




# SAVE Colonie


A Partnership for Planning

*Neighbors and Neighborhoods First*

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Save Colonie: A Partnership for Planning

July 16, 2019

Albany County Planning Board  
Albany County Department of Public Works  
449 New Salem Road  
Voorheesville 12186

Dear Members of the Albany County Planning Board:

You have before you for approval, pursuant to Section 239-m of the NYS General Municipal Law, the Town of Colonie's 2019 update of its 2005 Comprehensive Plan. We urge the Albany County Planning Board to take a critical look at the Town of Colonie's referral package and the draft update for the reasons set forth below.

SAVE Colonie: A Partnership for Planning (SAVE) has been an active participant throughout the Town's three-year comprehensive plan update process. One of our members sat on the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. We have participated in each of the community forums, attended each Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee meeting, and submitted written and online comments to the Committee. Following the Committee's submission of the draft Plan to the Town Board, we've analyzed in detail each rendition of the Plan and submitted written and oral comments at the Town Board's public hearings on the 2019 Plan. SAVE's written submissions to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and to the Town Board are attached for your information.

While Supervisor Mahan has dismissed our comments as those of "only one group", we are a broad-based citizen coalition of more than 200 email members, 725 Facebook friends and many more "followers", from all Colonie neighborhoods and interests, environmental, legal, business, educational, and more. We do represent the residents of Colonie.

The Town of Colonie, with over 83,000 residents, is by far the largest suburban town in Albany County and the Capital Region. It has been undergoing significant development pressure and loss of open space. Consequently, one would expect that the Town of Colonie's three-years-in-the-making proposed 2019 update to its 2005 Comprehensive Plan would be a shining example of and prototype for future land use planning in Albany County and the Capital Region. Unfortunately, this is not the case. You have before you a seriously flawed document which fails to provide meaningful direction and should not be approved and referred back for adoption by the Colonie Town Board.

SAVE has repeatedly expressed our members' concerns that the Town of Colonie must "get it right" when it adopts this document, which will serve as a "roadmap" to direct town planners toward achievement of the Plan's goals and objectives. It is the community's vision for its own future. Once a comprehensive plan is adopted by a municipality, it is supposed to guide the development decisions and any land use code changes. Consequently, the Town of Colonie must get this right.

However, the Town has ignored concerns SAVE members and other residents have raised regarding loss of open space, natural wooded areas and community character; development decisions creating increased and sometimes unsustainable traffic congestion; allowing single family zoned parcels to be densely developed as Planned Development Districts without consideration of impacts to adjacent single family residential areas; and the lack of any open space, historic preservation plans and funding for open space acquisition and planning.

The document before you fails to contain any reasoned analysis or a coherent plan for getting from 2005 to where the Town now is, where the Town will need to go in the future, and the steps to take to get there. Unlike the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, this document has no "Section 7" (see attached) to get us from here to the future where we want to go.

Here are some details:

#### 1. Procedural flaws

- a. Public comments from the public hearings and via the online comment portal are not addressed nor reflected in the final draft or appendices. Specific written comments, letters, and online submissions are not replicated, documented, or responded to within the document.
- b. Business and government agency input was not obtained or included in the Comprehensive Plan.
- c. The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee has neither voted on nor commented publicly on the draft update.
- d. There is no input from the Planning or Zoning Boards, which are vital to implementation of the Plan.
- e. Neither SEQRA findings or full Environmental Assessment Form for this document are included, referenced, or posted on line.
- f. Posting of testimony, hearing transcripts, public comments and other documents has been spotty throughout this process. Not all public hearing transcripts have been posted online or affixed to the draft update document.
- g. The public hearing facilitator, who happened to be the Town Supervisor, repeatedly and at length interrupted, disputed, and discounted the opinions of residents during their testimony.

#### 2. Substantive Flaws

Although SAVE and others have pointed out these issues orally and in written comments, they have not been addressed in the Comprehensive Plan:

- a. The document fails to provide a baseline of where the town was in 2005, from which this "update" is to be derived. For example, there is no data on open lands developed since 2005 or remaining vacant; no data on the number of and categories of residential and commercial units built since 2005; no estimates of types of residential units needed going forward; no data concerning parks usage or recreational needs going forward, no information on remaining agricultural and historic resources. Sadly, there is not even a map delineating the open space

remaining available for preservation or development. Privately owned open space is not included in the inventory.

b. Section 7 of the 2005 Plan (attached) provides detailed action items and a timeline for steps required to achieve the plan's goals. The current draft before you conveniently carries forward action items the Town has embraced and ignored those it apparently disagreed with, without explanation.

c. The 2019 draft before you makes reference planning documents that are missing from the Plan and appendices, such as 1. a draft open space plan; 2. a town-wide pedestrian and bike pathways plan; 3. the Town Parks & Recreation master plan. Any documents referred to should be provided so they can be analyzed by the reader and reviewers such as yourselves.

d. Despite public requests for audio visual and tech tools, public broadcasting of public meetings to make Planning Board, Town Board and Zoning Bd of Appeals meetings accessible to the public, the plan fails to call for these basic modern advances, advances available to residents in much smaller communities in our County.

e. Finally, the document does not contain a goals section *recommending specific code changes* to effectuate plan goals or acknowledgement that the Town's three Generic Environmental Impact Study Area GEIS's are long overdue for updates.

In light of the above, we ask the Albany County Planning Board to take a hard look at this document and conduct an unbiased review, immune from election year politics. Town of Colonie and Albany County residents deserve much better than this flawed document, which will be relatively toothless as a basis for land use and fiscal decisions affecting Colonie and Albany County residents far into the future. Where the town has failed its residents, the County can provide meaningful direction to improve this vitally important document.

Respectfully submitted,  
SAVE Colonie: A Partnership for Planning

Cc:  
Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy  
Lisa Ramundo, Commissioner Albany County Department of Public Works  
Paula Mahan, Supervisor Town of Colonie

Enclosures



Neighborhoods and Neighbors First!

August 23, 2016

Comprehensive Plan Committee Members  
% Joseph LaCivita, Chair  
Town of Colonie Operations Center  
347 Old Niskayuna Road  
Latham, New York 12210

RE: Comprehensive Zoning and Land Use Plan Update

Dear Committee Members:

Our community group, SAVE Colonie: A Partnership for Planning (SAVE), seeks a major role in the work of revising and updating the Town's 2005 Comprehensive Zoning and Land Use Plan ("the 2005 Plan"). We are comprised of more than 200 Town residents who are dismayed by the recent changes in our Town. We see revision of the 2005 Plan as an opportunity to assure that *the Town's 80,000 residents* are represented in both the development of the revised Plan and in the planning process going forward. After all, it is these residents who have chosen to live in Colonie, who care about the Town's future, and who pay the taxes to support the government here. It is the government's job to represent these residents' interests.

These are Save's priorities:

1. Review and updating must begin with the 2005 Plan's goals. Have the stated goals been achieved, and if not, why not? Are those goals still appropriate today?

The Committee appointed to review and update the 2005 Plan is heavily weighted with administration-affiliated members. There are few, if any, independent Colonie residents on this Committee, a serious failing. Additional members should be appointed to the committee reflecting the views of neighborhood organizations.

2. Colonie's residents' vision and existing neighborhoods' needs must be the top priority. Before new developments are approved, local area infrastructure, ambience, and community character must be considered. For example, approval is often given to projects in neighborhoods with serious existing drainage, water pressure, or traffic issues, without adequately addressing their potential negative impacts. Similarly, projects discordant in scale and scope with the neighboring community should not be approved. The Planning Board has the legal authority to be able to make proposed projects acceptable to both neighborhoods and project applicants.

3. Analysis of the 2005 Plan must rely upon up-to-date data. Clearly, sound planning decisions cannot be made without accurate and complete data. Before further decisions are made, it is imperative that the Town compile a list of development activity which has occurred since 2005 and undertake an inventory of current undeveloped parcels. Comprehensive town-wide traffic studies of Colonie's pressure points must be completed. The Generic Environmental Impact Statements (GEIS) must be updated for the Airport and Boght Road areas. Decisions based on old information are not good

for the Town or its residents.

4. Planning and Approval Process needs improving. All meetings regarding planning and development impact the community, so members of the public should be included in meetings of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee. We expect the public to be invited to attend all meetings where any decision regarding town development may take place so that communication can flow both ways earlier in the process. The entire approval process for development in the Town must be made more open, inclusive, transparent, and participatory. Public meetings should not merely constitute an announcement of a prior decision, with lip service given to the public's comments.

5. Be more demanding. As one of the most attractive, desirable, and livable communities in the area, Colonie does not need to provide incentives for development, with the possible exception of redevelopment of abandoned parcels. Rather, the Town should be setting criteria for development based upon how it might affect the community at large. Proposals that do not add to the community's quality of life should be discouraged. The Comprehensive Plan effort that has just begun should establish those values for the future. Developers will adapt and the value of their developments will be enhanced.

