

**Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement**

City of Schenectady

Final Draft Comprehensive Plan  
and  
Zoning Ordinance Revision

Title of Action: Adoption of the Final Draft City of Schenectady Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision

Location: City of Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

Lead Agency: City Council, City of Schenectady  
City Hall  
105 Jay Street  
Schenectady, New York 12305

Contact: Steve Strichman, Zoning Officer  
City of Schenectady, Department of Development

Prepared by: City of Schenectady in consultation with River Street Planning & Development, LLC

Date Accepted: January 14, 2008

Comment Period Deadline: February 21, 2008

## **Table of Contents**

I.	Statement of Regulatory Authority .....	3
II.	Description of the Action .....	3
III.	Description of Setting .....	17
IV.	Consideration of Potential Environmental Impacts .....	2121
V.	Consideration of Alternatives .....	25
VI.	Unavoidable Adverse Impacts .....	26
VII.	Irreversible Commitment .....	26
VIII.	Growth-Inducing Aspects .....	26
IX.	Mitigation Measures .....	26
X.	Impacts on Energy Use .....	26
XI.	Referenced Resources and Plans.....	27

## **I. Statement of Regulatory Authority**

This Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement is prepared pursuant to Article 8 of New York State's Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations: Section 6 Part 617 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR). This Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement is prepared in lieu of a long Environmental Assessment Form for a Type I action as identified in 6 NYCRR Part 617.4.

Due to the nature of the action under consideration and its status as a Type I action, the City Council of the City of Schenectady has elected to prepare a Generic Environmental Impact Statement to address the potential impacts of this action. This action involves the Council's adoption of a Comprehensive Plan and revision of the City's Zoning Ordinance. The Comprehensive Plan consists of a series of actions that the Council, appointed officials, City staff and volunteers will undertake to further the goals identified during this process, which will guide the City to its desired future. The Zoning Ordinance Revision reflects the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and provides an enhanced land management tool for the City.

## **II. Description of the Action**

The action in question is the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan and revision of the Zoning Ordinance and related ordinances for the City of Schenectady.

### Schenectady 2020 Comprehensive Plan

The Schenectady 2020 Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the City's immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, and development. It is designed to reinforce Schenectady as a vibrant urban community. The plan was prepared during a planning process initiated after the City administration and Council recognized that the City's fiscal challenges were forcing choices that should be informed by careful forward-looking planning. The prior City of Schenectady Comprehensive Plan was more than thirty years old, and prepared before the New York State Legislature enacted sweeping changes to the planning and zoning enabling acts in the 1990's.

The new Comprehensive Plan is the product of a three-year planning effort by City staff, elected officials, the Planning Commission, a Steering Committee, community stakeholders and community members. The City held focus group meetings with service agencies, businesses, residents and other stakeholders to gain insights on important issues facing the City. Steering Committee, Planning Commission, and focus group input was supplemented by community meetings including three visioning sessions in the community, more than twenty-two neighborhood workshops, two downtown workshops and a citywide neighborhood planning summit. Additionally, the consultants contacted key stakeholders for additional information on economic development, housing, real estate tax base, natural resources, historic resources, recreation, infrastructure, transportation and community resources. Nine individual Neighborhood Plans were released to the public in July 2006 followed by the final draft Comprehensive Plan (which includes a City-wide Plan, nine Neighborhood Plans and a Downtown Plan) was released to the public in November 2007.

This is the final draft version addressed by the accompanying Generic Environmental Impact Statement. The City has prepared this Draft GEIS pursuant to the New York State Environmental Conservation Law Sections 3-0301(1)(b), 3-301(2)(m), and 8-0113. Adoption of a Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance is a Type I action pursuant to 6 NYCRR 617.4(b)(1).

The Schenectady Vision Plan 2020 consists of a number of documents including a detailed community profile, nine neighborhood plans, a downtown plan and a policy-oriented city-wide plan. The Community Profile describes the City, its residents and its resources; identifies needs; and discusses key issues, opportunities, and challenges impacting future growth in Schenectady. It provides a profile of the City of Schenectady with respect to population, land uses, historic and natural resources, economic development, housing, community resources, real estate tax base, infrastructure and transportation, and recreation, and is designed to serve as a basis for developing community goals, objectives, strategies and policies.

### *Vision and Goals*

Schenectady launched the community planning process in June 2005 with three major public visioning workshops designed to expand citizen awareness of issues and trends facing the City. Hundreds of residents, property owners and business owners attended the meeting to share ideas and ask questions. The community visioning workshops were an opportunity for residents, businesses and stakeholders to imagine the future of the city. At this meeting, the Consultants presented an overview of the comprehensive planning effort and explained the visioning process.

Using feedback from the visioning workshop, along with issues identified at the focus group meetings, the Consultant developed a draft vision statement and goals for the City and Steering Committee to consider. The purpose of a vision statement is to provide direction regarding the community's growth and development, serving as a foundation underlying the development of goals and strategies for implementation. Reflecting the common values of local residents, it expresses the "ideal future" that the community hopes to attain. Residents and leaders of the City of Schenectady have established the following vision statement for Schenectady:

*"Schenectady is a city rich in history and heritage and the very birthplace of American technical innovation. Today, Schenectady remains a culturally diverse, yet contemporary community of proud people who believe a brighter future lies within the strengths of their city's many assets, including beautiful parks, dynamic and architecturally unique neighborhoods, and the Mohawk River. Now, through 2020, Schenectady will actively build upon this foundation of strength to become a highly preferred destination for Capital Region families of all cultures and faiths, who seek quality homes and better schools in safe neighborhoods. They will be joined by businesses both large and small, both cultural and technical, seeking to expand with the benefit of an outstanding and educated workforce and to thrive within a city poised to continue its proud history of American achievement."*

This plan focuses investments in people, laws, technology, educational, financial and physical infrastructure that is essential if the City is to create economic opportunity and accomplish high levels of employment for residents. The plan outlines new ways to stimulate the tax revenues necessary to improve quality of life, provide efficient municipal services, maintain park and recreation resources and revitalize the commercial corridors. It focuses on reestablishing Schenectady's historical reputation as a center for technology by targeting four areas that are the foundation of a prosperous community.

