

Section IX Summary of Environmental Impacts

Potential Environmental Impacts

As stated in the introduction, this plan also functions as the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the purposes of compliance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). As a generic impact statement, it is meant to describe the potential impacts of adoption of the LWRP plan. Adoption of the LWRP will not result in the approval of any development activity, either private or public. Due to the unique environmental, historic and cultural considerations evidenced along the Pittsford waterfront (i.e., the former Monaco Oil site, historic village, etc.), individual projects should be subject to specific SEQRA review, determination of significance, permitting (if necessary) and compliance with the precepts and policies of this LWRP. The proposed land and water uses and proposed projects contained in the plan must still undergo more detailed, site specific planning by the public and/or private entities that will undertake these actions. As individual activities are proposed and reviewed, site specific environmental reviews may be necessary. Among other things, such reviews should consider the scope and scale of the proposed action and whether these are consistent with the concepts outlined in this plan and generic environmental impact statement.

In general, adoption of this Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) by the Town and Village of Pittsford will not have an adverse environmental impact on the study area. The plan itself embodies the concept of environmental protection in that it carefully considers the environmental setting of the canal waterfront (see Section II entitled “Inventory and Analysis”). The plan should be viewed as an attempt to mitigate against the impact of uncontrolled development on the natural and cultural resources along the canal waterfront. Through the use of the policies set forth in Section III “LWRP Policies” and the illustrated design guidelines in Section V the LWRP seeks to promote very limited new development that is consistent with, and enhances the environmental setting. In general, the plan is expected to have a beneficial impact on the community over time. Updated land use concepts for the waterfront will help the community to achieve its desired objectives.

Alternatives

There are three alternative actions that the town and village can pursue. These are:

1. Adopt the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program as proposed
2. Adopt an altered plan
3. Do not adopt a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Of the available alternatives, adoption of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) as proposed would provide the best combination of appropriately scaled growth, recreational and waterfront resource enhancement, and natural resource protection in accordance with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The overriding local goal, as stated in the Town of Pittsford Comprehensive Plan, is to preserve the historic canal- front character in the heart of the Village of Pittsford, and to provide improvements to existing facilities and infrastructure along the canal throughout the town, thus creating investment opportunities that will act as a catalyst for economic growth, community revitalization and job creation. The community's desire is to maximize use of the canal as an amenity for the town and to ensure that all uses complement, but do not compete with the village. The plan, as proposed, would go the farthest toward achieving this goal.

It is difficult to anticipate possible alternatives to a plan, as opposed to specific projects proposed within. The most obvious alternative would be to take "no action". This, essentially, means that the town and village would not adopt the plan. In light of the effort that has already been made to identify the area's valuable natural and cultural resources, and to solicit input from the community as to the most appropriate ways to enhance and protect these resources while generating economic activity along the Pittsford waterfront, the "no action" alternative would be counter-productive. It would also do nothing to further the goals of the town's comprehensive plan.

Existing local, state, and federal regulations would likely be sufficient to protect most of the natural and cultural resources in the corridor. But the benefit of the plan is that it proposes to grow the community in a way that enhances the community's character and incorporates and protects the community's valuable resources. This balance can only be achieved through a deliberate, collaborative planning process which looks to the future. In the absence of a plan, and a program to implement the plan, the community must simply react to development proposals as they are submitted. The establishment of inappropriate uses, or sprawl type development along the waterfront, is one possible result. Another possible result would be that no new improvements would occur along the canal.

Another alternative action for the town and for the village would be to adopt an altered plan. The degree to which the plan emphasizes resource protection or economic development, for example, is a potential area of change. It would be possible to develop a plan that focuses solely on the protection of the waterfront's natural features. Under such a scenario, areas such as the Monroe Avenue Parcel might be left untouched, or the entire Powers Farm might be recommended for permanent protection. At the other extreme, the desire to create economic development opportunities could be the sole focus of the plan. Under this scenario, areas identified as appropriate for the development of public spaces and parks might instead be designated for commercial or industrial uses. The relocation of non-water related uses from the waterfront might no longer be a priority in this case.

