

SECTION III ALTERNATIVES

A. INTRODUCTION

This DGEIS provides the Town of Colonie with a comprehensive environmental analysis of cumulative growth impacts and potential mitigation measures for the Study Area. This information will assist the Town of Colonie in determining the most environmentally sound and economically responsible steps to manage growth in the Study Area over the course of the twenty year planning period.

To date, the Town of Colonie has not determined an acceptable level of development for the Study Area, or which of the recommended mitigation measures would be required to manage future growth. This determination would be included in the Findings Statement, as required by SEQR.

B. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

Development related impacts within the Study Area, as discussed under the Projected Growth Development Scenario, presented in

Section II, represents only one of a litany of possible alternative scenarios which could result by the end of the 20-year planning period. Other development scenarios that were evaluated include the Full Buildout Scenario, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) Growth Scenario and the No Growth Scenario.

The Full Buildout Scenario, which assumed a high growth rate in the Study Area, evaluated impacts expected if all *developable* land was developed. The CDRPC Growth Scenario evaluated impact related to a slow growth scenario developed from CDRPC land use and population information. The No Growth Scenario considered the impacts anticipated if there was no further development within the Study Area.

The last alternative, and one required by SEQR, is the No Action Alternative. The evaluation of this alternative provides a basis for comparing the environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could occur if the Town of Colonie did not proceed with the preparation of this DGEIS.

Full Buildout Scenario

Under the Full Buildout Scenario, a hypothetical scenario was developed which assumed that all developable land within the Study Area was developed in the 20-year planning period. Developable land was identified in the same manner as for the Projected Growth Scenario. Land inhabited by NYSDEC regulated freshwater wetlands, potential federally regulated wetlands, and protected Pine Bush Habitat was considered undevelopable.

While it is not absolutely certain that land inhabited with state or federal wetlands or Pine Bush Habitat would never be developed, the presumption is, that the land for the most part would remain undeveloped because of environmental regulations and/or land owner concerns.

Under this development scenario, it is estimated approximately 1,300 new housing units and 7.5 million square feet of commercial and industrial space could be developed in the Study Area (Table III-B-1).

Obviously, with the drastic increase of development over that discussed under the Projected Growth Development Scenario, there is a corresponding increase in the significance of environmental and socioeconomic impacts. The additional

1,300 new housing units projected for the study area would result in an increase in the present population by approximately 4,290, people for a total of 15,300 by the year 2015. This population increase would include an additional 925 school age children.

Projected future land use under the Full Buildout Scenario could have a significant impact on existing land use in the study area, primarily regarding conflicts with Albany Pine Bush Commission preservation goals. By the simple fact that full buildout in the Study Area would result in more industrial, commercial, and residential development than the Projected Growth Development Scenario, there would be greater impact on the physical environment and on municipal services.

Since development density would increase, there would be a corresponding increase in land use conflicts. Incompatible uses such as residential vs. industrial development could be located closer to each other, requiring substantial mitigation. By the end of the 20-year planning period, substantially more open areas would be displaced by new buildings, roads, and parking lots. Consequently, there would be a greater increase in the amount of native vegetation removed and the wildlife supplanted.

Table III-B-1
Lisha Kill - Kings Road Area GEIS
Full Build out Scenario

Land Use	Potential Units/Gross Square Footage
Residential	1,300 units
Commercial	1,500,000 sq. ft.
Industrial	6,000,000 sq. ft.

The amount of impervious surface would double over that projected under the Projected Growth Development Scenario. The resulting increase in the amount of runoff would require additional funding to pay for the substantial drainage improvements required in and outside the Study Area. Average daily water demand would increase from the nearly 2,000,000 gallons per day (gpd) expected under the Projected Growth Development Scenario to approximately 4,000,000 gpd. A similar increase would result for wastewater.

Impacts to the transportation network would increase substantially. While the majority of the Study Area could accommodate full buildout, with minimal improvements, the area south of the Conrail rail line would be significantly impacted (Figure III-B-1).

North of Central Avenue, significant impacts would be restricted to the section of Consaul Road between Lisha Kill Road and Watervliet-Shaker Road. In this area, because of the significant capacity restraints attributable to the expected traffic volumes, it would probably be necessary to widen Consaul Road and provide new turning lanes at the Lisha Kill/Consaul Road intersection. Although minor capacity restraints would also occur along Watervliet-Shaker from Consaul Road to Vly Road intersection, these constraints would not require the need for substantial improvements.

