

Lake Avenue Country Gateway: Vision and Recommendations



Report
of the
Weibel
Avenue -
Gilbert
Road
Study Area
Advisory
Committee

October 2003



City of
Saratoga
Springs,
New York

A Linkage Project of the Capital District Transportation Committee

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**Report of the
Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study Area Advisory Committee
City of Saratoga Springs, New York
October 2003**

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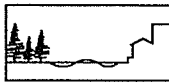
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Executive Summary

The "Lake Avenue Country Gateway: Vision and Recommendations: A Report of the City of Saratoga Springs' Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study Advisory Committee" presents the existing conditions, analyses, community vision and recommendations for land use and transportation policies, including amendments to the Saratoga Springs' comprehensive plan, zoning code, and rural design principles.

The City of Saratoga Springs initiated the study as an implementation action of the comprehensive plan. The Capital District Transportation Committee's (CDTC) Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program funded the study through a matching grant program.

The study area consists of approximately 200 acres of largely undeveloped land east of I-87 between Northway Exits 14 and 15. The study responded to the comments and concerns generated by citizens involved throughout the extensive planning process.

Clear Vision

This study area is part of a greenbelt of open space that wraps around the city's more urban core. Overall the vision is to protect Saratoga Springs' sense of place – the "City in the Country" – by maintaining this contributing part of the city's rural character and this area's function in bridging the countryside to the more urbanized center.

Guiding Principles for the Area

As change occurs, any and all future uses of the area whether through private or public initiatives should avoid consuming the rural landscape and limit impacts to the area's rural character. Open space is desired provided active recreation uses do not overwhelm the desired rural character. Other desired primary uses are residential and agricultural, complemented by secondary uses that maintain the rural character. All development of this area including recreation uses should apply a conservation site analysis approach currently required for subdivisions. New uses should be low-traffic generating uses with impacts no greater than rural residential uses in order to minimize impacts to the transportation network.

Four Land Use Options Identified

Below are four options for the city council to evaluate. As some of these options are complementary and not mutually exclusive, combinations would be appropriate and acceptable.

- ❖ **Open Space and Recreation Strategy.** The committee found support for the idea of proactively securing open space within the study area with the condition that any active recreation use maintains the desired

rural character and maintains low impact traffic comparable to rural residential use.

- ❖ **Maintain the Current RR-1 Zoning.** With no change in current zoning, the city would respond to development proposals using the existing ordinance. Conservation subdivision regulations are in effect.
- ❖ **Create a Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay and Allow Limited Additional Special Permit Uses to Complement Existing RR-1 Zoning.** Allow limited flexibility for complementary land uses such as day care center, multiple-family housing in addition to 2-family housing, senior housing, and recreation business (indoor or outdoor).
- ❖ **Develop an Incentive Zoning Program for the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area to Achieve Community's Desired Amenities – Enhanced Conservation, Complementary Development and Pedestrian, Bicyclist and Transportation Amenities.**

Traffic Options

Simple, phased traffic improvements should be conducted to stay ahead of the regional traffic growth. Start with the straightening of Gilbert Road. A detailed traffic discussion is included in the report. Concurrent with traffic improvements and any land use changes, phased pedestrian and bicyclist enhancements designed with sensitivity for the rural character should be pursued along Lake Avenue, Weibel Avenue and Gilbert Road.

Key Public Decisions

1. **Open Space Decision.** Advance this initiative if the city council is interested in pursuing open space protection in this study area. Engage in land negotiations with willing and interested landowners. The approach for securing the open space lands may include a land swap with city-owned lands in the downtown, activating the use of open space bond authorization, or seeking outside funding. Any future use including public use for active recreation should be required to utilize a conservation site analysis.
2. **Zoning Decision.** Concurrent to the pursuit of the open space strategy, decide on amending the zoning either slightly for a few additional special permit uses, or for increased flexibility and potential for greater community amenities via an incentive zoning program custom for the study area. The determination will need to be made whether incentive zoning which holds promise for greatest flexibility and potential greatest public benefit is appropriate for use at this time in light of public concerns.

Summary of Four Land Use Options

These options for evaluation may be considered in combinations as well.

❖ Open Space and Recreation Strategy. (See Figure 1)

Concept: As a public policy, the city council pursues action to acquire/negotiate lands for obtaining all or part of the study area for public open space (passive recreation) and/or for some active recreation uses. The remaining lands not included in an open space strategy would be subject to existing RR-1 zoning or to any revised zoning that is implemented. The use of the open space lands should be used for preserved natural area/passive recreation balanced with active recreation uses (if any.) Any uses including active recreation should apply a conservation site analysis approach and be low-traffic generating uses.

Approaches and Funding: If this is a preferred option, the city will need to explore with interested landowners first. Funding options include using local funding, pursuing grants, or performing a combination of the above. Another creative option is a land swap of the desired open space lands with city-owned property downtown for economic development. Details on such potential approaches to achieving this option are as follows:

- The city could consider buying the properties of interest in fee title from willing landowners (possibly using the city's open space bond act funding if the properties qualify under the city's open space bond act funding criteria.) This would avail the city of site control and enable public access to the open space.
- The concept of a "land swap" is a creative approach that would involve the city and the landowners trading city-

owned land where development is desired, such as a downtown property owned by the city, with lands in the study area for permanent community open space, as well as other potential benefits to the city.

- The city could purchase development rights of selected properties. This option would require willing landowners and the lands would remain in private ownership, and thus not necessarily achieve public access.
- The city could seek competitive private, state and federal grant funding to achieve open space and active recreation land uses within the study area. However, this approach may be a long-term proposition, due to the competitive nature of the grant programs.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes required (if any): The refined vision for the area developed through this study process should be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.

Zoning changes required (if any): No change in zoning is required to achieve use of these lands for public open space or public recreation parkland use. However, the city may want to change zoning of the area earmarked for a public park and public open space once it becomes used for that purpose, as is generally the city's policy.

Open Space - Amount Provided: The open space acreage will depend upon the specific parcels sought for public open space. The lands obtained for ownership by the city would be 100% public lands. The city may or may not seek all the parcels within the study area.

Open Space - Public Access: With public ownership, 100% public access would be possible.

Fiscal impacts on city: Open space lands would be removed from the tax rolls if the city obtains ownership, so there would be a net loss of property tax revenue. However a positive aspect is that there would be no new expenses for school services. Whatever limited uses of the site for public open space use and access and/or active recreation use and access would require a level of public investment in infrastructure and maintenance/operation services.

Costs borne by the city: Public costs will depend on the negotiated final value of the lands that is agreed to by the landowner(s) and the city and any other not-for-profit that could be involved, and whether or not a land swap can be achieved. If the land swap idea is not feasible or a viable approach, the alternative is the process of utilizing the open space bond may be an option. If the lands do not qualify for using the open space bond act funds, other local financing options would need to be considered. Any necessary infrastructure, access, park improvements or transportation improvements in the study area would likely be borne by the public, unless dedicated fundraising was conducted or grants were sought.

Traffic impacts: The city would need to be careful to achieve a balance of public uses of land (active recreation vs. passive) because active recreation uses can have high trip generation. Popular passive areas can also generate traffic.

Potential Traffic Mitigation / Improvements:

If the city obtains ownership of lands within the study area, there would be no private investment assistance for transportation improvements or other community benefits. The community amenity could be significant open space benefits. Any necessary infrastructure or transportation improvements in the study area would likely be borne by the public.

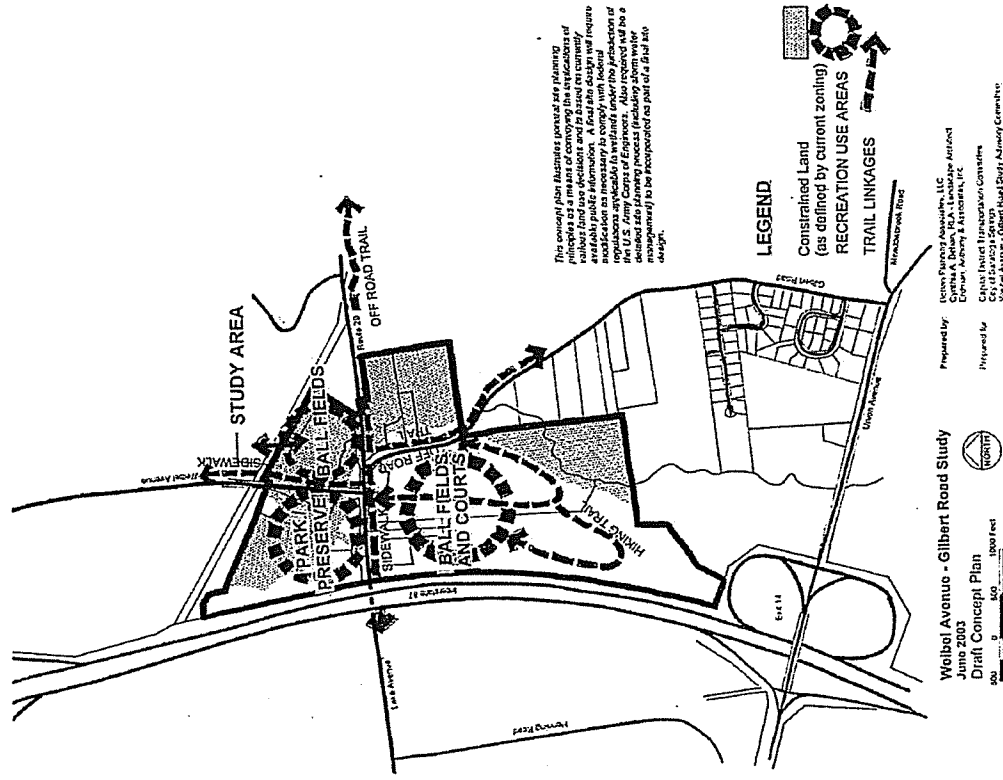


Figure 1: Open Space and Recreation Strategy. The above figure indicates use of the entire study area for open space and active recreation. However, an open space and recreation strategy could also be that only portions of the study area are used for open space and/or active recreation combined with development uses under the existing RR-1 zoning or any revised zoning.

❖ Maintain the Current RR-1 Zoning. (See Figure 2)

Concept: Make no changes and accept development as-of-right that would be required to comply with all currently applicable comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances, including the Rural Residential-1 Zoning District regulations and the conservation subdivision regulations. Under this scenario if all the parcels involved are fully built out as residential uses, taking into account the approximate constrained lands, the city could expect perhaps approximately 50 residential units within the total study area based on a preliminary build-out analysis with the new conservation subdivision regulations. No public access is guaranteed with this scenario. However, if a developer supplies public access to the open space provided, the developer could obtain an incentive of 20% density (thus increasing the total to approximately 60 total units).

Approach / Funding: With this scenario, private market forces will proceed when the market is ripe.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes Required (if any): None, although including or referencing this report in the comprehensive plan would be appropriate.

Zoning Changes required (if any): The refined vision for the area developed through this study process should be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.

Open Space - Amount Provided: Constrained lands (floodplains, stream corridor buffers, NYSDEC wetlands, 25% slopes or greater) plus 50% of the remaining buildable land would be conserved as open space.

Open Space - Public Access: Public access is not required. However, if the private developer grants public access to the open space set-aside, there is an incentive for a 20% density increase.

Fiscal impacts on the city: This scenario will require a potential additional demand for school services; municipal services. Yet it will also add tax revenue to the tax rolls more than vacant land. A low to moderate value residential development is likely to be a net fiscal cost (see city's fiscal analysis 2002).

Costs borne by the city/public: No additional costs per se.

Traffic impacts: Primarily single-family home trip generation for say 50 to 60 homes.

Traffic mitigation/improvements: No significant developer-borne improvements are anticipated. Private development would make traffic/transportation-related improvements as necessary for access and circulation for the private development. Improvements would likely be frontage sidewalks (or for this rural character corridor -- off-road paths), and site access road construction.

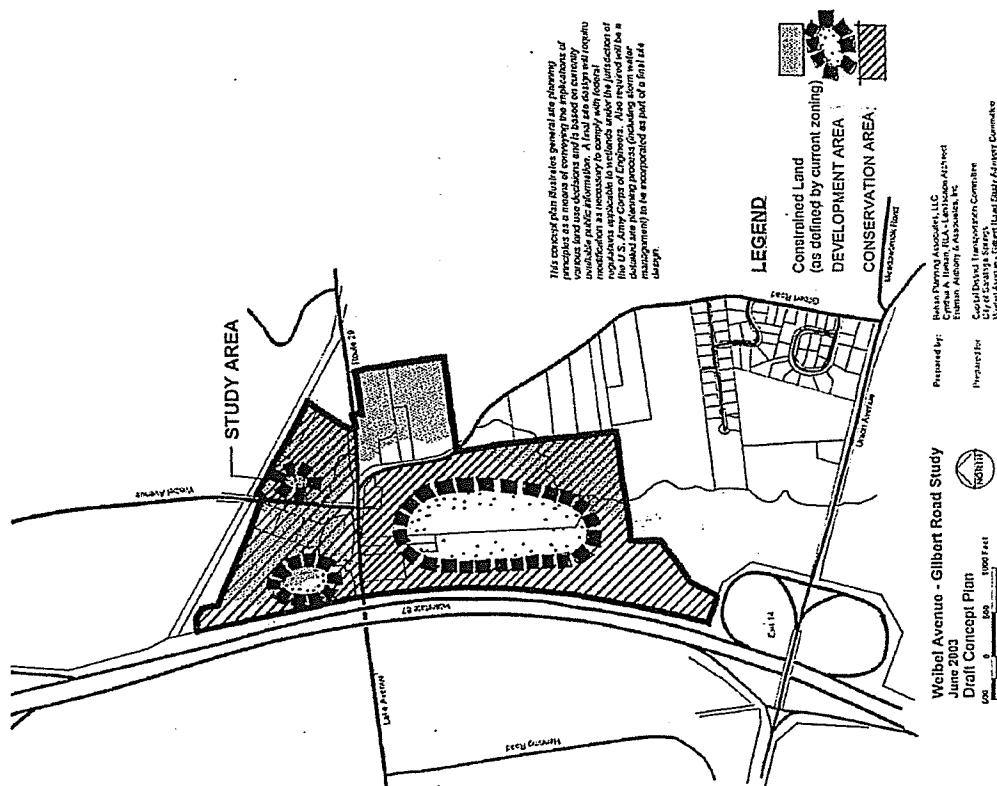


Figure 2: Two Scenarios Depicted: No Change in Zoning/As-of-Right Development and Lake Avenue Country Gateway Zoning.

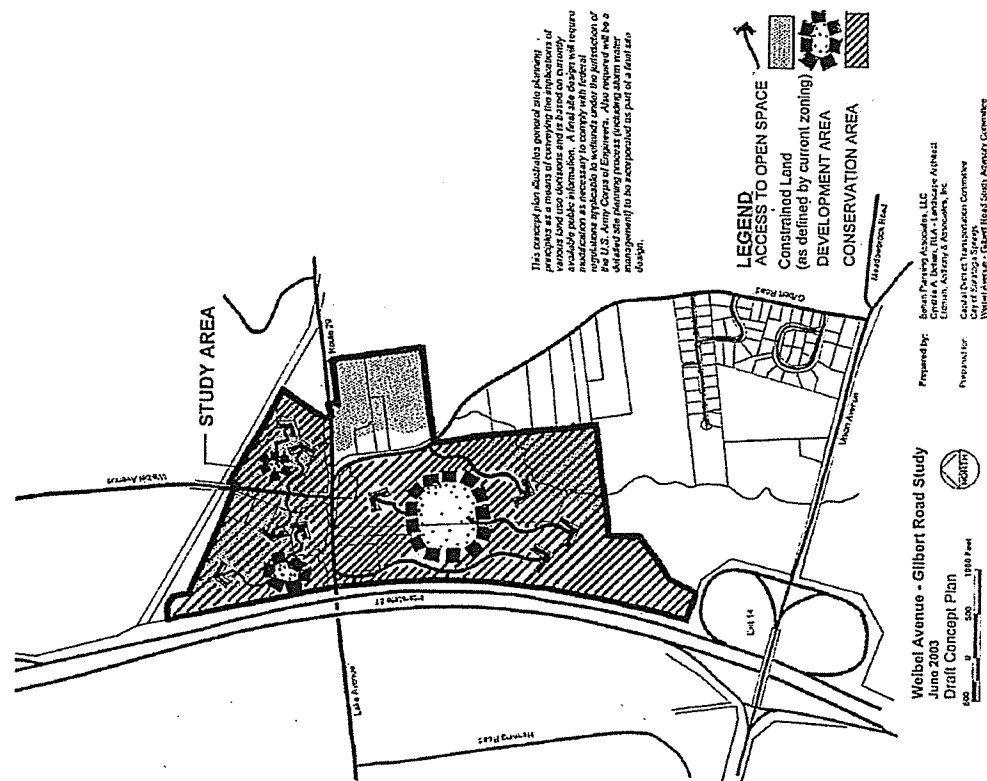


Figure 3: Incentive Zoning Scenario. This option could provide flexibility and opportunity for additional community amenities paid for by developer in exchange for a development density bonus.

❖ Create Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay and Allow Minimal Additional Land Uses By Special Use Permit Only to Complement Existing RR-1 Zoning. (See Figure 2)

Concept: Existing RR-1 zoning remains in place with the change of adding flexibility in allowed uses. Add a limited list of special permit uses within the specific "Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay District" (the study area). Residential uses should continue to be the predominant development land use, with any non-residential use as the subordinate, complementary use.

The additional special permitted uses that are proposed to be added to the existing list of special permit uses under this scenario are:

- Day Care Center
- Multiple-family dwellings (notably, only a small proportion of 2-family dwellings are currently allowed)
- Senior housing
- Professional or business offices
- Recreation business (indoor or outdoor facilities)

Approach: Make minimal changes to zoning code.

- ❑ Keep current RR-1 Zoning District.
- ❑ Create a study area overlay district - a rural gateway overlay called the "Lake Avenue Country Gateway District" to achieve this option, so that only the study area would have the potential for these additional uses.

- ❑ Add the limited list of additional special permit use to the list of special permit uses that would only be applicable for the "Lake Avenue Country Gateway District."
- ❑ Strengthen the tests articulated in the zoning ordinance for the granting of a special use permit that would apply, including: meeting rural character, maintaining no greater density than for RR-1 residential uses, and generating equal or less traffic than the RR-1 land uses.
- ❑ Condition of special permit uses: On significant size parcels, a minimum requirement would be established for primary uses that must be agricultural or residential to ensure maintenance of the rural character.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes required (if any): Adopt an amendment to the comprehensive plan to describe the Lake Avenue Country Gateway vision that is more inclusive of a few limited additional uses that would complement the rural character.

Zoning Changes required (if any): Amend the zoning as indicated above.

Open Space - Amount Provided: Constrained lands (floodplains, stream corridor buffers, NYSDEC wetlands, 25% slopes or greater) plus 50% of the remaining buildable land would be conserved as open space.

Open Space - Public Access: Public access is not required. However, if the private developer grants public access to the open space set-aside, there is an incentive for a 20% density increase.

Fiscal impacts on the city: Opportunity for more flexible, additional use may result in improving the net fiscal benefit of a project to the community.

Costs borne by the city/public: No additional costs per se.

Traffic impacts: This scenario would maintain comparable traffic impacts to other existing RR-1 potential uses.

Traffic mitigations/Improvements: With additional special permit uses allowed, require no significant increase in traffic generation beyond other RR-1 uses.

