

State Environmental Quality Review
Findings Statement

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act - SEQR) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Rockland County Legislature as the Lead or an Involved Agency makes the following findings.

Name of Action: Rockland County Comprehensive Plan

Description of Action:

The Proposed Action is the adoption of the Rockland County Comprehensive Plan by the Rockland County Legislature. The Comprehensive Plan is a blueprint for the County's future that will provide guidance for future municipal planning and zoning actions and serves as a basis for County government planning and development issues for the next 10-20 years.

Location:

Rockland County, New York

Agency Jurisdiction:

Rockland County Legislature

Date Final Environmental Impact Statement Filed:

January 18, 2011

Facts and Conclusions Relied on to Support the Decision:

1. HISTORY AND COMPLIANCE WITH SEQR REQUIREMENTS

Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act) of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law requires that comprehensive plans follow a State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) process before they are adopted. A Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) was prepared to evaluate the impacts of the adoption of the Rockland County Comprehensive Plan by the Rockland County Legislature. This findings statement represents the conclusion of the SEQR process, which is summarized below:

- Lead Agency

On April 20, 2010, the Rockland County Legislature declared itself the Lead Agency for the Comprehensive Plan SEQR process and determined that a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be produced. The Legislature determined that the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan is a Type 1 Action and issued a Determination of Significance – Positive Declaration for the Rockland County Comprehensive Plan. Prior to determination, an Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) was prepared, filed, and provided to the other Involved Agency, the Office of the Rockland County Executive.

- Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS)

The DGEIS for the Proposed Action, prepared by the Rockland County Legislature with the assistance of its consultants, was accepted by the Legislature on November 16, 2010.

(continued on next page)

- **Public Hearing**
The public comment period on the DGEIS opened on November 23, 2010 and extended through December 31, 2010. During this period, public hearings on the DGEIS and the Draft Rockland County Comprehensive Plan were held on December 20, 2010. One letter containing written comments on the DGEIS was received from the public during the comment period, and referenced in the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement.
- **Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS)**
The FGEIS was accepted by the Legislature on February 15, 2011, and a Notice of Completion filed. The FGEIS and Notice of Completion were circulated and filed with involved and interested agencies on February 16, 2011. Copies were also made available to the public at the offices of the Rockland County Legislature, located at the Allison-Parris County Office Building, 11 New Hempstead Road, New City, NY 10956, and on the project website: www.rccompplan.com.

2. DECISIONS MADE AND RATIONALE FOR AGENCY'S DECISION

The Legislature concludes that the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan conforms to the certifications required by 6 NYCCR Part 617.11(d)(5). After discussion with its consulting professionals and taking into account the comments received during the public review process, the Legislature believes that no significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan, which has been prepared to guide future development within Rockland County in accordance with sound land use and environmental management practices.

As discussed in the DGEIS, if implemented, some of the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations may have fiscal impacts that, in and of themselves, do not constitute environmental impacts for purposes of SEQR. The long-term benefits of these proposed recommendations outweigh the funding costs, which have been mitigated as stated in the FGEIS.

The Rockland County Legislature is under no legal obligation to approve the proposed Comprehensive Plan, and the No-Action Alternative represents the option of not taking this action. Without the Comprehensive Plan, Rockland County would continue to face the numerous issues confronting it, including land use, traffic, housing, services, socioeconomics, and environmental and open space resource issues, but without the benefit of a comprehensive and up-to-date set of policies and actions to help guide these issues. The proposed Comprehensive Plan's goals to reinforce centers, maintain commercial and industrial corridors and clusters, and promote conservation and smart growth policies, are intended to benefit the public interest more than the No-Action Alternative. Furthermore, none of the recommendations proposed in the Comprehensive Plan will directly lead to beneficial or adverse impacts until private development or public action occurs. All future actions (i.e. zoning, land use policies, development, etc.) within Rockland County are subject to future review under SEQR, and will be administered by the appropriate approving agency (county, town, or village).

3. FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS RELIED UPON TO SUPPORT THE ADOPTION OF THE ROCKLAND COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Rockland County Legislature finds, upon due consideration of the DGEIS and FGEIS, as well as information derived from the public review process, that the proposed adoption of the Rockland County Comprehensive Plan will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment for the following reasons (organized by DGEIS chapter):

A. Demographics

The Comprehensive Plan indicates that there will be continuing population growth in the county, with significant shifts in the age structure of its population. Recent population trends have shown increases in the number and proportion of youths and seniors. These anticipated changes have ramifications for social service delivery, physical and economic development, housing needs, transportation and infrastructure demand, and education needs in Rockland County. It is suggested in the Comprehensive Plan that land uses will have to address the needs of senior citizens and youthful householders, as well as the demands that result from growth.

The Comprehensive Plan policies and actions are designed to protect the county's natural resources and enhance the quality of the environment, while providing for the required services and infrastructure that is necessary to support its population.

B. Land Use and Zoning

The Comprehensive Plan includes land use policies and actions that aim to conserve open space, protect environmentally sensitive areas, promote conservation (cluster) subdivision design, reinforce existing County centers, foster and maintain well-designed business and industrial corridors, encourage smart growth planning, and preserve existing neighborhood character.

