

Town of Babylon

**Final Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan
(i.e., Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement/
Final Urban Renewal Plan/
Final NYS Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program Nomination)**



May 2009

**Prepared by:
Town of Babylon
with assistance from
AKRF, Inc.
with
The RBA Group
and Sustainable Long Island**

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This document was prepared for the Town of Babylon, the New York State Department of State, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation with state funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Babylon Town Board

Supervisor Hon. Steve Bellone
Councilwoman Hon. Jacqueline A. Gordon
Councilman Hon. Lindsay P. Henry
Councilman Hon. Tony Martinez
Councilwoman Hon. Ellen T. McVeety

This document was prepared through a coordinated effort of the Town and its staff, the consultant team, and the Town Board, which also acts as the Lead Agency and Urban Renewal Agency.

**TOWN OF BABYLON
FINAL WYANDANCH DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN
(i.e., FINAL GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/
FINAL URBAN RENEWAL PLAN/
FINAL NYS BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREAS PROGRAM NOMINATION).**

PROJECT LOCATION: Town of Babylon
Suffolk County, State of New York

LEAD AGENCY AND CONTACT: Town of Babylon
Town Board
200 East Sunrise Highway
Lindenhurst, NY 11757

Richard Groh
Chief Environmental Analyst
Town of Babylon
Department of Environmental Control Room 23
281 Phelps Lane
North Babylon, NY 11703
631-422-7640 phone
631-722-7686 fax

**DATE OF ACCEPTANCE
BY LEAD AGENCY:** May 11, 2009

PLAN PREPARERS:

Lead Environmental Consultant: AKRF, Inc.
3900 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite 300
Bohemia, NY 11716
(631) 285-6980

Traffic, Zoning, and Site Layout
Recommendations Consultant: The RBA Group
40 Marcus Drive, Suite 201
Melville, NY 11747

Public Outreach Consultant: Sustainable Long Island
45A Seaman Avenue
Bethpage, NY 11714

FOREWORD

This document is the Final Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan (Final Plan). It constitutes the Final Urban Renewal Plan, Final NYS Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program Step 2 Nomination, and the Final GEIS for the proposed project. It provides, as Chapter 1, a comprehensive Response to Comments on the Draft Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan (April 2009), certified as complete and distributed for public comment. These comments were submitted as written comments (as letters or memoranda) during the public comment period that extended from April 8, 2009 through May 8, 2009. The text of the Response to Comments chapter includes text changes made to the April 2009 Draft Plan, based on the comments received. Where changes to the Draft Plan are not indicated, the original text provided in the Draft Plan constitutes the Final Plan; the Draft Plan and its associated Appendices are not repeated here in their entirety, but are included in this Final Plan by reference.

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A. INTRODUCTION

This Response to Comments chapter of this Final Plan (i.e. Urban Renewal Plan/Nomination/GEIS) has been prepared to respond to public comments on the Draft Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan, which was distributed for public review by the lead agency, the Town of Babylon Town Board, on April 8, 2009. The public comment period for submitting written comments was held open until May 8, 2009.

Listed below are the agencies who commented on the Draft Plan. The lead agency did not receive any comments from individuals or organizations on the Draft Plan. Each commenter has been assigned a number, which is used to identify the origin of the comments on the Draft Plan that are summarized in this chapter. Where comments have been made on the same subject by more than one commenter, they have been condensed and summarized into a single comment. Following each comment is the number assigned to each of the commenter(s). The summarized comments, with associated responses, are presented in section C, below. Copies of the complete comment letters received are collected in Appendix A. In addition to the comments and responses shown below, a number of minor editorial text changes, corrections, and edits were made to the Draft Plan. These edits are included as replacement pages for inclusion in this Final Plan, collected in Appendix B.