❖ Develop an Incentive Zoning Program For the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area to Achieve Desired Community Amenities -- Enhanced Conservation and Development and Transportation Amenities. (See Figure 3)

Concept: Amend the zoning to allow customized study area incentive zoning program to achieve community amenities for granting approval for an equal value of development bonuses. The uniqueness about this option is the flexibility in allowing the opportunity for a developer to propose paying for a community amenity in exchange for additional density. The benefit to this option is that it would clearly establish the requirement of obtaining and approving a comparable value of a public/community amenity/benefit in order to allow a developer bonus.

This option could be used to strengthen the land protection and open space conservation element of the area and grant more flexibility in allowable land uses. The benefit of this

scenario is to create more rural conservation set asides than would be achieved by the current zoning and to work with private landowners to realize additional community benefits such as for desired traffic improvements. Residential uses should continue to be the predominant development land use, with any non-residential use as the subordinate, complementary use.

Conditions could be placed on this scenario such as the following to ensure the rural character is maintained: This scenario could create a minimum of 75% of the total buildable (unconstrained) land area to be set aside as permanently protected open space with a minimum of 50% of the open space accessible to the public. (This is an increase of total open space area from the RR-1 and guarantees greater public access to open space.) The additional uses could include mixed uses and limited commercial uses. No office parks, general retail or restaurants would be allowed. Any new use proposed outside of the current zoning would not be allowed to create significant traffic impacts beyond a residential development scenario.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes required (if any): The refined vision for the area developed through this study process should be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.

Zoning Changes required (if any): Adopt incentive (amenity) zoning specifically for this area.

Open Space - Amount Provided: Requires 75% of the land area to be protected, meaningful and accessible open space. Potential opportunity to achieve greatest amount of open space paid for privately.

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Cover Photo Credits: Illustration of open space with conservation residential development in the wooded area (center right): © 1995-1996 Center for Rural Massachusetts.
Aerial photo of clustered residences (bottom): Copyright 2002 Alex S. MacLean/Landslides, (617) 497-9400, from Above and Beyond. Other photographs: Behan Planning Associates, LLC.

I. Introduction

a. Purpose

Defining a clearer land use vision with applicable transportation considerations for the complexity of issues facing the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road intersection area on Lake Avenue in the City of Saratoga Springs was the premise for the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study. The study was proposed by the City of Saratoga Springs as an implementation action of The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan adopted in July 2001. The comprehensive plan proposed that immediate action be initiated to:

“Prepare master plan for Gilbert Road/Weibel Avenue intersection area. A consultant should be retained to assist the City with the preparation of land use plan for the area near the intersection of Gilbert Road and Weibel Avenue. The plan should be developed with significant public participation. It should address design standards, traffic calming actions, road realignment and mixed land uses.”

—The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan, July 17, 2001, page 54 of 66.

An eight-member advisory committee led the study process through its closely defined scope of work, guided by the city’s planner/community development director, and a professional consulting team consisting of Behan Planning Associates, LLC, Erdman, Anthony & Associates, Inc., and Cynthia A. Behan, Landscape Architect. The advisory committee consisted of a representative from the city’s planning board, zoning board of appeals, design review commission, department of public works, department of public safety, as well as three study area property owners.¹

The committee approached its work with the objective of encouraging and facilitating public discussion to involve the public and obtain direction on the community’s development and protection goals for this sub-area of the city. Committee members listened to, synthesized and have taken into account extensive public input, including a presentation of proposed design alternatives by the City in the Country Land Protection Committee at a committee meeting on September 10, 2003. Evaluating the full spectrum of the public comments and recommendations, coupled with consultant technical input and committee discussion, the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study Advisory Committee members achieved considerable consensus on the appropriate

¹ One advisory committee member, Susan Anderson Touhey, resigned the committee in May 2003.

land use vision for the study area, and developed recommendations for the comprehensive plan, zoning, and for design guidance.

Funding for the study was provided by the Capital District Transportation Committee's (CDTC) Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program, a grant program requiring a local match.² The CDTC is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for carrying out federal requirements for cooperative transportation planning and programming within the Capital District area.

b. Location

The comprehensive plan reads ambiguously on the definition of the study area. As a result, agreeing on the boundaries of the study area proved difficult to achieve among committee members. The "study area" was finally interpreted to be the parcels along the Lake Avenue corridor from Gilbert Road to the I-87 overpass. A number of these parcels are large – and whole parcels were included. The resulting Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study area consists of approximately 200 acres of largely undeveloped land east of I-87 between Northway Exits 14 and 15. At the onset of the public participation process, some members of the public commented that the study area was larger than what was called for in the comprehensive plan's implementation recommendation.

A figure of the study area boundaries is shown below. The area is bisected by Lake Avenue (County Route 29), and includes the section of Lake Avenue identified as a city gateway. The study area experiences local and regional traffic en route to Union Avenue/Exit 14 and the retail establishments and malls at Exit 15, and cross-city traffic along Lake Avenue. The study area includes extensive wetlands, a protected stream corridor, and is adjacent to the city's Union Avenue rural gateway and the Bog Meadow Nature Trail.

² Local property owners in the study area contributed to the local share of the grant match.



The Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road study area is outlined in red above.

c. Scope and Approach

The study included the following major tasks performed by the consultant team on behalf of the advisory committee:

- An assessment of existing conditions;
- Identification of major issues;
- Design and execution of three public workshops and public outreach;
- Preparation of draft conceptual plans;
- Review of study progress with the advisory committee and staff; and,
- The preparation of a report with recommendations for the comprehensive plan and zoning code.

The findings of this report reflect the highest level of consensus available at the time among the range of views of committee members and their understanding and synthesis of the public input.

d. Public Participation Process

The advisory committee actively involved members of the public throughout the study process. Meetings were announced in advance via the city hall bulletin board, the city's website, at city council meetings,

through advertisements in the local media and at committee meetings. In addition, advisory committee meetings were open to the public, and a public comment period was included as part of each meeting. Upon request the consulting team also met with individual members of the public and the committee outside of regularly scheduled advisory committee meetings and public meetings to gather more input on issues and perspectives. Participants at the public workshops and citizens who provided comments included residents, representatives of Saratoga PLAN, business owners, retirees and employed citizens, residents from the eastern part of the city and the western parts of the city, residents from Gilbert Road, residents from Lake Avenue, local officials, a law student, landowners in the study area and near the study area, committee members. Finally, media representatives reported on the public meetings and the study progress throughout the project.



At the first public workshop on May 22, 2003 at the City of Saratoga Springs City Hall Music Hall, a summary of the existing conditions and issues about the study area was presented to the public. Public input was invited and recorded during break-out discussion groups led by teams of professional planners and designers. Each group reported its findings back to the whole group.

The second public workshop on May 31, 2003, a "hands-on" planning charrette, was held on a Saturday morning at the Lake Avenue Elementary School. Break-out groups consisting of public participants, professional planners and facilitators brainstormed potential alternatives for land use and transportation solutions.

At the third public workshop held on June 26, 2003 at the City of Saratoga Springs City Hall Music Hall, eight alternative scenarios of preliminary concepts for land use and traffic improvements alternatives were presented by the consultant team to the public for feedback and comments with the goal of narrowing down the alternatives to arrive at a consensus.

In addition, representatives of the City in the Country Land Protection Committee presented their ideas for design alternatives to the study area advisory committee in a presentation entitled, "Design Alternatives for Consideration in the Weibel Avenue - Gilbert Road Study" (September 10, 2003). The desired vision and land use of the City in the Country Land Protection Committee is largely that the city should make no changes to the existing RR-1 zoning which is one of the options the advisory committee has set forth. Further, their ideas included input on

road alignment of Gilbert Road and other transportation solutions, and about open space for the study area.

E-mail and other written comments were also received by the advisory committee and consultants. Each public comment was carefully reviewed and considered in the study process and in developing the committee's recommendations.

II. Land Use

a. Existing Conditions

Regional & City Setting

Residential and commercial growth

The City of Saratoga Springs is a growing community, experiencing infill residential development within the "downtown" as well as new development to the west and east sides of the city's downtown core.



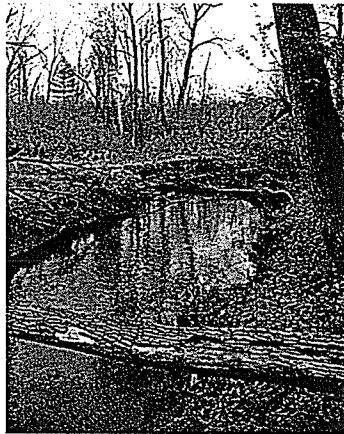
Residential growth along Saratoga Lake as well as the eastern part of the city affects the transportation system within the study area.

About half of the traffic using Lake Avenue and Weibel Avenue travels to and from the west, while the other half is traveling to and from the east, and is attributed to the extensive residential development near

Saratoga Lake and other eastern areas of the city. Traffic using Gilbert Road, likely

as a route to and from the Route 50 Wilton shopping corridor and malls is attributed also to east side residential development. With the demand for housing in Saratoga Springs and the attractiveness of the community, the growth in the city and its environs is anticipated to continue and will place pressure on the existing transportation system and on the study area. The transportation system and traffic issues within the study area are discussed in more detail in Section III of this report.

Open space lands and protection initiatives



Notably, this study area is part of the remaining 7,000 acres³ of primarily vacant, unimproved open lands in the Outer District of the City of Saratoga Springs. Extensive efforts have been made to build support for the protection of open space on a city-wide scale, culminating in voter approval of a \$5 million open space bond authorization in 2002.

Spring Run

Nearby development and recreation uses

North of the study area along Weibel Avenue are the following land uses and traffic generators: two city ice rink facilities, the city transfer station, Police Benevolent Association facilities, and existing commercial development. This area has significant potential for additional commercial development within the Northern Weibel Avenue area. A speed skating hall of fame is also proposed in the Northern Weibel Avenue area. The Northern Weibel area and the study area, as well as other locations throughout the city are under consideration by a separate recreational facilities committee for siting additional active recreational facilities (indoor and outdoor).

Few north-south roadway options

The study area's roads are attractive to residents and under pressure because there are few north-south options between the eastern part of the city and the Northway.

Comprehensive Plan

Historically the study area has been largely open lands (not developed) and zoned for low-density residential use.

In the 1999 City of Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan, the portion of the study area south of Lake Avenue was identified as a unique area of economic potential coupled with environmental constraints, resulting in a designation as an "impact" and later as a "special development" area. The area north of Lake Avenue remained designated for low-density residential use.

³ Source: Saratoga Springs: The City in the Country Open Space Resources 2002, p.6.

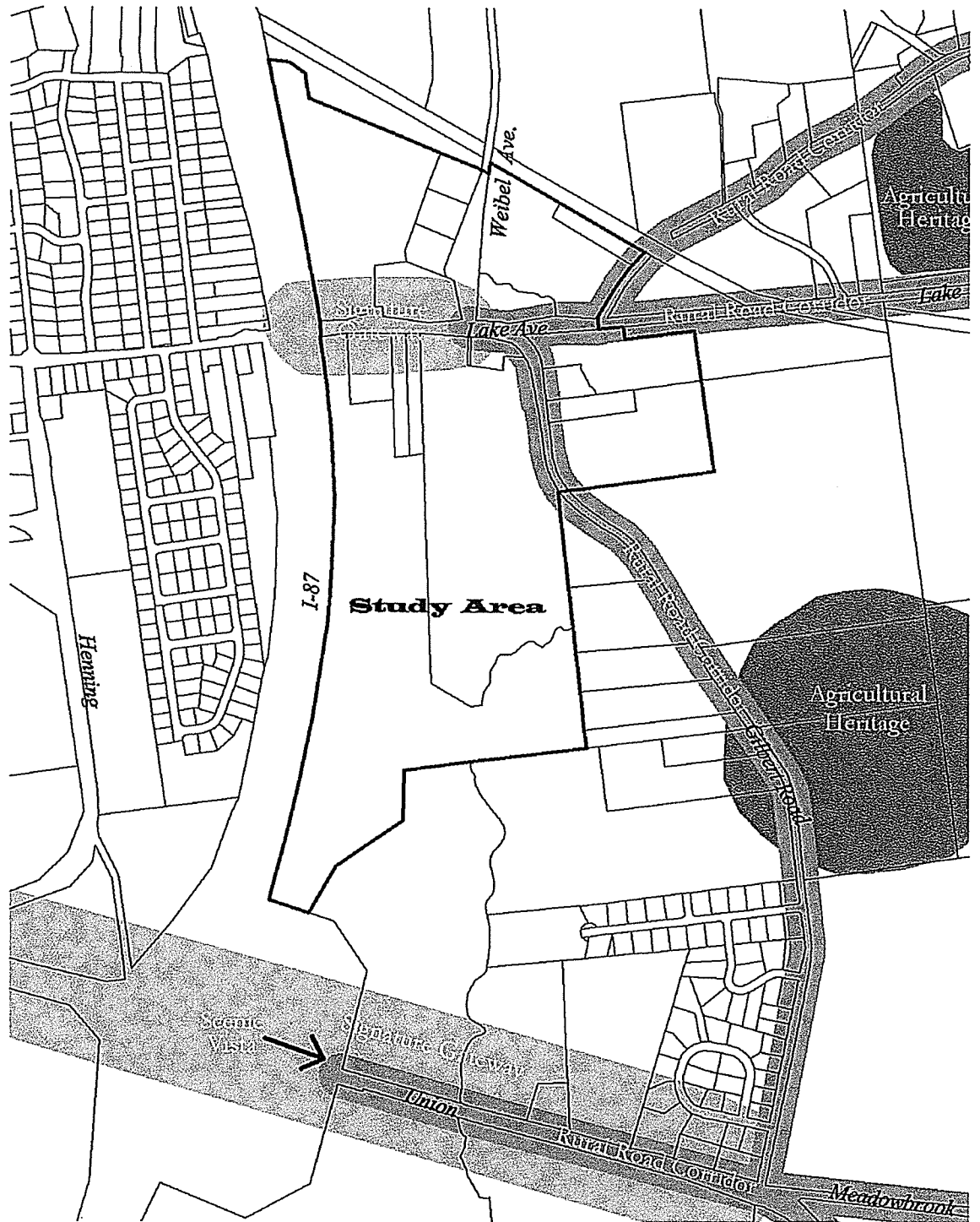
In The Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2001, the community identified the east side of the city as the "country" beginning at the Northway (Interstate-87), and ultimately removed the "special development" designation from south of Lake Avenue following much debate and split voting. The 2001 comprehensive plan designated the study area as part of the "Conservation Development District" allowing a base density of one residential unit per two acres of unconstrained land. However, the consensus on the land use vision for the area was still not clear. Thus the current comprehensive plan called for this study to be performed as an implementation action item (p. 54):

"A consultant should be retained to assist the City with the preparation of land use plan for the area near the intersection of Gilbert Road and Weibel Avenue. The plan should be developed with significant public participation. It should also address design standards, traffic calming actions, road realignment and mixed land uses."

Open Space Plan

Citizens previously identified rural character features within the study area in the development of the City of Saratoga Springs open space plan entitled, City of Saratoga Springs Open Space Resources 2002: An Update to the 1994 Open Space Plan. The study area includes a "Signature Gateway" area on Lake Avenue between its intersection with Weibel Avenue and I-87 overpass. The open space plan also identified Lake Avenue, Gilbert Road and nearby Old Schuylerville Road as "Rural Road Corridors." South of the study area, Union Avenue (NYS Route 9P), is also identified as a Rural Road Corridor. Further, Union Avenue at Exit 14 is considered another "Signature Gateway." A "Scenic View" is identified along Union Avenue as well. These features are summarized in a graphic on the following page.

Also relevant for the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study are two nearby "Agricultural Heritage" areas identified in the city's open space plan. One agricultural heritage area is located about midway on Gilbert Road, just east of the study area, along the east side of the road. Another agricultural heritage area is on Lake Avenue where a small horse farm exists across from the Bog Meadow Trail.



Cultural features in the study area as identified in the 2002 open space plan are shown above.

Current Zoning

Applicable zoning code for the City of Saratoga Springs is found in Chapter 240 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Saratoga Springs, New York. The entire study area is within the Rural Residential (RR-1) Zoning District. A significant portion of the city east of the Northway is zoned RR-1. The intent of the current RR-1 zoning is as follows: "...to provide low density residential and agricultural uses in order to preserve open space and a rural character. Limiting topography, soil condition, slopes, and lack of public infrastructure warrant the low densities." [Chapter 240, Article II]

RR-1 is two-acre zoning, meaning the allowable density per parcel is one unit per every two acres. For example, a 60-acre lot would yield approximately 30 housing units. A zoning amendment for a portion of the study area was adopted by the City of Saratoga Springs City Council on May 20, 2003, following a period of time when a portion of the study area was zoned for higher density and mixed use.

A portion of the study area – the lands along the Lake Avenue corridor – are also subject to the architectural review portion of the zoning ordinance (Chapter 240, Article VIII) as administered by the City of Saratoga Springs Design Review Commission.

Conservation Subdivision Regulations

Further, all applications for subdivisions within the RR-1 Zoning District must comply with the new conservation subdivision regulations, Article IV – Conservation Subdivision Regulations (Added 5/20/03).

Conservation subdivision regulations are intended by the city to preserve tracts of environmentally and scenically significant undeveloped land in the "country" part of the city in accordance with the comprehensive plan vision.

The procedure for creating a conservation subdivision requires a conservation site analysis as part of the site layout design process – resulting in the protection of the "constrained lands" of conservation value identified as a first step in the process, and additionally the setting aside of 50% of the "buildable land" as open space. Constrained lands include: floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, open space and recreational resources described in the city's open space plan, buffer areas for screening new development from adjoining parcels, and land exhibiting present or potential recreational, historic, ecological, agricultural, water resource, scenic or other natural resource value. The development is focused in a more clustered layout of structures on the remaining footprint of buildable land. In accordance with standard city procedures, project sponsors must submit subdivision applications for review and approval by the City of Saratoga Springs Planning Board.

Land Uses under RR-1

A number of principal permitted uses are allowed under the RR-1 zoning. Notably, these uses have a range of traffic generation and other types of traffic impacts related to the different uses and potential intensities. The list of principal permitted uses is as follows:

Principal Permitted Uses

- Single Family Residences
- Agriculture
- Homestead Activity
- Orchard Crops
- Truck Farming Crops
- Nurseries

Permitted Uses upon Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review Approval

There are existing non-residential uses allowed by special permit under the RR-1 zoning including the following examples: private clubs, bed & breakfasts, kennels, utility facilities, TV/radio, telephone tower & antennas. These special permit uses are not necessarily guaranteed to be "rural" in character or architecture, and if permitted, would require planning board oversight to ensure that the rural character desired in the study area is maintained. However, proposed plans within the Lake Avenue corridor additionally must be in compliance with Architectural Review section of the city's zoning ordinance, under the purview of the Design Review Commission. The complete list of Special Use Permit uses is:

- Bed & Breakfast
- Dog Kennel
- Riding Stable
- Greenhouses (commercial)
- Seasonal Produce Stand
- Golf Course & Clubhouse
- Churches & Religious Institutions
- Cemeteries
- Private Clubs
- Heliport
- Utility Facilities
- TV/Radio/Telephone Tower & Antenna
- Marinas & Docks
- Agriculture
- Dairy Farms
- Horse Farms.

Permitted Accessory Uses

Finally, several accessory uses are permitted in the RR-1 zoning district:

- Private Garages

- Storage Sheds
- Greenhouse (non-commercial)
- Barns & Stable
- Swimming Pools
- Outdoor Athletic Court Facilities
- Antennas & Satellite Dishes
- Private Docks
- Family & Group Day Care
- Solar/Heating/Ventilation Equipment
- Temporary Accessory Dwelling
- Home Occupation.