The Comprehensive Plan policies and actions are designed to protect the county's natural environment and environmental quality by concentrating limited growth and development within existing centers, which will help to protect against out-of-scale development in other parts of Rockland County. As a result, a positive impact on environmental resources is anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

C. Transportation

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to promote integrated multi-modal transportation infrastructure, enhance mobility and accessibility for Rockland County residents and workers, reduce dependence on the automobile, encourage pedestrian activity, and promote and enhance safety for motorists and pedestrians.

The Comprehensive Plan policies and actions are designed to reduce auto congestion by increasing the accessibility and attractiveness of public transportation, and enhancing the operations of the existing road system. These policies are intended to benefit Rockland County by reducing the impacts of vehicular traffic and carbon emissions. As a result, a positive impact on environmental resources is anticipated.

D. Natural Resources

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to preserve and protect land and water resources and reduce air pollution by encouraging energy efficiency and promoting an approach to sustainability in the areas of site development, water savings, materials selection, and human and environmental health. The Plan stresses the need to address water supply in the near future by both conservation efforts and the development of new sources of water. These policies are intended to benefit Rockland County by protecting the county's natural resources and enhancing the quality of the environment. As a result, a positive impact on environmental resources is anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

E. Open Space and Recreation

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to preserve existing open space, improve parks, expand open space in high-density areas, provide recreational resources serving the diverse needs of the county population, and ensure physical and visual access to the Hudson River. As a result, a positive impact on open space and recreation resources is anticipated.

F. Historic and Cultural Resources

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to preserve and protect farmland and historic and cultural resources, while expanding these resources whenever practicable. Comprehensive Plan recommendations and policies help to address current and potential future gaps in historic resource identification and cultural programs and initiatives. As a result, a positive impact on historic and cultural resources is anticipated.

G. Housing

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to expand housing opportunities for the county's diverse population, promote high-quality residential communities, and provide sufficient and affordable housing stock for the aging and young adult population, caregiver work force, and emergency-service volunteers.

Housing policies and actions aim to conserve open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas by promoting conservation (cluster) subdivision design and reinforcing existing County centers in an effort to reduce suburban sprawl, while adequately responding to the housing needs of its growing population. As a result, impacts on environmental resources will be reduced.

H. Economic Development

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to foster opportunities for the growth of businesses in the county, ensure a broad range of employment opportunities for its residents, maintain a strong tax base for the county, communities and taxing jurisdictions, and protect the county's diminishing stock of developable commercial land from rezoning that eliminates economic development opportunities. As a result, a positive impact on the county's economy is anticipated.

I. Infrastructure

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to promote water conservation, energy efficiency and recycling and waste reduction, encourage the use of renewable resources, and address current and projected infrastructure needs within the county.

The Comprehensive Plan policies and actions are designed to address potential infrastructure issues and energy and water supply shortfalls in order to adequately serve Rockland County's population. At the same time, the Plan aims to employ green development and infrastructure practices and conservation measures. As a result, impacts on environmental resources will be reduced.

J. Public Services

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies and actions that aim to ensure that educational and community facilities and services adequately and equitably serve Rockland County's current and projected population, particularly for the county's growing senior and youth populations. As a result, a positive impact on the county's public services is anticipated.

4. MITIGATION MEASURES

One of the adverse impacts identified in the DGEIS and FGEIS is the fiscal impact of several Comprehensive Plan recommendations upon the County taxpayer. If implemented, some of the Plan's recommendations may have minor fiscal impacts to cover a specific community feature, program, service, or infrastructure improvement. However, the long-term benefits of these recommendations outweigh the initial funding costs. These impacts have now been mitigated by editing the Comprehensive Plan to eliminate or revise the following recommendations:

- **Summit Park Hospital and Nursing Care Facility:** Based on the current economic conditions, this recommendation has been dropped. Rockland County intends to provide for the continued mission and services of the Summit Park Hospital and Nursing Care Center, but alternative ownership structures of the hospital and nursing care center are being evaluated.
- **Office of Sustainability:** Due to the current economic conditions, the recommendation to create this office has been eliminated from the updated Comprehensive Plan. However, the Plan still supports climate change measures to be undertaken by the appropriate Rockland County departments, with a structure being established to provide centralized coordination and guidance among relevant departments as a means to implement climate change efforts. In addition, the Plan still recommends the creation of an environmental task force including staff from the appropriate County departments and other agencies, as well as town and village appointees and volunteers from a range of sectors in the county.
- **Emissions Reduction Goals:** Specific emissions reduction target dates were eliminated until further specific goals could be created with the implementation of a Countywide Climate Action Plan.

Certification To Approve/Fund/Undertake :

Having considered the draft and final Environmental Impact Statement and having considered the preceding written facts and conclusions relied on to meet the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617.11, this Statement of Findings certifies that:

1. The requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and
2. Consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is the one that avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that adverse impacts will be avoided or minimized to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the decision those mitigative measures that were identified as practicable.
3. (And if applicable) Consistent with the applicable policies of Article 42 of the Executive Law, as implemented by 19 NYCRR Part 600.5, this action will achieve a balance between the protection of the environment and the need to accommodate social and economic considerations.



c/o Hon. Harriet D. Cornell

Signature of Responsible Official

Chairwoman of the Rockland County Legislature

Title of Responsible Official

Name of Agency

Rockland County Legislature

Hon. Harriet D. Cornell

Name of Responsible Official

March 1, 2011

Date

Address of Agency

Rockland County Legislature
Allison - Parris County Office Building
11 New Hempstead Road
New City, NY 10956

cc: Other Involved Agencies (Office of the Rockland County Executive)
Applicant