6. Budget town funds for leveraging state and federal grants. Funding for sewer and water infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, various other community improvements, and conservation of natural areas is available, if we were equipped to apply. There is no reason a community as large, rich and diverse as Colonie cannot budget to take advantage of the multitude of grant and low interest loan opportunities that exist. A variety of mechanisms are being used successfully in other towns both in the state and elsewhere.

7. Zoning, signage and other codes need updating. If variances are frequently sought and granted, and if existing codes and regulations are ignored by regulators, there is an underlying problem that must be addressed. Rather than ignoring the problem or developing a work around, the Town needs to identify these problems and amend the codes and regulations to address them.

8. Methods to ameliorate traffic congestion must be included in the Plan. Traffic congestion is not merely commuter-caused. Residential development adds considerably more trips than generally estimated by developers. Walkable communities with sidewalks and bike trails, nearby shopping, schools and recreation must be the goal of every project. Further, the cumulative effect of developments within a traffic corridor must be considered as part of an overall development plan rather than waiting until congestion has overwhelmed existing traffic capacity.

9. As the Town moves forward with the review process, it should impose a development moratorium. Previously predicted efforts by developers to rush projects through the process ahead of any such moratorium would need to be carefully managed by Town authorities. From October 1989-January 1991, the Town imposed a building moratorium while the 1991 Airport Area GEIS was finalized. Similarly, in 2004, a building moratorium was imposed for projects along the Route 7 and Boght Road corridors. In 2010, the Town imposed a development moratorium for new hotels and motels on Route 5. There have been several significant development projects on the Town Planning Board agendas since the Town made its announcement in June, 2016. A moratorium is even more critical now, since the Planning Board has erroneously stated that it has no or little authority to alter development proposals in response to neighborhood concerns.

As SAVE reviewed the 2005 Plan, we noted with interest that residents' concerns in 2005 were the same ones we are hearing expressed now, eleven years later. We think it's time to address them.

SAVE looks forward to partnering with the town government and the Comprehensive Plan Review

Committee to create a community that reflects the desires and vision of the Town's residents, that exemplifies best practices in planning, and that recognizes that Colonie is a most desirable place to live and to grow a business.

Wendy Allen

Chair, Comprehensive Plan Task Force

SAVE Colonie: A Partnership in Planning

cc: Supervisor Paula Mahan

Planning Board members



Neighborhoods and Neighbors First!

March 6, 2019

Dear Supervisor Mahan and Colonie Town Board:

SAVE Colonie, a Partnership for Planning has prepared the following comments and assessment of the draft *Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan Update* as adopted by the Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee on February 27, 2019 and forwarded to the Town Board for consideration.

Since 2016, SAVE members have attended Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee meetings, enthusiastically participated in public outreach sessions, and provided written comments via the Comprehensive Plan website. It was our hope that this process would culminate in an updated Comprehensive Plan which would provide valuable guidance for the Town of Colonie and our fellow residents for the next 10 years. We envisioned the updated plan would address how the goals of the 2005 comprehensive plan were accomplished and implemented; what has occurred in the Town since 2005; the current and future needs of the Town concerning key issues such as development, preservation of open space, transportation needs, recreation needs, utilities and public services.

Unfortunately, the draft updated plan, as presented at the February 27, 2019 meeting, falls well short of both what was expected and what a municipality the size and complexity of Colonie requires to grow in an equitable and sustainable manner. As the result of our review, we have developed extensive comments which are detailed later in this communication. These issues can be grouped into a few major themes, as follows:

1. An Executive Summary is needed which not only highlights updated findings, but clearly connects to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, since that was the stated major charge for the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. Additionally, the status of goals included in the 2005 Plan and their relationship to updated findings need to be addressed in this document.
2. Conclusions, charts, maps, and tables should be supported by the most current data available; data sources need to be identified and dated.
3. Recommendations for implementation should be either linked to the text and supported by data--or omitted from the document (See Appendix D comments).
4. Proposed studies to assess town assets such as open space, sidewalks, utilities, and recreation areas as well as future transportation, development and

redevelopment priorities should be approached in stages as part of an integrated, holistic approach rather than in an isolated fashion, as presented in this document (See Appendix C).

Given the extent of these deficiencies (see Appendices A and B), we believe the Town Board must proceed cautiously until the public has had ample opportunity to review and provide their input to the Town Board. We believe that the Town's March 1, 2019 referral to the Albany County Planning Board for its March 21, 2019 agenda was premature because there is no finalized comprehensive plan update document. More than one public hearing is necessary because the public's ability to provide public comment was already stymied by inclement weather and misleading public notices on February 27, 2019.

As SAVE representatives outlined at that meeting, the draft update presented to the Comp Plan Advisory Committee on February 27 is technically deficient and incomplete. Both the Town Planning and Economic Development Director and the Town Designated Engineering firm representative acknowledged in the meeting that the draft under consideration by the Committee was incomplete and missing critical information. We remain very concerned that the draft update does not comply with NYS Town Law 272-a. There were other members of the public who attended the meeting and voiced similar concerns.

It is our hope that the updated comprehensive plan draft will reflect and address the concerns identified in this document before the March 21, 2019 public hearing and that a revised draft will be available for public review well in advance of the March 21, 2019 scheduled hearing. We also request that the Town Board contact the Albany County Planning Board to request removal of the draft comprehensive update from their March 21, 2019 meeting agenda. We must question the Town's decision to hurry this critical process along to meet a subjective deadline rather than proceeding in a transparent manner that allows for public review and comment.

As Town of Colonie residents, we share the common goal of making this comprehensive planning effort result in the most accurate, data rich and useful planning document for our Town. We are hopeful that after considerable Town resources have been expended on this effort over the last several years, the Town will yet produce a credible plan that we can support.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

Sincerely,

SAVE a Partnership for Planning



## **Appendix A: General Deficiencies**

The draft update does not address the following:

- Directive to establish an open space fund and how should town prioritize open space acquisitions (2005 Comp Plan directive)
- How should parks be developed, improved, new parks (2005 Comp Plan town recreation master plan directive)
- Update the town GEIS's (2005 Comp Plan directive)
- Why actions listed in the 2005 plan were not carried out or whether they will be continued in the future.
- How the town will address future and ongoing infrastructure maintenance
- A commitment to public broadcast meetings, more advance notification residents, more complete record keeping Town Pedd, ZBA websites, audio visual upgrades for PB and ZBA, Town Board agenda sessions be televised or minutes uploaded on website.
- Explanation of open space inventory methodology and criteria for amount of funding and location of open space acquisitions.
- Explanation for criteria for location of senior housing, amenities, affordability and whether current zoning allows for senior needs.
- Explanation for what IDA benefits should be included with development approvals, when appropriate
- Types of zoning regulation changes recommended and why, how prior variance/ special use permits be factored into any zoning regulation changes. Should these variances, special use permits be continued? Instead of a discussion, there are five pages of zoning exception maps that provide little or no useful information to the public.
- How town will deal with future drinking water issues such as NYSDEC chlorination requirements for drinking water supply and discharges to the Mohawk River.
- The cost/benefit of Stony Creek reservoir as a water source, especially for future needs
- The status of Colonie landfill capacity, recycling programs, waste reduction initiatives

- Impact of climate change, stormwater initiatives on town planning, alternative transportation, workforce management techniques to encourage telecommuting and lower traffic congestion.
- Plan for training and professional development for Department staff.

## Appendix B: Detailed, Indexed Comments

- p. 7 “Colonie has benefitted from a moderate growth rate over the past fourteen years with an increase of roughly 2,000 people.” No footnote and no reference to actual current population figures.
- p. 7 “an increased number of redevelopment projects occurring all across the Town” No reference to stats for this statement and conclusion and does not put into context of all the development approvals that have occurred since 2005 comp plan. How many **redevelopment** projects, types?
- p. 8 “town has made great strides in adding to and expanding its open space and recreational amenities.” No reference to specific actions and timeline for this statement.
- p. 8 “tougher regulations incorporated into the Town’s land use laws allowed the Town to preserve more sensitive and natural open spaces through the site plan review process.” No reference to acreage added, time frame etc.
- p. 8 “a long range linkage plan to create an alternate north/south link in this area to alleviate traffic congestion along Wolf Road is already underway.” Need reference to plan and status. Clarification needs to be provided regarding the linkage plan and the pending Radtke property PDD proposal.
- p. 8 “in **2008** the Town Board commissioned a complete overhaul of the Town’s Zoning Code.” These code revisions were completed in January 1, 2007 and became effective January 1, 2008.
- p. 8 “several new plans and studies have also taken place by commission of the Town Board to increase awareness of growth and development issues across Colonie.” What are these plans and studies?
- p. 8 Appendix C What is the relevance of a document which was prepared by a disbanded committee and no Town Board vote on the disbanded committee’s recommendations? Instead, Appendix C should include an analysis of the 2005 plan recommendations and how the draft update addresses how the 2005 recommendations have or have not been implemented. The current comp plan update needs to address and explain how the 2005 Comp Plan recommendations apply to 2019.
- p. 10 “the Town Board felt that it was time to sunset the older plan.” This is not correct. See Spring 2017 Colonie Chronicle, June 2016 Press Release, June 28, 2016 Colonie Spotlight Article.