As a standard procedure for land uses proposed in any zoning district:

- Landowners and project sponsors would submit future actual projects for the applicable subdivision, special use permit, and/or site plan review processes.
- Specific future development proposals will be required to comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

Environmental Setting

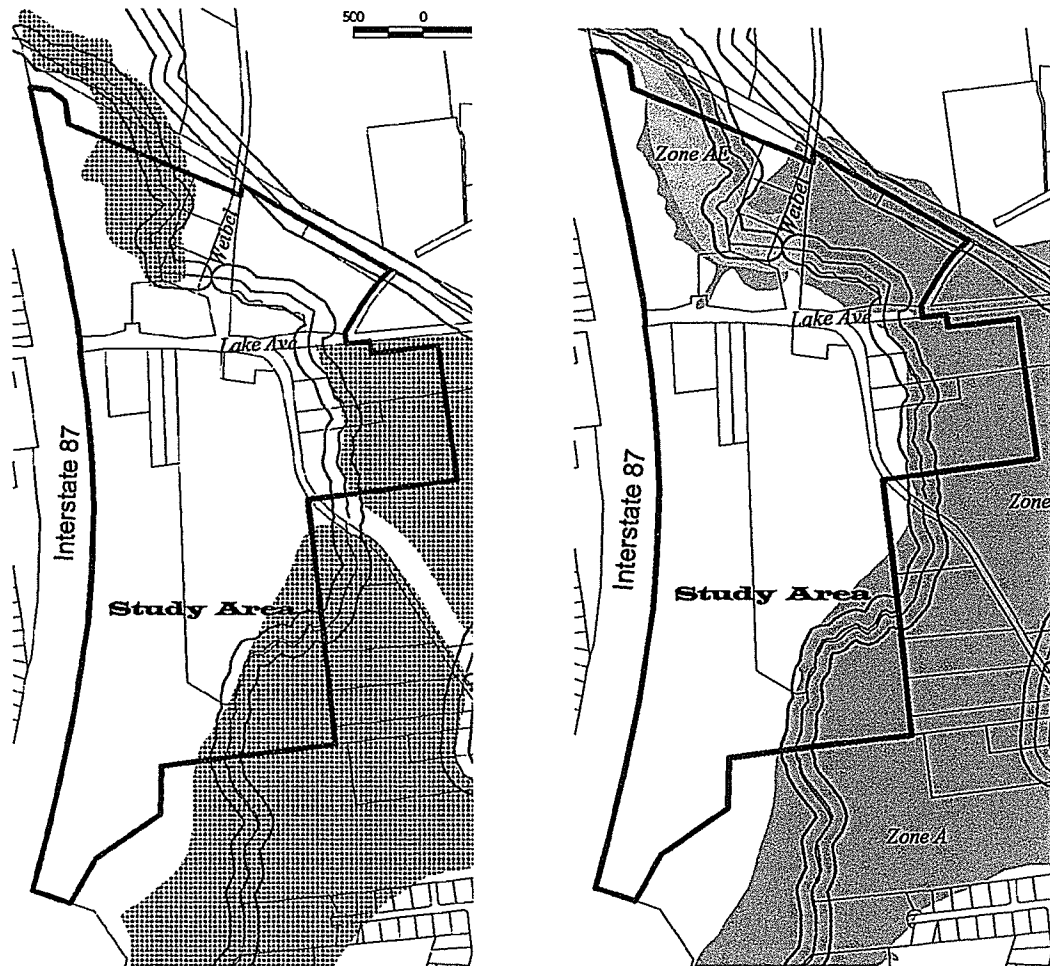
Using publicly available data, the current environmental conditions were mapped for use in the study. The features mapped included: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation regulated freshwater wetlands, the city's 50-foot stream buffer on each side of streams, the 100-year flood hazard zone, the floodway areas, and 25% or greater slopes. Maps of this data for planning purposes were presented to the public and the committee at public meetings, and are provided at a reduced scale on the following page.

Extensive state-regulated wetlands, flood hazard areas (floodplain and floodway), Spring Run, and city's 50-foot stream buffer protection area along each side of Spring Run, are located within the study area in the northwest, northeast and southeast quadrants of the study area.

Development potential in floodplains is constrained under the conservation development regulations in accordance with the required conservation site analysis approach for site design. In the study area, several individual parcels in the northeast quadrant of the study area appear to have extensive floodway constraint features that may limit potential for subdivisions under the newly adopted conservation subdivision regulations.

The southwest quadrant of the study area (southwest of Lake Avenue and Gilbert Road has the largest contiguous area of potentially

"developable" land based on the preliminary review of the above environmental setting. Minimal steep slopes are located within the study area – and mostly north of Lake Avenue along the Northway and the stream banks of Spring Run. Additional future parcel-specific planning and design considerations would include the locations of any federally-regulated wetlands, stormwater consideration, and other site specific conservation analysis related to review for subdivisions.



These portions of two maps show the approximate locations of the primary constrained lands within the study area for planning purposes only -- including the NYS Department of Conservation's regulated freshwater wetlands, Spring Run and 50-foot stream buffer protection on each side of stream, [left map] and the floodplain and floodway areas [right map]. Additional site-specific studies of environmental features would be required for a specific proposal. Maps are available at the city's planning office.

Current Land Uses

Within the study area of predominantly open, undeveloped lands, a few residences, a retail convenience store with gas pumps, one building for professional offices and agricultural fields exist. Additional properties within the study area are open lands with no buildings or active uses.

Residential

Two homes are located along the south side of Lake Avenue between I-87 and Weibel Avenue. One home is located at the northeast corner of Weibel Avenue and Lake Avenue, across from a Stewart's store. Additional homes are located along the length of Gilbert Road with driveways located directly off of Gilbert Road. Outside of the study area at the most southern end of Gilbert Road just before it intersects with Union Avenue are residential subdivisions.

Commercial Uses within the Study Area

Under the RR-1 zoning, some agricultural commercial uses are allowed. Yet, the presence of an economically successful retail commercial use and a newly constructed professional office space use allowed through variances within the study area is indicative of the complexity of economic issues and pressures surrounding the study area. A Stewart's Shop retail store with gas service is located on the south side of Lake Avenue at the west side of the Gilbert Road intersection with Lake. A two-story, small office building is nearly complete on the east side of Gilbert Road at its intersection with Lake Avenue.



A newly constructed office building is on the eastern side of Gilbert Road in the study area. This photo was taken in September 2003.

Lands for Sale

Several parcels in the study area are listed for sale including parcels north of Lake Avenue on both sides of Weibel Avenue.



About 13 acres of agricultural lands are located in the northeastern section of the study area and are currently listed for sale.

Former City Landfill

The city's closed landfill extends onto three parcels in the northwestern section of the study area. No buildings are allowed in the future on the former landfill footprint.

Potential Rail Trail

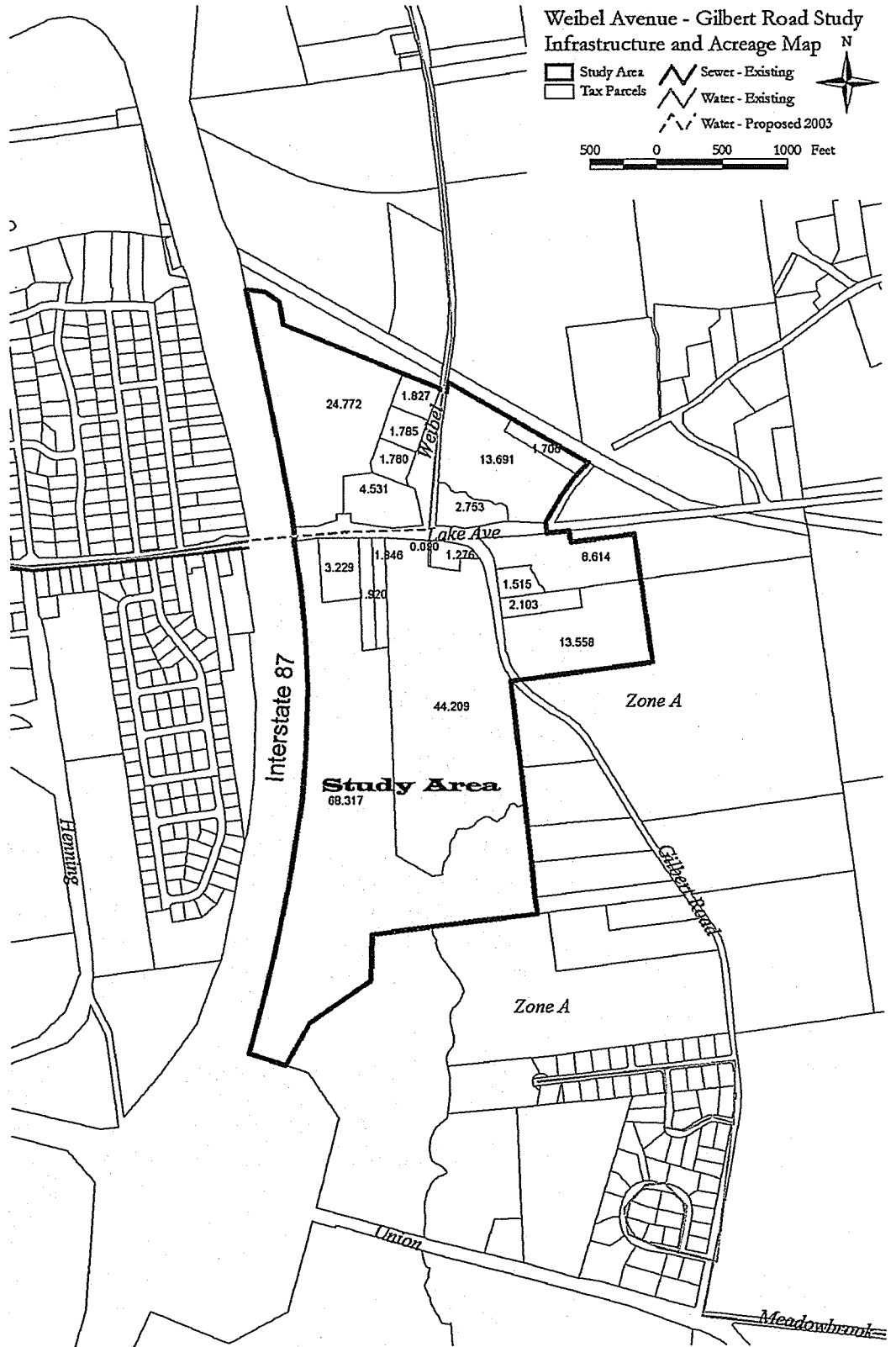
A former railroad line crosses east-west along the northern end of the study area. This railroad right-of-way is proposed for re-use as an off-road bike trail in the City of Saratoga Springs Open Space Plan.

Nearby Off-Road Trail

East of the study area, located on the south side of Lake Avenue is the beginning of the Bog Meadow Trail, an off-road path for pedestrians and bicyclists. This trail is open to the public and a small parking area is provided at this trailhead.

Infrastructure

Municipal central sewer system service extends along Lake Avenue in the city as far east as the I-87 overpass. Municipal central water system service extends along Lake Avenue to the same extent as the sewer lines; however, water lines are proposed for extension to the intersection with Weibel Avenue in 2003. Municipal water lines also exist for the entire length of Weibel Avenue. The next nearest location of municipal water lines is located at the southern end of Gilbert Road extending as far north along Gilbert Road as Conner Drive and its attendant residential subdivision.



As noted earlier in this report, Rural Residential-1 zoning is intended to provide low density residential and agricultural uses in order to preserve open space and a rural character where limiting topography, slopes and a lack of public infrastructure warrant the low densities. Yet, with municipal water service along Lake Avenue frontage, and municipal sewer service immediately west of the study area on Lake Avenue, public infrastructure is readily within reach of the study area parcels. The accessibility of the study area sites to municipal water and sewer, coupled with the proximity to two Northway exits are factors that contribute to landowners' potential economic interests in developing higher density uses.

b. Community Input

Land Use and Character

The protection of the rural character of Saratoga Springs is a major priority for the members of the public who participated in the study process. Thus the extent to which this specific 200-acre unique location of the city is a contributing element in the identity of the "City in the Country" is important. Just as surrounding buildings sometimes are considered "contributing buildings" to a historic district, the study area could be considered a "contributing landscape" to the rural character identity of the "City in the Country."

Public input was analyzed as a valuable component of this study and planning process. Overall, the major public comment was to protect the City of Saratoga Springs' "City in the Country" vision as directly relevant for the study area. The committee found support for the idea of proactively securing open space within the study area with the condition that any active recreation use maintains the desired rural character and maintains low impact traffic comparable to rural residential use.

The most difficult issues discussed during the public evaluation of potential land use options were the potential for allowing some level of commercial or light industrial mixed economic development opportunities, and alternative transportation solutions for improving traffic conditions in the area, including connecting Lake Avenue to Union Avenue. The key public concerns centered upon whether these types and intensities of land use and traffic system changes could and would maintain the desired rural character.

Citizens expressed concern about use variances being granted to allow commercial uses in the study area. Many citizens are interested in seeing the zoning remain in place and not be challenged in order to change individual parcels to commercial uses or other high-traffic generating

uses. However property owners have the option of applying to the zoning board for a variance.

The siting of recreational facilities potentially in the study area, near the study area and throughout the city was also a significant issue of concern for citizens throughout the public planning process, and is an issue that merits additional evaluation outside of the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study.

Citizens vocalized concerns about safe passage for children and adults in and near the study area. Linking the western half of the city to the study area will require pedestrian paths or sidewalks for about 12 blocks outside of the study area on Lake Avenue before even reaching the study area. Lake Avenue offers a viable, more immediate alternative for connecting the Spring Run Trail from the Excelsior Park area out to the Bog Meadow Trail until another proposed I-87 crossing is achieved.

Residents along Gilbert Road feel highly impacted by increased use of Gilbert Road, a condition that was heightened when athletic fields were in use at the southern end of Gilbert Road for a few seasons up until 2003. The use of the athletic fields on southern Gilbert Road has ended but the memory of that traffic pressure remains fresh in the minds of citizens – and they strongly advocated for the RR-1 Zoning District designation with a conservation-based approach to development for this study area in order to achieve the desired objective of avoidance of future uses that would induce a high generation of traffic particularly on Gilbert Road.

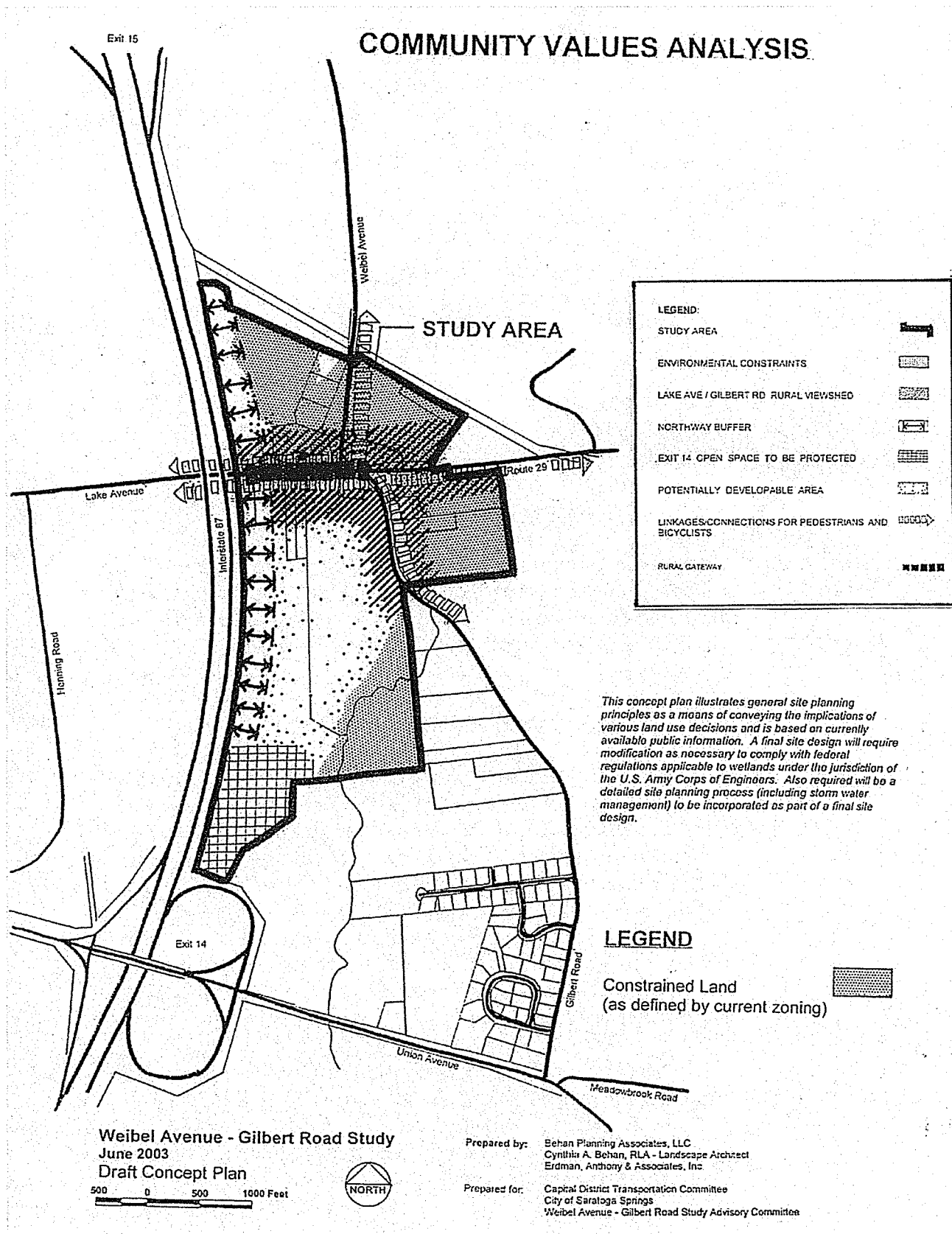
The consulting team presented incentive zoning (amenity zoning) as a new technique to achieve community amenities in exchange for development incentives, but many members of the community and some committee members were not comfortable with applying this approach.

The following list is a summary of the key community comments heard throughout the planning process:

- Protect the rural residential character of the “City in the Country”;
- Respect the areas of significant environmental constraints (wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes of 25% or greater;
- Apply conservation design approach to site layout for all development (whether private or public) in the “developable areas” to maintain rural character;
- Protect the Lake Avenue/Gilbert Road rural viewshed within the study area (and beyond);
- Maintain some level of a Northway noise and visual buffer;
- Conserve the open space throughout the study area, and particularly within view of Exit 14;

- Create the safe linkages and connections for pedestrians and bicyclists along Lake Avenue, Weibel Avenue, and Gilbert Road, preferably using "off-road" paths as is possible;
- Recognize the area on Lake Avenue between the Northway and Gilbert Road as a "Rural Gateway" (not a rural commercial gateway).

These comments that reflect community values are summarized in an illustration located on the following page.



Community Input on Design

Many issues were identified during the extensive public participation process that could be categorized as aesthetic or design issues. The number one issue for the citizens who participated in the process is: protection of the rural character and open space.

▪ Design with Rural Character in Mind for Trails Too

In designing additional links within the study area to improve pedestrian and bicyclist connections, maintaining design sensitivity to the desired rural aesthetics is important. Typical sidewalks along Lake Avenue east of I-87 may contribute to "urbanizing" the look and feel of the study area. Thus, striving for "off-road" paths and trail systems would be preferable for all links proposed in the future within the study area. In general, private landowners could be partners in developing off-road paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.

▪ Conservation Design, not Sprawl Design

Many citizens are interested in seeing a variety of lot sizes for any residential development and not a "conventional, cookie-cutter" suburban development. Conservation design that protects environmentally valuable areas and clusters development on a site is supported.