B. LIST OF COMMENTERS ON THE DRAFT PLAN

WRITTEN COMMENTS

1. Stephen M. Jones, Suffolk County Water Authority (SCWA), April 9, 2009
2. Ben Wright, P.E., Suffolk County Department of Public Works (SCDPW), Division of Sanitation, April 9, 2009
3. David Ashton, New York State Department of State, May 7, 2009

C. COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comment S-1: The Executive Summary should include a summation of “Existing Conditions” in the project area. (3)

Response S-1: *The following text is added to the Plan on page S-12 before section E, “Implementation Strategy.”*

SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS IN THE PROJECT AREA

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 and Economic and Market Trends Analysis*.

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.

Inappropriate Land Uses. While certain industrial businesses are an important component of the local economy, in some cases their proximity to residential properties causes a potentially

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

hazardous situation for local residents and, because of their conflicting nature, creates a blighting effect on the community as a whole. On Site E, a cement manufacturing plant directly borders a residential community. Weld Built on Site B is another example of industrial property abutting residential parcels. The Weld Built site is generally unkempt with broken fences, trash, barbed wire, and overgrown landscaping along its edges. In addition, the location of certain industrial businesses in the downtown core detracts from Wyandanch's efforts to further develop commercial activity and generate much-needed tax revenue for the Town.

A revised zoning code and property acquisition and redevelopment is necessary to replace or phase out inappropriate land uses in the project area with viable, compatible mixed uses appropriate to a downtown area.

Poor to Critical Building, Site, or Parking Conditions. Consistent with the findings of the blight study, the existing conditions assessment found that many properties in the project area had exterior building conditions, including steps, walls, door, windows, and roof; and/or site conditions such as graffiti or garbage; and/or parking conditions in poor or critical condition. Of the 281 parcels in the project area, 117 or approximately 42 percent were given poor to critical ratings in the blight study. Most of the properties rated "fair" or "good" were found to have at least one critically rated element.

Adopting an Urban Renewal Plan for the project area will allow the Town to implement urban renewal project including rehabilitation and redevelopment of existing buildings and properties.

Restrictive Zoning. The small size of certain commercial lots in Wyandanch combined with restrictive commercial zoning is preventing redevelopment of the project area and causing lots to remain vacant, thereby creating blighted conditions in the area. Because Wyandanch's street structure was platted pre-war, many lots along Straight Path, designed at the time to accommodate a traditional downtown, are too small to adhere to Babylon's current suburban zoning that requires at least 50 feet of frontage and 10,000 square feet in area for commercial development. As these non-conforming lots have become vacant for various reasons, they lose their "grandfathered" status and therefore have not been able to be redeveloped for commercial use. For those lots that may meet the above size requirements, on-site parking or building setback requirements may prevent commercial development. Further, these small lots, regardless of restrictive zoning, are often not as appealing to current developers who typically seek large areas of land for redevelopment.

Property assemblage would allow for areas large enough to accommodate commercial and residential development and attract developers. A revised zoning code and reduced parking requirements would also encourage the type of mixed-use, transit-oriented development appropriate to the downtown area.

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

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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.

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 may be sought to prepare site assessments for several sites within the project area. Additional funding will 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 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 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 Babylon by 2015, and 9.0 percent by 2030 from 2005 levels, (b) a large pool of potential buyers and renters within the Residential Trade Area¹ with comparable household characteristics, (c) strong demand within existing and target market segments for a variety of housing types, (d) the relative affordability of housing in Wyandanch compared to other communities in the Residential Trade Area, and (e) easy access to New York City and throughout Long Island via the LIRR. It is conservatively estimated that between 459 and 1,335 new households would

¹ The Residential Trade Area, as described in AKRF's *Town of Babylon – Wyandanch BOA Nomination Economic and Market Trends Analysis* (2007), is comprised of the geographic area in which existing residents are most likely to consider buying or renting in Wyandanch. The Residential Trade Area includes Suffolk County's Towns of Babylon and Islip, as well as Nassau County's Town of Hempstead and southern portions of the Town of Oyster Bay.

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likely move to Wyandanch, particularly if new residential development provides a greater variety of housing types, such as townhomes or condos and rentals.

