

SECTION I

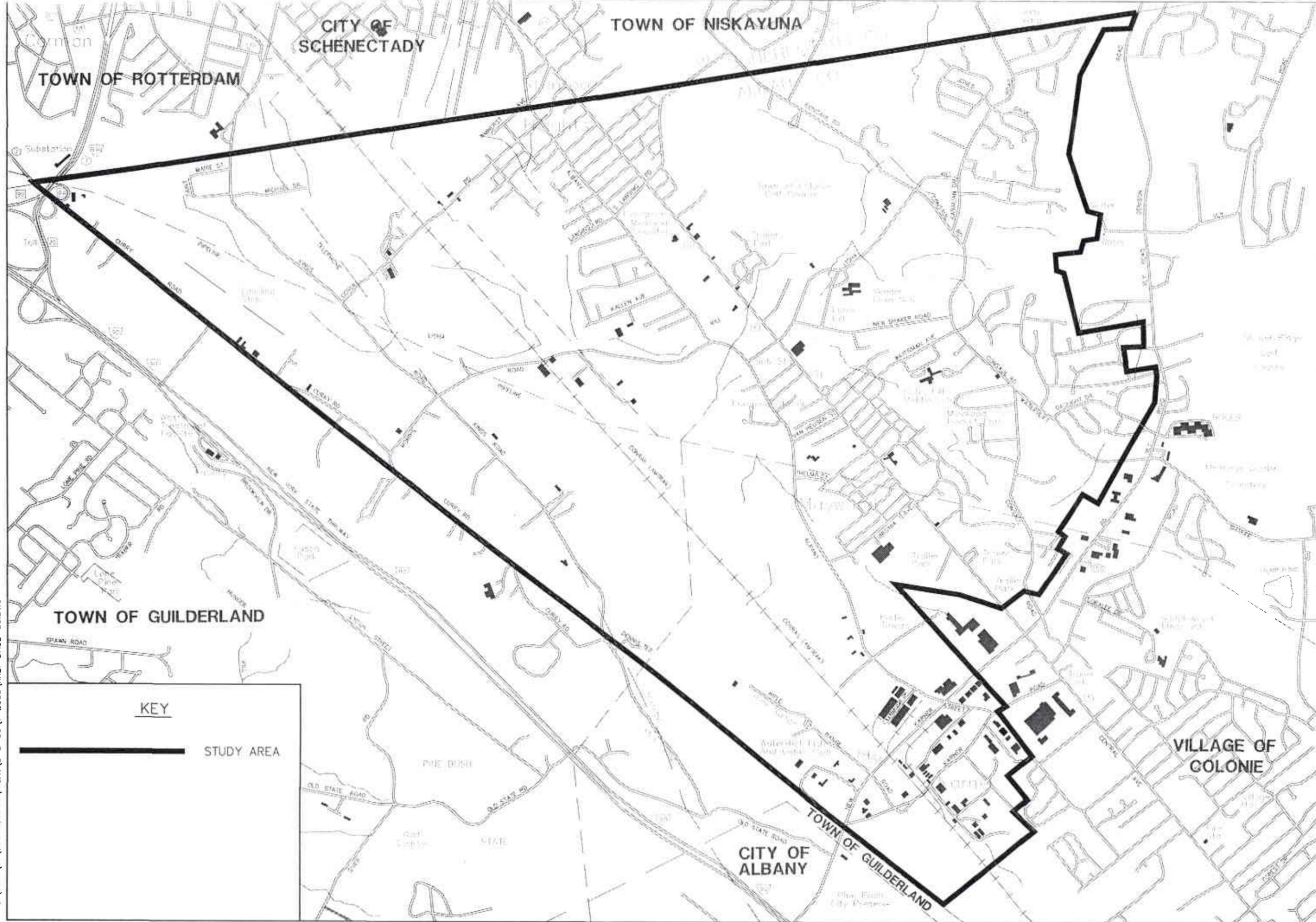
PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND NEED

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process, the Town of Colonie has initiated this Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) to evaluate socioeconomic and physical environmental impacts anticipated within the Lisha Kill-Kings Road Area (hereinafter referred to as the "Study Area"). Current development proposals and projected development over the course of a 20-year planning period, which will end in 2015, will form the basis of the evaluation. Appropriate mitigation measures to minimize any identifiable impacts, as well as potential costs for mitigation, will also be examined.

The Study Area, encompassing 5,800 acres, is located in the westernmost portion of the Town of Colonie. The area is bounded by the City of Schenectady, Town of Niskayuna and Town of Rotterdam municipal boundaries to the north, the Town of Guilderland Town line to the south, and the Village of Colonie and Airport Area GEIS Study Area to the east (refer to Figure I-A-1).

Existing land use in the Study Area is a mixture of commercial, agricultural, residential, and industrial development. North of Central Avenue, the Study area is typified by residential uses, with medium-density residential being the most common. Along Central Avenue, commercial and retail-based land uses are common, with residential development scattered throughout. South of Central Avenue to the Conrail Rail lines, the Study Area transitions from residential development to industrial and commercial land uses. From the rail road tracks south to the Guilderland Municipal boundary, the Study Area is largely undeveloped, with scattered industrial and commercial uses intermixed among sparse residential development. Commercial and industrial development, however, is common along New Karner Road.