Four vision elements frame the goals and action plan for the next fifteen years:

- Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered
- Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods
- Beautiful, Clean and Green Community
- Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses

Goals and actions were identified for each individual neighborhood as well as for the City of Schenectady. The following goals identified in the Citywide Plan have been established to fulfill the City of Schenectady's vision:

## **CITYWIDE PLAN**

### **Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Provide strong financial stewardship, visionary municipal leadership and proactive municipal services in all areas described below. Services will be provided in a framework of open government that encourages the involvement of residents.*

*Goal Two: Ensure state of the art access to utility service, telecommunications, infrastructure and energy sources.*

*Goal Three: Ensure that excellent transportation amenities are accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and public transit users.*

*Goal Four: Develop, maintain and encourage the development of diverse community programs for all community members.*

*Goal Five: Protect and promote historic resources*

*Goal Six: Enjoy a stable tax base with expanded contributions from commercial and industrial sectors.*

### **Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal One: Encourage universal design and energy efficient practices*

*Goal Two: Establish a demolition program to provide sites for the development of new housing that meets identified gaps in the housing inventory and appeals to a wide array of residents.*

*Goal Three: Create incentives for reinvestment of existing housing stock through rehabilitation of structurally sound units.*

*Goal Four: Offer diverse, high quality homeownership to meet all phases of a family life-cycle including starter houses, family residences, and retirement homes.*

*Goal Five: Promote a sustainable jobs/housing balance and ensure adequate workforce housing for employees of newly recruited companies*

*Goal Six: Encourage the development of an array of senior housing*

*Goal Seven: Promote special needs housing*

*Goal Eight: Encourage downtown housing development*

*Goal Nine: Protect the integrity and long-term viability of residential neighborhoods and strive to reduce the negative effect of disinvestment.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal One: Protect sensitive natural, scenic and environmental areas and permanently preserve open spaces*

*Goal Two: Develop and maintain excellent park and recreation resources, and become a model “healthy community”*

*Goal Three: Employ best practices and creative land use tools to shape development, improve design and aesthetics, preserve historic resources and enhance urban character*

*Goal Four: Become an environmentally responsible community*

*Goal Five: Remediate brownfield sites to the highest appropriate standards and return land to productive use fully protective of human health and the environment*

*Goal Six: Promote beautification program and efforts city-wide*

*Goal Seven: Promote waterfront planning access and redevelopment*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal One: Create work and wealth for local residents by recruiting compatible new companies, supporting business expansion, and creating a thriving retail center.*

**BELLEVUE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused first on residential and investment properties with ongoing monitoring.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make Bellevue a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Transportation & Infrastructure  
Provide reliable infrastructure, traffic circulation system and pedestrian amenities.*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Four: Housing  
Make Bellevue a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Five: Parks, Recreation & Special Projects  
Maintain existing parks and greenspace and add new recreation amenities that appeal to children and young families.*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Six: Commerce & Economic Development  
Make Bellevue's commercial areas successful and attractive, anchored by a fully occupied Broadway and new investment in commercial structures.*

## **CENTRAL STATE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD**

### **Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused on residential issues and investment properties with ongoing monitoring.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make central State Street a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain the traffic circulation system in the central state street neighborhood.*

### **Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Five: Housing  
Make central State Street a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants.*

### **Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Six: Parks and Recreation  
Create new recreation facilities and maintain existing parks and greenspace*

*Goal Seven: Landscaping, Gateways & Streetscaping  
Improve landscaping in the central state neighborhood.*

### **Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Eight: Major Economic Development  
Position Central State Street to capture new economic investment.*

*Goal Nine: Neighborhood Corridors  
Improve neighborhood commercial corridors to ensure that they are fully occupied and vibrant.*

*Goal Ten: Entrepreneurship  
Assist small businesses to grow and create incentives for new entrepreneurial activities.*

## **DOWNTOWN**

### **Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focusing on problem properties and nuisance issues in the downtown*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make downtown a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain the traffic circulation system in the Downtown*

*Goal Five: Historic Preservation  
Protect and enhance the Downtown's historic resources*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Six: Housing  
Create new downtown housing including town homes, condominiums, market and affordable apartments and lofts*

*Goal Seven: Enhance the College Park Neighborhood  
Focus quality of life improvements in the college park residential area bounded by Erie Boulevard, Union Street, Seward place and Nott Street*

*Goal Eight: Enhance East Front Street Neighborhood  
Focus quality of life enhancements in the east front street neighborhood*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Nine: Parks and Recreation  
Create new recreation facilities and maintain existing parks and greenspace*

*Goal Ten: Landscaping, Gateways and Streetscaping  
Ensure that the downtown is visually attractive with well maintained landscaping and street trees*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Eleven: Economic and Business Development  
Advance major economic development initiatives in the downtown to significantly expand the base of companies and jobs*

*Goal Twelve: Downtown Entertainment and Retail  
Continue the successful downtown entertainment and retail strategy*

*Goal Thirteen: Marketing and Management  
Focus on professional downtown management and development of an effective marketing campaign*

*Goal Fourteen: Zoning  
Implement appropriate zoning and standards to maintain an attractive and vibrant retail and commercial district.*

**EASTERN AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused first on residential issues and investment properties with ongoing monitoring.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make eastern avenue a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain the traffic circulation system in the Eastern Avenue neighborhood*

*Goal Five: Historic Preservation  
Protect and enhance the Eastern Avenue neighborhood's historic resources*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Six: Housing  
Make eastern avenue a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants, building upon its excellent elementary school and convenient location.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Seven: Parks and Recreation  
Maintain existing parks and greenspace and add new recreation amenities that appeal to children and young families.*

*Goal Eight: Trees, Landscaping & Streetscaping  
Improve landscaping in the eastern avenue neighborhood.*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Nine: Neighborhood Corridors  
Make eastern avenue's commercial areas successful and attractive, anchored by fully occupied corridors and new investment in commercial structures.*