There are several sites in the downtown core that would be suitable for residential development and at the same time meet the generally accepted parameters for transit oriented development, i.e., about a ½-mile walking distance to and from mass transit. As recommended in *Wyandanch Rising*, combining residential with commercial uses could act as a catalyst to revitalize Wyandanch's stagnant retail sector and provide a mechanism to add much needed amenities to support residential development in the Straight Path corridor, such as shopping, dining, and parking opportunities.

Lack of office and retail uses appropriate to the area. The potential for retail and office development is strong, as demonstrated by a variety of indicators:

- An analysis of consumer spending patterns indicated that retail merchants in Wyandanch and Wheatley Heights are capturing about 38 percent of the household spending power for a range of shoppers' goods and convenience goods, as well as restaurant expenditures.¹ In other words, the majority of households in the retail trade area are shopping and dining outside their neighborhood, primarily in shopping centers in Deer Park, Babylon, East Farmingdale, and beyond. The underlying reason for this trend is the lack of a diverse selection of quality stores and restaurants. A slight increase in local spending in the downtown area by local residents could create a demand for about 50,000 square feet of additional retail space. Development of new residential units in the downtown area could conservatively increase the demand for new retail space to about 67,000 square feet. Unlike other nearby shopping centers that are only accessible by car or bus, much of the potential retail development in Wyandanch would be conveniently located near the train station, accessible to pedestrians including both residents and commuters. This proximity to transit may be an important competitive advantage for Wyandanch's downtown as the local community tries to differentiate its downtown from the large, automobile-centric shopping centers that surround the trade area.
- The office market in Western Suffolk County is performing well, with low vacancy rates, particularly for Class B and C office space, and high rents. Although Wyandanch is not currently home to any major office buildings, the availability of developable land in close proximity to the train station is a key asset. A mixed-use office/residential/retail development within walking distance of the station would likely be an attractive product for businesses seeking to reduce commutation time and expense for their employees and for residents to improve their quality of life by either living or working closer to a railroad station.
- Stores selling convenience and shopping goods, as well as eating and drinking places, are found in a variety of store sizes, many of which would be appropriate for Wyandanch's downtown.

¹ Shoppers goods generally include general merchandise found in variety stores and department stores, apparel and accessories, furniture and home furnishings, and miscellaneous goods such as sporting goods, jewelry, cameras and photographic equipment, computers, TV's and other electronics, and toys, among others. Convenience goods generally include food and beverages sold in supermarkets and grocery stores, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, and other personal items.

The proposed project would serve to alleviate blighted conditions and provide the basis for implementation of revitalization and redevelopment strategies. Creating an urban renewal area and adopting an Urban Renewal Plan and Nomination in downtown Wyandanch would provide the regulatory capacity to stimulate additional commercial, residential, and mixed-use development in the area. State funding could be leveraged to provide public sewer service in downtown Wyandanch to accommodate the proposed developments. Brownfields would be remediated and redeveloped. A new zoning code would serve to foster redevelopment and resurgence of downtown Wyandanch by allowing for mixed uses and greater density. Property assemblage would allow for areas large enough to accommodate commercial and residential development and attract developers. Pedestrian safety would be enhanced by public or private investment in traffic calming methods and other transportation improvements along Straight Path. 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. Redevelopment and revitalization strategies would translate to new businesses and housing options, an increase in both property and non-property related tax dollars, the creation of jobs from construction and operation of new businesses, and an overall greater quality of life in the community.

Lack of parks and open space. The project area could benefit from additional and/or improved parks and open space resources to serve the existing and projected residential and worker populations of Wyandanch. Open space resources in the project area are limited to George Sims Veterans Plaza and a small landscaped area totaling about 1/3 acre. The proposed expansion of George Sims Veterans Plaza and the addition of a public plaza on Site A would serve to alleviate this shortfall. Significant opportunities also exist for connecting the project area to open space resources in the larger study area and beyond. For example, the Town is considering a dedicated bike route along Commonwealth Boulevard that would connect to the Town's Geiger Memorial Park on Grand Boulevard just outside the study area and run along the Carlls River south to Belmont Lake State Park.