- p. 12 “draft pathways plan (2008) referenced. Draft needs to clarify that this draft pathways/sidewalk plan was never finalized. Address how the Town has implemented a sidewalk bike path policy to date.
- p. 13 List of studies needs to be amended to list all studies referenced throughout the document with footnotes.
  - CME study major transportation corridors
  - Albany County Commercial Transportation Access Study
  - Mohawk River Public Access Plan
  - Brownfield Opportunity Study
  - Not mentioned in Update but should be included and referenced-Capital District Transportation Committee Bike Pathway plan
- p. 14 public involvement results found in Appendix A is an executive summary. They are not found on the Town website as claimed. Where are the written comments submitted via the comp plan website and otherwise. Where are the responses to written comments?
- p. 14 “top 3 concerns” There were other concerns listed by residents that are not discussed. Why were these top 3 concerns selected?
- p. 15 full survey results are not provided. These are not on the town website.
- p. 16 incomplete data. There are still blanks to be filled in. When will these be filled in? When will the final draft be available to the public for review, given that it is less than a month away already and this is clearly not a final draft?
- Town wide meeting 2 still sounds as if it will happen, not as if it is being reported on as part of a past process. These bullets need updating.
- p. 17 “this plan should be reviewed regularly every 5-10 years.” Note 2005 comp plan required town committee to monitor when updates needed. Time frames for the action items are now 1-10 years. There is no requirement in the comp plan update for future monitoring of the Plan under development.
- Maps included are not up to date. No 2019 dated maps or explanation for why the maps are not current.
- p. 18 Community Profile 2010 census data utilized. Why is there no more timely census data? If not, there needs to be an explanation for why 2010 Census data is utilized.

- p. 19 CDTC population projections need footnote to data source.
- p. 22 Household makeup is this 2010 data?
- CDPRC population projections need footnote.
- p. 23 economics educational attainment 2010 data can updated data be used?
- p. 24 Employment data 2010 why no updated data?
- p.25 Economic development patterns regional is 2010 data. Need footnotes and explanation for why this data was used. Please fix formatting so you can easily read the text around the table.
- p. 26 transportation data is 2010.
- p. 29 Poverty income data is 2015 per American Community Survey. Is there more updated data and why isn't the American Community Survey used throughout?
- p. 30 need foot note to United Way study on Financial hardship in the State of NY
- p. 31 Using 2010 data for housing units. No data # units from 2005-2019. No housing unit trend analysis.
- p. 31 "value of homes" based upon 2010 data. Why isn't current data utilized?
- p. 32 7- year old data for market sales days. Table 4 need footnotes.
- p. 33 utilizes 2015 American community survey data for homeowners and renters. Is this most current data.
- p. 34 Figure 9 Existing land use needs a footnote that indicates the date. What is the data source? Please fix label in dark blue section of pie chart. This is not a final draft.
- p. 34 current zoning map is not the Map on the town website. Not updated to show i.e. Elks PDD granted in 2016.
- p. 35 According to the most recent tax assessment- no date provided is it 2018?? Update does not discuss the methodology for determining vacant properties. How was vacant land determined? Some vacant parcels are not listed in "vacant" category on the town assessment rolls.
- p. 35 citation to 19.1% vacant but no reference to acreage total town acreage v. total vacant acreage.
- p. 36 the land conservation zone accounts for 6.6% of the towns total land area. This zone has been increased by 51.5% since the 2005 comp plan. Again, no reference to data for this statement and no acreage data included.

- Maps showing the variances and waivers. No explanation for why this information is included, what the basis for these maps were, data source is it PB or ZBA or Town Board legislation. List is from 2006-2016. Not updated to 2019. What is the purpose for this information-is it to suggest amendments to the land use code?
- p. 20 Senior statistics are from 2010. Updated information should be obtained from the Colonie Senior Services Department. What is the purpose of these statistics and how does this information pertain to plan goals and recommendations?
- transportation. No total miles listed for town owned roads and no percentages for all roads from total roadways to provide a comparison. Need road labels.
- chart transportation alternative modes- what is the purpose. This is not discussed in the draft. How does this information relate to plan goals and recommendations?
- Airport enplanements 2014 data. Why included and why not 2019 data? What is the purpose for this data?
- No footnote the Creighton manning study for Albany County. Is this the Albany county Commercial transportation access study?
- Need date for the Route 5 Corridor study.
- Environmental constraints listed on map does not include steep slopes. Steep slopes are included in the definition of constrained land in Land Use Law Section 190-6.
- p. 39 Second paragraph has draft language about Siena survey that needs to be updated and finalized before this draft can be considered for public review.
- p. 42 The draft plan states, “public sewer is required in all new developments, the cost of sewer extension being borne by the developer, at no expense to taxpayers.” This comment needs to be clarified as it sounds untrue. There are long term costs of sewer extensions that have implications for the town’s capital and operational budgets. These costs are not discussed and analyzed and glossed over by the simplicity of this statement which is misleading.
- p. 44 wetlands floodplains. Fed definition of wetlands is subject to continuing litigation. Dec regulated wetlands can be less than 12. 4 acres if determined to be a wetland of unusual local importance. Why reference this at all?
- p. 44 mineral resources. Incorrect reference to SEQRA rather than the Mined land reclamation law. Why need to define what the town can regulate. This is subject to legal interpretation and could be subject of future litigation regarding limits to Town of Colonie regulatory jurisdiction.

- p. 46 why reference to septic systems in soil type description. Is this an issue in Colonie?
- p. 46 lists steep slopes greater than 15%. Colonie Land use law defines slopes greater than 25%. Why is there a different number?
- p. 47 Historic Resources. No discussion 2005 comp plan recommendations. Why switch to responsibility of a historical society rather than town historian and PEDD to develop historic inventory? How to empower this recommendation? Create a Historical Commission like Clifton Park?
- p. 48 reference to Time Warner Cable and channel 17. Spectrum now provider. No Chanel 17. Add include broadcast of town meetings.
- p. 51 The table being in the middle of the text makes this page incredibly difficult to read.
- p. 52 “because of the Town’s abundant cultural and recreational resources, the parks and Recreation Department may face challenges while trying to maintain current levels of service and expand underutilized facilities.” This statement is unlike anything of the sort about other issues facing the Town such as acknowledgment of the need to maintain the “free infrastructure “given” to the town by developers. Why? This statement could be utilized by applicants who may not wish to set aside recreation and park facilities on their developments pursuant to NYS Town Law and Section 190-60 or provide public benefit amenities related to open space and parks and recreation facilities. This statement also does not reflect the results of the Siena Survey where town residents rated the creation of parks and recreation facilities as high priority.
- p. 53-54 The list of areas that should be conserved or “remain” conserved from the 2005 comp plan is included. Why are there no additions to this list? Why is there no discussion about how to prioritize lands to be conserved or remain conserved?
- p. 55 when was school enrollment information provided and why not updated. No mention all school districts in the Town and all private schools.
- p. 59 Why reference to Rochester/Genessee models with no footnote. What do these plans contain and why significant for Colonie?
- p. 60 Form based code- 2005 Comp plan only had form based code apply to Route 5. Is the Town going to adopt a form based code for entirety of town, other transportation corridors? Where is analysis and discussion of this in the updated draft?
- p. 61 sign review board and ZBA. Who is responsible for sign permits? If only ZBA why have a sign review board at all?