▪ Define the Rural Gateway and the Edge

The study area particularly along Lake Avenue from Gilbert Road to the Northway is recognized as a transition zone – a "rural gateway" and a definitive edge or boundary between the open country along eastern Lake Avenue to the more downtown core starting at the Northway. What this "gateway" should look like was not clearly defined through the public process. One resident wanted to see 500-foot setbacks on both sides of Lake Avenue for a greenway effect and eventually remove buildings from along the road. Others wanted to see any new development set back from the road a reasonable distance but were less adamant about the distance.

Under current zoning the conservation subdivision regulation helps to protect the viewshed along Lake Avenue with planning board recognition and requirement that this be part of the conservation features to protect. Additionally, however, any transportation improvements need to address and be sensitive to the "rural gateway."

- **Noise and View Buffer from Northway**

Another public concern was that residential development along the Northway should be buffered adequately from highway noise and views of the Northway traffic.

- **Interface with Existing Commercial Entities**

The architectural design and layout of the Stewart's Shop site was discussed during the public participation process. Some citizens were interested in encouraging the Stewart's Shop to improve upon its architectural design and layout scheme in any future site changes in order to improve the site's "blending in" with a more desirable rural character. Recommended improvements along Lake Avenue would include improving the definition of the streetscape through natural looking landscaping, fencing, stonewalls, etc. Future residential or public facilities developed south of the Stewart's Shop should include visual buffering from the Stewart's Shop site that currently is at a slightly higher grade than the area to the south.

c. Land Use Alternatives

Evaluating various land use alternatives involved approximating the magnitude of traffic-related impacts that would be generated by different lands uses.

Considering Potential Trip Generation for Differing Land Uses

The potential for trip generation among different potential land uses was a significant component of the public discussion during the analysis of different land uses. The table below, "Trip Generation Comparison for Planning Purposes" depicts "rules of thumb" for planning purposes and discussion only. Actual trip generation may vary greatly. For example, a 25,000 s.f. retail commercial shopping space may generate 1,000 to 2,000 trips per day depending on the type of retail commercial and location, compared to a professional office comparably sized at 25,000 s.f. that may generate approximately 300 trips per day. Fifty single-family homes may generate approximately 500 trips per day to 750 trips per day, compared to 50, two-family duplex units that may generate about 300 trips per day. This comparison of land uses and associated potential traffic generation illustrates the following:

- ✓ Single-family homes may generate the highest amount of traffic of all types of residential types. Senior housing tends to generate the least amount of traffic.
- ✓ Limited square footages of professional office space are likely to generate considerably less traffic than other non-residential uses.

- ✓ Even passive and active recreation uses generate traffic – and may prove harder to predict in potential traffic impact.

Table - Trip Generation Comparison for Planning Purposes

Land uses, by type	Approximate trips per day estimates for planning purposes only
Senior housing	3.3 per unit
Two-family duplex	6 per unit
Apartments	6 per unit
Single-family homes	10 (to 15) per unit
General light industrial	7 trips per 1,000 s.f.; or 76 per acre (alternative way to calculate)
Professional offices	12 trips per 1,000 s.f.
Commercial retail (for a retail store less than 100,000 s.f.)	83 trips per 1,000 s.f.
Passive recreation	9 trips per acre in developed areas
Active recreational parkland	13 trips per acre (may vary considerably depending on definition of parkland)
Outdoor athletic fields	30 per acre

Sources: ITE, various studies performed for CDTC

Summary of Brainstorming Land Use Alternatives

As an outcome of the public workshop/planning and design charrette held on May 31, 2003, a total of eight (8) potential land use alternatives were developed for analysis and consideration by the public and the advisory committee. These alternatives were presented to the committee and to the public at public workshop on June 26, 2003. This presentation is provided in summary form in Appendix A. Land uses and a preliminary estimate of the potential traffic impacts per type and intensity of different uses, as discussed above, were calculated and presented alongside the layout options for differing land uses. The field and range of possible future alternatives was debated and discussed, and additional comments were supplied in person and in writing following this third public workshop. Key alternatives for which some common ground was found throughout the discussions are noted below.

Analysis of "As-of-Right" Zoning

Maintaining the current zoning of Rural Residential-1 (RR-1) is an option that received strong public support.

Based on an analysis of the primary environmental constraints, the following approximate calculation of potential residential build-out under RR-1 was calculated for study and planning purposes only:

- Northwest of Lake and Weibel: if all lots were combined = approx. 5 units
- Northeast of Lake and Weibel: if all lots were combined = approx. 1 more unit
- Southwest of Lake and Gilbert: if all lots were combined = approx. 49 more unit
- Southeast of Lake and Gilbert: if all lots were combined = approx. 2 more units.

Based on these estimates, approximately 57* residential units would be allowed. [*Pending additional site analysis by a project sponsor, the final number of allowable units could and likely will vary.]

Under RR-1, if project sponsors agree to allow public access to the required open space, up to an additional 20% density bonus could be allowed by the planning board. No additional density bonuses are included with RR-1. Thus, with a 20% density bonus for the public access to open space approximately 68* units could be allowed. [*Pending additional site analysis by a project sponsor, the final number of allowable units could and may vary.]

Under the current zoning, agricultural use such as a horse farm would be an allowable use with a special use permit and site plan review. Conceivably, the public interest in seeing a residential development on part of the study area (south of Lake Avenue) and a horse farm could coincide and be complementary uses within the study area.

Some additional considerations remain as to the strength of the RR-1 zoning to deliver the level of publicly accessible open space and quality of protection of rural character that may be publicly desired. An analysis of the RR-1 zoning identified the following potential issues:

- The 50% open space requirement for a conservation subdivision is not mandated to be publicly accessible. If a project sponsor chooses to make the lands available to the public, they may volunteer to do so. If a project sponsor is interested in the 20% residential density bonus, they would be required to make the open space publicly accessible.
- Of note: the conservation subdivision regulations include four criteria for waiving conservation subdivisions and allowing conventional subdivisions.
- The conservation site analysis is applicable only for proposed subdivisions, and is not currently required for other allowable principal permitted or special use permit land uses under RR-1 that do not require subdivision.
- The protection of the rural character relies on the enforcement of the conservation subdivision regulation where it is applicable.

Discussion of an Open Space Scenario

The study area lands are primarily in private ownership, with some study acreage as right-of-way and roadways. Thus achieving an open space land use scenario will require committed, creative efforts by municipal, outside private, and/or not-for-profit entities. It is unlikely that open space or passive recreation would be supplied by private ownership at this time or in the near future with the perceived economic value of this location. In general, eminent domain is not recommended as the appropriate method for achieving community goals for open space and passive recreation and/or for active recreation.

Thus, the permanent protection of the open space lands for public passive and/or active recreation uses within the study area will require one of the following approaches: public purchase of the land(s) in fee title; purchase of development rights; a transfer of development rights; or a land swap with city-owned property in downtown. Any one of the above approaches will require the participation of the willing seller(s)/landowner(s). In addition, to make the lands publicly accessible, some additional costs would include designing for and constructing at minimum: a parking area, a basic trails system, and signage.

Some members of the public expressed concern about paying for portions of land that have environmental constraints and may be undevelopable under certain scenarios. While the city's assessed values of these properties provide some insight as to the potential cost for purchasing these lands from their private owners, a better estimate of potential costs would be from current market appraisals and willingness of owners to negotiate with the city or another entity. A professional appraisal will be necessary to determine land value, appropriately recognizing environmental constraints and development potential. The appraisal process includes consideration of comparable sales, the highest and best use, and environmental constraints among other factors.

Discussion of active recreation uses

Some interest was expressed for allowing some active recreational uses within the study area, but the interest was tempered by a concern for not creating high traffic generation impacts. The city could sponsor active recreation uses such as a park with athletic fields and/or indoor athletic facilities, or a more highly-designed park as one citizen suggested, with a mix of passive and active recreation features and cultural or public garden features (incorporating elements from such parks as Congress Park in Saratoga Springs, or Prospect Park in Brooklyn, or a visitors center, for example.) This is possible provided there is a willing seller. Privately sponsored recreational or athletic facilities in general would require a special use permit or be allowable as permitted accessory uses,

and likely would only be achieved dependent upon market forces for initiation.

Conceptually, some limited active recreation use such as ball fields and courts and/or an indoor facility, if allowed, should follow the pattern for other developed uses – and be in a compact footprint within the site to maintain the desired rural character. Active uses should be surrounded by open space and onsite trail systems. Additionally, connections for pedestrians and bicyclists are desirable to link existing recreation and nature preserves as well as to link to future additional active and passive recreation uses within the study area.

Discussion of Increasing Community Amenities in Exchange for Development Bonuses

To obtain greater community benefits than what the typical zoning would currently allow, an additional scenario is to revise the existing zoning for this study area. This scenario would allow some flexibility to the planning board and acknowledge the economic issues surrounding this location within the city.

In exchange for obtaining community needs and benefits, the developer might consider a small office building set back from the road with appropriate rural design, near a conservation residential development. Perhaps a small farm stand or garden/landscape center could be located as one of the businesses allowed. Another opportunity could be to allow the existing house at the northeast corner of Weibel and Lake to be converted to professional offices. Community needs would be balanced with the market demand for potentially some limited non-retail commercial uses.

This scenario would allow the planning board flexibility to allow for an appropriate use that would have no net impact greater than a currently allowable land use. The burden would be on project sponsors to prove that an alternative land use would not create greater net impact. The value to the community in allowing for consideration of future alternative uses would be the value of the following community benefits only if additional public open space is provided, if affordable housing is to be constructed, and/or if significant public traffic/transportation facilities are provided.

Strict limits should require the following for example:

- The open space provision must be 75% of the total site, and include useable upland (non-wetland) for 50% public access to open space.
- The affordable housing provision must be at least 25% of the developed units, but may be no more than 50% of the units. The affordable housing must be of the same aesthetics and construction

quality as the other housing onsite, and blend into the whole development.

- The traffic/transportation facilities would have to mitigate existing and future background significant traffic impacts beyond the development-related impacts which a developer would be required to address as a matter of course. However, the maximum development density would still not be allowed to exceed 50% of the existing allowable density.

Any allowance for a non-residential, commercial use would not be allowed to exceed 25% of the footprint of the developable area, nor exceed more than 50% additional traffic impact than the allowable use.

Finding Consensus on the Options

Some members of the public were open to a broader range of land uses and intensities, and potentially some greater density of development, however, the majority of the public participants preferred a narrower field of land use options and combinations of land uses which led the committee to narrowing the potential scenarios down to the following four options described in the following paragraphs.

The four options proposed for further evaluation and potential combination of options are:

- ❖ Open Space and Recreation Strategy.
- ❖ Maintain the Current RR-1 Zoning.
- ❖ Create Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay and Allow Minimal Additional Special Permit Uses to Complement Existing RR-1.
- ❖ Develop an Incentive Zoning Program for the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area to Achieve Desired Community Amenities – Enhanced Conservation and Development and Transportation Amenities.

Evaluating the Narrowed Field of Four Main Options

❖ Open Space and Recreation Strategy. (See Figure 1)

Concept: As a public policy, the city council pursues action to acquire/negotiate lands for obtaining all or part of the study area for public open space (passive recreation) and/or for some active recreation uses. The remaining lands not included in an open space strategy would be subject to existing RR-1 zoning or to any revised zoning that is implemented. The use of the open space lands should be used for preserved natural area/passive recreation balanced with active recreation

uses (if any.) Any uses including active recreation uses should apply a conservation site analysis approach and be low-traffic generating uses.

Approaches and Funding: If this is a preferred option, the city will need to explore with interested landowners first. Funding options include using local funding, pursuing grants, or performing a combination of the above. Another creative option is a land swap of the desired open space lands with city-owned property downtown for economic development. Details on such potential approaches to achieving this option are as follows:

- ❑ The city could consider buying the properties of interest in fee title from willing landowners (possibly using the city's open space bond act funding if the properties qualify under the city's open space bond act funding criteria.) This would avail the city of site control and enable public access to the open space.
- ❑ The concept of a "land swap" is a creative approach that would involve the city and the landowners trading a city-owned land where development is desired, such as a downtown property owned by the city, with lands in the study area for permanent community open space, as well as other potential benefits to the city.
- ❑ The city could purchase development rights of selected properties. This option would require willing landowners and the lands would remain in private ownership, and thus not necessarily achieve public access.
- ❑ The city could seek competitive private, state and federal grant funding to achieve open space and active recreation land uses within the study area. However, this approach may be a long-term proposition, due to the competitive nature of the grant programs.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS - SUMMARY:

Comprehensive Plan Changes required (if any): The refined vision for the area developed through this study process should be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.

Zoning changes required (if any): No change in zoning is required to achieve use of these lands for public open space or public recreation parkland use. However, the city may want to change zoning of the area earmarked for a public park and public open space once it becomes used for that purpose, as is generally the city's policy.

Open Space - Amount Provided: The open space acreage will depend upon the specific parcels sought for public open space. The lands

obtained for ownership by the city would be 100% public lands. The city may or may not seek all the parcels within the study area.

Open Space - Public Access: With public ownership, 100% public access would be possible.

Fiscal impacts on city: Open space lands would be removed from the tax rolls if the city obtains ownership, so there would be a net loss of property tax revenue. However a positive aspect is that there would be no new expenses for school services. Whatever limited uses of the site for public open space use and access and/or active recreation use and access would require a level of public investment in infrastructure and maintenance/operation services.

Costs borne by the city: Public costs will depend on the negotiated final value of the lands that is agreed to by the landowner(s) and the city and any other not-for-profit that could be involved, and whether or not a land swap can be achieved. If the land swap idea is not feasible or a viable approach, the alternative is the process of utilizing the open space bond may be an option. If the lands do not qualify for using the open space bond act funds, other local financing options would need to be considered. Any necessary infrastructure, access, park improvements or transportation improvements in the study area would likely be borne by the public, unless dedicated fundraising was conducted or grants were sought.

Traffic impacts: The city would need to be careful to achieve a balance of public uses of land (active recreation vs. passive) because active recreation uses can have high trip generation. Popular passive areas can also generate traffic.

Potential Traffic Mitigation / Improvements:

If the city obtains ownership of lands within the study area, there would be no private investment assistance for transportation improvements or other community benefits. The community amenity could be significant open space benefits. Any necessary infrastructure or transportation improvements in the study area would likely be borne by the public.

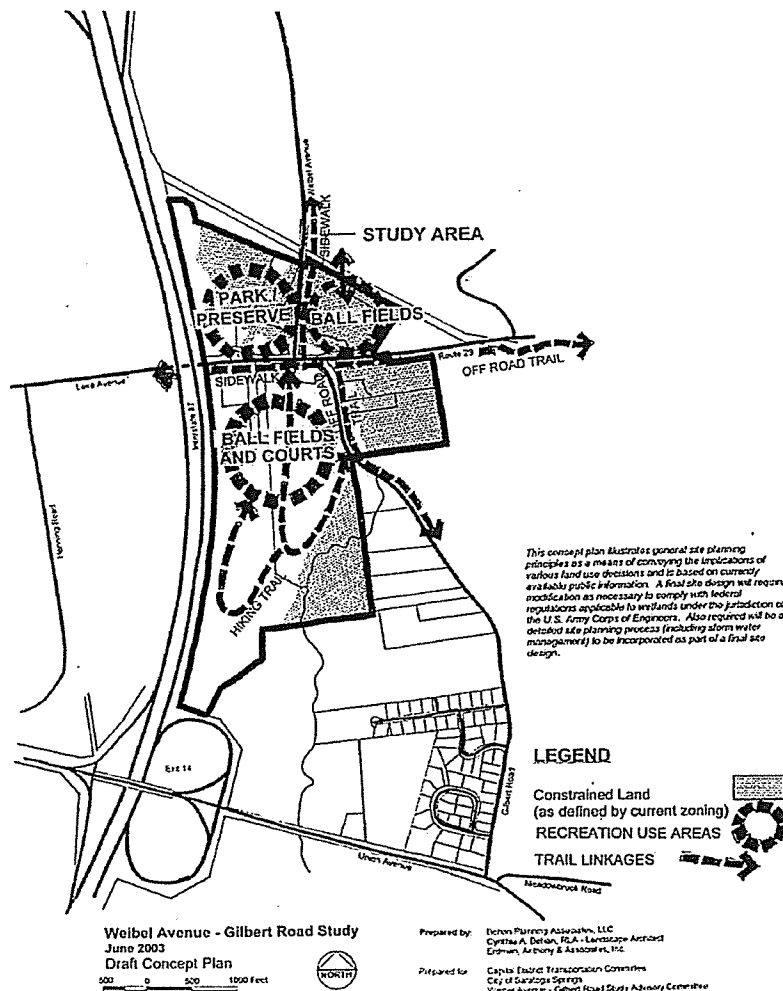


Figure 1: Open Space and Recreation Strategy. The above figure indicates the use of the entire study area for open space and active recreation. However, an open space and recreation strategy could also be that only portions of the study area are used for open space and/or active recreation combined with development uses under the existing RR-1 or any revised zoning.

❖ **Maintain the Current RR-1 Zoning.** (See Figure 2)

Concept: Make no changes and accept development as-of-right that would be required to comply with all currently applicable comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances, including the Rural Residential-1 Zoning District regulations and the conservation subdivision regulations. Under this scenario if all the parcels involved are fully built out as residential uses, taking into account the approximate constrained lands, the city could expect perhaps approximately 50 residential units within the total study area based on a preliminary build-out analysis with the new conservation subdivision regulations. No public access is guaranteed with this scenario. However, if a developer supplies public access to the open space provided, the developer could obtain an incentive of 20% density (thus increasing the total to approximately 60 total units).

Approach / Funding: With this scenario, private market forces will proceed when the market is ripe.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes Required (if any): None, although including or referencing this report in the comprehensive plan would be appropriate.

Zoning Changes required (if any): The refined vision for the area developed through this study process should be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.

Open Space - Amount Provided: Constrained lands (floodplains, stream corridor buffers, NYSDEC wetlands, 25% slopes or greater) plus 50% of the remaining buildable land would be conserved as open space.

Open Space - Public Access: Public access is not required. However, if the private developer grants public access to the open space set-aside, there is an incentive for a 20% density increase.

Fiscal impacts on the city: This scenario will require a potential additional demand for school services; municipal services. Yet it will also add tax revenue to the tax rolls more than vacant land. A low to moderate value residential development is likely to be a net fiscal cost (see city's fiscal analysis 2002).

Costs borne by the city/public: No additional costs per se.

Traffic impacts: Primarily single-family home trip generation for say 50 to 60 homes.

Traffic mitigation/improvements: No significant developer-borne improvements are anticipated. Private development would make traffic/transportation-related improvements as necessary for access and circulation for the private development. Improvements would likely be frontage sidewalks (or for this rural character corridor – off-road paths), and site access road construction.