The Carlls River watershed runs along the easterly portion of Wyandanch. Carlls River is the Town of Babylon's largest watershed extending from the Great South Bay north into the Town of Huntington at its northernmost terminus. The watershed contains extensive open space, primarily composed of New York State's Belmont Lake State Park. The County of Suffolk has been actively acquiring properties in this watershed to form a continuous green belt throughout the system. The watershed encompasses a diverse array of freshwater wetlands, woodlands, tributaries, lakes, and ponds. The ability to support trout habitat within segments of the Carlls River is notable. This is an indicator of the existing water quality value of the system and how the preservation of open space has protected the watershed. Opportunities now exist within the river corridor for recreation, fishing, and small scale boating and wildlife appreciation. The Town of Babylon would like to connect the Wyandanch community to this important natural resource. Bike and water trails are now being investigated for underutilized portions of this open space area. The Town of Babylon Wyandanch Park has a direct connection to this open space and may be utilized as an access point. The challenge will be to address manmade and natural barriers for bicycle and water trails for this important initiative.

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

COMMUNITY VISION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Comment 1-1: Chapter 1.C. Community Vision, Goals and Objectives (also relates to Executive Summary and Chapter 2). The breadth of the Town and community's vision for the area is not fully articulated. The document would benefit from a more complete discussion of the progressive, transformative goals of the revitalization effort. (3)

Response 1-1: The bullet list on page 1-4 (and S-5) has been expanded to include the following:

- Sustainability. Incorporate sustainability into all aspects of redevelopment, including opportunities for transit-oriented development and smart growth.
- Housing. Provide for more diverse housing options to accommodate a range of persons and incomes.
- Retail amenities. Provide for a variety of retail uses to support the downtown.
- Community Facilities. Improve existing community facilities in the area and create a new community services hub.
- Design Improvements. Develop progressive architectural and sustainability design guidelines. Incorporate Gateway features at both ends of Straight Path. Institute a façade improvement program in connection with the new architectural design guidelines.
- Public Art. Infuse public art into the redevelopment and revitalization plan.
- Jobs. Create job opportunities for local residents to participate in the revitalization process.

CHAPTER 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY

Comment 3-1: The water main distribution system should be considered part of the existing public infrastructure, not just pump stations. Distribution mains should also be considered as part of the existing public infrastructure. This is particularly important in the event that certain roads, such as Woodland Road or Garden City Avenue, are abandoned or relocated as a result of the proposed project. Water main relocations and extensions are paid for by the development entity involved, as a contract with SCWA. SCWA contractors would actually perform the work. SCWA has no objections to waterlines remaining undisturbed in place,

provided an easement is properly described and recorded. SCWA reserves the right to require upgrades to the distribution system, provided that pressure and flow tests indicate any directly related inadequacies to serve new development, especially multi-story buildings. SCWA is in full support of the proposed redevelopment plan, which would provide additional customer base and consumption to share the existing system. (1)

Response 3-1:

The SCWA distribution system was considered in the Existing Conditions and Analysis chapter and Chapter 5 noted that the proposed four-story buildings may require the installation of internal booster pumps to be adequately served. The Draft Plan also notes that, given the proposed density, SCWA expects that there would need to be some improvements to or elimination of dead-end mains to adequately serve the proposed project (see page 5-4). Once the proposed developments are refined, specific infrastructure needs and modifications would be addressed during site plan review.

Sewer construction will meet Suffolk County Department of Public Works engineering requirements. The most current and modern construction standards and practices will be utilized for sewer construction. This should mitigate settlement and other potential similar problems associated with sewer construction in the past.

Comment 3-2:

On page 3-18, the Draft Plan incorrectly states that \$273 million has been invested in the Southwest Sewer District to prepare for an expansion to Wyandanch. Rather, a 2002 report prepared by the Suffolk County Department of Public Works (SCDPW) indicated that four hamlets could be connected to the district at a cost of \$273 million.

The description on page 3-18 is correct with respect to the cost of \$1,500 per home for sewer connection that was estimated in 2002. However, recent correspondence referring to the 2002 report indicates that those costs are outdated.