While each of these scenarios would meet at least one of the community's objectives, each would do so at the expense of another important community objective. Neither would achieve the necessary balance between resource protection and economic growth, and neither would address the enhancement of Pittsford's canal waterfront in terms of community character.

Adoption of this Local Waterfront Revitalization Program would best ensure that the community's multiple goals for the waterfront are achieved. The plan's combination of projects, made in consideration of a careful analysis of the study area's natural and cultural resources, were derived with significant input from the community. As a result the LWRP, as proposed, will enhance the character of the Pittsford waterfront in a manner consistent with the community's desires and Comprehensive Plans.

Impact on Land

Adoption of the LWRP by the Town and Village of Pittsford will impact land resources in the study area. Some areas, as described in Section II, are currently undeveloped or underdeveloped and are proposed for more intensive uses in the plan. Other portions of the study area are already developed and plans proposed include the adaptive re-use of existing structures where available. Sections IV and section V of the plan call for carefully scaled development that will add to the community's economic base while preserving valuable natural areas and recreational opportunities. By starting with a careful analysis of the environmental setting, areas containing environmental constraints or important natural resources such as steep slopes, floodplains, woodlots, etc., have been identified and considered in the development of these proposals. Erosion and flooding are not significant issues in the Pittsford canal corridor. None of the proposed projects will take place in the areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as flood hazard areas.

Impact on Water

Adoption of the LWRP by the Town and Village of Pittsford should have a minimum adverse impact on the existing water resources in the study area described in Section II. No development is planned that would lead to the addition of point or non-point source pollution to the water. Sections IV and V discuss the possibility for relocating some of the non water- dependent or water-enhanced industries located along the canal may even lead to an improvement in water quality. For example, the NYSDOT facility, the Monoco Oil Company site, and the Pittsford Department of Public Works garage are all uses which could be relocated away from the waterfront to allow for the creation of more appropriate canal related development at these waterfront sites. The use of all or parts of these sites along the waterfront as public or recreational spaces would potentially enhance long term water quality.

Wetlands, which were also identified as part of the resource inventory and analysis in Section II, are found in several locations throughout the study area. Proposals for these areas (illustrated in Section IV) take into account the presence of the wetlands. For example, improvements to the existing trail connection to Lock 62 will not impact the state regulated wetland located adjacent to the trail. Plans for the Monroe Avenue Parcel also account for the protection of the included wetland. Portions of the site outside of the wetland area are proposed for mixed use development which takes advantage of the prime location along the canal. The proposal states that “development of this area with uses that relate to the canal is desirable, but great care should be taken not to overwhelm the site with excessive development.” The wetland area will be incorporated into a proposed park which will include both active and passive recreation opportunities. In addition to both state and federal regulation of wetlands in the study area, the Town of Pittsford’s local Wetlands Protection Law, Article XV of the Code of Pittsford, states that it is “the public policy of the Town of Pittsford to preserve, protect and conserve freshwater wetlands and the benefits derived therefrom...” The combination of these regulations, and the clear identification in the plan of areas where wetlands must be carefully considered, should ensure that site specific review of proposals for these areas will result in the protection of all existing wetlands in the study area to the maximum extent possible.

Similarly, the three major creeks which run through Pittsford, their tributaries, and their primary flood plain areas are identified in the plan. It is recommended that caution be used when pursuing activities around any of the creeks as these actions could impact wetlands downstream. The Irondequoit Creek and its floodplain are singled out for their natural features, vegetation and wildlife. The plan states that preservation of this ecosystem is important and that construction in these floodplains should be minimized or avoided altogether.

Impact on Air

As a result of the proposed increase in commercial and residential development in portions of the waterfront area, minor adverse impacts to local air quality might be anticipated. However, it is not anticipated that these impacts will be of a type or magnitude that would adversely affect human health or the environment, or to even cause irritation or annoyance. The proposed development of additional parks and trails along the waterfront should help to mitigate against negative air quality impacts. The closure and clean up of the former Monoco Oil facility will eliminate a major source of air pollution in the canal area.

