall revitalization effort for downtown Wyandanch, AKRF, on behalf of the Town of Babylon, completed a blight study (see Appendix B) and an economic and market trends analysis (see Appendix C) for the project area. Those efforts were funded under the BOA Program grant, which also funded this Plan that is the subject of this GEIS/URP/BOA Nomination document. The blight study was conducted to document existing conditions in the project area and to support the determination that the project area is indeed blighted and in need of urban renewal. The economic and market trends analysis documented residential, retail, industrial, and office market trends in the project area and identified strategic opportunity clusters of land areas and preliminary redevelopment strategies for those locations. Those recommendations serve as the basis for the proposed redevelopment and revitalization strategies being put forth in this Plan as part of the proposed Urban Renewal Plan and Nomination. The key findings and recommendations associated with each of these important planning documents are summarized below.

BLIGHT STUDY

An assessment of physical conditions in the project area was undertaken in 2007 to determine if the area was substantially “blighted” based on a generally accepted range of factors and indicators, including but not limited to: deteriorated or structurally unsound buildings; inadequate, unsafe, or unsanitary street conditions; vacant and unsanitary lots; irregularly shaped lots; diversity of land ownership making it difficult to assemble properties for redevelopment; incompatibility of existing mixture of residential and industrial property; overcrowding in residential structures; high incidence of crime; and unhealthy or unsafe environmental conditions.

The 2007 blight study for downtown Wyandanch concluded that the project area clearly meets accepted criteria of a blighted area, due to numerous instances of substandard, unsanitary, deteriorated or deteriorating conditions within the boundaries of the area, including: 1) a significant number of buildings and sidewalks in poor to critical condition, 2) numerous vacant lots and/or vacant buildings, 3) substantial accumulation of trash and debris throughout the study area, 4) incompatible or underperforming land uses, 5) known or potential environmental contamination, 6) high crime, particularly drug-related crime, 7) inadequate or nonexistent sewer infrastructure, 8) outdated zoning regulations, 9) diverse property ownership, 8) and hazardous traffic conditions, including a high-volume intersection at Straight Path and Acorn Street that contributes to a lack of connectivity between the portions of the project area to the north and south sides of the LIRR tracks.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the project area is generally blighted and in need of repair, restoration, revitalization, and redevelopment.

ECONOMIC AND MARKET TRENDS ANALYSIS

A market analysis was undertaken to test the practicality of implementing the community vision and development concepts that were generated during the *Wyandanch Rising* public outreach program. Among the objectives of the market analysis was to identify brownfield sites that were strategic to the redevelopment of downtown Wyandanch and to incorporate the mitigation of these sites in a plan that would have broader impacts on the revitalization of the project area. Concepts such as transit oriented development, mixed-use development, job creation, locally owned retail stores, pedestrian friendly streets and sidewalks, and improved public safety were

A. INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years the Town of Babylon has displayed an overwhelming commitment to including Wyandanch stakeholders in the decision making process for their community. The process began in 2002 with the community-based revitalization effort known as “Wyandanch Rising,” and continued through meetings of the implementation committee. Public participation continues to play a major role in the implementation of the proposed project. This chapter outlines the project’s public participation plan and techniques to enlist partners in implementing the *Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan Rising Plan*.

Traditionally comprehensive planning efforts across the country have taken a top down approach, with minimal community input. The *Wyandanch Rising* process was designed as a bottom up approach where community stakeholders determined values, priorities, goals and recommendations for the redevelopment of their downtown. As noted in Chapter 1, the Town of Babylon hired Sustainable Long Island to facilitate a community based planning process that was transparent, informative and inclusive. In order to assist in this effort, Sustainable Long Island organized a design team of architects, landscape architects, transportation, and smart growth professionals that would work to complete a community based plan that met the needs identified by the community and was designed for implementation.

Over the course of five days from June 5-9, 2003, over 800 residents, business and property owners, civic groups, labor, clergy, seniors, government officials, and youth worked together to create a vision for a revitalized downtown corridor in Wyandanch. However, the vision process started earlier that year with outreach and education workshops about community development and revitalization, smart growth principles and general planning concepts. In addition to education workshops, visioning activities included a goals identification session, focus groups, walking tours, a design day (charrette) and community presentations.

