

Town of Ithaca, New York

# **Comprehensive Plan**

Scoping Document | 13 May 2013

## Scoping Document for the Town of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan

Town of Ithaca, New York

Lead agency:

Town of Ithaca | Town Board

215 North Tioga Street

Ithaca, New York 14850

Preparer:

Town of Ithaca | Planning Department

215 North Tioga Street

Ithaca, New York 14850

Contact: Dan Tasman, Senior Planner (607-273-1747 | [dtasman@town.ithaca.ny.us](mailto:dtasman@town.ithaca.ny.us))

19 March 2013

## INTRODUCTION

The Town of Ithaca, New York is preparing a new comprehensive plan as an update to the current (1993) plan. The new plan will provide a policy guide for the future development of the Town. In accordance with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) will be prepared for the Comprehensive Plan. According to the State Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617, Section 617.8), the lead agency may choose to conduct scoping to focus on potentially significant adverse impacts and to eliminate consideration of those impacts that are irrelevant or not significant.

The lead agency for the Town of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan, the Town Board, has chosen to conduct scoping for the project. This document is the scope for the GEIS.

The scoping document sets forth the analyses and methodologies used in the preparation of the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS).

## PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed Comprehensive Plan is the product of a five year planning effort. The first draft of the Comprehensive Plan was released to the public in June 2012.

The Comprehensive Plan will guide the physical development of the Town of Ithaca over the next 10 to 20 years. The Plan includes analyses of existing conditions and past and future trends. It describes a vision for the physical, environmental, social, and economic characteristics of the Town, and provides recommendations to make that vision a reality.

Goals and recommendations of the Plan address 11 policy areas:

- Land use and development
- Housing and neighborhoods
- Natural resources and environment
- Energy and climate protection
- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Historical resources
- Transportation
- Municipal services and infrastructure
- Community services
- Economic development

After it is adopted, the Comprehensive Plan will serve as the basis for policies and regulations regarding development and conservation. The Comprehensive Plan will inform and guide Town staff, boards, and elected officials on actions and decisions about land use, housing, transportation, the natural environment, and economic development.

## **DGEIS CONTENT**

The DGEIS will include the following.

### **COVER SHEET**

The cover sheet will include:

- Title of the proposed action.
- Lead agency name (Town of Ithaca Town Board) and action location.
- Contact information.
- Names of those that prepared any portion of the DGEIS.
- Date of the completion acceptance of the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) by the Town Board.
- Date of the SEQRA public hearing.
- Date by which written comments will be accepted by the lead agency.

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

The DGEIS will be written to follow the format and content sequence of this scoping document.

#### **1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

This section will provide a description of the Town's environmental setting, describe changes proposed in the proposed Comprehensive Plan, and detail its goals and recommendations.

#### **2 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

This chapter will evaluate the proposed Comprehensive Plan for each of the subject areas below, including an analysis of existing conditions, likely impacts without the proposed action (future baseline conditions), potential impacts of the proposed action, and any necessary mitigation measures that are applicable to minimize their effect. Where applicable, quantitative projections will be to the year 2030.

##### **2.1 Development pattern, zoning and public policy**

This section will describe the existing development pattern; physical, social and legal constraints that now shape development in the Town, and current land use policy and regulation. Recent development trends will be discussed, including the type of new development occurring in the town. Potential impacts associated with the proposed Comprehensive Plan will be evaluated and compared to future baseline conditions.

##### **2.2 Community character**

This section will include a general description of the defining attributes of the Town of Ithaca, in terms of the built and physical/natural environment. It will examine the potential impacts of the proposed Comprehensive Plan on community character and scenic quality.

## **2.3 Transportation**

This section will examine existing traffic patterns and volumes in the Town based on recently completed studies and counts, and describe physical and operating characteristics, including geographical/topographical conditions. It will provide estimates for potential traffic generation rates under existing zoning and for concept scenarios of future zoning in those areas of the Town anticipated for increased residential densities and commercial development, projected to the year 2030. It will also examine the impacts of policies related to pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation facilities; Complete Streets; and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND).