The August 25, 2008 letter from SCDPW to Supervisor Bellone did state that the cost would be upwards of \$3,000 per home and it was specific to the smaller area that was evaluated on a limited amount of information to develop an approximate cost.

The last paragraph on page 3-18 is incorrect with respect to the indication that available capacity at Bergen Point is less than 350,000 gallons per day (gpd).

The August 25, 2008 letter to Supervisor Bellone indicates that the number of units being proposed in the revitalization area in Wyandanch

would be more closely represented by a flow of 350,000 gpd based on Health Department flow standards.

Page 5-4 indicates a projected sewage flow of 255,369 gpd, whereas the Health Department standards more closely reflect a sewage flow of 350,000 gpd. We would assume that once more engineering analysis is performed for the project; the volume of sewage to be generated would be closer to the Health Department standards.

The same comments that apply to Page 3-18 also apply to the majority of text on page 5-5. In addition, the last paragraph should recognize that regardless of the percentage of flow that would be conveyed from the Wyandanch area to the Bergen Point Collection System 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. 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. (2)

Response 3-2:

In order to respond to the issues raised by the commenter, it is necessary to revise portions of the text that appears in the Draft Plan and GEIS. The proposed text revisions are shown below, and are incorporated into this Final Plan and GEIS by reference, replacing the associated text in the Draft Plan.

The first paragraph on page 3-18 is revised as follows:

~~According to the Town of Babylon's Empire Zone application, as sourced in Sustainable Long Island's Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study (2004), \$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 Suffolk County Department of Public Works (SCDPW) indicated that four hamlets could be connected to the district at a cost of \$273 million. However,~~ According to Sustainable Long Island's Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study (2004) the same report, 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. 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. This ~~The projected cost~~ 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. It is noted that connecting to an existing public sewer system is likely to be the least costly and acceptable option to the community for new construction.

The last paragraph on page 3-18 with respect to sanitary sewers is revised as follows:

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 just to the southwest of the Village of Babylon, just south of the Bergen Point Golf Course. 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. The SCDPW letter to the Town Supervisor dated August 25, 2008 indicated available capacity of less than 350,000 gpd, although the actual available capacity was not specified. 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 first paragraph under “Sanitary Sewage” on page 5-4 is revised as follows:

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

The third paragraph on page 5-5 is revised as follows:

According to the Town of Babylon’s Empire Zone application, as sourced in Sustainable Long Island’s Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study (2004), \$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 Suffolk County Department of Public Works (SCDPW) indicated that four hamlets could be connected to the district at a cost of \$273 million. However, aAccording to Sustainable Long Island’s Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study (2004)the same report, 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. A letter from SCDPW to the Town Supervisor dated August 25, 2008 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. This The projected cost 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. It is noted that connecting to a public sewer system is likely to be the least costly option for new construction.

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.

The fifth paragraph on page 5-5 is revised as follows:

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 located in West Babylon just to the southwest of the Village of Babylon, just south of the Bergen Point Golf Course. This plant has a permitted capacity of 30.5 mgd of wastewater influent. According to the Hamlet Plan, the plant is at or near capacity. The SCDPW letter to the Town Supervisor dated August 25, 2008 indicated available capacity of less than 350,000 gpd, although the actual available capacity was not specified. 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. Additional capacity at the Bergen Point facility could also be purchased. However, there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan's anticipated wastewater flows.

The last paragraph on page 5-5 pertaining to sanitary sewers is revised as follows:

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 (e.g. groundwater contamination) ~~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.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Comment 3-3: With respect to Section D, "Hazardous Materials," in Chapter 3, "Existing Conditions and Analysis," describe, comprehensively and specifically, the process that was undertaken to research, analyze, and identify the 226 abandoned, vacant, underutilized, and potential brownfield sites referenced in this section and in associated Appendix E. Document how the list of these sites was compiled and note the methods and specific sources used to identify them. (3)