**HAMILTON HILL AND VALE NEIGHBORHOODS**

**Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused on problem properties and nuisance issues.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make Hamilton Hill and Vale safer*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.*

*Goal Four: Community Services*

*Improve and maintain community services including education, health, libraries and job training.*

*Goal Five: Transportation  
Improve and maintain traffic circulation system*

*Goal Six: Historic Preservation  
Protect and enhance historical resources in Hamilton Hill and Vale.*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Seven: Housing  
Create a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants by increasing homeownership.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Eight: Parks and Recreation  
Create new recreational facilities and maintain existing parks and greenspace as identified on the 2005 Parks and Recreation Rehabilitation Plan.*

*Goal Nine: Landscaping, Gateways and Streetscaping  
Improve streetscapes in Hamilton Hill and Vale.*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Ten: Major Economic Development  
Develop a major economic development project in Hamilton Hill and Vale.*

*Goal Eleven: Neighborhood Corridors and Entrepreneurship  
Make commercial corridors attractive and successful by creating opportunities for new private investment in commercial structures and business development.*

**MONT PLEASANT NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Aggressively implement code enforcement activities.*

*Goal Two: Public safety  
Make Mont Pleasant a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain the traffic circulation system in the neighborhood.*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Five: Housing  
Make Mont Pleasant a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Six: Parks and Recreation and Open Spaces  
Create new recreational facilities and maintain existing parks and greenspace as described on the 2005 Parks and Recreation Rehabilitation Plan.*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Seven: Major Economic Development  
Position Mont Pleasant to capture new economic investment*

*Goal Eight: Neighborhood Corridors  
Coordinate investment in public infrastructure and entrepreneurial support to ensure that neighborhood commercial corridors are vibrant.*

**NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused first on residential issues and investment properties with ongoing monitoring.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make Northside a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain traffic circulation system in the Northside neighborhood.*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Five: Housing  
Make the Northside a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Six: Parks and Recreation  
Maintain existing parks and greenspace and add new recreation amenities that appeal to residents of all ages and abilities as identified on the 2005 Parks and Recreation Rehabilitation Plan.*

*Goal Seven: Landscaping, Gateways & Streetscape  
Improve landscaping and streetscaping in the Northside neighborhood.*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Eight: Major Economic Development  
Position the Northside neighborhood to capture new major economic development projects along technology drive and on the waterfront*

*Goal Nine: Neighborhood Corridors  
Make the Northside's neighborhood corridors successful and attractive, anchored by an improved Van Vranken avenue commercial district.*

## **STOCKADE NEIGHBORHOOD**

### **Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement*

*Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused on nuisance issues.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety*

*Make the stockade a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure*

*Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.*

*Goal Four: Community Services*

*Balance the impact of human service organizations in or adjacent to the Stockade on neighborhood quality of life.*

*Goal Five: Transportation*

*Improve and maintain the traffic circulation system in the Stockade*

*Goal Six: Historic Preservation*

*Protect and enhance the Stockade's historical resources*

### **Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Seven: Housing*

*Provide quality and stable housing in the stockade.*

### **Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Eight: Parks and Recreation*

*Maintain existing parks and greenspace as described in the 2005 Parks and Recreation Rehabilitation Plan.*

### **Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Nine: Neighborhood Corridors*

*Enhance the effectiveness of existing neighborhood corridors by improving circulation, pedestrian amenities and overall livability.*

*Goal Ten: Regional Coordination & Promotion*

*Involve neighborhood organizations and residents in formulating a comprehensive campaign to market and promote the stockade's historic resources.*

*Goal Eleven: Arts/Cultural/Heritage Tourism*

*Focus city and regional heritage tourism planning and promotion on stockade resources.*

## **UNION STREET NEIGHBORHOOD**

### **Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement*

*Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused first on residential issues and investment properties with ongoing monitoring.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make Union Street a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain traffic circulation system in the union street neighborhood.*

*Goal Five: Historic Preservation  
Protect and enhance the union street neighborhood's historic resources*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Six: Housing  
Make Union Street a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants, building upon its stunning architecture, vital commercial district and institutional linkage with union college.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Seven: Parks and Recreation  
Maintain existing parks and greenspace and add new recreation amenities that appeal to children and young families as described in the 2005 Parks and Recreation Rehabilitation Plan.*

*Goal Eight: Trees, Landscaping & Streetscaping  
Improve landscaping in the union street neighborhood*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Nine: Neighborhood Corridors  
Make union street's commercial areas successful and attractive, anchored by fully occupied corridors and new investment in commercial structures.*

**WOODLAWN NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered**

*Goal One: Code Enforcement  
Conduct aggressive code enforcement focused first on residential issues and investment properties with ongoing monitoring.*

*Goal Two: Public Safety  
Make Woodlawn a safer city neighborhood.*

*Goal Three: Infrastructure  
Improve and maintain reliable infrastructure and pedestrian amenities.*

*Goal Four: Transportation  
Improve and maintain traffic circulation system in the Woodlawn neighborhood.*

**Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

*Goal Five: Housing*

*Make Woodlawn a residential neighborhood of choice for current residents, seniors and the disabled, new families and quality tenants, building upon its quiet, safe and convenient location and excellent schools.*

**Vision: Beautiful, Clean and Green Community**

*Goal Six: Parks and Recreation*

*Maintain existing parks and greenspace and add new recreation amenities that appeal to children and young families as described on the 2005 park improvement list.*

*Goal Seven: Trees, Landscaping & Streetscaping*

*Improve landscaping in the Woodlawn neighborhood*

**Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

*Goal Eight: Neighborhood Corridors*

*Make Woodlawn’s commercial areas successful and attractive, anchored by fully occupied corridors and new investment in commercial structures.*

These goals guided the comprehensive planning process and allowed for the development of the initiatives and projects outlined in the Action Plan.

*Action Plan*

The action plan component of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide City leaders and other stakeholders, both current and future, with guidance regarding the kind of place residents would like Schenectady to be in the future, a set of goals for achieving that future vision, and a set of implementation strategies that will facilitate the accomplishment of each goal.