- p. 61 There is no analysis of what is contemplated by updated zoning regulations for airport protection zones? Per FAA advisory, a Runway Protection Zone “is to enhance the protection of people and property on the ground. Such control includes clearing RPZ areas (and maintaining them clear) of incompatible objects and activities. Per FAA advisory, “while it is desirable to clear all objects from the RPZ, some uses are permitted, provided they do not attract wildlife, are outside of the Runway OFA and do not interfere with navigational aids. Automobile parking facilities, although discouraged, may be permitted, provided the parking facilities and any associated appurtenances, in addition to meeting all of the preceding conditions, are located outside of the central portion of the RPZ. Fuel storage facilities may not be located in the RPZ. Land uses prohibited from the RPZ are residences, and places of public assembly (churches, schools, hospitals, office buildings, shopping centers, and other uses with similar concentrations of persons typify places of public assembly.) Fuel storage facilities may not be located in the RPZ.”FAA Advisory No. 150/5300-13 3/28/2007.
- p. 62 open space conservation program- add neighborhood representatives, change “identify” to implement funding for open space. Eliminate “consider creating” to around create. These goals were identified in 2005 and were never implemented.
- p. 63 “work with utilities and providers for fiber optics and other communications infrastructure to ensure that high quality services are available to meet the growing needs of residents and businesses.” What are the implications for 5G ? Draft should discuss the potential number of new cell towers, how cell tower obsolescence should be addressed, small cell stations that will likely be located within the town for 5G technology and their impacts. Discussion should include the need for expert assistance to review these applications, siting criteria, FCC safety rules for siting, collocation requirements, height limits, importance of uniform enforcement of the town’s cell tower law, enforcement of the town’s location priorities and setback requirements in Chapter 189 and the need for any amendments to Chapter 189.
- p. 64 This section does not reference Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee discussions to encourage the inclusion of electric vehicle chargers at gas stations, parking lots and other facilities that come before the planning board and other town boards for approvals. This would fit in with the other climate change/renewable energy goals.
- p. 64 “have a historical society perform an inventory of historically significant areas.” Why not the Town Historian and PEDD per 2005 comp plan. Will town be paying the historical society to do this and what is the time frame?
- implementation table does not address goals and tasks of the 2005 plan and why the town is no longer adhering to the 2005 recommendations and goals.
- p. 51 move graph from center page makes it difficult to read.



- p. 52, p. 53 add CDTC bike path study and bike path connections completed and identified for completion. Cumberland Farms bike path connection to Mohawk River bike trail is not identified. Referenced by PEDD director during the February 27, 2019 meeting. Discuss complete streets. Incorporate and address Albany Bike Coalition comments presented at February 27, 2019 hearing.
- p. 52 “because of the Town’s abundant cultural and recreational resources, the Parks and Recreation departments may face challenges while trying to maintain current levels of service and expand underutilized facilities.” Why is this statement included? The update contains no discussion about what is adequate desired parks and how the need for more parks will be determined. No reference to NYS Town Law authorization for the creation of parks and recreation during the subdivision review process. No discussion about priority locations and whether there are underserved areas of the town. 1988 LUMAC study should be referenced and discussed for relevance to future development and planning.
- Vacant Land Map vacant land listed to be greater than 10 acres. Why is 10 acres significant? Why was this # selected is it because of the Town GIS?
- Vacant land map dated December 2017 needs to be checked for accuracy and updated to date (2019) development approvals. i.e. On the Farm, Elks PDD, Afrims sports arena, Gordon/Rosetti Apts, British American Offices/Hotel, Starlite, Londonderry Ridge, Boght Road subdivisions, Lupe Way, Morris Road developments.
- Nov 2016 Map Conservation Open space needs to be updated to 2019.
- Recreation and Trails map. What is purpose of this map? How is “entertainment” category defined?
- Conservation Open Space November 2016 needs to be updated. What is definition utilized to map.
- P. 68. How was this December 2017 map compiled? What are “existing open space opportunities. Map should be updated to reflect 2019.
- No discussion of the timelines associated the goals.
- p. 67 the prioritization table is helpful. Development process transparency should be labeled high priority.
- Appendix B-all public comments submitted online to the committee should be printed out and included in this section in addition to meeting notes. Town residents have submitted emails to PEDD and to the Comp plan website form that must be included in this section. A response should be provided to these comments.

## **Appendix C- Assessment of Town Assets**

An Asset Class/Category list should be developed for the Town of Colonie.

Examples of assets could include:

- **BUILDINGS/FACILITIES:** All municipal buildings (town halls, storage buildings, libraries, museums, theatres) as well as recreation facilities (gymnasiums, hockey arenas, indoor soccer complexes). This category also includes facilities that house water and wastewater treatment equipment, but not the equipment itself.
- **PARKS:** All municipal parks, gardens, playgrounds and green spaces, etc.
- **ATHELETIC FIELDS:** All outdoor athletic fields including soccer fields, baseball diamonds, rugby fields, football fields, etc.
- **CULTURAL/TOURISM:** An historic site, statue, sign, commemorative plaque, something similar having historical significance or that is used to attract tourists.
- **TRAILS:** All walking/hiking/biking trails.
- **LAND:** Woodlots, fields, vacant properties

An asset inventory is a comprehensive list and assessment of all assets that are owned by the Town. The purpose of an asset inventory and assessment is to develop an asset management plan. “The Concept of Municipal Asset Management” A Toolkit for Municipal Asset Management

“Estimates show that in many cases, the value of fixed assets of a municipality can amount to more than 4 times its yearly expenditures (400%). In these cases, if property can be rented out, a conservative estimate is that the municipality could earn additional yearly revenues equivalent to 10% of the budget expenditures (assuming conservatively that about 50% of the fixed assets are rented out at 5% of the value of the asset per year). With a balanced budget, this means that additional revenues to local government could potentially increase by 10%. Hence, there is strong incentive for local governments to develop their fixed asset base as a productive resource to help in the attainment of public goals.”

## Appendix D: Implementation Table Comments

*“The Future of Colonie is in the Planning for Tomorrow”*

2019

### Section 5 – Updated Implementation Table

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The following table outlines the various updated goals and recommendations of this Plan and prioritizes them as well as provides recommended time frames for their implementation by the Town. It is important to note that these are recommendations only and are not binding in any way nor do they commit the Town to any direct action. They are meant to serve as a guide to assist the Town with its future land use growth and development decisions. Implementation of these goals and recommendations will ultimately be the responsibility of current and future Town administrations and officials over the next five to ten years.

Question- what is the relationship between the priority level and the timeframe in the tables?

These time frames were not discussed at the Comp Plan Advisory Committee meetings. They were selected by PEDD staff and the TDE. Town Board should validate whether these time frames are acceptable.

It would seem that any timeframe starting in Year 1 would be a “high” priority. If it isn’t, the timeframe should be later.

Eliminate all wording such as “consider, should” and replaced with directives. There were various goals which were part of the 2005 comp plan which were not implemented due to “fuzzy” language.

**Town of Colonie - Comprehensive Plan Update**

Goals	Recommendations		Priority Level	Timefram
<p>Accommodate the provision of a range of housing types in appropriate locations to meet the diverse needs of Colonie's residents. Provide incentives for affordability and to encourage mixed-income developments and multi-generational neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Develop an inventory of "zombie properties" and consider working with the Albany County Land Bank to facilitate the reuse and redevelopment of these properties – getting them back on the tax rolls and possibly providing additional opportunities for affordable housing.</p>	<p>Support reinvestment in the Town's older housing stock and the neighborhoods where such housing is concentrated.</p>	<p>Medium/High</p>	<p>5-10-15 Years <u>Colonie is being inundated w/hi-end senior housing requests incompatible w/ intergenerational living. If not addressed soon, this will become a future liability for the Town</u></p>
<p>Work with the Senior Resources Department to <u>develop strategies for addressing the housing and transportation needs</u> of the Town's senior population as part of the Town's planning and zoning approach. Opportunities for mixed-income, multi-generational neighborhoods designed to facilitate independent living may be found in the Town's mixed-use nodes. Universal design and sensitivity towards seniors needs also need to be incorporated into these strategies.</p>	<p>Review incentive provisions in current zoning and ensure that incentives (i.e. density bonuses) are targeted to the provision of affordable, workforce housing and/or other community benefits that are difficult to obtain in the marketplace without such incentives. This should also include consideration of school projections and possible new services that might be needed.</p> <p><u>Density incentives as currently used in the Town provide a VERY limited view of the options for facilitating independent senior living and do not address "transportation needs". Innovative initiatives that have been undertaken elsewhere include</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>the "Village" concept of housing in place w/caring networks</u></li> <li>• <u>Intergenerational supportive housing developments (e.g Beacon Community in Guilderland)</u></li> <li>• <u>Student/senior housing developments</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Transportation needs in the area include pedestrian-friendly streets &amp; especially intersections (crosswalks, bus shelters, sidewalks)- especially on Rte 9 in the built-up area between Maxwell Rd and Latham Farms. This requires coordination w other agencies, but is critical for our students &amp; retail workforce</u></p>			
<p>Protect existing neighborhoods from encroaching commercial and higher density residential development. Work with neighborhood groups to identify and address quality of life concerns.</p>	<p>Create provisions in zoning to better address the transition from commercial, mixed-use, and higher density residential zones to adjoining residential neighborhoods. Careful attention to building and site design, including the preservation of existing vegetation as appropriate, should be incorporated into the project review process. <u>An architectural review board is needed to achieve any level of consistency of approach in TOC development. It shouldn't be dependent on the tastes of a variable roster of Planning Board members present at any given meeting.</u></p>	<p>Given the town's large size and diverse neighborhoods, it might be appropriate to prepare neighborhood area plans focusing on more specific local issues on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis. This can be done on a more long-term basis over the next 3-5 years. <u>The Town has a number of neighborhood groups already that would respond positively to the chance to be more proactive in planning their neighborhoods. This needs to start NOW, not in 3 years and could start as a pilot in one or two neighborhoods w/grant funds to support a professional planning facilitator.</u></p>	<p>High</p>	<p>1-3 Years</p>
<p>Improve mobility throughout the Town. This includes thoughtful investments in roads and highways to relieve significant impacts of traffic congestion and to enhance the safety and attractiveness of active transportation modes (walking and biking). Continue to expand and improve access to public transportation. Coordinate with our partners at Albany County, CDTC, CDTA, and NYS DOT in addressing these mobility issues.</p>	<p>Establish a point person at the Town for transportation issues – this person would be responsible for coordinating with partners at CDTC, CDTA, Albany County, and NYS DOT.</p> <p>Work with CDTC to develop and disseminate information about "Complete Streets" and the benefits that this approach provides for all users of the transportation system, including automobiles. As one of the core features of New Visions 2040, the region's long-range transportation plan, complete streets will continue to be a focus of the region's transportation investments in the coming years; and therefore, more dialogue about this approach and how it can be applied in Colonie would be beneficial.</p>	<p>Utilizing the Albany Shaker Road Corridor Study as a model, undertake land use / transportation studies for targeted corridors – especially those where neighborhood quality of life and thru traffic concerns appear to conflict</p> <p><u>Consider applying to CDTC for funding to prepare an Active Transportation Plan for the Town of Colonie. Develop an Active Transportation Plan <u>would</u> create a vision and recommendations to guide the development of a network of sidewalks, on-road bicycle facilities, and trails that allow for safe and convenient travel in and around the Town of Colonie. Apply to CDTC for funding to prepare this Active Transportation Plan. If unsuccessful, seek funding from other sources as a top priority for the Town.</u></p> <p><u>NOTE: A number of communities in the Rochester region have prepared such studies in partnership with the Genesee Transportation Council, that region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).</u></p>	<p>High</p>	<p>1-3 Years</p>
<p>Incorporate "Complete Streets" design concepts and guidelines into the next Zoning Code update. <u>How is this going to be done? No discussion in text</u></p>	<p>Consider commissioning a "Sidewalk Connectivity Study" of the Town to help prioritize the installation of new pedestrian sidewalks and see where gaps in existing sidewalk infrastructure exist <u>in high traffic areas.</u></p>			