Significant impacts to Albany Street, under the Full Buildout Scenario, would occur primarily at the Cordell Road, Morris Road, Lisha Kill Road and New Karner Road intersections. To mitigate the reduction in Level of Service (LOS) at these intersections, it would be necessary to construct new thru lanes and double turn lanes. Between Cavanaugh Drive and New

Karner Road it would be necessary to widen Albany Street.

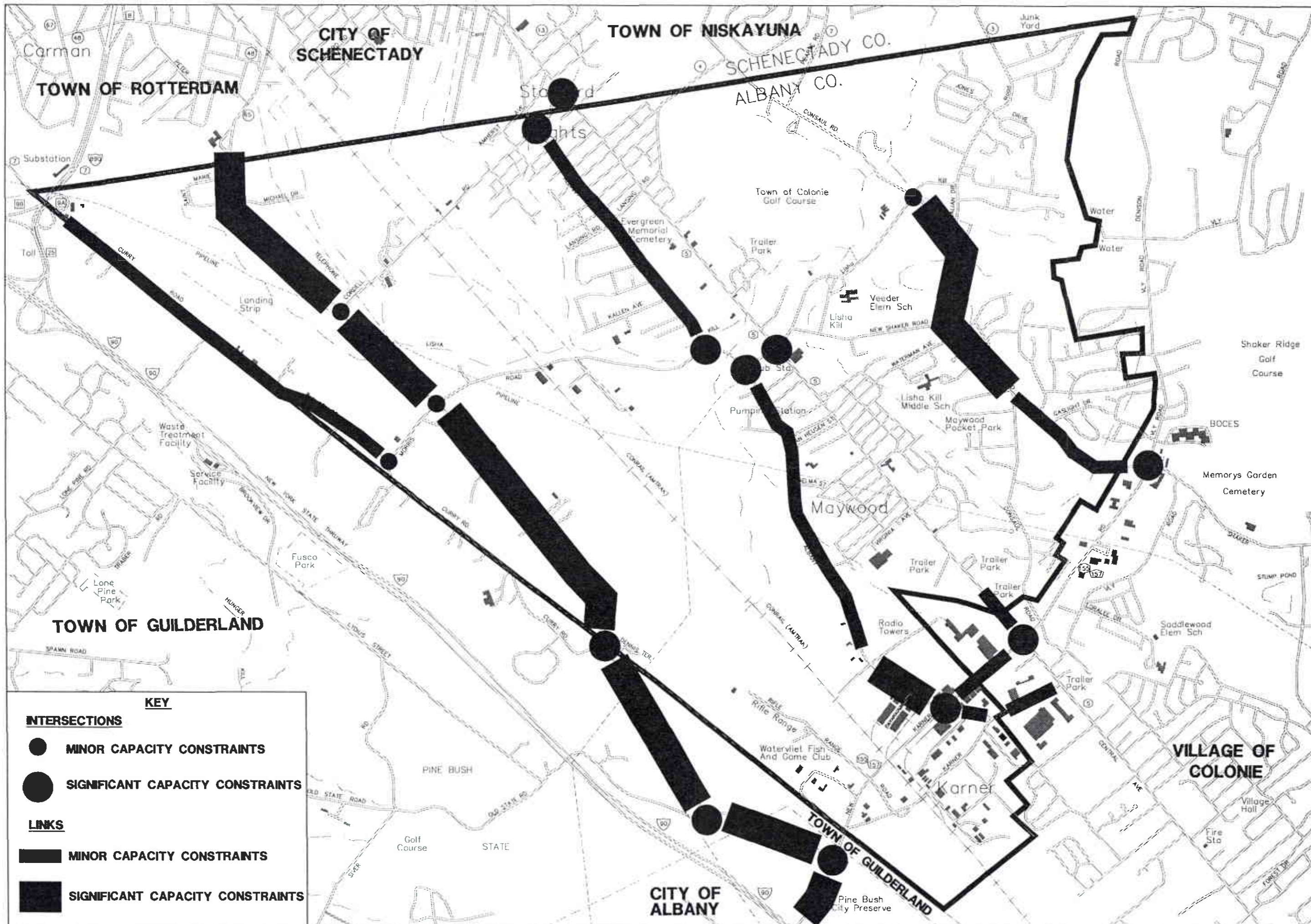
Along Kings Road, substantial improvements would be required to accommodate the Full Buildout Scenario. In addition to the signal, thru lanes, and turning lane improvements required at the Cordell Road, Morris Road, Curry Road, Old State Road and New Karner Road intersections, significant improvements to Kings Road would be required. Additional lanes and improvements in horizontal and vertical geometry would be required.