The action plan focuses and consolidates the inventory of initiatives that the City of Schenectady will pursue. This element will build on the vision and goals that were developed as part of the planning process. The Action Plan will guide decision-making by concisely focusing resources on shared goals, objectives, and implementation strategies.

This Draft GEIS assumes that all actions in the Action Plan will be implemented as described. This GEIS examines the potential impacts of the actions individually and collectively.

Zoning Ordinance Revision

The revisions to Chapter 264, Zoning Ordinance of the Code of the City of Schenectady –which includes repealing Chapter 223 Signs, revising the text, and incorporating it into chapter 264 -- will be the most comprehensive update of the City’s Zoning since 1984. The Zoning Ordinance Revision will reflect the goals and objectives of the Schenectady 2020 Comprehensive Plan and make modifications that modernize and simplify the existing code and provide new standards for commercial and multi-family building design, landscaping and buffering, signage and lighting. The revised Zoning Ordinance improves clarity for residents, City Staff and the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals and streamlines the permitting and Site Plan review process for applicants.

The revised zoning ordinance meets the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan as it:

- encourages the stabilization of neighborhoods by down-zoning some neighborhoods to prevent the unnecessary conversion of single family structures into two and multi-family units;
- protects and improves neighborhood character by providing new site and design and landscaping standards for infill commercial and multi-family development and major expansions to improve the quality of design in mixed-use districts and corridors where many residences have been partially or fully converted to commercial uses;
- improves landscaping and streetscaping for pedestrians by providing new landscaping and buffering standards for all new infill development and changes in tenancy; and
- creates economic development opportunities by maintaining commercial corridors, improving the zoning in the City’s downtown to promote the flexible use of available land and creating a waterfront mixed-use district designed to encourage a mixture of commercial and residential uses on the City’s Mohawk River waterfront which is currently underutilized.

The changes to the Chapter 264, Zoning and Chapter 223, Signs are summarized below:

#### Changes to Use Districts §264-(6-21)

- Residential
  - Down-zoned large areas
  - Organized the historic districts
  - More flexibility with townhouses – but design oriented
  - No unfinished wood in front or side of house – no grandfathering
  - Maximums for impervious surfaces
- Removed suburban style districts – GP (industrial park) and the OCBD overlay for larger scale buildings in downtown which is no longer necessary under the new zoning for downtown.
- Created a downtown Mixed-Use District
  - Less auto oriented
  - Density oriented
    - No lot coverage maximums, or use minimums
    - Smaller lot sizes allowed
    - Height minimums
    - Maximum height increased
- Created waterfront district
  - Mixed use, walkable, live/work/shop community
  - Preserve public areas
- Neighborhood Commercial District
  - Located in all the commercial corridors adjacent to residential districts
  - Footprint maximums
  - Density and transit bonuses
  - Assembly allowed on appropriate scale
- Business District – Woodlawn and Route 7
  - Assembly allowed on appropriate scale
  - More lenient sign requirements
- Industrial Districts – many downtown locations become “Downtown“
- Institutional – Colleges and Hospitals
  - Creates appropriate lot and building standards for these uses which were previously covered by multiple-family housing standards
- Planned Residential and New Planned Mixed Use District

Parking §264-(39-48) provide adequate parking, with requiring mass paving

- On-street parking is now a consideration for meeting parking standards
- Public parking is now a consideration for meeting parking standards
- Creates maximum parking space requirements
- More shared parking opportunities

#### Design Standards §264-49

- Gives Planning Commission authority for building elements and location
- Universal for commercial districts, but Downtown and Union Street design guidelines prevail
- Covers materials, parking location, window, blank walls, EIFS use, dumpsters

#### Buffering and Landscaping §264-50

- Gives Planning commission authority to require landscaping and buffering for all commercial uses in commercial districts.
- Creates more pedestrian oriented streetscapes, more aesthetic appeal, buffers pedestrians and other uses from parking lots.

#### Lighting Standards §264-51

- Gives Planning Commission authority to require lighting standards throughout the City which will set uniform standards to prevent glare, noxious spill-over and improved lighting design.

#### Signs §264-59 (Chapter 223 to be repealed)

- Planning Commission, not Council approves electronic boards
- Taller and larger signs allowed in Woodlawn and Route 7 as they are auto-oriented corridors.
- Murals require special use permit
- Free-standing non-conforming signs must come into compliance by 12/1/2010.

#### Non-conforming uses §264-83

- May be enlarged by 10% - once
- Residential “As-built” resumption allowed without special use permit, unless previously converted into compliance.

#### Special Use Permits

- To be approved by the Planning Commission instead of Board of Zoning Appeals which will streamline permitting process as it relates to Site Plan Review

#### Site Plan §264-89

- Change in tenancy policies - An exemption procedure created for sites that may not need to be re-reviewed.

#### Home Occupations §264-104

- Performance based – no longer a list of allowed uses

## Satellite Dishes

- No longer permitted in front yard, or side yard of corner lot

## Town Houses – §264-111

- Allowed in R-2 and R-3
- Garage restrictions
- Design differentiation

### **III. Description of Setting**

#### *Location*

The City of Schenectady is located in the Capital Region of New York State in the eastern part of Schenectady County.

#### *Demographics*

In 2000, the City of Schenectady had a population of 61,821, a decrease of 5.7% since 1990. The median age of City residents was 34.8 years. Adjusted for inflation, median household income decreased 10.1% from 1989 to 1999 and median family income decreased 10.8%. Census figures indicate that approximately 66.9% of households in the City in 2000 were considered low and moderate income households (i.e., households with income less than 80 percent of the Albany-Schenectady-Troy MSA median) as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Further, 45.8% of households in the City are very low income, earning 50% or less of the Albany Schenectady-Troy MSA median family income.