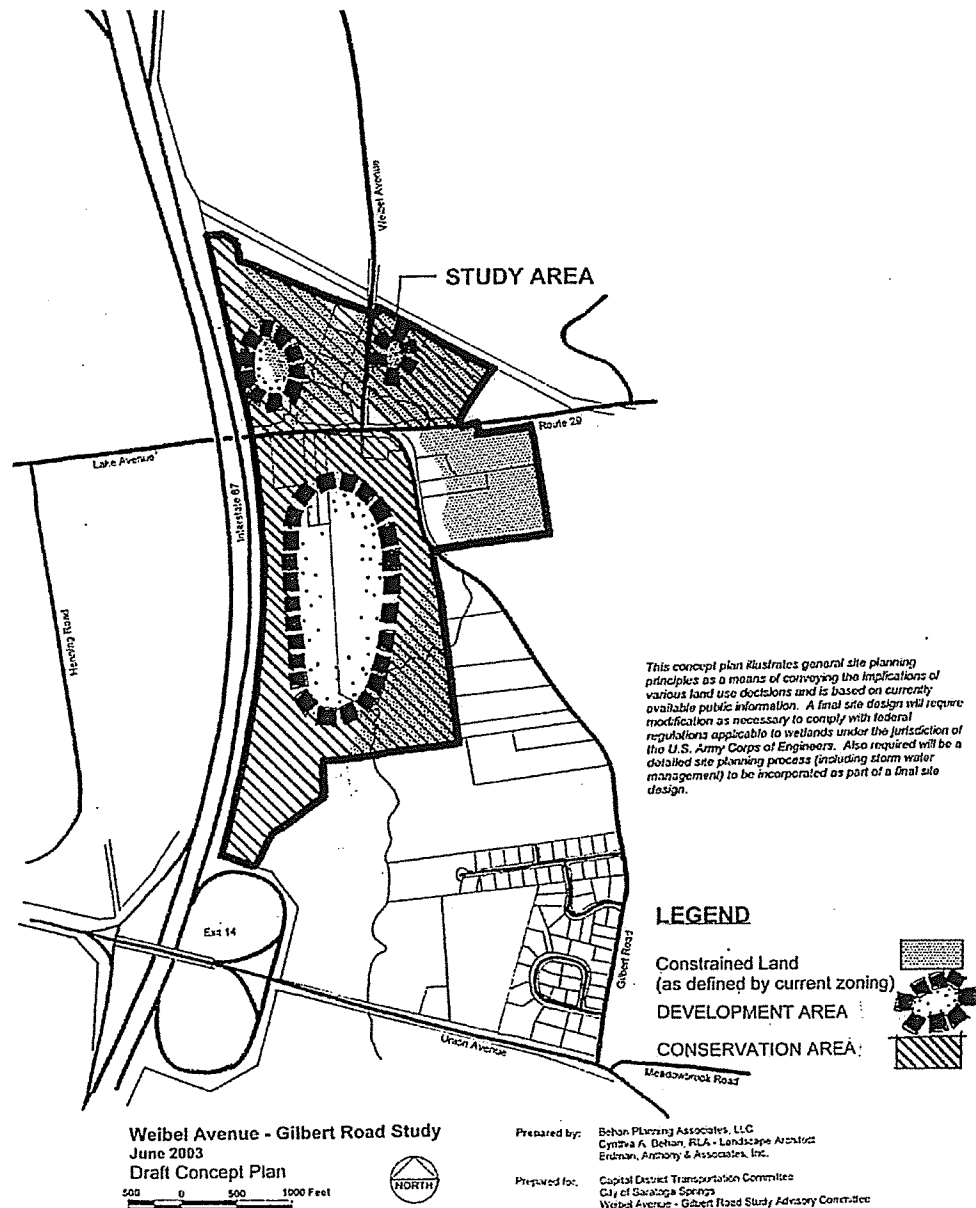


Figure 2: Two Scenarios Depicted by the Same Graphic: No Change in Zoning and Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay Zoning.

❖ **Create Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay and Allow Minimal Additional Land Uses to Complement Existing RR-1 Zoning. (See Figure 2)**

Concept: Existing RR-1 zoning remains in place with the change of adding flexibility in allowed uses. Add a limited list of special permit uses within the specific "Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay" (the study area). Residential uses should continue to be the predominant

development land use, with any non-residential use as the subordinate, complementary use.

The additional special permitted uses that are proposed to be added to the existing list of special permit uses under this scenario are:

- Day Care Center
- Multiple-family dwellings (notably, only a small proportion of 2-family dwellings are currently allowed)
- Senior housing
- Professional or business offices
- Recreation business (indoor or outdoor facilities)

Approach: Make minimal changes to zoning code.

- ❑ Keep current RR-1 Zoning District.
- ❑ Create a study area overlay district - a rural gateway overlay called the "Lake Avenue Country Gateway District" to achieve this option, so that only the study area would have the potential for these additional uses.
- ❑ Add the limited list of additional special permit use to the list of special permit uses that would only be applicable for the "Lake Avenue Country Gateway District."
- ❑ Strengthen the tests articulated in the zoning ordinance for the granting of a special use permit that would apply, including: meeting rural character, maintaining no greater density than for RR-1 residential uses, and generating equal or less traffic than the RR-1 land uses.
- ❑ Condition of special permit uses: On significant size parcels, a minimum requirement would be established for primary uses that must be agricultural or residential to ensure maintenance of the rural character.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes required (if any): Adopt an amendment to the comprehensive plan to describe the Lake Avenue Country Gateway vision that is more inclusive of a few limited additional uses that would complement the rural character.

Zoning Changes required (if any): Amend the zoning as indicated above.

Open Space - Amount Provided: Constrained lands (floodplains, stream corridor buffers, NYSDEC wetlands, 25% slopes or greater) plus 50% of the remaining buildable land would be conserved as open space.

Open Space - Public Access: Public access is not required. However, if the private developer grants public access to the open space set-aside, there is an incentive for a 20% density increase.

Fiscal impacts on the city: Opportunity for more flexible, additional use may result in improving the net fiscal benefit of project to the community.

Costs borne by the city/public: No additional costs per se.

Traffic impacts: This scenario would maintain comparable traffic impacts to other existing RR-1 potential uses.

Traffic mitigations/Improvements: With additional special permit uses allowed, require no significant increase in traffic generation beyond other RR-1 uses.

❖ **Develop an Incentive Zoning Program For the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area to Achieve Desired Community Amenities -- Enhanced Conservation and Development and Transportation Amenities. (See Figure 3)**

Concept: Amend the zoning to allow customized study area incentive zoning program to achieve community amenities for granting approval for an equal value of development bonuses. **The uniqueness about this option is the flexibility in allowing the opportunity for a developer to propose paying for a community amenity in exchange for additional density.** The benefit to this option is that it would clearly establish the requirement of obtaining and approving a comparable value of a public/community amenity/benefit in order to allow a developer bonus.

This option could be used to strengthen the land protection and open space conservation element of the area and grant more flexibility in allowable land uses. The benefit of this scenario is to create more rural conservation set asides than would be achieved by the current zoning and to work with private landowners to realize additional community benefits such as for desired traffic improvements. Residential uses should continue to be the predominant development land use, with any non-residential use as the subordinate, complementary use.

Conditions could be placed on this scenario such as the following to ensure the rural character is maintained: This scenario could create a minimum of 75% of the total buildable (unconstrained) land area to be set aside as permanently protected open space with a minimum of 50% of the

open space accessible to the public. (This is an increase of total open space area from the RR-1 and guarantees greater public access to open space.) The additional uses could include mixed uses and limited commercial uses. No office parks, general retail or restaurants would be allowed. Any new use proposed outside of the current zoning would not be allowed to create significant traffic impacts beyond a residential development scenario.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Comprehensive Plan Changes required (if any): The refined vision for the area developed through this study process should be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan.

Zoning Changes required (if any): Adopt incentive (amenity) zoning specifically for this area.

Open Space - Amount Provided: Requires 75% of the land area to be protected, meaningful and accessible open space. Potential opportunity to achieve greatest amount of open space paid for privately.

Open Space - Public Access: Requires public access to a minimum of 50% of the open space.

Fiscal impacts on the city: Opportunity for more flexible, additional uses and higher density may result in improving the net fiscal benefit to the community. With this scenario, the city could secure city-owned park and open space land, and transportation enhancements at no cost to taxpayers.

Potential Traffic Impacts: Traffic generation limited to 1.5 x RR-1 uses.

Traffic Mitigation/Improvements: Opportunity to secure enhanced traffic improvements or other community benefits by potentially allowing higher density uses.

Costs borne by the city/public: No additional costs per se.

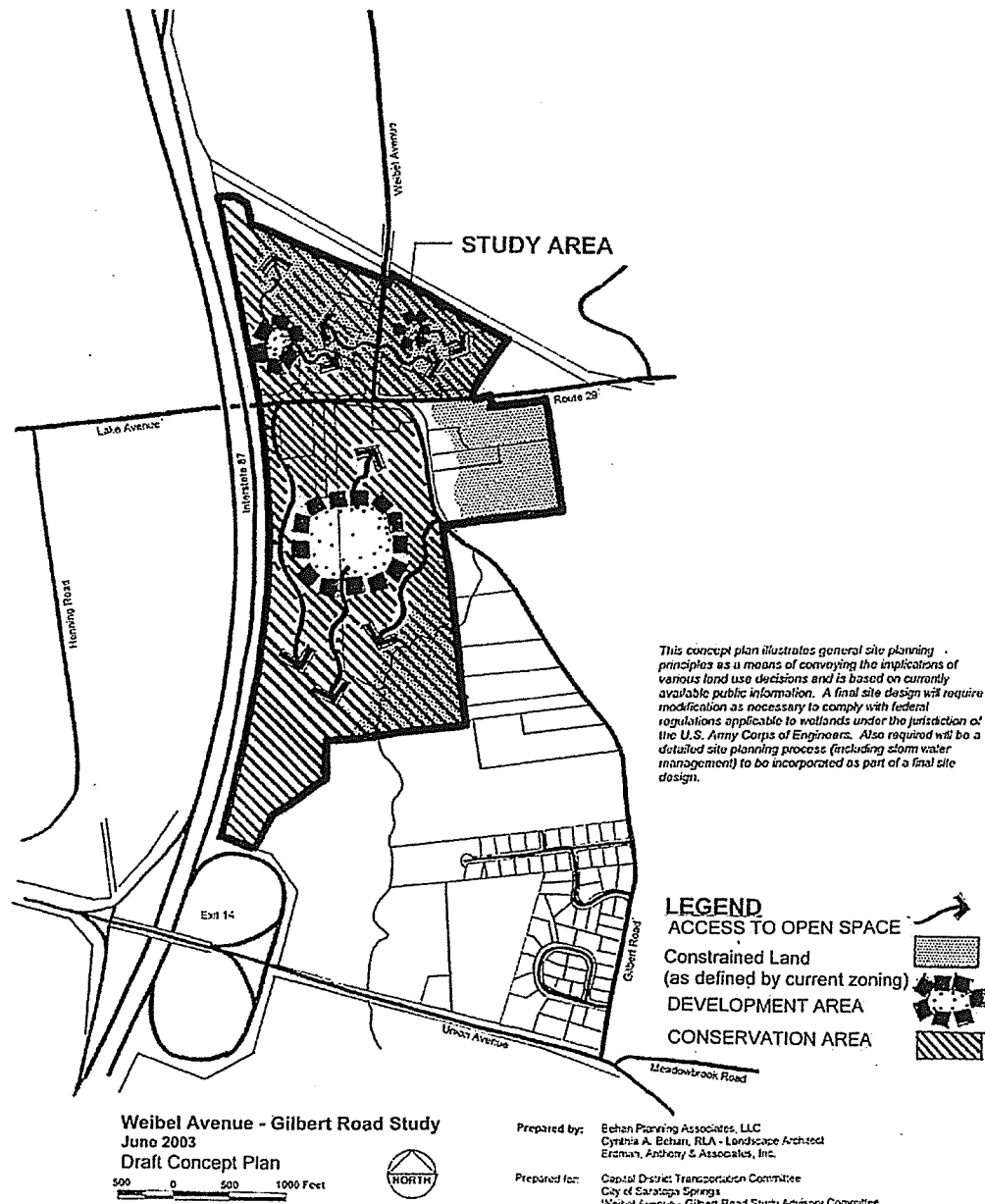


Figure 3: Incentive Zoning Scenario: could provide flexibility and opportunity for additional community amenities paid for by developer in exchange for density bonus.

III. Traffic and Transportation

a. Existing Conditions and Issues: Overview

The advisory committee and planning team consulted with the City of Saratoga Springs Planning Department staff, City of Saratoga Springs Department of Public Safety staff, City of Saratoga Springs Department of Public Works staff, Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) staff, New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) staff and local citizens to identify and analyze the traffic and transportation issues in the study area. A traffic assessment summary and a graphic indicating a summary of the proposed transportation options as prepared by the Capital District Transportation Committee is included in Appendix B.

Major Issue: Quality of Life

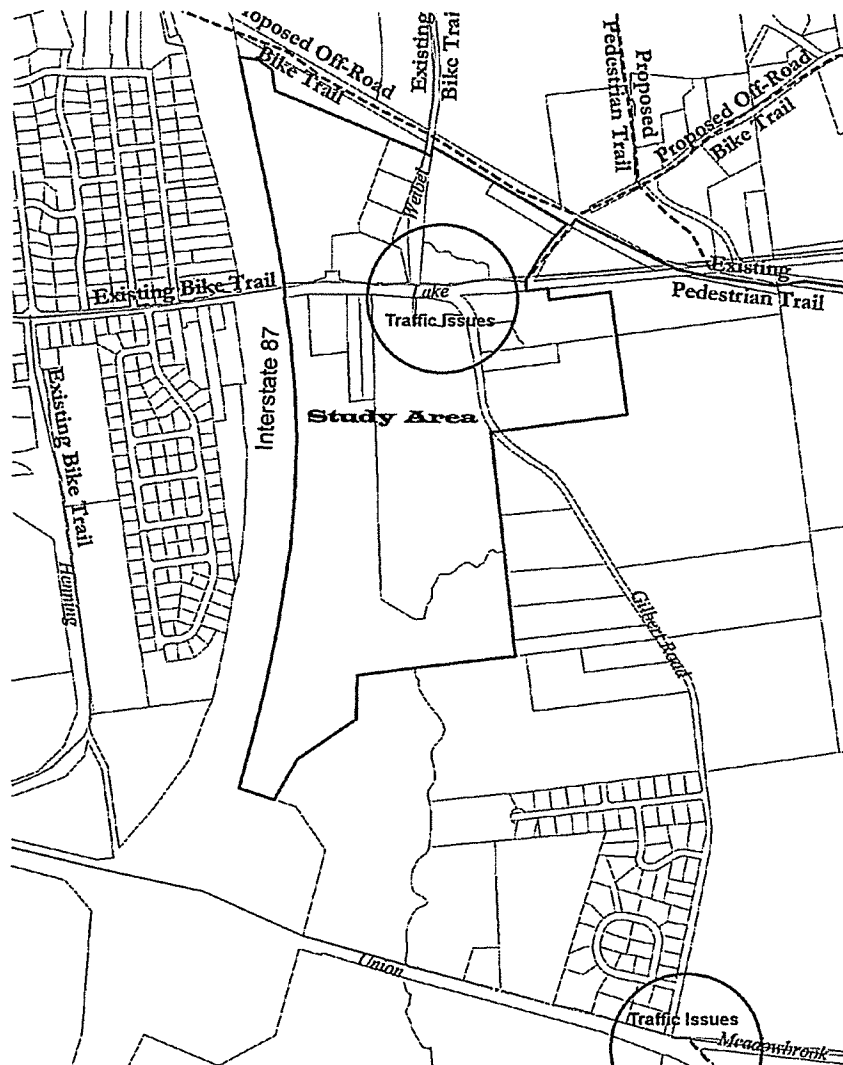
Many citizens maintain strong ongoing concerns about the existing traffic's impacts to the quality of life in the community. Residents do not want to see additional traffic volumes or congestion, nor an increase in traffic speeds, but most importantly want to see increased safety for all pedestrians especially children and for bicyclists. Many existing residents on Gilbert Road are concerned about the use of Gilbert Road as a "short-cut" from the east side of the city to the north. As a response to the growing traffic in the city, public participants called for low traffic impact land uses for the study area.

According to many residents on Lake Avenue, the traffic on Lake Avenue is heavy at peak periods and the residences along Lake Avenue experience vehicles traveling at speeds exceeding the posted speed limit. In addition, frequent back-ups occur along Lake Avenue as traffic approaches the Weibel Avenue and Henning Road intersections. Recognizing the regional traffic issues related to use of Lake Avenue, Weibel Avenue and Gilbert Road within the study area, residents on Lake Avenue are concerned about new additional traffic impacts from any future development within the study area as well as residents within the study area.

Existing traffic conditions are related to: ongoing growth and city expansion throughout the city's "countryside" that is experiencing residential development; the downtown economic growth; and the regional growth and attractions occurring in Wilton and other communities. A problem for the eastern half of the city is having too few available north-south connections for drivers to reach the Route 50 corridor and regional shopping attractions north of the city - resulting in the pressure on those that do exist - namely Gilbert Road and Weibel Avenue. Existing recreational uses, city transfer station uses, and commercial uses on Weibel Avenue outside of the study area are traffic generators. According to a review of recent traffic data, Weibel Avenue is the route within the study area that has experienced the most significant traffic growth.

The following observations were made by the consultant team in consultation with CDTC based on available data:

- Review of CDTC's 1999 and 2003 traffic data indicates that there is adequate capacity for existing traffic volumes on all roads within the study area.
- Roadways can accommodate additional traffic volume based on engineering standards - the data suggests that adequate reserve capacity remains.
- Traffic crashes do occur at intersections and mid-block, but the number and severity of crashes are low compared to other locations in the city and region. As traffic volume increases, traffic conflicts will worsen because acceptable gaps for left-turning traffic will become shorter.
- The proximity and geometry of existing intersections makes them difficult for drivers to maneuver.



On the following pages is a discussion of the existing conditions, issues and analysis related to the roads and intersections within the study area.

b. Pedestrian Facilities

Pedestrian Facilities: Existing Conditions

- There are no sidewalks or off-road paths for pedestrians within the study area.
- The nearest sidewalks on Lake Avenue are about 12 blocks west of the Northway.
- The nearest pedestrian trail facility is the Bog Meadow Trail, located south of Lake Avenue, east of Gilbert Road.
- Pedestrians use the shoulder area of roadways.



No pedestrian facilities exist on Lake Avenue in the study area.

Pedestrian Facilities: Issues and Positions Identified through the Public Participation & Comment Process

- Increase trail connections for pedestrians.
- Connect all portions of the study area.
- Connect outward to the Bog Meadow Trail off of Lake Avenue.
- Create an off-road trail system along Gilbert Road.
- Most public participants had concerns about using trail development by developers as a trade-off for developer bonuses.

c. **Lake Avenue**

Lake Avenue: Existing Conditions

- Lake Avenue (New York State Route 29) is a two-lane, two-way state highway with paved shoulders on both sides, city-maintained within the City of Saratoga Springs Inner Area (West of I-87) and state-maintained east of I-87 – within the study area.
- Lake Avenue is a posted bicycle route. Bicyclists use the shoulder.
- There are no crosswalks and no pedestrian signals of any type within the study area.
- The roadway geometry is relatively flat and straight. There are no significant changes in the horizontal or vertical geometry of the road.
- There is no accommodation for parking along the roadway.
- Intersecting roadways with Lake Avenue include Weibel Avenue and Gilbert Road within the study area.
- Several driveways are located along the south side of the roadway.
- Weibel Avenue forms a three-way right angle intersection with Lake Avenue and traffic is controlled with a traffic signal.
- There are turning lanes at both eastbound and westbound approaches to Weibel Avenue.
- Gilbert Road forms an offset intersection with Lake that is close to the Lake and Weibel intersection.
- Gilbert Road is skewed in its approach to Lake Avenue – with a “Y” geometry intersection. This configuration makes turning movements difficult from Gilbert Road to Lake Avenue.
- Gilbert Road is stop sign controlled.
- The regulatory speed limit on Lake Avenue is 45 mph (from about Gilbert Road to the I-87 overpass; however, actual operating speeds are observed to be higher. The speed is reduced to 30 mph closer to Henning Road.
- Lake Avenue serves as a truck route through the city.