Impact on Plants and Animals

Adoption of the LWRP by the Town and Village of Pittsford will result in both positive and negative impacts on plant and animal resources in the waterfront area. There are

numerous woodlots, several wetlands, and a variety of waterfowl, wading birds, fish, and other animals such as deer, raccoons, rabbits and squirrels in the study area. No threatened or endangered species have been identified as living in the Pittsford canal corridor area. Where new development is proposed, existing vegetation will be removed and some wildlife displaced. For example, one area of concern will be the Monroe Avenue parcel. Aside from the flora and fauna in the wetland area which is proposed to be incorporated into the design of this site, the development of the remainder of this site will result in the removal of some vegetation and the displacement of the wildlife living there. There is a green corridor via the Auburn rail trail which connects this site to another large undeveloped area behind Nazareth College. This corridor should allow the wildlife living in the area to move to other, undeveloped, areas. In general, the creation of a continuous stretch of parks does provide area wildlife with some benefits. By connecting existing undeveloped areas, important connections for animal movement will be created. In addition an important migratory corridor for birds will be preserved.

Impact on Agricultural Land Resources

Adoption of the LWRP by the Town and Village of Pittsford will not adversely impact agricultural resources in the study area. The Powers Farm, located directly behind Schoen Place, is the most relevant agricultural open space to any canal projects. The proposed expansion of Schoen Place into a small portion of the farm was planned for in Pittsford's Greenprint for the Future (1996). This area was not included in the protection strategy for the Powers Farm. The remainder of the farm, however, was recommended for full protection in the Greenprint. Subsequent implementation of the Greenprint has resulted in the town's purchasing development rights from several farms as recommended. The Powers Farm is expected to be protected under this program in the near future. Once the conservation easement is in place, this land will be permanently protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses. The proposals for Schoen Place take advantage of its proximity to a working farm. The Powers Farm serves as an immediately visible example of Pittsford's agricultural history and acts as a buffer, providing a scenic view behind Schoen Place and preventing sprawl type development. The plan's proposals for Schoen Place integrate the Powers Farm to the benefit of both the commercial center and the farm. For example, the concept of reusing the grain elevators and the barns at the east end of Schoen Place for the development of a historical museum takes advantage of the adjacent working farm as a reminder of the community's agricultural history. In addition, the edge of the farm property could enhance the viability of Schoen Place by providing room for additional parking and for a possible extension of the access road to Route 31 beyond the residential properties. The farm could benefit by the possible creation of a Farm Market at Schoen Place which would enable the farm to sell produce directly to customers at this busy commercial area.

Impact on Aesthetic Resources

While it is difficult to determine whether impacts to aesthetic resources are positive or negative, the proposals in Sections IV and V of this plan are intended to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the canal waterfront. The proposals incorporate and protect the most important natural features of the landscape, while promoting carefully scaled development of sites along the waterfront for canal related uses. Enjoyment of the aesthetic qualities of this area will be enhanced by the improvement of trails and the creation of additional public spaces along the waterfront, and by increased access to the water. Streetscape improvements, including the use of appropriate street trees, shrub and flower plantings, lighting, street furniture, curbing, sidewalks and other amenities will also serve to enhance the experience of those who frequent the waterfront area. Proposals were developed in consideration of the state's design guidelines and principles for public spaces, site and building development, and the preservation and maintenance of canal structures in the canal corridor.

Impact on Historic and Archaeological Resources

Appendix A provides a listing and brief description of some of the many historical sites along the Pittsford Canal. The plan proposes that these sites be linked through the creation of an historical interpretation trail. In addition, as described in Sections IV and V, a possible adaptive reuse of the grain elevators and barns at the east end of Schoen Place could be the creation of a museum dedicated to the area's canal history. Both the interpretive trail and the museum would enhance the enjoyment and understanding of the value of the area's historical resources. Pittsford's historic structures are already protected by strict zoning rules and are slated, in the plan, for adaptive reuse whenever possible.