Significant impacts would also occur along New Karner Road. Major improvements to both New Karner Road and its major intersections would be required.

Many of these improvements would require property acquisition, because work would be required outside the existing right-of-way. Taking this into consideration, along with construction costs, there could be a substantial increase in mitigation costs required for the Study Area. The improvements would also result in impacts to wetlands and Pine Bush habitat.

The Full Buildout Scenario would also increase impacts to historical and archaeological resources, municipal services, visual resources and open space. The increase in both the amount and density of development would have adverse impacts on all of these resources.

Because of the substantial increase in environmental and socioeconomic impacts, full build out of the Study Area over the next 20 years is neither desirable or realistic. Based on recent trends, the pace of development that would be required to achieve full buildout in the next 20 years is



**2015 CAPACITY CONDITIONS
FULL BUILD-OUT SCENARIO
LISHA KILL - KINGS ROAD AREA
GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**



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ENGINEERS, SURVEYORS, PLANNERS & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
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111 WINNERS CIRCLE - ALBANY, NEW YORK 12205

FIGURE NO. III-B-1 SCALE: 1" = 2000'

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KEY

INTERSECTIONS

- MINOR CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS
- SIGNIFICANT CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

LINKS

- MINOR CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS
- SIGNIFICANT CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

not expected. Furthermore, based on the capacity of municipal infrastructure, it is unlikely the Town of Colonie could provide the municipal services to adequately serve this scale of development. For these reasons the Full Buildout Scenario was dismissed as the preferred development alternative.

CDRPC Growth Scenario

Among other responsibilities, the CDRPC periodically develops population and employment data for Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga Counties. The data can be useful for a variety of land use planning and economic development applications.

According to data developed by the CDRPC, they estimate, by the year 2015, the population within the Study Area could increase to 12,268; an increase of 12% over the course of the planning period. Furthermore, the CDRPC estimates that approximately 971 new jobs could occur within the Study Area.

Table III-B-2 equates these figures to a corresponding number of new residential units and amount of commercial and industrial square footage that would occur over the course of the planning period. In

comparison to both the Projected Growth Development Scenario and the Full Buildout Scenario, the CDRPC Growth Scenario would result in less impact to both environmental and socioeconomic conditions within the Study Area. Less new construction would result in less impact to vegetation, wildlife, and wetlands. Impacts to surface water, groundwater, and drainage would also be reduced.

The transportation network and municipal services would require fewer upgrades and improvements to accommodate the additional growth. Since more of the Study Area would remain as open space, in comparison to the other growth scenarios, impacts to historical, archaeological, and visual resources would be less. The problem with the CDRPC Growth Scenario is that it is designed for the purposes of regional planning and, therefore, is less detailed in the analysis of local conditions. For example, the CDRPC estimates of population employment data do not take into consideration conditions such as zoning, recommended land use plans, proximity to major highways and other development, buildable area, capacity of the existing infrastructure and other environmental considerations.

**Table III-B-2
 Lisha Kill - Kings Road Area GEIS
 CDRPC Growth Scenario**

Land Use	Potential Units/Gross Square Footage
Residential	850 units
Commercial/Industrial	475,000 sq. ft.

Furthermore, the CDRPC Growth Scenario does not take into consideration recent trends in development within the Study Area. Based on development projected for the Study Area, the slow growth the area was subject to in the past may not be an indicator of future growth. All of these conditions were considered in developing the Projected Growth Development Scenario. It was for these reasons, the CDRPC Growth Scenario was determined to be inappropriate for assessing the environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with growth in the Study Area.

No Growth Scenario

The No Growth Scenario would involve eliminating growth in the Study Area for the 20-year planning period, either through economic and/or regulatory means.

The likelihood of naturally occurring economic cycles restricting growth in the Study Area for the next twenty years is extremely remote. Even in the slowest of economic times, new development occurs. Therefore, this is not a realistic means to achieve the No Growth Alternative. Alternatively, restricting growth by regulatory changes at the Town level would require several extreme measures.