Lake Avenue: Issues and Positions Identified through the Public Participation & Comment Process

- **Speed on Lake Avenue.** The speed of traffic on Lake Avenue was identified as a major issue. Some citizens desire increased enforcement of the speed limit and reduction of the speed limit where it is still 45 mph.
- **Stewart’s Shop’s ingress and egress.** Stewart’s Shop has two, two-way access points: one on Lake Avenue in between Gilbert Road and the Weibel Avenue intersection; the second on Gilbert Road. Several factors contribute to the difficulty in ingress and egress at the Stewart’s Shop on Lake Avenue. The Weibel Avenue intersection and signal at Lake Avenue and the nearby intersection at Gilbert make it

difficult for traffic to negotiate in and out of the Stewart's Shop. CDTC's 2003 traffic data indicated a peak hour count of +/- 200 vehicles per hour. These factors create public safety concerns.

Traffic maneuvering in and out of Stewart's from its Lake Avenue access is a significant problem for citizens. The Lake Avenue access is confusing and difficult to negotiate with its proximity to the signal at Weibel. The most difficult feature of this access is particularly for drivers attempting to exit Stewarts and head westbound on Lake. Drivers attempting to head westbound out of Stewart's Shop "read" the red light facing the south side of Lake - and assume that the Weibel Avenue traffic heading southeast onto Lake Avenue is red as well.

Turning in to the Stewart's Shop from Lake heading westbound is also difficult at times due to proximity of the signal at Weibel. Although the pavement is wider at this access point which allows traffic to bypass turning vehicles, the interaction of vehicle movements at this location and proximity with Gilbert Road is not a desirable situation.

Notably, the landowner is concerned about maintaining its rights of access to Lake Avenue. Any future improvements to the ingress and egress out of Stewarts must address the landowner's existing permitted roadway access.

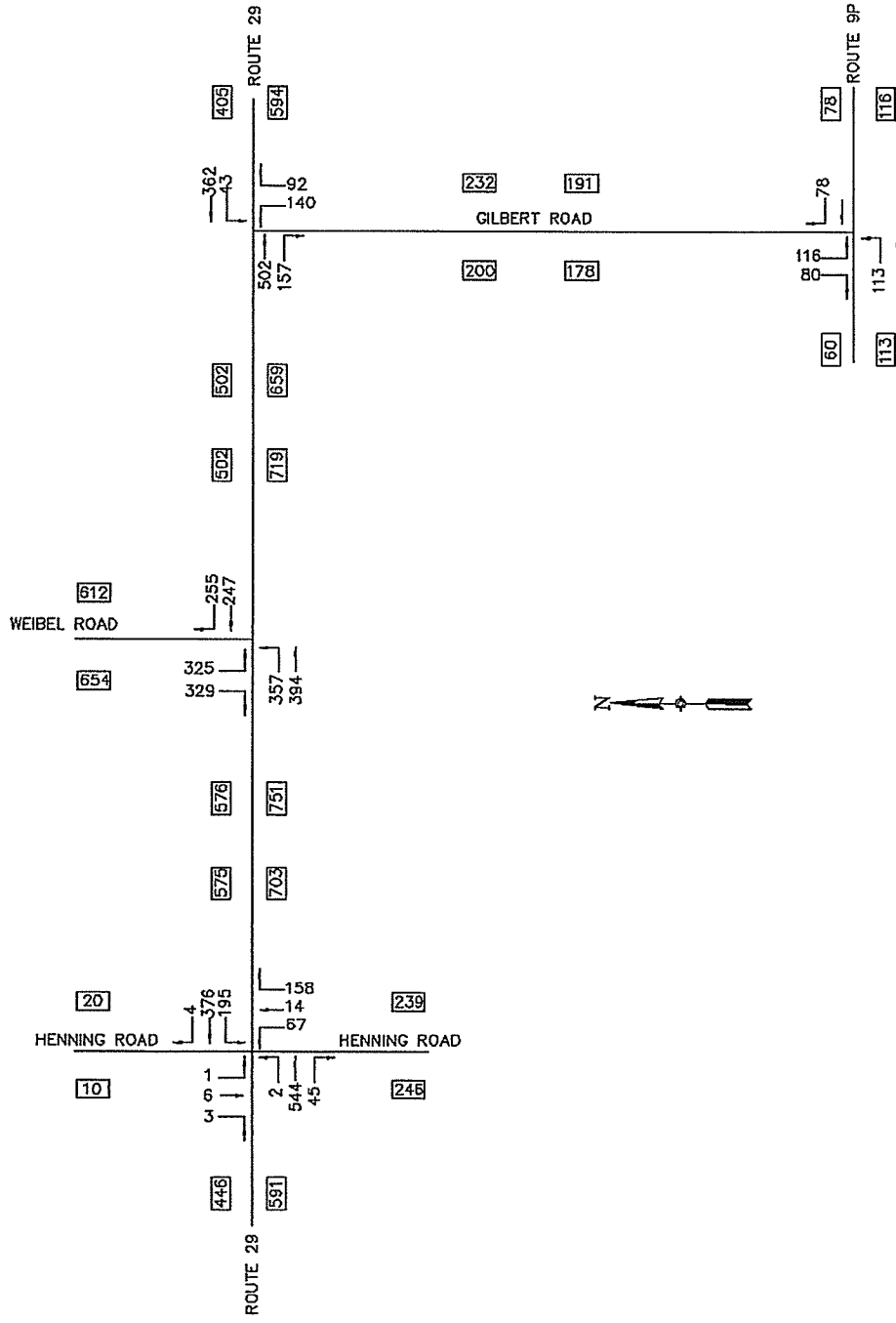
- **Lake Avenue is a wide road and has no protection for pedestrians,** so pedestrians perceive the intersection as dangerous in attempting to cross Lake Avenue at the Weibel Avenue intersection.

Lake Avenue: Analysis & Discussion

Peak Hour Traffic

A diagram of peak hour traffic volumes for the study area and environs is included below.

Peak Hour (Weekday P.M.) Traffic Volumes, Weibel Avenue - Gilbert Road Study Area, June 12, 2003 [Source: CDTIC]



Lake Avenue Traffic Volume Summary, 1999-2003

[Maximum Acceptable Capacity for Single Lane=1,000 vph]*

Lake Avenue, single lane, Vehicles per hour (vph)	1999	2003	Approx. % change
West of Weibel, eastbound	580 vph	751 vph	30% increase
West of Weibel, westbound	510 vph	576 vph	13% increase
East of Gilbert, eastbound	450 vph	594 vph	32% increase
East of Gilbert, westbound	380 vph	405 vph	7% increase

Source: CDTC and NYS DOT

* CDTC's "Policies Related to the Evaluation of Vehicle Level of Service -Table 10 Urban Arterials in Project Design Mid Block Capacity Threshold"

- The heaviest-traveled segment of Lake Avenue is from Henning Road to Weibel Avenue.
- Nearly half of Lake Avenue traffic in this segment turns onto Weibel Avenue or comes from Weibel Avenue.

In accordance with engineering standards, Lake Avenue has sufficient capacity for current traffic volumes. Additional traffic analysis is necessary to examine the future capacity of Lake Avenue.

d. Weibel Avenue

Weibel Avenue: Existing Conditions

- Weibel Avenue is a two-lane, two-way local road with paved shoulders maintained by the City of Saratoga Springs.
- The roadway geometry consists of several horizontal and vertical curves. Sight distance is adequate in the study area.
- There is no accommodation for parking along the roadway.
- The regulatory speed limit is 30 mph on Weibel Avenue; however, actual operating speeds are observed to be higher.
- Crosswalks are non-existent.

Weibel Avenue: Issues and Positions Identified throughout the Public Participation & Comment Process

- Traffic volumes and congestion at the Weibel Avenue - Lake Avenue intersection are experienced by citizens.

Weibel Avenue: Analysis & Discussion

Weibel Avenue Peak Volume Summary, 1999-2003

[Maximum Acceptable Capacity for Single Lane=1,000 vph]*

Weibel Avenue, Single lane. Vehicles per hour (vph)	1999	2003	Approx. % change
Southbound	485 vph	654 vph	35% increase
Northbound	449 vph	612 vph	36% increase

Source: CDTC and NYS DOT

* CDTC's "Policies Related to the Evaluation of Vehicle Level of Service-Table 10 Urban Arterials in Project Design Mid Block Capacity Threshold"

Growth Trend on Weibel Avenue

The most significant growth in traffic within the study area has occurred on Weibel Avenue.



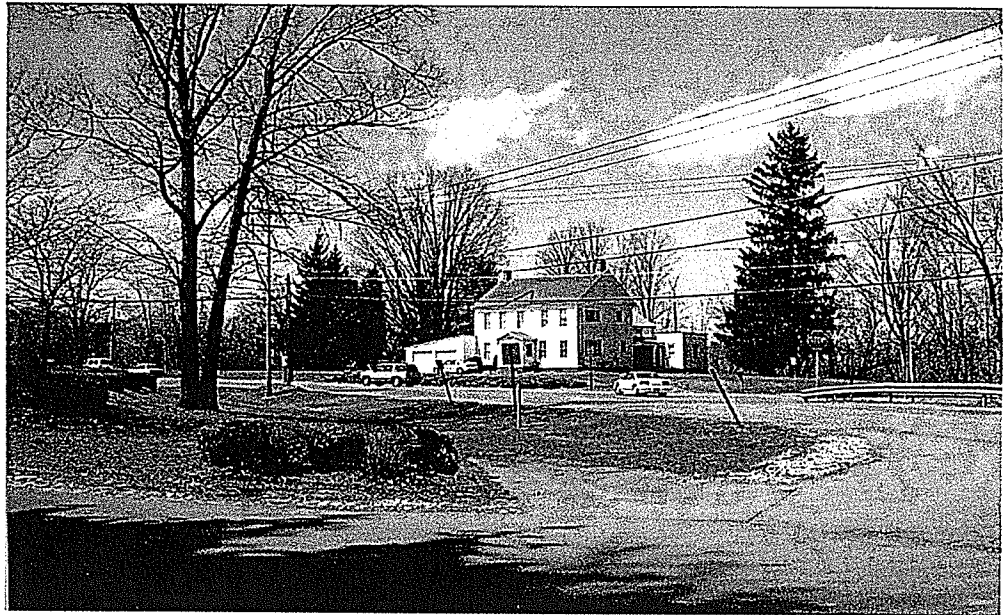
Weibel Avenue facing north, with city landfill on the left.

e. Gilbert Road

Gilbert Road: Existing Conditions

- Gilbert Road is a city-owned and maintained roadway with no shoulders.

- The road has a number of curves and vegetation is close along sections, providing visual clues to drivers to adhere to the speed limit.
- Development along Gilbert Road is concentrated in residential subdivisions located off of its southern end near the intersection with Union Avenue.
- The "y" intersection of Gilbert Road with Lake Avenue is a difficult traffic movement.
- Crosswalks are non-existent.
- There is no accommodation for parking along the roadway.



The intersection of Gilbert Road with Lake Avenue is a "Y" geometry that drivers find difficult to maneuver.

Gilbert Road Peak Volumes Capacity: Data Summary, 1999-2003

[Maximum Acceptable Capacity for Local Road = 625 vph]*

Weibel Avenue, Single lane. Vehicles per hour (vph)	1999	2003	% change
Northbound	No data	232 vph	unknown
Southbound	No data	200 vph	unknown

Source: CDTC and NYS DOT, CDTC's "Policies Related to the Evaluation of Vehicle Level of Service-Table 10 Urban Arterials in Project Design Mid Block Capacity Threshold"

Gilbert Road: Issues and Positions Identified through the Public Participation & Comment Process

- An off-road path/trail system is desired for pedestrians and bicyclists to provide a safe passage.
- The perception is that traffic speeds on Gilbert Road. Public participants called for traffic calming measures for Gilbert Road through signage, better police enforcement, and/or through other traffic calming means.
- Signage suggestions for posting on Gilbert: "local traffic only," "no through traffic," "no trucks."
- Most residents/participants called for discouraging the use of Gilbert Road as a "short-cut" to the shopping malls in Wilton. The provision of alternate routes was suggested.

Gilbert Road: Analysis & Discussion

The CDTC traffic counts taken in 2003 are intersection counts where Gilbert Road has a significant amount of activity. Midblock counts are expected to be significantly lower than the volumes indicated. Further evaluation is suggested to support recommendations to mitigate impacts to Gilbert Road.

Gilbert Road has a number of curves and vegetation is close to the road along some sections, providing visual clues to drivers to adhere to the speed limit. Development along Gilbert Road is concentrated in residential subdivisions located off of its southern end near the intersection with Union Avenue. Along most of the road are former farm fields, barns, wetlands, and single family homes. A few homes are quite close to the roadway – leading these residents to experience greater traffic impacts than homeowners whose homes are set back.

The "Y" intersection at Gilbert and Lake needs to be improved to eliminate difficult turning movements.

Intersection of Lake Avenue and Gilbert Road

- About 76 % of eastbound traffic on Lake Avenue goes straight through and does not turn onto Gilbert Road.
- About 10% of westbound traffic on Lake Avenue turns left onto Gilbert.
- An average of 7 accidents per year occurs in the vicinity of Gilbert Road & Lake Avenue, according to city traffic safety data.

Intersection of Lake Avenue and Weibel Avenue

Issues Identified by the Public.

- Located in the center of the study area, the intersection of Lake Avenue and Weibel Avenue is in need of traffic calming, pedestrian and gateway-related improvements.

f. Traffic Crash History

A review of the recent traffic crash reports indicates that there are a low number of accidents reported within the study area in comparison to similar types of intersections and traffic system usage in the city and region.

g. Major Community Concerns - Summary

The major community concerns and concepts related to traffic identified by the public are summarized as follows:

1. Avoid generation of new traffic from the study area - allow only low-impact, low-traffic intensity land uses.
2. Mitigate existing traffic conditions throughout the study area and in the region: perceived high volume, safety, speed and intersections.

h. Discussion and Conclusion of Existing Traffic Conditions:

The traffic analysis indicates that the individual traffic component conditions such as traffic volumes, number of accidents, severity of accidents, speed of traffic, pedestrian use, and existing and future pedestrian generators appear to be approximately within the range of acceptable design standards in accordance with NYSDOT engineering standards. However, the combination of factors at this particular, unique location creates difficulties for drivers and pedestrians related to proximity and geometry of intersections, and the high traffic generator of the Stewart's Shop. A response to address the difficulties in the functioning and interaction of these traffic components together would be appropriate.

Any changes to the transportation system such as adding signals, adding signage, changing intersections, adding medians, narrowing roadways, traffic calming, etc. will need to be further explored by engineering studies.

i. Potential Traffic Alternatives

Traffic Solution Ideas Generated

Many ideas were generated in the public involvement process and additional ideas were offered by committee members, CDTC staff, city staff and individual consultants. Some ideas entail larger costs and more complex regulatory approvals than others. A number of potential traffic management and design options were considered throughout the public planning process, including the following types:

- **Safety Improvements**
 - Intersection Controls—Signals
 - Realignment of non standard intersection
- **Traffic calming**
 - *Roundabouts—Calm Intersection
 - Boulevard—Planted Median
- **Capacity Improvements**
 - *Bypass Roads—Reroute Traffic
 - *New connector road to divert traffic from Gilbert Road
 - *New exit ramp off the Northway at Lake Avenue.

*Notably, the advisory committee did not achieve consensus on these options.

Discussion of Potential Traffic Options

As presented earlier in the report, the traffic analysis indicates that the traffic conditions are within the range of acceptable levels in accordance with NYSDOT engineering standards. However, to address public concerns about current traffic conditions (notwithstanding what the engineering standards may call for) and concerns about future traffic conditions, options are available to respond to the community's concerns now and for future development in the study area. A summary graphic of potential traffic options for immediate, short-term, and long-term options as prepared by Capital District Transportation Committee is included in Appendix B.

Below is a synthesis of the potential traffic calming measures and transportation design options for the City of Saratoga Springs and other transportation improvement project sponsors (public and private) to evaluate and consider carefully in the future. These represent a refined list of options derived from a larger menu that had been generated in the study process. Other factors in the future may influence these options as well.

Based on an overall evaluation, the phased traffic improvement options that may be most appropriate for the community to further consider in mitigating the traffic congestion and safety concerns within the Weibel Avenue-Gilbert Road Study Area are as follows:

- Phase 1. Re-align Gilbert Road to a "T" – meet Lake Avenue at a right-angle with Lake.
 - If interested in the option of a future roundabout at Weibel and Lake, continue to use a stop sign as the traffic control measure (no signal here so as not to interfere with a roundabout). *(could be a near-term action, use force account labor to reduce construction costs)*
- Phase 2. Conduct engineering feasibility and design study to evaluate:
 - Narrowing Lake Avenue in keeping with the desired rural corridor character, including the addition of pedestrian facilities (sidewalks or off-road paths) and crosswalks. Consider use of curbs, medians, street trees and other landscaping to achieve a "narrowing" of the roadway. Narrowing will help reduce traffic speeds through this segment of the study area. Landscaping and streetscape design should be consistent with the rural character desired.
 - Narrow Weibel Avenue as well and add a pedestrian off-road path connection to the proposed rail-trail and city recreation facilities north of the study area.
 - Feasibility of constructing a roundabout (3-way for now) to best solve the perceived congestion, safety issues, and to improve the conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. The roundabout would improve level of service, slow down traffic, and decrease back-up conditions. *(long-term option)*
- Alternative Phase 4 or Phase 5:
 - Design and build an off-road pedestrian and bicyclist path along Gilbert Road in consultation with property owners.
- Stewart's Shop:

There are various types of elements and combinations of solutions at hand for potentially improving and adjusting the ease of access into and out of Stewarts in conjunction with a review of the nearby intersections. A design level study may be warranted. Potential elements of a solution may include:

- The first step in addressing these issues is for the landowner to voluntarily address movement issues.

- Another component is to evaluate the signalization timing at the Lake Avenue/Weibel Avenue intersection and adjust the signal to take into account vehicles that may be trying to exit Stewarts and head west on Lake Avenue.
- Reducing the speed limit on Lake Avenue in front of Stewarts.
- Maintain existing access, with the additional provision of signage for "No left turn" exiting Stewarts onto Lake Avenue.
- Considering access to be a one-way entrance-only into Stewart's, and keep access 2-ways onto Gilbert Road.

Finally, should a new road ever be constructed to create a 4-way at Weibel Avenue, Stewart's would be interested in access to this new "lower Weibel - south of Lake" road.

For these potential options, a detailed study and design phase would be warranted in order to proceed with potential traffic improvements.

Feasibility of Implementing Traffic Options

Given the significant quality of life issues and traffic issues throughout other parts of the city and the region, the desired study area improvements would be anticipated to compete for highway funding priority with many other areas in need. Given the tight funding environment and state of the economy, the city should consider involving private developers in achieving some traffic improvements.

Without involving private landowners, the above traffic options may be achievable if budgeted over the long run by joint cooperation and funding by the City of Saratoga Springs and the CDTC and NYS DOT (using federal and state funding.) Altogether, the package of options is warranted by the public comments received and is a reasonable and comprehensive context-sensitive solution for the study area. The scale and magnitude of the type of transportation improvements proposed are responsive to the community context, character and local growth conditions.

Additional Recommendations Related to Traffic Issues within and outside the Study Area:

- ❑ Conduct an engineering analysis to adjust the existing signalization timing at the signal at Lake Avenue and Henning Road, and Lake Avenue and Weibel Avenue.

IV. Recommendations

a. Vision for the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay Area [For Use in Amending the Comprehensive Plan]

In summary, based on the public comments and committee consensus, the vision for the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area that should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan is recommended as follows:

"The Weibel Avenue - Gilbert Road - Lake Avenue intersection and gateway area is part of the City of Saratoga Springs' unique, open space "greenbelt" that surrounds the urban core. The Northway is essentially a growth boundary between more intense development to the west and the rural outer area to the east of the Northway.

The overall vision of this area is to maintain the rural, open space character to the greatest extent possible through compatible, low-impact land uses. Secondly, low traffic intensity land uses are envisioned for this area to minimize impacts to the regional traffic system.