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

Response 3-3: Chapter 3, Section D, “Hazardous Materials,” has been revised in its entirety to address the comment and is included in Appendix C of this Final Plan. The section has been renamed, “Brownfield, Abandoned, and Vacant Sites” and describes more specifically the process that was undertaken to research, analyze, and identify the abandoned, vacant, underutilized, and potential brownfield sites, as well as the sources that were consulted. Table 3-3 has been removed and the information and sources about the sites that were identified in that table have been included in the broader discussion of specific sources used to identify the complete list of 226 identified abandoned, vacant, underutilized, and potential brownfield sites. Table E-1 and Figure S-6 from the Draft Plan have also been revised, and are included in Appendix C of this Final Plan. The Introduction of this section has also been revised to better reflect the information provided in this section. In the updated section provided in Appendix C, reference has been made to the Profiles of Strategic Sites included in Appendix D of the Draft Plan. The Profiles of Strategic Sites B and C have been revised (changes are indicated with double underline) and have also been included in Appendix C of this Final Plan.

STRATEGIC SITES

Comment 3-4: BOA strategic sites are generally narrowed from a basket of identified sites with characteristics of underutilization or potential for brownfield conditions. In this case, the parcels included in the strategic sites comprise the majority of the study area and the vacant/underutilized/brownfield sites inventory. This is the case because of the extensive blight conditions and property underutilization. This section would benefit from a discussion and explanation of how strategic sites were selected and what factors were considered. (3)

Response 3-4: *The following text is added to the end of the first paragraph under section O, “Strategic Sites,” on page 3-91.*

Specifically, in terms of location, the strategic sites were identified as a result of one or more of the following factors:

- their proximity to the train station—which presents an opportunity for transit-oriented development, higher density, and mixed uses in the project area;

servicing 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.

- their location along the central business corridor—which is strategic for spurring economic development on adjacent properties; or
- their location at the northern or southern gateways to the project area—which present opportunities to create visual gateways that would attract visitors to the downtown.

In addition to the location factors, other considerations were also taken into account in selecting strategic sites. For example, because of the small size of certain commercial lots in downtown Wyandanch combined with restrictive zoning, it was necessary to assemble large developable parcels to allow for appropriate commercial and residential development and to attract developers. Alternatively, certain strategic sites were selected based on their proximity to existing amenities. For example, Site F was chosen in part due to the proximity of the existing Town Youth Center, which would serve as an anchor to the proposed community facilities hub on that site. Moreover, all of the strategic sites front on Straight Path, the hamlet’s primary commercial corridor, and include abandoned, vacant, underutilized, or potential brownfield parcels.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Comment 3-5: An analysis of existing parks and open space, utilization, condition, etc. and associated impacts on the existing, limited open space resources should be added to the document. (3)

Response 3-5: An overview of parks and open spaces in the project and study areas was included in Section B, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy” of Chapter 3, “Existing Conditions and Analysis,” of the Draft Plan and shown on Figures 3-1 and 3-2. Open space is limited in the project and study areas.

On page 3-2, at the end of the “Project Area” section, the following section is added to the Plan:

Parks and Open Space

Within the immediate project area, open space resources are limited to the approximately 0.15-acre George Sims Veterans Plaza, which includes a small sitting area on Straight Path at the intersection with Garden City Avenue, just south of the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Health Center, and a landscaped parcel (0.16 acres) at the northwest corner of Straight Path and S. 21st Street. The landscaped parcel, which was developed as part of the Town’s Adopt-a-Spot Program, is the site of a “Welcome to Wyandanch” sign. These open spaces are depicted on Figure 3-2a, in Appendix D of this Final Plan. Overall, there is a dearth of open space resources in the project area;

however, the project area is primarily non-residential (approximately 85 percent). With the addition of the proposed housing units, the project area's existing and future residents would benefit from an increase in open space resources within a radius of ½-mile from the project area. A focus of this project is to explore opportunities for creating new open space in the study area. To that end, the Town is proposing an expansion of George Sims Veterans Plaza and a new plaza on Site A as part of the overall redevelopment and revitalization plan. In addition, the Town is actively researching possible connections to other open space areas and parks in the vicinity of the project area for the community. With these proposed improvements, it is not expected that the proposed project would result in any significant adverse impacts on open space.