C:\3371\proj\CHMA\anno\R.J.T. 11-11-96\11-11-96\XRc\03E-Summary



CHA CLOUGH, HARBOUR & ASSOCIATES LLP
ENGINEERS, SURVEYORS, PLANNERS & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
 111 WINNERS CIRCLE - ALBANY, NEW YORK 12205
 FIGURE NO. 1-A-1 SCALE: 1" = 2000'

STUDY AREA LOCATION MAP

**LISHA KILL - KINGS ROAD AREA
 GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

B. PROJECT NEED

A large portion of the land within the Study Area is undeveloped, containing protected Pine Bush habitat and wetland areas. Furthermore, the limited municipal utility infrastructure and road network within undeveloped portions of the Study Area limits development potential. Therefore, due to the industrial, commercial, and residential development projected for the Study Area, the Town of Colonie has authorized the preparation of this DGEIS to evaluate development related impacts, and ensure that growth proceeds in a manner sensitive to environmental and socioeconomic resources.

A critical component of impact evaluation is development of a future growth scenario which can serve as a basis for the analysis. Unfortunately, past development trends do not provide a clear picture of future growth in the Study Area.

Currently, the Town of Colonie Planning Board has 17 individual projects in various stages of review. These projects could result in the development of approximately 400 new single and multi-family residences and 350,000 sq. ft. of commercial and industrial space. Proposed projects only paint a partial picture of the growth the area could be subject to in the future.

Apart from the area along and north of Central Avenue (the Maywood/Stanford Heights area), the Study Area remains largely undeveloped. The only other areas where development is concentrated is along New Karner Road and various sections of Albany Street.

The area north of Central Avenue is currently, and will continue to be, an attractive area for new residential development because of its well developed

infrastructure and proximity to business and commercial areas. Commercial development along Central Avenue will occur as the remaining undeveloped lots are developed. Future residential and commercial development in these areas is expected to occur at a rate comparable to the past, assuming economic conditions within the Capital District are maintained.

However, for the undeveloped areas along Albany Street, south to the Guilderland town line and west of New Karner Road, past development, as well as that currently proposed, provide only a partial profile of growth that could occur in the area. According to the Town of Colonie Engineering and Planning Services Department, the area is not currently under significant development pressure but could be in the near future. Since this area contains significant tracts of undeveloped industrially zoned land, determining an accurate future growth scenario for the area is an important part of impact analysis.

There are many uncertainties when attempting to predict growth in areas that are currently undeveloped. Many factors, known and unknown, could subject the area to increased development pressure. Although development within the area has been slowed due to a lack of infrastructure (i.e., municipal sewer and water) found in other areas of the Town, the rate of growth could increase. As the Town of Colonie continues to develop, and the remaining parcels that can connect to the Town's water and sewer systems are developed, the area could be subject to greater development pressure.

The Study Area's proximity and easy access to the New York State Thruway could, in

the future, attract industrial land uses that are made up of, in whole or in part, warehouse and distribution facilities.

Therefore, taking these factors into consideration, a growth scenario should predict a relatively higher growth rate than previously experienced by the Study Area. Making this assumption assures future development related impacts are fully identified and evaluated. If growth is estimated too low, environmental and socioeconomic impacts may be missed or underestimated.

For example, if growth along Curry Road proceeded at a faster pace than projected, traffic congestion at critical intersections could result. Since adequate mitigation measures had not been identified, a subsequent study of the road would be necessary to determine what improvements are needed. Furthermore, adequate funding mechanisms may not be in place as the Town was never aware that future improvements to Curry Road would be needed. This is but one example of the problems that could occur if the growth scenario is estimated too low. Similar problems could also occur with any of the environmental or socioeconomic conditions discussed in the proceeding sections.

Planning for a higher than previously experienced growth rate provides a basis for accommodating industrial development in the Town of Colonie. The Town of Colonie's 1988 Land Use Management Advisory Council's Technical Report (LUMAC) considers new industrial development an important part of the future of the Town of Colonie. In this regard, LUMAC makes the following recommendation:

"...industrial development should be encouraged at appropriate locations so as to provide job opportunities and a balanced tax base consistent with the capacity of the Town to attract and support such uses."

The most appropriate means to encourage industrial growth consistent with LUMAC, is to plan for it. Proper planning means evaluating impacts associated with new land uses, identifying appropriate mitigation measures, and developing funding mechanisms to pay for mitigation measures.

Development of a future growth scenario was based in part on an evaluation of the maximum buildout potential of the Study Area. That is, the amount of development that could occur if all *developable* land in the Study Area was developed. Developable land was considered land free of environmental restrictions such as wetlands and protected Pine Bush Habitat.

After consideration of the environmental and socioeconomic impacts related to full buildout (discussed in more detail in Section III), environmental limitations, capacity of the existing infrastructure, past land use trends, zoning, and the LUMAC recommendations, it was concluded that the Town of Colonie could reasonably expect development of approximately 660 new residential units, 750,000 gross square feet (gsf) of commercial space, and 3,000,000 gsf of industrial space; hereinafter referred to as the Projected Growth Development Scenario. This development scenario will serve as the basis for impact analysis for the following sections of the DGEIS.

The examination of alternatives and mitigation strategies included herein, will establish a basis for future site specific

reviews within the Study Area. It will enable the Town of Colonie to provide sound environmental planning on an area wide basis, while limiting the extent of review necessary for individual future actions that are consistent with the Statement of Findings. The findings resulting from the SEQR process will allow the Town of

Colonie Planning Board and reviewing agencies to assess the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of development and estimate the scope of capital improvements and other mitigation measures necessary to accommodate and plan for future growth.