#### *Economy*

With the exception of General Electric, the largest employers located in the City of Schenectady are government agencies and health care and education sector employers. Approximately 18.8% of City residents were employed in the health care and social services industries in 2000 followed by retail trade (13.4%), educational services (9.6%) and public administration (9.0%). After adjusting for inflation, median incomes in the City decreased between 1990 and 2000. The median household income declined 10.1%, while the median family income decreased 10.8%. More than two-thirds of City residents are low and moderate income. Incomes have not kept pace with inflation. More residents are living below the poverty line than ever before. Retail trends for the City of Schenectady over the last three Economic Census in 1992, 1997 and 2002 show a decline in all metrics including number of retail establishments, total sales, sales per store and number employed.

#### *Land Use Characteristics*

The City of Schenectady includes 10.8 square miles (approximately 6,912 acres) of land area according to US Census data. For 2004 the City of Schenectady maintained assessment data on 20,505 parcels. Based on the GIS shape file provided by the County of Schenectady, these parcels contain approximately 5,644

acres, indicating that 1,268± acres is dedicated to roads and right of ways, or about 18% of the City's land.

Approximately 42% of the city's remaining land area is dedicated to residential uses including single and multi family homes, with an additional 4% used for commercial apartment buildings. Community service properties account for 14% of the acreage, with recreation properties occupying 12%, and commercial properties 11%. Not unlike other older upstate New York cities, only 6% of the City's land area is classified as vacant meaning that almost any opportunity to expand the tax base will result from redevelopment.

### *Housing*

The City of Schenectady has 30,272 housing units according to the 2000 Census. Of the total units counted in the Census, 26,265 were occupied. Owners occupy 44.7% of the occupied housing and renters occupy 55.3%. The vacancy rate of for-sale housing in the City in 2000 was 4.6% and the vacancy rate for rental housing was 9.3%.

Over one-half of all housing units in the City were built prior to 1940. There are approximately 2,828 subsidized housing units in the City. The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority manages 1,015 public housing units and 1,289 Section 8 units and maintains long waiting lists for housing. Three of the City housing providers (Habitat for Humanity, Better Neighborhoods Inc. and the Community Land Trust) are concentrating on building homes in coordinated target areas in Hamilton Hill to maximize impact. The key issues identified by housing providers include the lack of affordable housing, impact of high property taxes, homebuyer credit issues, and code enforcement. The key issues identified by residents is the need for increased code enforcement, as well as the absence of any low-maintenance, quality housing that is attractive to seniors, and young families.

### *Infrastructure and Transportation*

The City of Schenectady's public water system serves the entire community and portions of the surrounding towns of Rotterdam and Niskayuna. The City's water system has adequate supply capacity and a well-maintained distribution system.

The City's sanitary sewer system covers virtually the entire city with the exception of a few residential homes that utilize individual septic systems at the outer edges of the Woodlawn neighborhood. The age of the equipment at the City's sewage treatment plant is something that will need to be addressed in coming years, particularly to support expanded commercial and industrial activity. Age is also a more immediate problem for the City's sewer collection system. Older pipes in the collection system require frequent repair. Similar to older systems in other communities around the country, stormwater infiltration and inflow remains a significant issue for the City. The City of Schenectady is currently developing a strategy for remedying its sewer system problems.

Niagara Mohawk, a National Grid Company, provides natural gas service and electric power distribution throughout the City of Schenectady.

The City of Schenectady is well served by a network of Interstate highways, state highways, and local streets. The City owns and maintains approximately 180 miles of roads. The City's road system appears to be adequate to support continued residential, commercial, and industrial development and redevelopment without significant changes or expansions to the network. Instead the primary need is ongoing maintenance, and in some cases design modifications to enhance safety and quality of life.

CDTA is currently undertaking a comprehensive look at their route structure and performance in an effort called the Transit Development Plan (TDP) and anticipates holding Schenectady-specific outreach and workshops in the spring of 2006. Several transportation projects in the City are on the region's Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for 2005-2010 including the redesign and reconstruction of Erie Boulevard which is scheduled to begin in 2006 with construction completed by 2008.

### *Natural Resources*

Portions of the Mohawk Riverfront and the ravine used as a rail bed separating the Bellevue and Mont Pleasant Neighborhoods are within the 100-Year Floodway. The Lisha Kill and adjacent land in the Woodlawn Preserve are designated a Class I freshwater wetland. That area of Woodlawn is also in a 500-Year Floodway. Flooding in the Woodlawn neighborhood has always been and continues to be a problem.

The Mohawk River is a vital link in the transportation and recreation waterways of the northeast and forms the City's northwest boundary. It is currently more recreation-oriented than transportation- or cargo-oriented.

The Woodlawn Preserve is an undeveloped, rare natural community and wetlands with a unique ecosystem that is home to several rare species.

The City of Schenectady has relatively flat and gently sloping terrain with the exception of four ravines radiating back from the Mohawk River. These ravines remain undeveloped or are used as transportation corridors. They are located in the northwestern corner of the City, the Conrail railroad bed, Vale Cemetery and the I-890 corridor. Steep slopes also exist along Broadway, Veeder Avenue and Nott Terrace.

### *Historic Resources*

National and State Register-listed historic resources in the City of Schenectady include three historic districts (the Stockade Historic District and the Union Street Historic District, and the General Electric Realty Plot) and 14 individually-listed buildings. In addition to the buildings and historic districts listed on the National and State Register, the City of Schenectady has 5 locally designated historic districts (the Stockade Historic District and the Union Street Historic District, the General Electric Realty Plot, Morris Avenue, and Union Triangle).

Several areas with the potential to become historic districts have been identified by members of the Schenectady Heritage Foundation and the City's Historic District Commission. These areas may benefit from designation as a local historic district or neighborhood conservation districts, to stabilize neighborhoods, enhance property values, and attract additional investment and rehabilitation. Opportunity areas include:

- Jay Street Historic District – This district was recently proposed as a local historic district to the City of Schenectady. It encompasses the first three blocks of Jay Street including City Hall and the Post Office.
- Union Street Corridor Historic District – This proposed designation will expand the District east of the existing District.
- Bradley Boulevard Historic District
- Wright Avenue Historic District
- Central Park Historic District
- State Street Historic District – State Street from W. Gateway Bridge to Erie Boulevard.