The Carlls River watershed runs along the easterly portion of Wyandanch. Carlls River is the Town of Babylon's largest watershed extending from the Great South Bay north into the Town of Huntington at its northernmost terminus. The watershed contains extensive open space, primarily composed of New York State's Belmont Lake State Park. The County of Suffolk has been actively acquiring properties in this watershed to form a continuous green belt throughout the system. The watershed encompasses a diverse array of freshwater wetlands, woodlands, tributaries, lakes, and ponds. The ability to support trout habitat within segments of the Carlls River is notable. This is an indicator of the existing water quality value of the system and how the preservation of open space has protected the watershed. Opportunities now exist within the river corridor for recreation, fishing, and small scale boating and wildlife appreciation. The Town of Babylon would like to connect the Wyandanch community to this important natural resource. Bike and water trails are now being investigated for underutilized portions of this open space area. The Town of Babylon Wyandanch Park has a direct connection to this open space and may be utilized as an access point. The challenge will be to address manmade and natural barriers for bicycle and water trails for this important initiative.

On page 3-10, before the last paragraph, the following heading is added to the Plan:

Parks and Open Space

On page 3-11, at the end of the last paragraph, the following text is added to the Plan:

The larger study area could also benefit from additional open space to serve the existing and projected residential and worker population in Wyandanch. To address any potential deficiency in the study area's public open space resources as a result of the proposed project, the Town proposes to prepare an area-wide open space plan to identify opportunities for regional open space connections in the project and study areas. For example, the Town is considering a dedicated bike route along Commonwealth Boulevard that would connect to the Town's Geiger Memorial Park (which includes a comfort station, fishing, food service, picnic area, playground, and swimming pool) on Grand Boulevard just outside the study area and run along the Carlls River south to Belmont Lake State Park. These open space resources are depicted in Figure 3-2a. With the Town's proposed open space improvements, no significant adverse impacts on the study area's open spaces are expected to result from the proposed project.

On page 3-95, after the "Lack of sense of place; community gathering spaces" section, the following text is added to the Plan:

Lack of parks and open space. The project area could benefit from additional and/or improved parks and open space resources to serve the existing and projected residential and worker populations of Wyandanch. Open space resources in the project area are limited to George Sims Veterans Plaza and a small landscaped area totaling about 1/3 acre. The proposed expansion of George Sims Veterans Plaza and the addition of a public plaza on Site A would serve to alleviate this shortfall. Significant opportunities also exist for connecting the project area to open space resources in the larger study area and beyond. For example, the Town is considering a dedicated bike route along Commonwealth Boulevard that would connect to the Town's Geiger Memorial Park on Grand Boulevard just outside the study area and run along the Carlls River south to Belmont Lake State Park.

On page 5-2, before the section subheaded "Zoning," the following new subheading and text is added to the Plan:

Parks and Open Space

Overall, there is a dearth of open space resources in the project area; however, the project area is primarily non-residential (approximately 85 percent). With the addition of the proposed housing units, the project area's existing and future residents would benefit from an increase in open space resources within a radius of 1/2-mile from the project area. A focus of this project is to explore opportunities for creating new open space in the study area. To that end, the Town is proposing an

expansion of George Sims Veterans Plaza and a new plaza on Site A as part of the overall redevelopment and revitalization plan. In addition, the Town is actively researching possible connections to other open space areas and parks in the vicinity of the project area for the community. For example, the Town of Babylon would like to connect the Wyandanch community to the Carlls River watershed, an important local natural resource. Bike and water trails are now being investigated for underutilized portions of this open space area. The Town of Babylon Wyandanch Park has a direct connection to this open space and may be utilized as an access point. The challenge will be to address manmade and natural barriers for bicycle and water trails for this important initiative. Additionally, the Town is considering a dedicated bike route along Commonwealth Boulevard that would connect to the Town's Geiger Memorial Park on Grand Boulevard just outside the study area and run along the Carlls River south to Belmont Lake State Park. With these proposed improvements, it is not expected that the proposed project would result in any significant adverse impacts on open space.*