Achieving the No Growth Scenario through regulatory means would require significant changes in the Town of Colonie's Zoning Ordinance. Besides being in contradiction to LUMAC, the changes in zoning would have several far reaching implications.

The significant restriction of new development within the Study Area would prevent many of the environmental and socioeconomic impacts discussed in Section II. Demographic and land use trends would remain virtually unchanged and impacts to

geology, vegetation, wildlife, groundwater and surface water would be negligible.

Since there would be no increase in industrial, commercial, or residential uses, the existing infrastructure would not need to be improved. Existing utilities and transportation systems would continue to provide adequate service.

Furthermore, air quality would likely improve and noise impacts would be reduced as new technology became available through the introduction of quieter, cleaner and more fuel efficient engines. Available land for recreation and open space would not be affected, and historic and archaeological sites, as well as scenic views, would not be disturbed.

However, while existing environmental and socioeconomic resources within the Study Area would remain unaffected, the No Growth Alternative would have an adverse impact on local and regional economies.

The value of land within the Study Area is a direct function of surrounding land uses, zoning, accessibility to other areas, and a land owner's best and highest use for the land. By restricting further development of land within the Study Area, an owner would be denied the right to build, or make improvements to the property. Under New York State Law, the taking of property through government action requires that the governmental entity fairly compensate the property owner when a property cannot be developed or is needed for a public use.

While the ultimate decision would lie with the courts, it is probable that the no growth alternative would be perceived as a taking of property since a moratorium on development could not be justified by a deficiency in community services or infrastructure. Such

action could have severe economic impacts on the Town of Colonie.

If the Town of Colonie was forced to compensate land owners within the Study Area for the loss of development rights, the remaining property owners within these municipalities would have to pay these costs through higher property taxes. Based on a conservative estimated acquisition cost of \$10,000 for each acre of developable land, the acquisition cost of 1,300 acres, would exceed \$13,000,000.

The loss of development rights would translate into a reduction in Town of Colonie tax base. Consequently, taxes would need to be raised to offset the anticipated revenue formerly generated by the properties within the Study Area. This decreased tax base would also adversely affect revenues currently raised by local school districts.

Therefore, while the No Growth Alternative would minimize the level of impact on environmental conditions, impacts to socioeconomic conditions, specifically the current property tax structure of the Town of Colonie, could be significantly impacted. For these reasons, the no growth alternative was considered to be unrealistic, economically unsound and was, therefore, dismissed.

No Action Alternative

This alternative would result in no plan for future development in the Study Area, other than the land use recommendations provided in the LUMAC Technical Report and regulations provided in the Zoning Ordinance.

The amount of development over the next 20 years would depend on market conditions and the current availability of municipal services. This has several adverse

implications. Without cost estimates and funding mechanisms for certain mitigation measures proposed in Section II of this DGEIS, some improvements associated with new development would continue to be funded on a project-by-project basis. Development in the near future would use the available road, sewer, and water capacity, leaving the cost of future improvements to the Town and the projects to follow. These costs may be high enough to preclude further development, resulting in adverse impacts to the Town's fiscal and economic goals.

In addition, the design recommendations and SEQR thresholds identified under the Projected Growth Development Scenario serve to reduce the time and money spent on reviewing projects by guiding the design and location of new development to avoid significant land use conflicts and other environmental impacts. Without these guidelines, a full SEQR process would be required for most individual actions, the development and land use issues would probably be more complicated, and there would be a greater potential for significant impact on important community resources.

Finally, a plan for future growth also reduces the potential for cumulative impacts through identification of important community resources and utility capacity. The design recommendations and SEQR thresholds presented in this DGEIS are provided to protect the community's resources and permit controlled development.

For these reasons, the No Action Alternative was considered environmentally and economically unsound, and was therefore dismissed.

Projected Growth Development Scenario

The Projected Growth Development Scenario was selected as the preferred development alternative because it not only provides a basis for long term planning in the Study Area but takes into consideration the goals of the Town of Colonie.

LUMAC recommends that the Town of Colonie encourage industrial development where appropriate to improve the tax base and provide new job opportunities. Because the Study Area encompasses large tracts of

industrial zoned land, the preferred development scenario must take this recommendation into consideration.

The Projected Growth Development Scenario is the only alternative that takes into consideration both the goals and objectives of the Town of Colonie and the most recent trends in development within the Study Area. For these reasons, it was selected as the preferred development scenario.