B. A COMMUNITY VISION**COMMUNITY ORGANIZING**

In order to ensure a representative and grassroots effort, Sustainable Long Island brought together various community leaders to help guide the strategies that would maximize community input. Through various informal and formal meetings with community leaders as well as on the ground research & analysis, outreach strategies, education topics, meeting locations and existing conditions were determined.

OUTREACH

The vision process was designed to promote inclusion of all of the stakeholders in Wyandanch. Sustainable Long Island rented space across the street from the train station from local owners to open a satellite in the Wyandanch community. Sustainable Long Island used this space to coordinate an extensive outreach effort that would ensure the participation of all stakeholders in

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter documents existing conditions in and around the proposed Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) and the designated Urban Renewal Area (URA) (together herein referred to as “the project area”), in order to establish a baseline against which conditions in the future with or without the proposed project can be measured or assessed. Existing conditions assessments are provided for a range of analysis areas, including land use, zoning and public policy, socioeconomic conditions, and the potential for hazardous materials on brownfield, abandoned, and vacant sites. An assessment of existing conditions in and around the project area was also used to identify strategic locations for redevelopment and key recommendations to achieve the proposed redevelopment strategies (see Section P, “Summary of Issues and Findings, ~~and~~ Recommendations,” at the end of this chapter).

B. LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Figures 3-1 and 3-2 depict land uses in the study area and project area, respectively.

INTRODUCTION

This section addresses existing land use and zoning in the project area and in the larger study area. Existing land uses, as well as known future development projects, are described to establish the setting in which the proposed project would occur. A description of zoning in the project area is provided to reflect current building regulations for new development. Public policies related to the redevelopment and revitalization of Wyandanch are also reviewed.

Information relative to existing land use, zoning, and public policy was obtained through several sources, including Digital Orthoimagery for the Town of Babylon from New York State Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Clearinghouse (2004); GIS data from the Suffolk County Real Property Tax Service Agency (December 2006); field surveys conducted by AKRF in October, November, and December 2006; the *Code of the Town of Babylon*; the Town of Babylon Building Zone Map (May 20, 1986); and public reports and plans prepared by or for the Town of Babylon with respect to the redevelopment and revitalization of Wyandanch.

EXISTING CONDITIONS*LAND USE**Project Area*

The approximately 105-acre project area encompasses downtown Wyandanch, or the area of the hamlet that contains the business core, and roughly includes the parcels along Straight Path from 9th Street on the north to Garrison Avenue on the south, as well as adjacent parcels extending

contamination, they can generate organic vapors. Former or current gasoline stations, auto body shops, and other industrial land uses are the most likely sources for substantial VOC contamination.

- **Semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs).** The most common SVOCs encountered are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are constituents of partially combusted coal or petroleum-derived products, such as coal ash and fuel oil. PAHs are common in fill material and associated with fuel oil storage (spill).
- **Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).** Commonly used as a dielectric fluid in transformers, some underground high-voltage electric pipelines, and hydraulically-operated machinery, PCBs are of special concern at electrical transformer and rail yard/train maintenance locations where leakage into soil may have occurred. PCBs and/or PCB-containing materials were once widely used in manufacturing and industrial applications (e.g., hydraulic lifts, transformers, and plastic manufacturing.). PCBs tend to travel only short distances in soil, except in unusual circumstances (e.g., large spills of PCB-containing oils over many years).
- **Pesticides, herbicides, and rodenticides.** These are commonly used to control rodents and/or insects, and vegetation in vacant structures or in vegetated lots.
- **Metals (including lead, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, and mercury).** Metals are often used in smelters, foundries, and metal works and are found as components in paint, ink, petroleum products, and coal ash. These metals tend not to travel far in soil; therefore, they would be of greatest concern at the site where they were generated. Metals, at levels above natural background levels, are frequently present in fill material.
- **Asbestos.** In addition to asbestos used for fireproofing or other purposes within existing structures, utility lines beneath some streets may be coated with asbestos or encased in “transite.” There are well-defined regulatory programs to manage asbestos during demolition and construction work.
- **Fuel oil and gasoline storage tanks.** Numerous residences and businesses within the project area currently have, or once had, both known and undocumented above-ground storage tanks (ASTs) or underground storage tanks (USTs) for fuels, including heating oil and gasoline. Some of these tanks may have been removed, and others, although no longer in use, may remain buried in place. Some of the tanks are known to have leaked, and others have possibly leaked with no evidence of a spill to date. Some of the spills have been cleaned up in accordance with state regulations, but others have not because they have not yet been discovered or because cleanup, which can take several years, is ongoing. However, both the regulatory process and technologies are in place to address removal of tanks and cleanup of any associated releases.

E. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

This section, which was derived from a traffic study prepared by The RBA Group, analyzes current vehicular and pedestrian traffic and parking conditions in downtown Wyandanch, and identifies existing congestion, deficiencies and safety concerns. The transportation network for this area is shown in Appendix F, on Figure 7. A general characterization of the transportation system in this area is provided at the end of this section. It should be noted that although the

P. SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing conditions analysis supports the findings and recommendations of previous studies conducted for the project area, including the 2004 *Wyandanch Hamlet Plan (Wyandanch Rising)* and AKRF's *Wyandanch Blight Study* (see Appendix B) and *Economic and Market Trends Analysis* (see Appendix C).

Overall, the project area was found to contain a number of substandard or blighted conditions including underutilization; inappropriate land uses; poor to critical building, site, or parking conditions; outdated zoning; insufficient sewer capacity; environmental contamination; pedestrian safety issues related to traffic infrastructure or sidewalk conditions; multiple ownership; and high crime. Taken together, these findings indicate that the portion of the hamlet encompassed by the project area, including the core commercial district, is blighted and in need of repair, restoration, revitalization, and redevelopment.

Underutilization. Underutilization of property is one of the standard criteria for identifying blighted conditions. The existing conditions assessment found that approximately 14 acres or 13 percent of the project area consists of vacant land and 22 lots contain vacant or partially vacant buildings. Many of these lots are strewn with trash or debris and are possible sites for crime or drug use, with some lots being used for inappropriately for parking, thereby undermining the Town's intentions to revitalize and redevelop the area with active, tax-generating uses. Further, over 20 vacant parcels front on Straight Path, several of which are located in the core business area, and are hampering the economic vitality of Wyandanch's downtown.

A 2006 report by the Suffolk County Planning Department found that the retail vacancy rate (the number of vacant stores divided by the total number of stores) in downtown Wyandanch was 16 percent, compared with 7.9 percent in the Town of Babylon overall.¹ The report ranked Wyandanch as the downtown with the ninth highest retail vacancy rate in Suffolk County overall (a total of 51 communities with downtowns were evaluated). The comparatively high retail vacancy rate in the project area creates an atmosphere of disinvestment in Wyandanch's downtown.

A major concentration of free commuter parking in Wyandanch's downtown is also contributing to underutilization of the project area. Suffolk County owns or operates another approximately 5.6 acres of land in the heart of the downtown area, north of the LIRR Wyandanch station, that are currently dedicated to free surface parking largely for commuters, rather than being used as resource to meet the housing and commercial needs of the community. At the same time, the free and unrestricted nature of the parking deprives the Town of an important source of revenue that could be used to eliminate blighted conditions and restore the function of the project area as a place to live, work, shop, and recreate. Finally, because a local resident parking permit system is not in place, residents must compete with non-residents for parking spaces near the station.

Adopting an Urban Renewal Plan and Nomination for downtown Wyandanch would provide the regulatory capacity to stimulate additional commercial, residential, and mixed-use development in the area. The proposed Intermodal Transit Facility would serve to consolidate parking demand under one roof, thereby freeing up valuable land for tax-generating, transit-oriented uses.

¹ Suffolk County Department of Planning, *Shopping Centers and Downtowns, Suffolk County, New York*, May 2006.

Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan

Insufficient Sewer Capacity. Wyandanch is not connected to a public sewer system and this is a critical factor in the lack of a commercially viable downtown. Rather, the community depends on independent on-site wastewater treatment, which is a major issue because of potential groundwater contamination and the fact that on-site wastewater treatment systems can be cost-prohibitive to potential developers and a disincentive for capital investment in Wyandanch. On-site wastewater treatment also requires compliance with SCDHS regulatory requirements, which limit the opportunity to provide the density necessary for economic development.

Provision of public sewers in Wyandanch would facilitate redevelopment of the area and reduce the potential for groundwater contamination from existing septic tank-serviced areas. Recently, the Town Board, in coordination with EPA, awarded funds for assessing the feasibility of extending the local sewer district infrastructure to Wyandanch. The sewer feasibility study was recently completed and one of the most important recommendations of this Plan is to implement the recommendations of the feasibility study to allow for public sewer connection in downtown Wyandanch. Sewer line extension to Wyandanch would have to be coupled with aggressive measures to reduce inflow and infiltration to the sewer system and/or create water conservation programs.

However, according to Sustainable Long Island's *Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study* (2004), it would cost \$1,500 per home for sewer connection, an amount that could be cost-prohibitive to already economically distressed households in the community. More recently, the Suffolk County Department of Public Works estimated the cost of connecting individual homes to sewer services in the area at \$3,000 per dwelling unit. This impediment may hinder a large expansion plan, but the immediate need for sewer service in the area is along the Straight Path corridor, which would be most beneficial for redevelopment and protection of groundwater. Therefore, it is imperative that the Town of Babylon seek matching federal and state funds to provide public sewer service to downtown Wyandanch.

Brownfields/Environmental Contamination. Properties in the project area where contamination may be present are considered potential brownfield sites. Approximately 76 lots in the project area meet this criterion. In general, environmental concerns include industrial land use, gasoline stations, automobile repair, current and historical generation of hazardous materials, storage of petroleum in underground or aboveground storage tanks, reported spills of petroleum and other chemicals, and groundwater and soil contamination at varying sites within the project area. Site assessment funding through the BOA Program will may be sought to prepare site assessments for several sites within the project area. Additional funding will may be necessary to fully investigate and remediate the extent of environmental contamination in downtown Wyandanch.

Traffic, Transportation, and Pedestrian Safety Issues. Sidewalk and street conditions were also found to be problematic and hazardous throughout the project area. Adverse sidewalk and street conditions observed in the project area include cracking or crumbling, inadequate drainage or ponding, and incidents of sidewalk parking by heavy trucks. Pedestrian safety in the project area is also compromised because of excessive speeds of cars and trucks on major routes in the area, especially along Straight Path. A high-volume intersection at Straight Path and Acorn Street contributes to a lack of connectivity between the portions of the project area to the north and south sides of the LIRR tracks. For this reason, as part of the Intermodal Transit Facility planned for Site A, a plaza and pedestrian safety improvements are proposed at this intersection to provide a better connection between Site A and the LIRR Wyandanch station. A pedestrian bridge is also proposed linking Site A to the proposed retail and office uses on Site G.

Multiple Ownership. Control of underutilized sites by multiple owners can create an impediment to needed redevelopment and removal of blighted conditions. Within the project area, ownership of the vast majority (i.e., approximately 88 percent of the 281 tax lots) is scattered among many different property owners including residents, development corporations, and religious institutions. Publicly owned property accounts for only 24 percent of the project area (approximately 25 acres). Diverse property ownership suggests that creating sites with areas large enough to accommodate commercial and residential development could be time-consuming and more costly than if the parcels were publicly owned by one or a few institutions.

Creating an Urban Renewal Plan for the project area will allow the Town of Babylon to assemble properties large enough to accommodate commercial and residential development and attract developers.

Crime. Another standard criterion for identifying blighted conditions is crime. Crime was found to be a significant issue in Wyandanch and one that the community has been struggling to overcome for decades. Wyandanch as a whole was found to have a high incidence of crime, especially drug-related, relative to both the Town of Babylon and Suffolk County overall.

Greater police presence and an active nightlife would serve to keep eyes on the street and stimulate a safer environment for Wyandanch residents, business owners, and visitors.