### *Recreation*

The City of Schenectady Parks Department manages park and recreational areas within the City, as well as numerous open spaces (such as memorial sites and vacant land) that can be used for passive recreation. Active parks comprise 500.76 acres and passive parks account for 198.41 acres. The Woodlawn Preserve, located in the Woodlawn neighborhood is the largest passive park at 135.0 acres. The second largest passive park is Vale Park and Cemetery, located in between the Eastern Avenue and Vale neighborhoods. Five parks are memorial sites, one park is a passive area, and one park is vacant land.

There are 21 active parks in the City. The largest active park is Central Park, which straddles the Central State Street, Woodlawn, and Union Street neighborhoods. Central Park encompasses 172 acres and has a wide range of recreational facilities including a swimming pool, picnic pavilion, music stage, ball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, open space, jogging paths, ponds, and a rose garden. The second largest active park is the Schenectady Municipal Golf Course. It is located southeast of Central Park on Oregon Avenue and encompasses 166 acres. Approximately 35,000 rounds of golf are played each year.

### *Government*

The City of Schenectady has a mayor/council form of government where officers serve four-year terms. The City Council is responsible for passing legislations, adopting the budget, auditing the performance of the government and adoption of resolutions and policy positions. The Mayor is responsible for hiring of department heads and administration of the budget. The City's Planning Commission consists of nine members, the Board of Zoning Appeals has seven members, and the Historic District Commission consists of seven members, all of which are appointed by the Mayor and City Council.

### *Public Safety*

The Schenectady Police Department currently employs approximately 160 sworn officers and 75 civilians making it the seventh largest police department in New York State. Serving under the Commissioner of Public Safety, the command staff of the Schenectady Police Department consists of a Chief of Police and three Assistant Chiefs. The Department includes three bureaus, the Field Services Bureau, Administrative Services Bureau and Investigative Services Bureau. Each bureau is commanded by an Assistant Chief. The Department also has many specialty divisions where members go through intense specialty training while retaining these positions. Some of these positions are Special Operations, Vice Squad, Forensics, K-9, Youth Aid, Counter-terrorism, Sniper Sharp-shooter, Hostage Negotiator, D.A.R.E., Motorcycle Patrol, and a Bike Patrol.

The Schenectady Fire Department employs 119 full-time fire-fighters. They serve the community from four stations, located in Woodlawn/Central State Street, Mont Pleasant, Downtown and the Northside. Serving under the Commissioner of Public Safety, the command staff of the Schenectady Fire Department consists of a Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, and three Deputy Chiefs that head up a HazMat Bureau, an emergency Medical Bureau, and a Training Bureau.

### *Schools*

The Schenectady City School District, which operates independently from the municipality, served nearly 10,000 residents during the 2006-2007 school year. Approximately 47.6% of the students were eligible for the free lunch program. The dropout rate during the 2003-2004 school year was 5.8%.

The City School District operates eleven elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school. They also operate a Career Center, an Adult Education Center, and in 2007 opened a new early childhood

education center. Plans are underway to add an additional school in the former St. Luke's Elementary School in 2008.

The Roman Catholic Diocese operates an elementary school, and a combined middle school/high school. A Charter School located just across the municipal boundary in Rotterdam also serves city residents. Two colleges serve the City: Union College and Schenectady County Community College.

#### **IV. Consideration of Potential Environmental Impacts**

In general, the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision offer a wide range of recommendations and strategies for redevelopment and new development to enhance quality of life, community character and environmental quality in the City of Schenectady.

##### *Land*

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the City protect sensitive natural, scenic and environmental areas by maintaining zoning and other resource protection measures to protect critical environmental resources and by developing a management plan to protect Woodlawn Preserve.

The Zoning Ordinance Revision proposes that many residential areas be down-zoned to better reflect the City's actual built environment as the current lot standards are rather suburban and to reflect the themes that emerged from the Comprehensive Plan.

Other areas, such as the waterfront, have been down-zoned from heavy industrial to mixed-use commercial and residential which is reflective of a change in economy and a desire to use important waterfront lands in a manner that will reconnect the City to the waterfront. The Woodlawn Preserve and other parklands have been down-zoned from residential to open space which will facilitate better protection of these environmentally sensitive lands.

The City's Downtown is currently zoned for general commercial with fairly suburban lot standards. A new Mixed Use Downtown District was created which allows for fewer general commercial uses and instead encourages a mix of retail, commercial, arts and culture and residential uses with new lot standards reflective of a dense urban environment.

The only areas of the City that were zoned to allow for more intense uses than are allowed now are lands on which the City's hospitals and colleges are located. Some of these lands are currently zoned for "multi-family" and have been rezoned "institutional." However, the existing multi-family district (C) allowed for many of the uses typically found in and around colleges and hospitals so the "up-zoning" is minimal but the development standards are more in keeping with the needs of hospitals and college campuses than the multi-family district provide.

The revised zoning institutes many new development standards designed to protect the environment and community character including a provision requiring a minimum amount of greenspace on each lot city-wide (maximum percentages of impervious surfaces), and design, landscaping and buffering standards for commercial development and multi-family in commercial and mixed use districts, townhouse design standards and lighting standards city-wide.

##### *Water*

The Mohawk River is a vital link in the transportation and recreation waterways of the northeast and forms the City's northwest boundary. It is currently recreation-oriented with very little transportation or cargo uses. During the Visioning Workshops held as part of the Comprehensive Plan, the Mohawk River was identified as a critical resource and waterfront development was identified as a high priority for Schenectady. The Citywide Plan recommends identifying major mixed use redevelopment sites including the waterfront for potential residential development and expanding waterfront park amenities. Specifically, Goal Seven of the Citywide Plan calls for promoting waterfront planning access and redevelopment through ensuring mixed use development (promoting the waterfront for entertainment, recreation, cultural and commercial purposes); expanding public access to the waterfront (including creating opportunities for recreational boating); pursuing redevelopment at the ALCO waterfront properties (for new housing types not available currently in Schenectady); and protecting waterfront resources and views (as well as encouraging public access to the water).