<p>Focus commercial and industrial growth in existing areas that are designated for these purposes and where infrastructure already exists. Encourage the reuse or redevelopment of existing commercial sites and buildings. Provide incentives and create opportunities for increasing the value of underutilized commercial areas by permitting higher density mixed-use development/redevelopment, and emphasizing pedestrian friendly, high quality design, in these areas. Facilitate reinvestment in older industrial areas for future industrial and light industrial use, or a wider array of mixed uses if appropriate.</p>	<p>Reevaluate the manner in which the 2005 Comprehensive Plan's "mixed-use nodes" were implemented as the NCOR and COR Zoning Districts in the rezoning that followed adoption of the 2005 plan. Specifically, the plan recommended specific areas for redevelopment as higher-density, mixed-use, and walkable centers of activity. The zoning that followed applied this concept to entire corridors (such as Route 5 and Route 7 – Route 2). The application of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan's recommendations for mixed-use centers should take into consideration the specific characteristics of each location where this is applied.</p> <p><i>The process for developing the Town of Clifton Park's Town Center Master Plan and resulting form-based code provide a good example of how this can be accomplished. There is no discussion in text</i></p> <p>Utilize the Railroad Avenue Area Transportation and Revitalization Plan, and the Lincoln Avenue BOA (Brownfield Opportunity Area) Study currently underway, as models for future redevelopment planning in underutilized commercial/industrial areas.</p>	<p>With the changing nature of the nation's retail sector – particularly the growth of e-commerce and the resulting challenges to brick and mortar retail – the Town of Colonie needs to develop a long-term strategy for addressing vacant commercial space. Providing more flexibility in terms of future land use, as described in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan for the "mixed-use nodes", may provide an incentive for redevelopment in some locations. However, the Town may want to investigate a more direct response to the potential abandonment of large-format retail (big box stores) in particular.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>3-5 Years</p>
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**Town of Colonie - Comprehensive Plan Update**

Goals	Recommendations	Priority Level	Timeframe
<p>Ensure an efficient and fair development approval process that is predictable, transparent, and protective of the Town's environment and the residential character of its neighborhoods.</p> <p><u>Enhanced notification via town websites, project document uploads to include all project documents. Improve ZBA website to provide past decisions &amp; meeting minutes, index of variances &amp; approvals to be maintained online.</u></p>	<p>The Town's zoning should be refined immediately following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update. In addition to subjects discussed elsewhere in this list of preliminary recommendations, some of the specific zoning items that have been identified for further consideration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revising parking requirements to reduce the amount of parking required and to provide for shared parking</li> <li>Update the sign regulations to address newer technologies such as LED signs and consider moving the sign approval process from the ZBA to the Planning Board. <u>What role will the Sign review board have if this is done?</u></li> <li>Reevaluate the Planned Development District (PDD) regulations to ensure that the Town is obtaining desired benefits in return for the development flexibility and higher potential densities that PDD's provide. As discussed above, ensure that existing neighborhoods that adjoin proposed PDD's are adequately protected. <u>The TB needs a stated PDD policy which will be consistently implemented by the PEDD. Currently benefits are determined in an ad hoc manner. Language in zoning code is sufficient and mimics NYS Town Law.</u></li> <li>Work with the Albany County Airport Authority to incorporate appropriate language related to the airport's Runway Protection Zones (49 CFR Part 77) into the Town's zoning. <u>what amendments are contemplated?</u></li> </ul>	<p><del>Medium</del> High</p>	<p>1-3 Years</p>
<p>Provide a business-friendly environment that is supportive of local businesses and that encourages entrepreneurship. Recognizing the Town's locational advantages, critical regional assets, well-developed infrastructure, and attractive quality of life, target economic development initiatives and incentives to industries that generate quality employment and diversify the community's economic base.</p>	<p>Building off the Industrial Development Agency's (IDA) Economic Assessment Study that is currently underway, <del>the Town should</del> develop a Town-wide Economic Development Strategy. This strategy should include methods to pro-actively market the Town to attract the kinds of businesses the Town wants and needs. <u>Any economic development strategy needs to be a coordinated and integrated part of an overall strategic plan for the Town, not an independent study. Update the Town's GEIS to reflect current Town infrastructure, open space, and recreation needs.</u></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p><del>3-10</del> Years</p>
<p>Protect the Town's important natural resources such as stream corridors, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, and unique ecosystems. Manage development activity to ensure that necessary clearing and site disturbances are minimized and implemented consistent with approvals. <u>develop a tree ordinance and review the towns clearing and grading regulations to require approvals for clearing less than 1 acres.</u></p>	<p>Strengthen standards regarding the clearing and grading of land in anticipation of development to ensure that such activity conforms to a plan approved by the Planning Board. <u>What does this mean? Why is it up to the PB? Why not Town-wide standards? Create appropriate limits on clearcutting. Expand the town's capacity to monitor and enforce development activity. Develop a tree clearing protocol similar to East Hills subdivision approval process.</u></p>	<p>High</p>	<p>1-10 Years</p>
<p>Conserve a Town-wide network of open lands including, but not limited to, viable farmland, wildlife habitat, special or unique environmental resources and potential trail corridors, river access, and recreation areas.</p>	<p>Support the preservation of existing, and the development of new wild-life corridors in Town. <u>Identify these lands on maps and update these areas on maps on a continuing basis. Identify who will update these maps. Conservation Advisory Council, PEDD?</u></p>	<p>High</p>	<p><u>How is it a high priority when 1-10 years given?</u></p> <p>1-10 Years</p>
<p>Enhance and expand active and passive recreational resources available throughout the Town to meet the growing and changing demand for these amenities.</p>	<p><del>Consider creating</del> <u>Create</u> a Town Parks &amp; Recreation Master Plan that includes a list targeted parcels that the Town may be interested in acquiring for future active and/or passive recreational uses. _</p>	<p><del>Medium</del> High</p>	<p>1-10 Years</p>