## **2.4 Housing**

This section will include a general description of current housing conditions in the Town, including form, location, cost, and trends. It will evaluate the potential impact of the proposed Comprehensive Plan on housing in the Town of Ithaca, and the general environmental impact from policies related to housing.

## **2.5 Community facilities**

This section will include a description of the Town's current community facilities. It will assess changes in demand for public safety services, social services, and educational facilities that may result from development associated with the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

## **2.6 Parks and recreation**

This section will identify parkland, public open space areas, and other recreational resources, and review requirements for dedicated open space in current land use regulations. It will evaluate the potential impact of Plan implementation on parks and recreational resources. It will also assess changes in demand for parks and recreational resources that may result from development enabled by the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

## **2.7 Utility infrastructure**

This section will evaluate the current conditions of the Town's water supply and sewer infrastructure. It will assess the potential impact of the Comprehensive Plan on utility infrastructure and capacity.

## **2.8 Agriculture**

This section will describe agricultural activities and lands in the Town. It will consider the impacts of development enabled by the proposed Comprehensive Plan on agricultural operations and lands. It will also assess the general impact of policies that promote agriculture, agritourism, and local food production; and recommendations regarding rural residential uses and density in agricultural areas.

## **2.9 Natural resources**

This section will describe existing conditions in general, and assess how recommendations of the proposed Comprehensive Plan will impact natural resources in the Town. Analysis will include a broad assessment of the potential impact on any sensitive features from development enabled by the proposed Comprehensive Plan, including geology, soils and topography, and vegetation and wildlife. It will also examine the Town's water resources, and the impact of policies and recommendations of the proposed Comprehensive Plan on stormwater management, surface water, and groundwater resources.

## **2.10 Economy**

This section will include a general description of the Town's economic base. It will include an assessment of the potential economic impact of policies and recommendations of the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

## **3 OTHER IMPACTS**

### **3.1 Unavoidable adverse environmental impacts**

This section will describe any potential adverse impacts that cannot be avoided as a result of adoption of proposed Comprehensive Plan.

### **3.2 Irretrievable commitment of resources**

This section will describe how development enabled by the proposed Comprehensive Plan may cause a loss of environmental resources, in the immediate future and in the long term, addressing generic components.

### **3.3 Growth inducing aspects**

This section will describe any potential the proposed Comprehensive Plan may have for triggering further development in terms of attracting similar, additional, or ancillary uses, significant increases in local population, increasing the demand for support facilities, and increasing townwide development potential.

### **3.4 Energy use and conservation**

This section will describe the general effects and aspects of the proposed Comprehensive Plan concerning use and conservation of energy resources by the Town and community at large.

## **4 ALTERNATIVES**

This section will describe the following alternatives to the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

- A no action alternative, assuming a continuation of existing development trends without changes to the Town's current development regulations or planning policies.

- Conceptual approaches including quantitative alternatives that would adjust the amount of growth and change, locational alternatives that would redirect growth from one location to another, and qualitative alternatives that would alter the form, pattern, and quality of development.
- Keeping the 1993 Comprehensive Plan, and amending it to reflect demographic, physical, environmental, and societal changes that have taken place since its adoption; address new issues; and incorporate contemporary best planning practice.
- Adopting a new Comprehensive Plan of a more limited scope, which would exclude one or more of the policy areas described above.

## **APPENDIX**

The appendix will include SEQRA documentation (FEAF, positive declaration, this DGEIS scope, and applicable resolutions), references, and other supporting material.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

Potential mitigation measures will be identified during DGEIS preparation for adverse impacts that would result from the proposed Comprehensive Plan or from any of the alternatives.

General areas where adverse effects might occur and mitigation could be required include agricultural land, aesthetic resources, drainage, transportation, natural resources, cultural and historical resources, community character, open space, and land use.

## **ISSUES THAT ARE NOT RELEVANT OR SIGNIFICANT**

[Placeholder for the final scope, which must list those prominent issues that were raised during scoping and determined to not be relevant or environmentally significant, or that have been adequately addressed in a previous environmental review.]