Lack of sense of place; and community gathering spaces and inadequate community facilities. The project area lacks a strong sense of place. There are some buildings that contribute to the area's sense of place such as the Town of Babylon Youth Center on Andrews Avenue and the new U.S. Post Office on Straight Path; however, these buildings are not sufficiently integrated into their surrounding area so as to be considered defining elements of the community. The LIRR station acts as a focal point in the community, but does not contribute a strong sense of place due to the sea of parking that surrounds it. Portions of Straight Path, generally between Long Island Avenue and Lake Drive, exhibit many characteristics of a typical "Main Street," including attached rows of retail shops, newly installed street lighting, flowering baskets, and newly planted trees, but these elements are not uniform throughout the project area. A brick walkway was also recently installed along Straight Path; however, cracking and crumbling was observed, most likely due to sidewalk parking by heavy trucks. Despite recent investment in the community, the presence of numerous trash-strewn vacant lots fronting on Straight Path creates the sense of disinvestment and economic stagnation in the area and disrupts the streetscape. The project area loses its downtown feel south of Lake Drive, where the buildings are of various uses, shapes, and sizes, and the streetscape is discontinuous.

There is tremendous opportunity for improvements in the project area that would contribute to a stronger sense of place and a typical "Main Street" feel, including a uniform streetscape all along Straight Path, better connectivity between the north and south sides of LIRR tracks, consolidated parking areas, and the creation of visual gateways at the northern and southern ends of the project area. In addition, mixed-use developments that tie in important community buildings are encouraged. Creation of a community facilities hub is recommended that integrates the existing youth center. Relocation of the existing Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Health Center and LI Head Start to this location would also be appropriate. The plaza proposed as part of the Intermodal Transit Facility would also contribute to the area's overall sense of place while providing an additional community gathering space.

Narrow range of housing options. Several factors point to healthy demand for new residential development in Wyandanch, including: (a) projected population growth of 4.2 percent in

proposed project is expected to generate an estimated 16,602 pounds (8.3 tons) of solid waste per day.¹ Solid waste generated from the proposed project would be managed by the Town of Babylon Sanitation Department, located within the Department of Environmental Control, as discussed in Chapter 3, "Existing Conditions." Non-putrescible waste materials would be recycled in accordance with local recycling ordinances. A letter was sent to the Town's Sanitation Department to ensure that no significant impacts to sanitation services would result from the proposed project (see Appendix G). The relatively small amount of waste generated from the proposed action (about 1 percent of the approximately 750 tons per day of solid waste processed at the Covanta facility that serves the Town of Babylon) is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts to solid waste handling and disposal services. The Town's Department of Environmental Control has indicated that the Town can handle the solid waste that would be generated from the proposed project and there would be an opportunity to recycle through the Town's programs and the proposed activities would be consistent with the Town's solid waste management plan.

ENERGY

Energy service would be obtained from LIPA and National Grid. The proposed project would require an extension of existing utility services in the area to provide new electric and gas service to the vacant subject sites. Projected energy demand for the proposed developments is based on loads for heating, ventilation, air conditioning, lighting, and auxiliary equipment, such as elevators and pumps. The annual energy consumption is calculated by applying factors from the Association of Energy Engineers, 1997.² It is estimated that the proposed project would result in an energy demand of 215,155 million British Thermal Units (BTUs) annually. This is equivalent to about 63 million kilowatt hours (kWh). A letter was sent to LIPA to inquire about the potential for any impacts (see Appendix G), but a response was not received in time for publication of this Plan. However, it is not expected that this additional load would be a problem for LIPA's existing facilities and any necessary service connections would be made. In addition, all applicable proposed projects under the Plan would meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification and ENERGY STAR standards, to ensure the development of environmentally responsible, energy-efficient buildings.

Therefore, no significant adverse impacts on infrastructure and energy systems are expected to result from the proposed project.

D. BROWNFIELD, ABANDONED, AND VACANT SITES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to assess the proposed project's potential impacts on brownfields and other vacant, abandoned, and underutilized lots sites within the project area as they relate to potential reuse and redevelopment.

¹ Tchobanoglous, George, McGraw-Hill Series in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering, *Integrated Solid Waste Management*, 1993.

² The City of New York, *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, 2001.