**Town of Colonie - Comprehensive Plan Update**

Goals	Recommendations		Priority Level	Timeframe
<p>Continue to maintain and enhance the Town’s extensive water, sewer, and local roadway infrastructure. Work with utilities and providers of fiber optic and other communications infrastructure to ensure that high quality services are available to meet the growing needs of residents and businesses. Consider adaptation strategies to ensure the resiliency of the Town’s infrastructure in response to a changing climate.</p>	<p><del>Consider implementing</del> an Asset Management Program to inventory infrastructure assets, equipment, materials, etc.</p>	<p>Review Albany County Hazard Mitigation Plan for suggestions about adaptation and resiliency measures in Colonie.</p>	Medium	3-5 Years
	<p><del>Consider supplementing</del><u>Supplement</u> existing funding for water and sewer infrastructure maintenance through a Community Preservation Program (see Open Space financing)</p>		Medium	1-3 Years
<p>Encourage low-impact development techniques and green infrastructure to address stormwater management.</p>	<p>Incorporate provisions in the zoning for the use of green infrastructure / low-impact design techniques to address stormwater management. Incentivize or require the use of these techniques as appropriate.</p>		Medium	1-3 Years
<p>Maintain the Town’s high level of public safety services.</p>	<p>Continue coordination of shared services with surrounding municipalities.</p>	<p>Locate areas to expand and improve public safety services.</p>	Low	3-5 Years
<p>Maintain the Town’s high level community services for youth, seniors, and the public at large.</p>	<p>Protect public spaces and public greenspace to maintain use for community services.</p>	<p>Establish inter-generational programs for seniors and youth.</p> <p>Facilitate volunteer opportunities for youth, seniors, and public at large.</p>	Medium	3-5 Years
<p>Protect and promote the Town’s significant cultural and historic resources. <u>Establish an historic register</u></p>	<p>Have a/the historical society perform an inventory of historically significant areas, buildings, public spaces. <u>Why not town historian?</u></p>	<p>Preserve and protect spaces that are deemed as historically significant to the Town.</p>	Medium	3-5 Years
	<p>Seek grants which exemplify and protect the Town’s cultural and historic resources and can attract tourism.</p>			
<p>Promote energy efficiency and conservation, the use of renewable energy, and waste reduction in the Town.</p>	<p><del>Consider participating</del><u>Participate</u> in the NYSDEC’s Climate Smart Communities program and actively seek certification in NYSERDA’s Clean Energy Communities program.</p>	<p>Seek to encourage applicants for new commercial projects to incorporate and follow LEED design standards, and seek LEED certification for all new buildings.</p>	Medium	1-3 Years
<p>Expand opportunities for sharing information and for encouraging community involvement. Promote volunteerism and community service. <u>Utilize the Coalition of Neighborhoods for outreach and notification</u></p>	<p><u>Require Planning Board meetings to be broadcast. Improve audiovisual and meeting amenities for planning board and zba meetings. Upload meeting transcripts of town Board agenda sessions online or broadcast town board agenda sessions.</u> Continue updating the Town’s website as well as using other social media mediums to keep the public up to date on current events.</p>		Medium	1-3 Years
<p>Cooperate with the Villages of Colonie and Menands, the school districts, and other neighboring and regional municipalities, agencies, and organizations on issues of mutual concern. Look for opportunities to share services when appropriate.</p>	<p>Establish a Town Board Liaison with the local school boards and meet monthly to provide updates on issues of mutual interest.</p>	<p>Increase the frequency of meetings between the Town and the North Colonie and South Colonie School Districts to once every six months</p> <p><del>Niskayuna and mohonosan school districts also included in the town</del></p>	Medium	1-3 Years
<p>Establish an identity for the Town of Colonie that transcends the Town’s size and diversity while maintaining the integrity and distinctiveness of individual neighborhoods. Encourage and support efforts to beautify Colonie.</p>	<p>Draw upon the data found in the Siena College Research Institute’s Survey to help determine how the broader Colonie community identifies itself (rural/suburban/urban) and then seek ways to integrate the perspective into long range growth and development plans.</p>		Medium	3-5 Years

Comp Plan 2019  
SAVE Colonie updated comments  
April 18, 2019

Based upon Supervisor Mahan's public statements, it appears that the Town Board has rejected the Comp Plan Advisory Committee's February 2019 draft and is now assembling an entirely new comp plan draft update without any further input from the Comp Plan Advisory Committee. We believe this approach is seriously flawed, as the fact finding function of the Comp Plan Advisory Committee and its input is now missing from the Plan. Before the Town Board takes a final vote, the newly updated draft should be sent back to the Comp Plan Advisory Committee for reconsideration and recommendations.

Second, the public record must be corrected regarding the legal implications of the Town's adoption of a comprehensive plan. Supervisor Mahan has been quoted several times stating or implying that the updated comprehensive plan will not be a legally binding document. This is not a correct interpretation of NYS Town Law. Section 272-a specifically provides:

- "11. Effect of adoption of the town comprehensive plan. (a) All town land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to this section.
- (b) All plans for capital projects of another governmental agency on land included in the town comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to this section shall take such plan into consideration."

For this reason, the Town Board members must take seriously their review and ultimate vote on the updated Comprehensive Plan as if it were legislation. It will be the town's guiding development principle. Although the PEDD director, who has lead the Comp Plan process for the past 3 years, stated in frustration on April 4 that the Town Board "now owns the document," we respectfully disagree.

After a three year process under the auspices of the PEDD director and two paid expert consultants, and the expenditure of more than \$130,000 in Town funds, the document submitted to the Town Board has had to undergo three revisions. We urge the Town Board to send this seriously flawed plan back to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to deliberate and make all necessary corrections. Residents should not have to comment on the draft's structural inadequacy, typographical errors, outdated data and missing analyses.

Here are our broad and general issues with the April 4, 2019 Draft. Detailed comments will be submitted in writing on the most current draft. It is not appropriate that residents must deal with a moving target.



### — Structure

The structure of the report is not designed to guide the reader in an understandable way through the update. It does not follow the layout of the 2005 Comp Plan, nor does one section relate directly to the next. The “Executive Summary” in this document is merely an Introduction. An executive summary should concisely outline the highlights of the plan, so the reader knows what’s coming.

### —Update?

From Day One the public was told, and reminded again and again, that this exercise is an “update of the 2005 plan.” However, it is impossible to do a side by side comparison of the goals and actions required in each plan. Many of the 2005 Section 7 action items are not addressed at all in this Draft. These 2005 action items should be the heart of the update. What was directed in 2005 and what has been done so far toward achieving them? “Continue” working with or “continue” working toward is insufficient.

### —Missing Comments

Where are the public comments? Many public hearings were held where residents took the time to make their concerns and issues known to the committee. Notes were taken on white boards. This section of the document should also include those comments submitted through the online form provided on the PEDD webpage. And what about those comments submitted in writing by Senior Services and the Historical Society? These need to be included in the document, so that organizations and residents know that they were heard and how their issues were addressed. Reliance upon a summary of the Siena survey is a disservice to the process and is inadequate to represent the public’s input.

### —Open Space

The draft fails to include an up-to-date list or a map of remaining Colonie open space. This is an essential tool to plan for the oft-stated goal of conserving open space, farmland, and wildlife corridors. The town is collecting fees that are to be used for open space acquisition, and yet there are no parcels identified as potential green space, no lands identified to “enhance and expand” passive and active recreational resources. How can this be accomplished if we do not know where these open spaces are? Or does the town intend to only “expand and enhance” those areas it already owns? It makes one wonder how serious the town is about this, despite it being one of the most popular concerns as identified by residents.

### -Climate Change

One of several issues that have arisen since 2005 is the imminent threat to our communities and our planet posed by human-exacerbated climate change. Since a large percentage of fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change result from heating and cooling homes, businesses, hotels, and other structures, local building and zoning codes should be a major focus of planning for a sustainable future. So, too, should the plan address revision of transportation systems and corridors to create mass transit, bicycle and walkability solutions. Development approvals without LED requirements, ride sharing, electric vehicle charging stations, solar farms and rooftop solar arrays are negligent, at the very least.

The issues identified above convince SAVE Colonie, whose members have spent considerable time on this project, that this document should not be accepted by the Board and should be returned to the Committee, PEDD, and hired consultant to address directly the issues listed above. We further suggest that the 2005 plan be consulted as a model of what a professional Comprehensive Plan looks like.

When there is an adequate actionable draft, we will submit more detailed granular comments. Thank you for your attention to what we all agree is a most important matter for the Town of Colonie and its residents.

SAVE Colonie: A Partnership for Planning

May 9 comp plan comments

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From: "Susan Weber"  
To: "Chris Carey", "David Green", "Jennifer Whalen", "Linda Murphy", "Melissa VonDollen",  
"Paul Rosano", "Paula Mahan"  
Cc: "Mallory Moench", "Jim Franco"  
Sent: Thursday May 9 2019 8:40:55AM  
Subject: SAVE Comments: Draft Comp Plan Issues 5/9/19

Supervisor Mahan and Town Board Members:

In light of the Town's piecemeal process of reviewing the proposed draft 2019 Comprehensive Plan, we thought it might be helpful if we highlighted for you some especially relevant information. Having these points in one place may aid your review.

As recently as this past Monday, reports from the five public meetings soliciting residents' issues for the Comprehensive Plan, held in late 2015 and 2016 by Michael Welti, former consultant for Colonie from Barton & Loguidice, were finally posted on the PEDD website. Attached below is Mr. Welti's excellent summary of these neighborhood meetings. Again, unlike the Siena survey, these meetings were part of an open and well-publicized effort to elicit residents' concerns and issues to be addressed in the upcoming Comp Plan.