The Citywide Plan also proposes supporting arts/culture/heritage tourism development on the Mohawk River.

The Downtown Neighborhood Plan recommends implementing the Schenectady-Scotia Waterfront Plan. This plan recommends linkages from the East Front Street neighborhood to adjacent commercial corridors, parks, historic areas and neighborhoods, and improved connections across the river from the bicycle and blueway trails. This plan also provides boat access for large and small craft, waterfront improvements, multi-use trails, overlooks, parks, and restaurants and recommends locations for residential, commercial and retail development. Streetscape improvements including lighting, sidewalks and intersection realignments are also included. Interpretative and way-finding signage, kiosks and a visitor welcome center will be important as are basics such as comfort facilities and parking.

The Downtown Plan also recommends creating amenities to attract Erie Canal boaters, tour bikers, local public and visitors including berthing, boat access, boater services and crew facilities; creating linkages to adjacent commercial corridors, parks, historic areas and neighborhoods, and improving connections across the river from bicycle and blueway trails; creating a waterfront bike trail with connections to other activity centers and trail segments along Erie Boulevard and the waterfront; developing new recreational facilities, including perhaps a pocket park, as part of waterfront development and through greenway linkages to other parks and recreation amenities; implementing the Schenectady Urban Bike Route Master Plan to create an alternative trail route through the City that would pass alongside the Mohawk River behind Nott Street Industrial Park, to Riverside Park in the Stockade; developing four loop systems tied into the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, designated as the Scotia/Glenville Loop, the Downtown/Stockade loop, the Park Loop and the Outer Park Loop; and adopting a waterfront overlay district.

The Stockade Plan proposes improvements to Riverside Park which would include conducting a shoreline stabilization study to reduce erosion from floods and waves from boats; evaluating the feasibility of installing docks to encourage boating and access to the neighborhood from the River; and cleaning up the vegetation along the river twice a year.

The Northside Plan recommends making improvements to the bike path that would include connecting the bike path to the waterfront from Technology Park Drive to Freemans Bridge, and beyond through ALCO to the Stockade.

The Zoning Ordinance Revision will better protect the City's Mohawk Riverfront. The new zoning follows the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan by down-zoning the Mohawk Riverfront presently zoned "Heavy Industrial" and the East Front Street Neighborhood presently zoned a mix of "light-industrial," "Business" and "Multi-Family" to a new Mixed-use Waterfront District. The purpose

of this district is to provide unique opportunities for the mixed-use development and maintenance of water-oriented uses adjacent to the Mohawk River. The new waterfront district permits recreational, open space, business and residential uses which will generally benefit from and enhance the unique aesthetic recreational and environmental qualities of these waterfront areas.

#### *Air*

The Comprehensive Plan and Revised Zoning Ordinance are not expected to have an impact on air quality.

#### *Plants and Animals*

The Comprehensive Plan is not expected to have an impact on plants and animals. The revised Zoning Ordinance will better protect plants and animals where lands previously zoned residential have been rezoned open space and recreation.

#### *Agricultural Land Resources*

The City of Schenectady does not have any agricultural land resources.

#### *Aesthetic Resources*

The Citywide Plan recommends promoting beautification program and efforts citywide including such projects as installing neighborhood banners, implementing gateway improvements, maintaining trees and landscaping, and improving lighting in parks and neighborhoods. The Plan also proposes to create an incentive program for small businesses to make aesthetic improvements to their buildings.

The Plan also calls for the development of design standards for new commercial development (which were proposed as additions to the revised Zoning Ordinance.)

The Zoning Ordinance Revision includes many new standards for development, infill development and changes in tenancy designed to protect the City's urban character, historic resources and general aesthetic appeal. Design standards for infill development and large expansions have been established to improve building design and protect urban character. Landscaping and buffering standards have been proposed in all commercial districts to improve aesthetic appeal, create better pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and buffer pedestrians and other uses from large spans of parking. Lighting standards have been proposed that will reduce glare city-wide by providing uniform standards and improve the design of lighting by disallowing certain unattractive designs.

#### *Historic and Archeological Resources*

The Citywide Plan proposes to utilize a range of tools to protect historic resources.

The City of Schenectady already has three local historic districts and some additional areas of the city zoned with a "Historic District Overlay" to protect important historic resources. These districts are overseen by the City's established Historic Commission. The new zoning maintains and enhances these districts and the role of the Historic Commission by improving the lot development standards in the City's historic neighborhoods to ensure that any infill development maintains the existing historic character.

#### *Open Space and Recreation Resources*

The Citywide Plan proposes to protect open spaces and the Woodlawn Preserve as well as developing and maintaining park and recreation resources. However, the Woodlawn Neighborhood Plan does recommend “allow(ing) context sensitive residential design with strict development standards on the golf course maintenance facility land on Oregon Avenue bounded by Route 7, Golf Road and Oregon Avenue.” By reusing this site for housing, some open space will likely be used for housing.

The Zoning Ordinance Revision further protects the City’s open space and recreation resources by rezoning some areas of the City from a residential zoning designation to open space and recreation including some City parklands and the Woodlawn Preserve. The Zoning Ordinance Revision does not rezone the golf course maintenance facility property mentioned above as a potential new site for housing. Rather, it remains zoned “recreation and open space” as it is anticipated that any such residential development would be a Planned Development District which will require a rezoning with strict criteria for development.

#### *Critical Environmental Areas*

There are no Critical Environmental Areas in the City of Schenectady.

#### *Transportation*

The Citywide Plan recommends the implementation of the State Street/Route 5 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Study as well as Transit Oriented Development incentives and standards. The plan targets the City’s Hamilton Hill and Vale neighborhoods and seeks to encourage a safe, walkable neighborhood with excellent community resources and a dense and vibrant urban neighborhood. The key focus of the plan is to encourage suitable density and mix of uses to support transit and build on the significant investment in Bus Rapid Transit along the corridor between Albany and Schenectady – one of the busiest transit corridors in the region.