The first order of desirable land uses would be agricultural and forestry uses, cultivation of row crops, fruits, vegetables, landscaping plants, trees and materials, flowers or other natural products, and/or raising animals for example such as a horse farm or riding stable.

Low-intensity, small scale, single-family residential development designed in a creative, conservation sensitive layout in a protected open space setting would also be compatible with the vision of the rural greenbelt. Senior housing and multiple-family housing could be incorporated into the rural setting using the conservation layout and compatible, high quality architectural design through a special permit process. A variety and combination of residential uses (such as single-family and senior housing, with some component of attached, small-scale multiple family housing) would be suitable as long as the conservation design, low intensity, and low traffic impacts were incorporated.

In addition, complementary uses such as active recreation (indoor or outdoor or both) or mixed uses, non-retail offices that supplement and coincide with rural, residential development would be potential

compatible uses in the area. A residential neighborhood surrounded by open space with a few, appropriately designed small-scale office buildings would be compatible with the vision for this area, for example. These uses are compatible with the vision for the area provided these are of no greater traffic impact than a residential use. As change occurs, the layout and design of these complementary uses as well should utilize a conservation analysis approach to achieve a low-impact, small scale design.

Site planning and architectural design would be compatible with the character of a more rural, or country style rather than the more formal urban character of the city.

A final aspect of the vision for this rural greenbelt – rural gateway is to pursue measures to mitigate existing and future traffic conditions related to regional growth – but any road, intersection, gateway, streetscape or trail improvements should support and enhance the rural character of the area. It is envisioned that a multi-purpose path system will connect this area with nearby neighborhoods, including a path along Lake Avenue as well as completion of the planned Spring Run Trail including connections across the Northway and along Weibel Avenue.”

b. Policy Goals for the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area:

In summary, based on community and advisory committee input throughout the planning process, the following overall planning policy goals related to the land use vision for the area were developed:

- Protect the “City in the Country” by maintaining the key elements of rural character and natural landscape to differentiate the “country” from the “city.” All future uses, whether private or public initiatives, should apply conservation site analysis and design approach.
- Protect a significant area of meaningful, connected open space throughout this greenbelt area of the city, including near Exit 14.
- Support limited impact and compatible land uses for all types of future uses whether private or public initiatives, that secure and advance the “City in the Country” vision.

- ❑ Protect the quality of life for existing residents (from traffic, noise, visual impacts, etc.) - particularly those on Gilbert Road and Lake Avenue, and for any future residents within this area of the city.
- ❑ In concert with any future street and/or infrastructure improvements or land use change, support the planning and design of a traffic-calming streetscape on Lake Avenue and throughout the area that retains the rural character of the corridor.
- ❑ Increase safe connections for pedestrians and bicyclists from Lake Avenue to recreation areas, to nature preserves, and scenic areas, and extend connections along Weibel Avenue and Gilbert Road.
- ❑ Monitor and address existing local and regional traffic issues related to the streets and intersections in and near the study area as regional growth continues.
- ❑ Protect the city's downtown commercial economic base by not developing a competing commercial area within this portion of the city.

Design Principles for the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area

Definition of rural

"Rural" in the City of Saratoga Springs may be used to describe a place where the natural landscape and environmental setting is the predominant feature and is characterized by a working landscape (cultivated fields, fences, paddocks, barns, for example). In rural areas of the city, population density tends to be low and development and urbanized features are minimal, and located sporadically throughout the landscape. Residential and non-residential uses are part of what exists in this rural part of the city. Maintaining such a rural character is not inherently easy to retain given the non-rural nature of most people's livelihoods today and the introduction of development. Rural character in development can be somewhat addressed through conservation site layout and compatible architectural design.

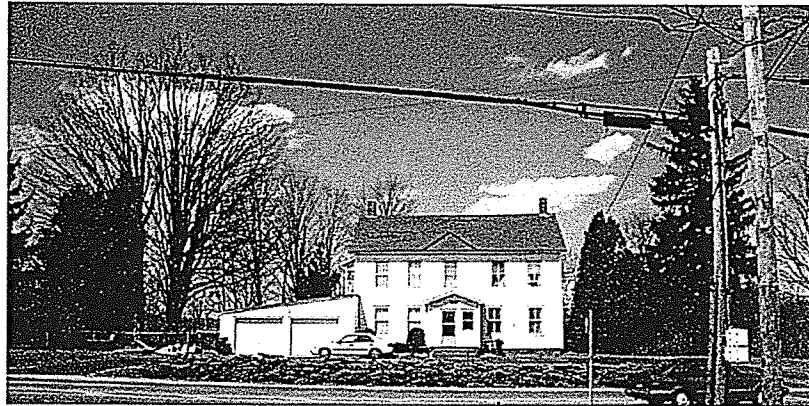
Recommended Design Principles

The City of Saratoga Springs' existing standards should be applied to all future uses within the study area – the City of Saratoga Springs Zoning Ordinance Article IV - Conservation Subdivision Regulations (Added 5/20/03) and also particularly, Article IV, Section 240-4.4 Rural Design and Siting Standards.

In addition, the city's rural design standards should be refined to further articulate more details about how design can protect rural character, and be adjusted to ensure that all types of development and infrastructure within a rural area helps maintain the landscape where the natural environment is the predominant feature, and the intrusion of development is minimal.

What does it mean to protect the rural character specifically in the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area?

- **Maintain the unique, natural and rural countryside character to differentiate Saratoga Springs' "countryside" from the more urbanized downtown or "city."** Protect the natural and scenic amenities of the countryside by being mindful of the siting of, and design and materials used for buildings in the countryside. The rural, natural landscape should be the predominant feature and view within the landscape; while the "built" components of the environment and the features of the "working landscape" should complement and blend in with the natural landscape to the greatest extent possible.



This existing residence along Lake Avenue is an example of the local architecture.

- **Design a stronger visual gateway of this "country to city" transition zone** from what is a rural landscape to the more urban landscape of the city along Lake Avenue from I-87 to Gilbert Road. Maintain the green, rural character and scenic, rural views along the extent of the Lake Avenue Corridor from the Northway to the easternmost city boundary.
- **Incorporate existing natural features into site and landscaping design to the highest extent practicable.** Existing natural features within this area include: Spring Run, intermittent streams and natural drainage channels, wetlands, steep slopes of the natural topography including along stream banks.

Design principles for preserving rural character in the Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area to consider in addition to the existing rural design standards in the conservation subdivision regulations are to:

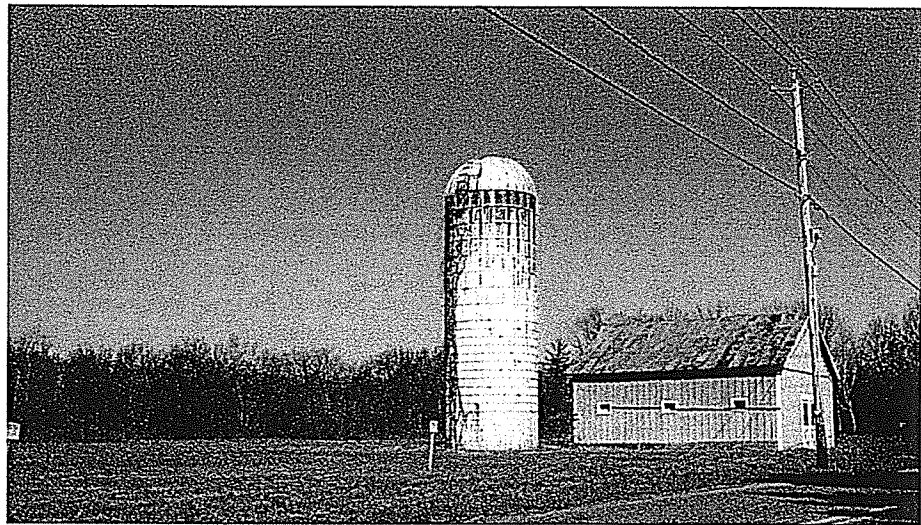
- **Define and establish rural character as a primary conservation site analysis feature for conservation subdivisions.**
- **Extend the requirement for a conservation site analysis approach to site design with rural character as a primary conservation site feature for all primary uses, special permit uses and public uses within the area to the extent practicable.** This would include locating active recreational uses within the buildable land area of a conservation subdivision site.
- **Design and manage stormwater as integral to the rural character,** and modeled upon naturally occurring ponds and streams in the city and vicinity.
- **Minimize urban design features in a rural landscape.** Encourage reduced impervious surfaces/ minimize paved areas. Allow for informal parking areas. Encourage non-urban design features in this rural, countryside area (for example: green parking areas, etc.)



Natural features should be left in a natural state to protect rural character (and water quality.)

- **Strengthen riparian buffers and setbacks.** The City of Saratoga Springs has enacted protections on designated streams – requiring a 50 foot setback buffer on each side of the stream's centerline. However, consider that all streams, including intermittent streams, should be left in their natural state and include native vegetation of setbacks of 50 feet or more.

- **Landscape with indigenous plants and tree species.** Plan and design the landscape with indigenous plants and trees to blend in with the character of the area and to conserve the existing landscape. Planting patterns of groups of mixed species rather than single species help integrate buildings into the landscape.
- **Avoid excessive exterior lighting.** Minimize light pollution in this rural area. Exterior lighting should be designed to meet lighting needs adequately and prevent excessive light in the night sky.
- **Integrate signage into the rural area.** Both building signage and freestanding signage (if any) should be designed to address communication needs balanced with enhancing rural character and avoiding urbanized character. Lighted signs, if necessary at all, should be scaled in brightness and color to prevent excessive light in the night sky.
- **Encourage rural context architectural design.** Apply architectural design, building scale, patterns and details which respect the gateway character and the overall rural character in the Rural Residential Zoning District, particularly the existing agricultural landscape features along Lake Avenue from the Northway to the city's eastern boundary. New development should reflect the character of the surrounding rural local architecture and character in scale, mass, and building form.



This rural landscape on Gilbert Road exhibits a sense of the rural character important for future design in the study area.

c. Zoning Code Amendments

Future land uses should reinforce and maintain the rural character desired in the Lake Avenue rural gateway and study area. Maintaining a "rural character" is not inherently easy with the introduction of development of any type of use but can be addressed and enforced through conservation layout and design for rural setting – for all future uses.

The key to balancing public interests with private interests in the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road Study area is to plan and zone for low traffic-generating uses within the study area as the most important standard. A diversity of uses within the study area may be appropriate – residential uses, agricultural uses, recreational uses, and very limited non-residential uses – with the condition that these uses protect the rural character of the area and generate the lowest amount of traffic possible.

Preferred land use options to pursue for the study area:

Option 1: Amend zoning to allow limited additional special permit uses. Achieve by creating a "Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay" area – specific to the study area.

To achieve the additional flexibility in the allowable land uses on a low density, low impact way the city should proceed with making the minor zoning change. That way, if the open space negotiations do not work out, the community has an opportunity to encourage a more flexible, mixed development that still meets its goal of maintaining the rural character. With this action, the existing RR-1 Zoning District remains, and the only change is adding a limited list of special permit uses to the existing list of special permit uses within the specific "Lake Avenue Country Gateway Overlay" study area. In other words, these additional special permit uses would not be broadly applicable to the entire RR-1 Zoning District, only to the area within the "Lake Avenue Country Gateway Area." (Traffic generation should also be considered as part of a special permit process.) This action will allow slightly more flexibility in land uses for development within the study area – however, no additional density would be permitted. Rural residential density of 2 units per one acre would still be the standard for density. Conservation subdivision regulations would still apply and conservation site analysis would be required. Commercial retail uses and light industrial uses would not be allowed. The proposed additional special permit uses suggested are:

- Day care center
- Multiple-family dwellings (only 2-family dwellings are currently allowed)
- Senior housing
- Professional or business offices

- Recreation business (indoor or outdoor facilities)

Ensure that all special permit uses on larger parcels of land are less than 50% or an even smaller maximum portion of the land use mix to ensure rural residential and/or agricultural uses remain the predominant land uses.

Option 2: Take action on an open space strategy; make no upfront change in zoning.

City and land owners negotiate purchase and sale of lands for open space. Funding options include using local funding, pursuing grants, or performing a combination of the above. Another creative option (that would potentially require no city cash) is a land swap of the desired open space lands with city-owned property downtown for economic development.

**d. Traffic and Transportation-Related Options /
Recommendations:**

The public is concerned about maintaining the community's rural character in this area of the city and overall quality of life – and this input is important for informing transportation system changes and improvements. Managing the existing traffic conditions and ongoing regional growth pressures on the study area's transportation system – regardless of the future land use within the study area – is an ongoing issue for local, state and federal entities. Traffic conditions can be addressed and monitored starting locally in concert and partnership with state and federal entities and private landowners.

□ Immediate Options:

- Address operational issues immediately:

1. Refine and adjust the existing signalization along Lake Avenue at the Weibel Avenue signal, and the Henning Road signal.
2. Request NYSDOT reduce the speed limit in the Lake Avenue Country Gateway area.
3. Support voluntary movement improvements by Stewart's Shop to improve quality of life and public safety with the existing combination of difficult turning movements and egress. Maintain existing access, but consider no left turn onto Lake Avenue from Stewart's Shop as a starting point. Recommend landowner (Stewart's Shop) self monitor its ingress and egress movements.
4. Increase police enforcement of speed limits in the area.

- Perform focused design development study and implement short-term quality of life improvements:
 1. Straighten geometry of Gilbert Road with Lake Avenue utilizing right-of-way land that is currently available. Change from “Y” intersection to a “T” intersection with stop sign control. Design to accommodate a future signal here (anticipate approval from DOT). Also, design for pedestrian safety along Lake Avenue and to access Bog Meadow Trail from the west side of the Northway. Design for a cross walk and future “off-road” pedestrian bicyclist path at the time of the redesign of this intersection.
- Short Term Options:
 - Conduct a traffic study of the regional transportation system – including not only the study area, but also the greater vicinity including the Northway exits 16 through 13 and connecting roads and other growth centers in the area – to evaluate regional traffic growth impacts (which are also quality of life impacts).
- Long Term Options: Implement findings of the regional traffic study by acting on the anticipated long-term solutions for anticipated regional growth traffic impacts (which are also quality of life impacts) that complement the land use vision of the study area:
 - Consider road medians or road narrowing (or some combination) on Lake Avenue from Gilbert Road to the I-87 overpass to provide traffic calming. Make sure design remains sensitive to rural character (context sensitive).
 - Evaluate intersection function in the future. Consider appropriate options to mitigate congestion including possible single-lane roundabout at Weibel Avenue and Lake Avenue to slow traffic, improve level of service and improve pedestrian mobility.
 - As traffic grows (as is expected) and/or as development on the south side of Lake Avenue occurs, consider creating a 4-way intersection (or as part of a roundabout) and consider extending Weibel Avenue south across Lake Avenue to Gilbert Road. This should be an indirect (e.g., including “T” intersection and stop sign) and not a non-stop bypass road.
- Linked to all Options: Plan for and Design Pedestrian and Bicyclist Improvements Within the Context of Planning and

Designing Future Development Projects and Traffic Calming Improvements on Lake Avenue and Weibel Avenue.

- Link neighborhood west of Northway to study area along Lake Avenue with sidewalks/multi-purpose path up to study area and continue with off-road, more rural path design within the Lake Avenue Country Gateway area.
- Add pedestrian crosswalks and pedestrian-activated lights on Lake Avenue at Weibel Avenue and on Weibel Avenue as well.
- Link area to Bog Meadow Trail.
- Link area north along Weibel Avenue to the proposed rail-to-trail corridor and to the city's ice skating facilities.
- Investigate the feasibility of an off-road path along Gilbert Road for pedestrians and bicyclists.

e. Other Recommended City Policies/Actions:

- The city should proceed with conducting a city-wide recreation master plan. This action was recommended in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. This committee supports this action in response to the many citizens who expressed concerns with siting active recreation facilities within the Weibel Avenue – Gilbert Road study area. Many citizens were concerned about creating too much of a concentration of recreation facilities and activities that generate high traffic within the study area. Considering the location of new additional recreational facilities in a balanced geographic way throughout the city may help mitigate for potential traffic impacts that can be associated with active recreation.
- Explore the development of an incentive zoning law for the City of Saratoga Springs. A strong incentive law places the burden on the developer to propose a community amenity that is identified as needed and desired by the community, in exchange for a bonus/incentive of comparable value. The proposed community amenity and desired development incentive/bonus project proposal; would have to be approved first through the city council for a decision with referral by the planning board before proceeding through the planning board for the site plan approval process.
- The city could develop enhanced, user-friendly design guidelines for the "Country in the City" district.

Lake Avenue Country Gateway: Vision and Recommendations
Report of the Weibel Avenue - Gilbert Road Study Advisory Committee

Appendix A
Public Presentation: June 26, 2003

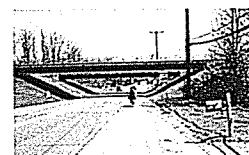
Weibel Avenue - Gilbert Road Study

Public Meeting #3

June 26, 2003

Tonight's Agenda

- Study Schedule
- New Traffic Data
- Review Conceptual Sketches in Detail
- Feedback & Comments
- *Optional at the end:*
Break into smaller discussion groups



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Study Schedule

- Public Input on Concepts – Tonight
- Develop Recommendations
- Committee Meetings:
 - Wed., July 2 @ 3 p.m.
 - Thurs., July 17 @ 1 p.m.
- Finalize report to committee
- Submit final report to city council



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Goals for Tonight

- What do you like?
- What do you not like?
- Are there any ideas or concepts missing that should be considered?
- What ideas / concepts can the majority agree upon?



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Give us Your Feedback

- Use 3 Green dots to Mark up Concept Sketches
- Mark up Sketches with Your Comments
- Tell us your thoughts in writing on the worksheet provided & hand in tonight

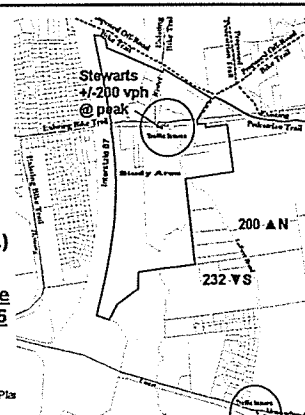
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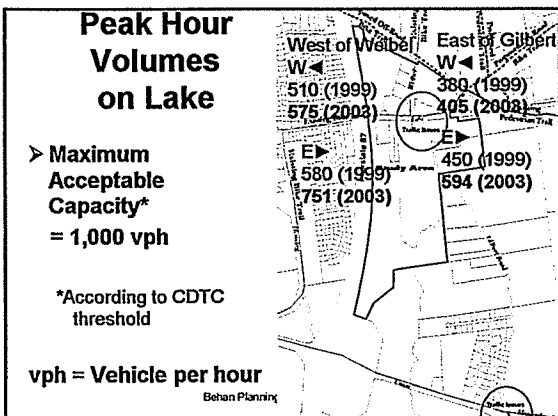
Peak Hour Volumes - Gilbert

New CDTC Traffic Count Data (6/12/03):
Peak Hour Count
(4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.)