<http://www.coloniepedd.org/attachments/comprehensive-plan/Issues-Identification-Workshops-Nov-Dec-2016-Summary.pdf> We understand these neighborhood concerns were not available for consideration by your Comp Plan Committee, although they were certainly a vital part of the process and cost the Town significant money.

Similarly helpful for your consideration is the attached Section 7 from Colonie's 2005 Comprehensive Plan, the plan that the current draft is designed to "update." 2005's Section 7 sets forth 1. Immediate Actions, 2. Short-Term Actions, 3. Mid-Term Actions, 4. On-Going Actions, and 5. Long-Term Actions. How have we done on these directives? An update of this plan *must* include an analysis of progress using these measures, as well as new such measures for the next ten years' duration of this 2019 plan. What still needs doing? What new steps are needed?

We look forward to hearing Town Board members' impressions of the Comp Plan, reactions to these public hearing sessions, as well as the process we're going through, at tonight's meeting,

Thank you for your engagement in this important planning process.

SAVE Colonie: A Partnership for Planning

## **Section 7 2005 Comprehensive Plan**

The specific actions that will be necessary to implement this plan are described and prioritized below in the Action Plan Section. It is important to recognize that some of these recommended actions should be implemented immediately, while others can be accomplished over several years. Although the preference may be to implement all of the recommendations immediately, an incremental approach is likely to be more efficient and realistic based on the availability of staff, funding resources and volunteers. While the plan attempts to consider the Town's capacity to implement the various recommendations, it is recognized that there may be a need for additional staff or a reallocation of staff responsibilities to fully implement the plan recommendations.

### **7.1 IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (WITHIN 1 YEAR)**

#### **7.1.1 Update zoning and subdivision regulations to be consistent with the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.**

1. The Town should immediately update the zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with the plan and to begin implementation of the plan recommendations.
2. Recommended zoning revisions are listed below by topic area.
3. Neighborhoods > Update zoning to allow a mix of housing options by special permit. Allowable housing should include options for senior housing as well as affordable housing opportunities such as accessory apartments, carriage houses and well-designed twin-homes.
4. Neighborhood Commercial Centers > Establish design guidelines for new and infill development.
5. Industrial Revitalization Areas > Update zoning to allow for appropriate redevelopment of these areas.
6. Primary Transportation Corridors > Establish form-based code for the Route 5/Central Avenue Corridor. > Revise mixed use zoning within nodes along the Route 7 –Route 2 corridor to reflect recommendations in the Route 7 – Route 2 Land Use/Transportation Linkage Study. > Revised mixed use zoning within a node along Route 9 between Maxwell Road and Latham Circle.
7. Mixed Use Nodes > Revise zoning to include mixed use nodes at transit stops on Route 5 / Central Avenue > Revise zoning to create mixed use nodes at key locations along the Route 7 – Route 2 corridor Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan August 2005 Implementation and Action Plan Page 69 > Consider revising zoning to reflect the Wolf Road corridor as a mixed use node or Town Center
8. Office Mixed Use Areas > Establish design guidelines.
9. Commercial Retail Areas > Establish design guidelines.
10. Airport Business Area > Rezone parcels surrounding the airport to more appropriate land uses that encourage ancillary services to the airport.
11. Mohawk River Revitalization Area > Revise zoning to include the use of conservation subdivision design. > Establish an incentive zoning mechanism that would allow for modest density increases in exchange for specified public benefits. > Revise zoning in the Delphus Kill area to allow residential north of

Pollack Road and residential with some mixed use office south of Pollack Road. Any development that occurs in this area should appropriately consider the environmental features of the area.

12. Pine Bush Area > Change the existing Industrial zoning to low-density residential and pockets of light industrial that appropriately consider this important natural resource. > Revise zoning to include the use of conservation subdivision design.

**7.1.2 Establish a regular system for monitoring implementation of the comprehensive plan.**

**7.1.3 Consider acceptance of the Mohawk River Waterfront Revitalization Study and the Route 7 – Route 2 Corridor Land Use/Transportation Linkage Study.**

**7.2 SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (WITHIN 1-2 YEARS)**

**1. 7.2.1 Restructure Planning and Economic Development Department.**

There are numerous recommendations within Section 3 of this plan that suggest an additional role or responsibility for the Town's Planning and Economic Development Department (PEDD) during implementation. The additional roles fall into two primary categories: economic development and long range planning. Both are functions that the PEDD currently has some responsibility over, however, these responsibilities are fragmented due to other priorities assigned to this department. Enhancing the Planning and Economic Development Department's ability to coordinate proactive economic development initiatives, and to undertake future planning studies such as neighborhood plans, will provide the Town Board with the staff support it will need to implement these important components of the Comprehensive Plan.

2. **7.2.2 Enhance gateways to the Town.** A gateway is important in providing a sense of arrival into a community. Gateways are also important in establishing a sense of identity for a community. These areas could be enhanced to be more prominent, welcoming and to create a sense of place. A well-placed sign with landscaping indicating that one has arrived in the Town of Colonie, for example, might be a nice addition in these areas and could also help to create an identity for Colonie. While it is recognized that such signage exists in some locations in the Town, there is an opportunity for enhancements. Additional enhancements might include banners or flowers to improve the sense of arrival. The local Chambers of Commerce or a local Business Improvement District might contribute to a streetscape beautification program in the identified entranceway areas. In addition, local volunteer groups might also contribute their time and energy to assist in maintaining these areas.

3. **7.2.3 Develop a Town-wide Economic Development Strategy.** Given its prime location in the region and proximity to regional transportation systems, the Town of Colonie has not had the need to actively pursue economic development in the past. However, this is changing. As new, high technology markets emerge in the region, the competition to attract business and increase the Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan August 2005 Implementation and

Action Plan Page 71 local tax base becomes stronger. The Town should first identify the type of businesses it hopes to attract and then develop a strategy to attract those businesses. Among the important questions that the Economic Development Strategy should answer is what role the Town of Colonie could play in the region's growing technology sectors. It should also explore the potential of specific locations such as Railroad Avenue in terms of attracting such industries. The Planning and Economic Development Department (PEDD) should have primary responsibility for developing the Economic Development Strategy. The PEDD, working with the local Chambers of Commerce, the Industrial Development Agency, and others, could then develop incentives for business to locate in specified areas.

4. **7.2.4 Pursue redevelopment initiative for the Lincoln Avenue Industrial Revitalization Area.** Even as it develops an Economic Development Strategy (above), the Town should begin conversations with the New York State Department of State (DOS) about the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program. A successful application to the BOA program will allow the Town to advance its understanding of any potential environmental contamination issues in the area, and to develop a comprehensive approach to redevelopment of the various sites that considers environmental remediation, appropriate reuse, transportation access, and neighborhood issues. However, eligibility requirements for this program are very specific and, in an effort to determine eligibility, an in-depth discussion with the DOS should take place prior to submitting an application.
5. **7.2.5 Consider reducing street widths in new residential developments.** At the same time as the Town's land use regulations are being amended (see above), the Town should organize a review of its residential street standards. Oftentimes, the required minimum residential street width is excessively wide. Wide residential streets inadvertently encourage speeding and, in areas with no sidewalks, can create an unsafe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Development of a reduced residential street standard would require coordination with various Town Departments, such as the Department of Public Works (DPW), and with emergency service providers in the area, to ensure safety. Information about the function, safety, and benefits of narrower streets has become available from transportation engineering organizations, such as the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), in recent years.
6. **7.2.6 Institute a snow emergency regulation.** In order to make narrower local roads practical in the Town of Colonie, snow removal procedures must be addressed. The DPW is responsible for the maintenance of all Town roads, including snow removal. This task can become very difficult on streets that allow for on-street parking and when cars are not removed in a timely manner. As it considers a narrower residential street standard (above), the Town should consider a snow emergency regulation. A snow emergency is a set of predefined parking regulations that would allow DPW to completely clear streets of accumulating snow. In order to be plowed completely, streets must be free of parked vehicles. A snow emergency might require residents to park on a specific side of the street or prevent residents from parking on certain

streets when a snow emergency has been declared. Specific requirements could be tailored to the characteristics of particular streets or areas of the Town. The details of such a requirement would need to be Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan August 2005 Implementation and Action Plan Page 72 determined by impacted Town departments, such as DPW. Many communities in Upstate New York have instituted snow emergency procedures and have seen successful implementation of such requirements.