The Central State Neighborhood Plan recommends implementation of the Central State Street (Neighborhood Land Use & Transportation) Study, which examined potential opportunities to extend transportation improvements into a portion of the Central State Street Neighborhood. The Study proposes projects that will reduce speed, improve pedestrian safety and sight distance, improve Bradley Boulevard and make improvements to the intersection of Bradley Boulevard and Elm Street.

The Downtown Plan recommends the creation of an intermodal transportation station with bus rapid transit, train and parking facilities.

Additionally the Citywide Plan recommends the creation of a multi-modal community with well-maintained roadways, manageable traffic and beautiful streetscapes through such tasks as creating attractive gateways, encouraging traffic calming plans, development of off-street parking, sidewalk and curb improvement, among others projects that would improve overall livability of the city and its neighborhoods.

The Zoning Ordinance revision is not anticipated to create any scenarios where an increase in vehicular traffic is expected that would take place over the existing zoning ordinance if certain types of businesses were to locate in the City. It is possible that the new Waterfront Mixed Use District will create more traffic than the heavy industrial uses and vacant lands currently generate. However, that district is intended to be a walkable, transit-oriented district where auto dependency and surface parking lots are discouraged.

### *Energy*

The Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision are not expected to have a negative impact on energy consumption. The Plan calls for the newly created Energy Advisory Board to identify a comprehensive strategy to protect the environment, reduce energy consumption, and produce savings.

### *Solid Waste Management*

The Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision are not expected to have an impact on solid waste or its management.

### *Noise and Odor*

The Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision are not expected to have an impact on noise or odor except that reducing the area where heavy industry is allowed in the City may reduce the amount of noise and odor in the City.

### *Public Health*

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision will have no direct impact on Public Health. However, the encouragement of more energy efficient design, additional recreation opportunities, increased pedestrian amenities and better zoning control of heavy industry, the amount of allowed impervious surface and the amount of auto-oriented amenities such as parking lots should only improve public health.

## **V. Consideration of Alternatives**

The alternatives considered include no action, modification of the proposed Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision, and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision.

### *No Action*

This option would result in the continuation of several undesirable trends in the City of Schenectady. These include the continued destabilization of the City's neighborhoods and residential quality of life, continued erosion of the City's economic vitality, continued destruction of the City's urban character, further erosion of the City's tax base and ability to attract new residents, and continued Zoning Ordinance deficiencies and inefficiencies which have led to ineffective oversight of land use activities and development in the City. There may be short-term financial benefit to no action in that the City might avoid costs associated with more staffing and new infrastructure and services to improve quality of life in Schenectady, however, over the long term these activities will strengthen the City and improve opportunities for its residents and businesses.

### *Modification of Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision*

This action would involve either the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision each with modifications OR it may mean the adoption one without modification and one with modification. While goals and objectives of the proposed Plan could be modified thereby creating or eliminating impacts, the proposed policies and actions represent the best course of action for the City of Schenectady. Modifications to the Zoning Ordinance Revision may also create or eliminate environmental impacts depending on the nature of the modifications.

## **VI. Unavoidable Adverse Impacts**

There are no unavoidable adverse impacts associated with the Comprehensive Plan or the Zoning Ordinance Revision.

## **VII. Irreversible Commitment**

The Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision focus on reinvestment in the existing built environment with some controlled new development intended to improve the economy and housing choices for residents. The Zoning Ordinance Revision further protects the City's open space and recreation resources by rezoning some areas of the City from a residential zoning designation to open space and recreation including some City parklands and the Woodlawn Preserve. It does not rezone any open space or recreation land for development purposes.

However, the Comprehensive Plan's Woodlawn Neighborhood Plan does recommend "allow(ing) context sensitive residential design with strict development standards on the golf course maintenance facility land on Oregon Avenue bounded by Route 7, Golf Road and Oregon Avenue." By reusing this site for housing, some open space could be used for the development of housing. The Zoning Ordinance Revision does not rezone the golf course maintenance facility property mentioned above as a potential new site for housing. Rather, it remains zoned "recreation and open space" as it is anticipated that any such residential development would be a Planned Development District which will require a rezoning with strict criteria for development.

## **VIII. Growth-Inducing Aspects**

Implementation of the policies set in the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision may result in attracting new residential, commercial and light industrial redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites in areas of the City zoned for such uses. However, the City generally maintained or down-zoned commercially or industrially zoned lands in the City. In fact, many areas of the City, including residential areas, have been down-zoned to less intense uses.

## **IX. Mitigation Measures**

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision will not generate adverse impacts and the need for mitigation measures. Further, the goals and objectives proposed in the Comprehensive Plan are not designed to generate adverse impact that would require mitigation measures.

## **X. Impacts on Energy Use**

The implementation of the policies and projects set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision are not anticipated to result in a significant effect on energy resources although it is hoped that policies of the plan and zoning changes will result in transit-oriented design, better use of transit and energy efficient building design. The Comprehensive Plan encourages growth in the City, but the level and type of growth should not significantly impact energy resources.

## **XI. Referenced Resources and Plans**

### Plans

*Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, City of Schenectady (2006)*

*Canal Square Corridor Redevelopment Plan (2002)*

*Central Park Master Plan*

*Central State Street Neighborhood Land Use & Transportation Study*

*Continuum of Care, City of Schenectady*

*Downtown Master Plan (1999)*

*Downtown Schenectady Improvement Program Design Guidelines*

*HUD Consolidated Plan*

*New York State Open Space Plan*

*Parks & Recreation Rehab Plan (2005)*

*Rose Garden Master Plan (2005)*

*State Street/Route 5 Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Study*

*Steinmetz Park Master Plan*

*The Schenectady-Scotia Waterfront Plan*

*Urban Bike Route Master Plan*

*Upper Union Street Design Guidelines*

*Vale Village Plan (1999)*

### Ordinances and Local Laws

*Code of the City of Schenectady, Chapter 223, Signs*

*Code of the City of Schenectay, Chapter 264, Zoning*

*Chapter 264, Article VII Historic Districts*