Impact on Open Space and Recreation

Overall, adoption of the LWRP by the Town and Village of Pittsford will have a positive impact on open space and recreational resources along the canal. It is the intent of this LWRP to preserve Pittsford's unique character and return the shoreline to water-dependent and water-enhanced uses. Section V proposes carefully scaled development that will add to the community's economic base while preserving valuable natural areas and recreational opportunities. Section IV discusses proposals to extend the canal trail along the north shore, eliminating existing gaps, and to create a trail on the south shore, linked to the north shore trail by a pedestrian bridge will enhance opportunities for walking, running, bicycling, and fishing along the waterfront. Additional public spaces along the shoreline, including parks for both active and passive recreational opportunities are also proposed. On-water recreation will also be enhanced by proposals for increased boat launch access and docking facilities, and the recent development of a new facility for the Pittsford Crew rowing club.

Some existing open spaces may be lost as a result of the development proposals in the plan. However, the plan focuses carefully designed development in appropriate locations while protecting important natural features and preventing sprawl type commercial development that would be inconsistent with the community's character. Important open spaces, such as the Powers Farm, are incorporated into the proposals and are recognized for their significant contribution to the overall character of the waterfront area. Other open spaces will be created or enhanced, including the canal trail and several parks along the waterfront.

Impact on Critical Environmental Areas

There are no Critical Environmental Areas (CEA), established pursuant to subdivision 6 NYCRR 617.14(g), in the study area.

Impact on Transportation

Transportation impacts of the LWRP's proposed projects listed in Sections IV and V will be mixed. As a result of the future changes to the limited development sites along the waterfront, the number of automobile trips generated by this area can be expected to increase slightly. Future development proposals along the waterfront should undergo review of their potential transportation impacts as part of the review process. The type and scale of individual proposals will determine the extent of the transportation analysis required. It is intended that adverse transportation impacts of the plan described in Sections IV and V, will be offset to some degree, by proposed transportation improvements and by the creation of a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment that encourages people to walk or ride. The most extensive changes to the transportation system proposed in the plan are for Schoen Place. It is proposed that the layout of this road be altered slightly. This would allow for the creation of a more manageable traffic flow and parking patterns. Additional access to Schoen Place via a new road proposed off Route 31. Additional changes to Schoen Place would include traffic signals at its intersections with North Main Street and State Street, and traffic calming features to enhance the pedestrian environment.

The plan calls for several other transportation improvements including expanded trails on both sides of the waterfront, several enhanced trail connections across the river, and the creation of a trolley and/or water taxi service to link outlying activity centers with the village center.

Impact on Energy

Adoption of the LWRP will not have a significant impact on energy resources.

Noise and Odor Impacts

Adoption of the LWRP will not result in adverse impacts from odors, noise, or vibration. In fact, due to the closure of the Monoco Oil facility and the potential for relocating the NYSDOT and Canal Corporation operations proposed in Section IV, noise and odor control should be greatly improved.

Impact on Public Health

Adoption of the LWRP will not result in any adverse impact on public health.

Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood

Adoption of the LWRP by the Town and Village of Pittsford will have a positive effect on the character of the community. The plan is consistent with the Town of Pittsford's Comprehensive Plan and complements the town's Greenprint initiative. The LWRP is part of Pittsford's vision to create a "ribbon of green" within the community and supports revitalization of the waterfront, which has been a community priority for several years. The projects proposed in Section IV of this plan will contribute to both of these goals. They will allow the community to continue to grow while ensuring that this growth takes place in a manner that contributes to Pittsford's unique sense of place. By focusing carefully scaled development the community will be able to accommodate future growth, expand its economic base, and protect and enhance its natural areas, recreational resources, and open spaces.

This LWRP is also consistent with, and is Pittsford's contribution to, New York State's plan to create a continuous stretch of parks and tourist attractions throughout the New York State canal system.