7. **7.2.7 Develop a Town-wide sidewalk plan.** Throughout the comprehensive planning process, participants identified the need for additional connections between residential neighborhoods and also between services. A Town-wide sidewalk plan would serve to identify appropriate locations for new sidewalks and locations where sidewalks connections or improvements are necessary. It is understood that sidewalks may not be appropriate in all locations and that the maintenance costs of sidewalks should be carefully considered. Additional study into the proper locations of such formal connections is recommended. The Planning and Economic Development Department could initiate such a plan.
8. **7.2.8 Establish an official map.** The Town Board should adopt an Official Map. This map would show the location of existing and proposed streets, public facilities, and other public areas. The adoption of such a map would allow the Town to reserve future corridors and protect the specified areas from development. Town staff could work to develop the official map.
9. **7.2.9 Identify priority areas for open space conservation and develop a funding mechanism for conserving open space.** The Open Space and Recreation Plan section of this document (Section 5) establishes a vision for a town-wide network of open lands and recreational resources, and provides recommendations for protecting these resources. Within this section, and the associated map (Section 6), a handful of specific areas are identified as “Parcels of High Conservation Interest”. These are special locations where some form of permanent protection is highly desired. In addition to these specific locations, there are several larger areas, highlighted in the plan and on the map as “Conservation Areas,” where significant blocks of undeveloped land still exist. In some cases these Conservation Areas coincide with special ecosystems or landscape features such as the Albany Pine Bush Preserve or the Mohawk River area. Within these larger areas, specific parcels may also be desirable for permanent protection. In some cases, the high conservation value parcels are already known. For example, the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Management Plan identifies parcels for “full protection.” In other areas designated in this Comprehensive Plan as Conservation Areas, it is not known which parcels would be most suitable for some form of permanent protection and which might be more appropriate for development utilizing conservation design. As follow-up actions to the Comprehensive Plan the Town should develop a set of criteria that could be used to evaluate specific open space parcels proposed for acquisition (fee simple or easement). At the same time, the Town should investigate the establishment of a local funding mechanism for its open space conservation program. Overall goals in terms of protected

acres, and estimates of associated acquisition costs should be evaluated. Ultimately, the Town should determine an appropriate level of funding, the methods for generating these funds (general funds, general revenue bonds, or other), and the process for gaining approval for such funding (some Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan August 2005 Implementation and Action Plan Page 73 methods may require voter referendum). These follow-up activities could be organized through an existing entity such as the Town's Conservation Advisory Council, with assistance from the Department of Planning and Economic Development and, perhaps, outside expertise from a partner such as the Nature Conservancy and/or the Trust for Public Land.

10. **7.2.10 Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.** The Colonie Department of Parks and Recreation should initiate a Town-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan. A Master Plan would inventory all of the recreational resources throughout the Town. The master plan would also identify recreational needs and address steps to fulfill those recreational needs. Technical and financial assistance could be available through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.
11. **7.2.11 Develop a neighborhood planning initiative** – utilize West Albany for the first neighborhood plan. Neighborhoods, such as West Albany, would benefit from a neighborhood master plan. A neighborhood master plan would identify neighborhood specific concerns and would determine the most appropriate recommendations to address those concerns at a detailed level. Once prepared the Town Board could adopt a neighborhood master plan as an amendment to the comprehensive plan. The Town might consider initiating such an effort in one of the town's older neighborhoods, developing a model process that could later be used elsewhere in the community, such as Roesselville.
12. **7.2.12 Establish an innovative homeownership program within the Town, targeting older neighborhoods.** Many communities have established homeownership programs and offer assistance to first time homebuyers. The Albany Housing Authority (AHA), for example, has established The Albany Home Store, which provides credit and homebuyer counseling. In addition, the AHA currently offers three homeownership programs. Each of these specific programs has income requirements, but they are examples of the type of programs that could be developed. Technical assistance is also available through organizations such as the Albany County Rural Housing Authority, the Affordable Housing Partnership of the Capital Region, Inc., and the New York State Housing Finance Agency, SONYMA, Affordable Housing Corporation. The Town should develop a homeownership program that targets specific neighborhoods.
13. **7.2.13 Consider the creation of a Design Review Board or an Architectural Review Board.** The Town Board may decide in the future to establish a Design Review Board or and Architectural Review Board to refine and expand on design guidelines in the Town. The design guidelines, once established by the Town through the zoning amendments and administered by the Planning Board, will likely have a positive impact on the aesthetics of



development in the Town. As the Town moves forward, it may find be necessary to have an additional layer of design or architectural review. This would ultimately be a Town Board decision. Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan August 2005 Implementation and Action Plan Page 74

### **7.3 MID-TERM ACTIONS (WITHIN 2-5 YEARS)**

1. **7.3.1 Implement traffic calming measures.** Traffic calming is concerned with improving safety and quality of the pedestrian experience, as well as creating safer roadways for those traveling via automobile. Traffic calming usually involves reducing vehicle speeds, providing more space for pedestrian and bicyclists, and improving the overall local built environment. Traffic calming techniques could include the simple addition of street trees along the roadway, bulbouts or curb extensions, chicanes, on-street parking and landscaped medians. These techniques either physically reduce the road width or give the appearance of a narrower street, causing motorists to reduce their travel speed. It is important to recognize that these techniques are not appropriate in every situation, and qualified transportation professionals must evaluate them on a case-by-case basis. The Planning and Economic Development Department could coordinate with the Department of Public Works to consider appropriate measures for calming traffic. The Town is currently undertaking a study to identify appropriate locations for and types of traffic calming measures for new development. Such measures may also be incorporated into developed areas when road improvements are considered.
2. **7.3.2 Establish a system of bicycle routes throughout the Town and provide appropriate signage.** Biking functions not only as a recreational activity, but also as an alternative mode of transportation. The Town should provide facilities to ensure the safety and convenience of bicycling, such as the informational kiosk illustrated in the adjacent photo. The addition of bike lanes, proper pavement markings and signage, and a map of bike routes in the Town should be considered. The opportunity exists for the Town to enhance connections with regional bicycle routes, such as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Path.
3. **7.3.3 Compile and organize existing historic and cultural resource information to develop a comprehensive Town-wide inventory.** The Town Planning and Economic Development Department and the Town Historian, in coordination with local volunteer groups, could work to pull this information together in a timely manner. While many of these resources are already documented (i.e. the National Register of Historic Places), it would be helpful to have this information in one easy-to-find location. An inventory could be the first step in properly identifying these resources and developing options for stewardship and preservation. Such an activity could also be the starting point for developing programs to promote and educate the community about these important resources. As part of the inventory, perhaps a brochure could be created that identifies the locations of these resources and allows residents and visitors to

embark on a self-guided walking tour. Various entities could assist the Town in this endeavor, in addition to volunteer organizations. The New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, for example, could provide valuable technical and perhaps financial assistance for programming and preservation. Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan August 2005 Implementation and Action Plan Page

4. **75 7.3.4 Update existing Generic Environmental Impact Statements (GEISs).** The Town has successfully utilized the GEIS tool to assist in mitigating impacts of new development in specific areas throughout the Town. The Town could update the existing documents and consider expanding the scope of the GEIS to strengthen provisions for mitigation of open space loss.

#### **7.4 ON-GOING ACTIONS**

1. **7.4.1 Encourage education for Town planning staff, the Town Board, the Planning Board and the Zoning Board.** The Town Board should encourage all members of the Town's Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to attend educational programs in an effort to update their knowledge of planning and zoning techniques and laws on a continuing basis. Town Board members and planning staff could also be encouraged to attend such programs as appropriate. This is of particular importance as the Town continues to change and as it considers the use of new planning tools in response to this change. Several organizations offer such programs and hold workshops and conferences or can come to local communities for this purpose. These organizations include, but are not limited to: the Albany County Department of Economic Development, Conservation and Planning, the New York State Department of State Division of Local Government, the New York Planning Federation, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, the Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association and local colleges and universities, such as Albany Law School and the State University at Albany.
2. **7.4.2 Prepare for and comply with the new Phase II Stormwater Management Regulations.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in an effort to protect and preserve the nation's water resources, has developed a stormwater management rule. The Stormwater Phase II Rule requires a permit for discharges from Municipal Separate Storm Water Systems (MS4s) in Urbanized Areas. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued two general permits under the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) to comply with the EPA law. The two state permits address MS4s in urbanized areas and construction activities. Also under the Phase II regulations, MS4s are required to develop and implement a stormwater management program by 2008. Generally, a stormwater management program must contain six minimum control measures, according to the MS4 Phase II Permit

requirements. Each minimum control measure must describe measurable goals as well as select and implement management practices to achieve the goals. The minimum control measures include: public education and outreach; public involvement and participation; illicit discharge detection and elimination; construction site runoff control; post-construction runoff control; and pollution prevention and good housekeeping. So, for example, the Town could work with partners to provide educational services related to septic system maintenance and the prevention of illicit discharges into the Town's storm drainage system.

## **7.5 LONG-TERM ACTIONS (WITHIN 5-10 YEARS)**

7.5.1 Update the comprehensive plan. As the community changes and grows, its needs and desires change. The comprehensive plan should be a flexible and adaptable document that reflects such changes. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the Town of Colonie review and update, if necessary, the comprehensive plan within the next 5 to 10 years. An assessment of the progress achieved on the implementation actions would also be beneficial.