* Maximum Acceptable for Local Road = 625 vph



Behan Pla



Working Through Traffic Ideas

- Signal Improvements
- Re-alignments
- Deter volume & speed of use of Gilbert Road
- Consider "dead-end" approaches on Gilbert
- Traffic calming
- New designs – roundabout
- Incorporate Pedestrian and Cyclist Routes and Safe Passage
- Add new connections between Union and Lake



All Must Consider Local Quality of Life

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Rules of Thumb = Trips per day estimates

- Senior Housing = 3.3 per unit
- 2-family duplex = 6 per unit
- Apartments = 6 per unit
- Single family homes = 10 (to 15) per unit
- General Light Industrial = 7 per 1,000 s.f.
- Professional Offices = 12 per 1,000 s.f.
- Commercial Retail = 83 per 1,000 s.f.
- Passive Recreation = 9 trips per acre* in developed areas
- Active Recreation Parkland = 13 per acre*
- Outdoor Athletic Fields = 30 per acre
- General Light Industrial = 76 per acre

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Review of Conceptual Sketches

- Preliminary Concepts – illustrations of land use concepts for discussion
- Based on Public Input at Charrette
- Numbers or units – for planning purposes only; could change
- Additional "Design Constraints" Would Be Realized as Part of Final Site Design
 - Expect Different Layouts by Future Project Sponsors



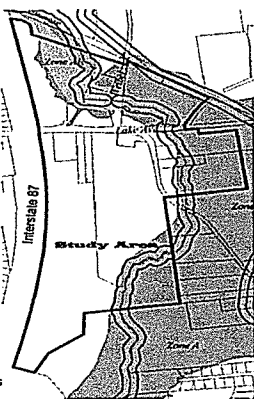
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Identification of Environmental Constraints:

- Steep slopes
- 100-foot stream buffer
- Floodplain and Floodway
- NYS DEC Wetlands

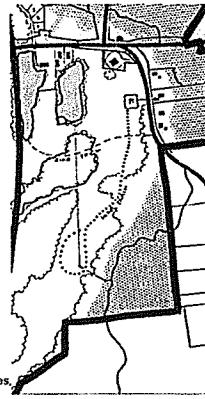
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For an actual project sponsor: more design constraints

- Examples:
 - Views
 - Unique characteristics of the site – such as Mature Woodlands
 - Cultural features such as stone walls, etc.

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Conceptual yield vs. final conservation site design

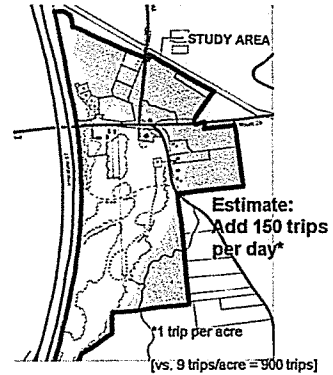
- Assumptions for yield analysis included:
 - Protection of entire, intact southern half of the study area (protect Exit 14 gateway area)

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Preliminary Concept Sketch 1:

- Open space conservation
- Land purchase southwestern parcels
 - Limited RR1/CDD other parcels

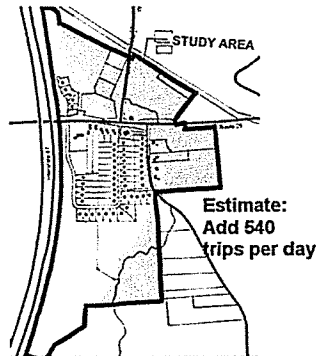


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Preliminary Concept Sketch 2:

RR1/CDD All Parcels

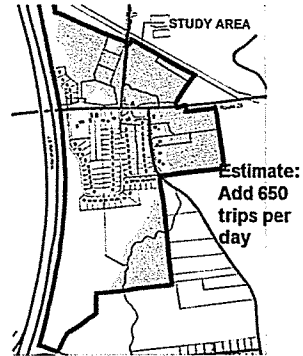
"T" intersection at
Gilbert Road

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Preliminary Concept Sketch 3:

- RR1-CDD All Parcels
- 20% Density Bonus for affordable housing

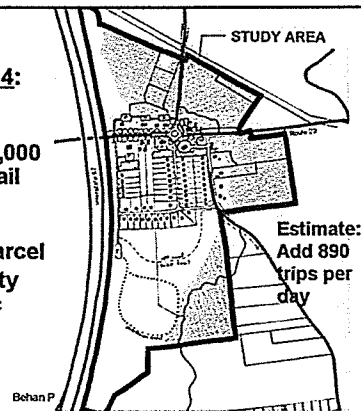


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Preliminary Concept Sketch 4:

- Limited commercial gateway (say 25,000 s.f. total non-retail office)
- RR1-CDD southwestern parcel
- With 20% density bonus for public access to open space



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Land Use

Trip Generation Comparison*

Professional office

- = 12 trips per day per 1,000 s.f.
• [example 25,000 s.f. = 300 trips per day]

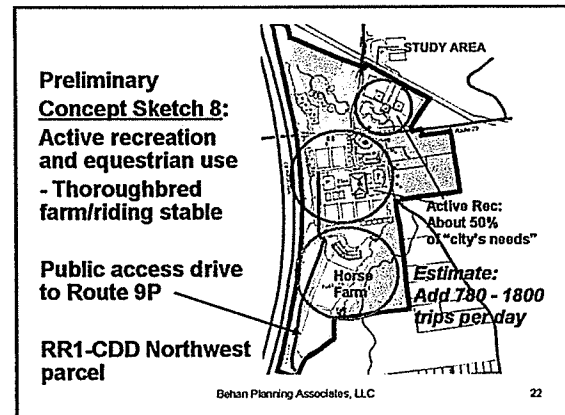
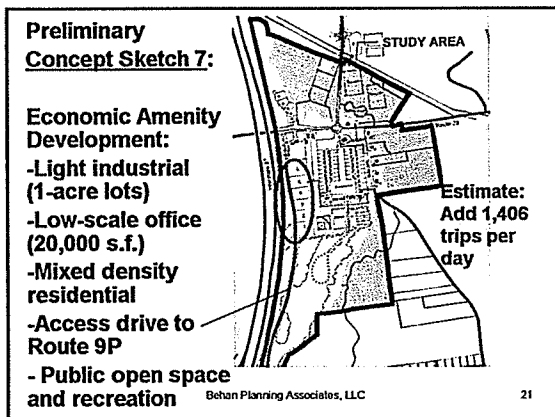
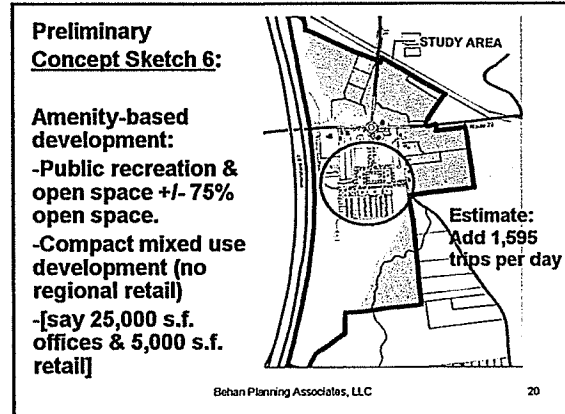
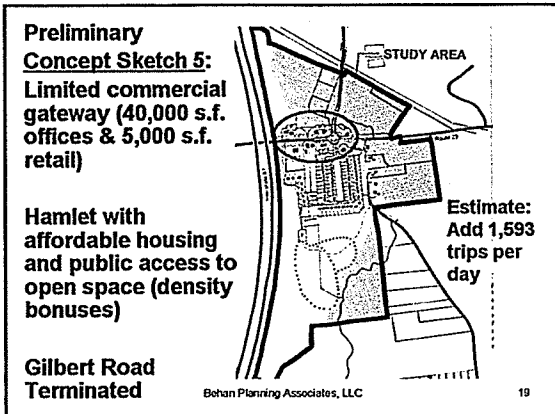
Retail (<100,000 s.f.)

- = 83 trips per day per 1,000 s.f.
• [example 25,000 s.f. = 2,075 trips per day]

*Rules of Thumb – actual projects may vary

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Conclusions

- All scenarios produce traffic impacts.
- Limits to land use intensity would be key to tempering traffic impacts.

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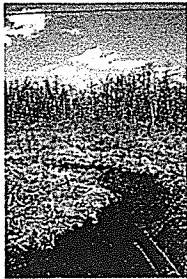
Road to Consensus

- Discuss Preferred Scenario(s)
- Discuss Preferred Concepts
- New Ideas?

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Thanks for your input!



*Welbel Avenue – Gilbert Road
Study Advisory Committee*

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Spring Run at Gilbert Road

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Lake Avenue Country Gateway: Vision and Recommendations
Report of the Weibel Avenue - Gilbert Road Study Advisory Committee

Appendix B
Traffic Assessment Summary
and Figure of Potential Options
Prepared by Capital District Transportation Commission
September 18, 2003

**Weilbel Avenue/Gilbert Road Study
Traffic Assessment**

Highway Capacity Manual procedures were used to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the existing street system to accommodate probable future increases in peak period traffic demand. The estimates of traffic demand derived from the land use planning process were evaluated against established capacity and level-of-service criteria. This evaluation identified areas of traffic congestion and delay. The evaluation included analysis of both intersections and individual highway links and was conducted for each of the four land use options.

In addition to the capacity analysis, traffic demand forecasts were also evaluated against threshold criteria that were established to define the compatibility between traffic and adjoining land use. This analysis served to identify streets in the study area where traffic volumes conflict with residential living environments. Neighborhoods or streets which would benefit from pedestrian and bicycle connections were also identified in this analysis.

Capacity and Level-of Service

Given the dominant role of the automobile in meeting travel demand, traffic is the primary transportation issue facing the City. Traffic congestion produces many adverse effects on the community including travel delays, increased fuel consumption, diminished air quality, inconvenience and irritation to motorists, and increased traffic conflict and vehicular crashes. Congestion also results in the potential diversion of traffic from congested areas to less traveled residential streets.

Traffic conditions were analyzed using accepted engineering practice. Capacity analysis was performed for Lake Avenue's intersections with Henning Road, Weilbel Avenue, and Gilbert Road. Intersections were evaluated in terms of volume-to-capacity (V/C) and level-of-service (LOS). Volume-to-capacity ratios measure the physical ability of an intersection to accommodate additional traffic, while level-of-service is a measure of average vehicle delay at the intersection. Level-of-service can range from A to F. LOS E corresponds to delays in the range of 40 to 60 seconds, and is generally considered to be the maximum acceptable delay to motorists in a suburban environment.

In addition to intersection analysis, capacity threshold analysis was also performed "mid-block" for road segments on the network. Capacity threshold analysis was designed to estimate reserve capacity of the highway system for mid-block locations. This mainline analysis looked at the physical ability of each road to carry existing traffic volumes without any improvements to the highway system. Deficiencies were identified by comparing mid-block traffic volumes against theoretical mid-block capacities. Analysis was conducted using guidelines adopted by CDTC for maximum acceptable volumes.

Under existing travel conditions, it appears that all of the traffic movements at the three intersections operate at level-of-service D or better during the peak travel period. While level-of-service at all three intersections has been measured at acceptable levels, the configuration of Gilbert Road and the Stewart's Lake Avenue driveway creates an awkward traffic environment.

Growth in traffic generated by continued development in the Weibel Avenue area and elsewhere in the city, in combination with this awkward environment, will have a modest impact on the roadway system. The traffic analysis indicates that the primary traffic problem in the area is centered on the Lake Avenue/Gilbert Road intersection. As Lake Avenue traffic increases, making left turns from Gilbert Road will become more difficult. As acceptable gaps for left-turning traffic becomes shorter, traffic conflict and the potential for right-angle crashes will worsen.

Residential Traffic Conflict

The roadway network of a community is defined in terms of a street hierarchy. This hierarchy describes the principal use and/or intended function of each road. Under the functional classification system, arterial streets primarily serve the through movement of traffic between communities. Local streets provide access to abutting land, such as in residential neighborhoods. Collector streets funnel traffic between the two, and usually serve a secondary land access function. When a street begins to serve more than its principal function, conflicts can occur.

The most notable conflict, from a quality of life perspective, concerns the intrusion of through traffic into residential areas. Heavy traffic volumes and through traffic diminish the quality of residential living environments. Conflicts occur where through traffic utilizes local neighborhood streets, or where residential properties exist along streets that are intended to serve a through traffic function. The point at which traffic levels are perceived as a detriment to residential quality, however, is difficult to measure and depends on the expectations and past experience of each individual. Using objective criteria developed from a number of sources, and based on traffic volumes, roadway function, and land use characteristics, analysis of the highway network can identify areas along arterial and collector streets where traffic volumes are clearly in conflict with residential land use. Much of the concern with regard to residential traffic conflict appears to lie with traffic using Lake Avenue to travel between Weibel Avenue and downtown Saratoga Springs. A second concern involves the increasing use of Gilbert Road as a short-cut for traffic traveling between Route 50 and the Exit 14 area of the Northway. It is expected that these conflicts will increase in severity as more parcels are developed and as traffic demand on Lake Avenue grows. The ability of City streets like Lake Avenue and Gilbert Road to accommodate increases in daily traffic while maintaining adequate and safe accessibility to residential and commercial areas served by these streets by minimizing traffic/land use conflict is a legitimate concern of area residents.

Pedestrian Circulation

The City's pedestrian circulation system consists of approximately --- miles of public sidewalk. Public sidewalks constitute an important element in the City's transportation network. Such facilities enhance public safety by physically separating vehicular and pedestrian circulation by

removing physical and perceptual barriers to access. The relative absence of pedestrian facilities in this area of the City hinders non-motorized forms of circulation and in many cases makes such travel unsafe. Use of study area streets by pedestrians or cyclists most often requires sharing travel lanes with automobiles – a situation which creates safety conflicts and acts to discourage use.

The City's Comprehensive Plan, CDTC's *New Visions Transportation Plan*, and Governor Pataki's *Quality Communities Initiative* calls for designing land development and transportation projects that promote walking and the use of bicycles. Initial efforts at providing facilities should focus on streets with high traffic-land use conflict and on linkages between residential areas and activity centers.

Transportation Improvement Options Considered to Mitigate Traffic Generated by Development In the Weibel Avenue/Gilbert Road Area.

Major changes to Lake Avenue, Weibel Avenue, or Gilbert Road will not be required to accommodate traffic generated by development in the Weibel Avenue Study Area. The traffic analysis demonstrates that a modest amount of development can be accommodated as long as access to property in the corridor is designed in a way that limits traffic conflict. A suggested traffic strategy is outlined in Figure 1.

The current cross-section of study area roadways with proper access management and reconstruction of the Gilbert Road intersection will provide sufficient capacity to handle expected traffic conditions. While level-of-service at the Weibel Avenue/Lake Avenue intersection will continue to operate at acceptable levels for the foreseeable future, several improvements should be made to improve the pedestrian environment. In the short-term, sidewalks or walking paths should be constructed, crosswalks on all three legs installed, and pedestrian signals installed. In the long-term, consideration should be given to replacing the existing signalized intersection with a roundabout. Roundabouts have been used extensively in the United Kingdom and in Europe, and are currently being built here in the Capital District. Not to be confused with a traffic circle, a roundabout has a number of advantages over a signalized intersection. A prominent advantage is that crash rates are significantly lower for roundabouts than for signalized intersections. In addition, where feasible, roundabouts can handle comparable volumes of traffic with reduced delay and take up less space (lower right of way impacts). Roundabouts can be designed to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists and be visually attractive gateways to a community. Construction of a roundabout and other traffic calming strategies will go along way toward reducing traffic speed and reducing the attractiveness of study area streets to short-cut traffic.

Another long-term option discussed by the Steering Committee calls for extending Weibel Avenue, connecting Lake Avenue to Gilbert Road as shown on Figure 1. By constructing the Weibel Avenue extension, the street system would be more complete and street spacing more appropriate to the development in the area than is the current situation. Grid-like designs for streets are generally safer for all users because direct access to the major street system via individual driveways can be minimized. Avoiding the construction of new driveways and consolidating, eliminating, or modifying existing driveways would help preserve traffic-carrying capacity and minimize traffic conflict and crashes. Further, construction of this connecting

roadway will add flexibility to the street system which is especially important for resident management and providing emergency vehicle access.

All improvements should incorporate design features that provide safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access. The option building multi-use paths elsewhere in the study area should be explored. Multi-use paths and sidewalks should provide high quality access for cyclists as well as pedestrians and would be consistent with principles stated in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

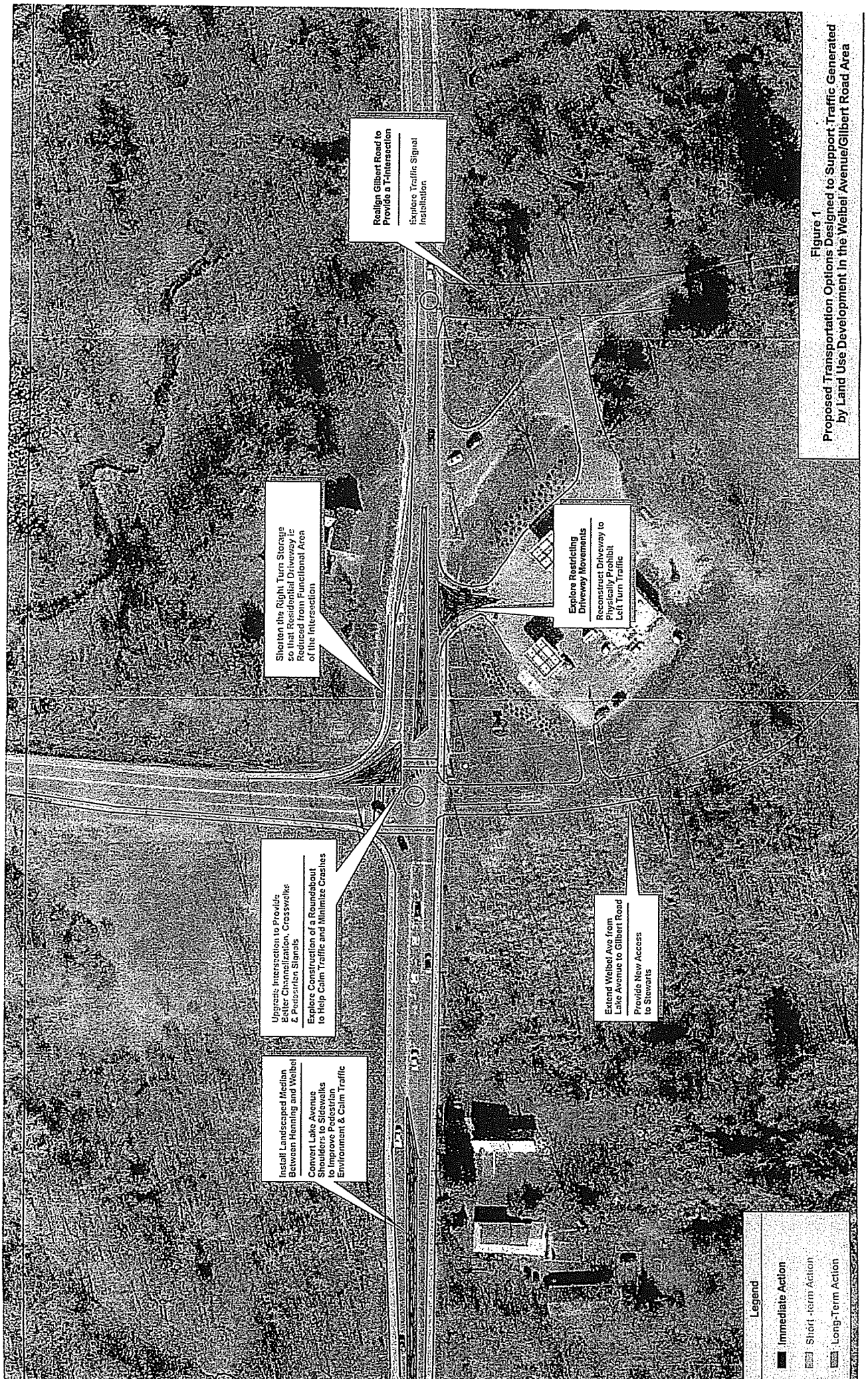


Figure 1

Proposed Transportation Options Designed to Support Traffic Generated by Land Use Development in the Weibel Avenue/Gilbert Road Area

