

DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT

for the

DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

for the

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE ONEONTA RAIL YARDS

City of Oneonta, Otsego County, New York

SEQRA Type 1 Action

Applicant:

County of Otsego IDA

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And

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City of Oneonta Common Council

Common Council Chambers

City Hall, 258 Main Street, Oneonta, NY 13820

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**Redevelopment of the Oneonta Rail Yards
City of Oneonta
Otsego County, New York
Generic Environmental Impact Statement
Draft Scoping Document**

INTRODUCTION

The City of Oneonta Common Council, as Lead Agency, is conducting an environmental review of Redevelopment of the Oneonta Rail Yards in the City of Oneonta, Otsego County, New York as proposed by the County of Otsego Industrial Development Agency (COIDA). COIDA will prepare a redevelopment master plan and economic development strategy for approximately 50 acres of an 80-acre site owned by COIDA and others, known as the Oneonta Rail Yards. The redevelopment of the Oneonta Rail Yards site, centered on Roundhouse Road and in the vicinity of Chestnut Street in the City of Oneonta, will involve the construction of structures, parking, and access to the site as well as the extension of utility infrastructure and site roadways, for a total potential project area consisting of approximately 17 individual parcels and approximately 200 acres with access to public water and sewer systems as well as natural gas. The project will provide an opportunity to create a new industrial/commercial business park that would provide additional markets for Otsego County, create new jobs, and add to the local tax base.

Part I of the Full Environmental Assessment was prepared together with a brief project description and study area map. Based on a review of 6 NYCRR Part 617.4, the Common Council determined that the proposed project is a Type I Action under SEQR involving more than one agency thus requiring coordinated agency review.

A coordinated review for Lead Agency status was initiated by the Common Council on September 28, 2017, and on January 16, 2018, the Common Council, having received no objections from involved agencies, declared itself Lead Agency for this project, made a Determination of Significance, and issued a Positive Declaration with its Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS).

The Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) will be prepared in accordance with Article 8 of the New York Environmental Conservation Law, the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA or SEQR) and the implementing regulations incorporated in 6 NYCRR Part 617. This scoping document outlines the issues to be studied and analyzed for the Redevelopment of the Oneonta Rail Yards.

POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS IDENTIFIED**Impact on Land**

The average depth to the water table on this site is less than 3 feet the impacts of which must be explored.

The construction is predicted to last for greater than 1 year the impacts of which must be evaluated.

Development of the site will add impervious surfaces which will concentrate stormwater the mitigation for which must be determined.

Impact on Water, Habitat and Flooding

The action may result in a decrease of over 10% of the on-site wetlands the implications of which must be identified including mitigation.

The action may involve construction within or adjoining a freshwater wetland the impacts of which must be determined including mitigation.

The site includes a small area within the 500-year floodplain; however, the extent of potential disturbance of the floodplain must be evaluated.

Development of the site will add impervious surfaces which will concentrate stormwater the mitigation for which must be determined.

Impact on Transportation and Traffic

The action may result in the construction of a paved parking area for 650 vehicles which implies traffic and stormwater impacts to be assessed and mitigation measures identified.

The traffic generated by the project could decrease safety on local roads and increase congestion the identification of the extent of which and mitigation measures for which must be identified.

Area transportation infrastructure will require upgrade in accommodate the traffic resulting from redevelopment of this site, the nature of which must be determined.

Impact on Energy

The action may utilize more than 2,500 MWh per year of electricity the capacity for supply to which must be explored.

The action may involve the heating and cooling of over 1 million square feet of building area at full build-out which may demand power system improvements which must be identified.

Impact on Community and Human Health

The redevelopment of the rail yards will demand community services, the impact and mitigation measures for which shall be identified. Revitalization of the rail yards may have an impact on cultural resources, the impact of which shall be identified.

The action is located within 1500 feet of Hartwick College, Riverside Elementary School, Early Head Start, Angels Daycare, Fox Adult Day Center, Oneonta Specialty Services, and United Health Services; however, the site's history, geography, and present land use along with

adjacent industrial land uses may mitigate this potential impact for which an evaluation is required.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The DGEIS will be prepared to document the environmental review of the proposed action and to seek comments and input from the public and involved and/or interested agencies. The DGEIS will present analysis of the potentially significant adverse and beneficial environmental impacts of the proposed action, as well as reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures. Given the nature of the proposed project many of the issues typically associated with a development related action will have little or no applicability which will be documented in the DGEIS.

Once prepared, SEQRA provides that the Lead Agency evaluates the DGEIS and determines if it is complete for public and agency review. With the DGEIS deemed complete, a comment period extending a minimum of 30 days shall be initiated. During the comment period, the public and involved and/or interested agencies are encouraged to provide comments regarding the DGEIS. At the conclusion of the comment period, the Lead Agency will prepare a Final GEIS (GFEIS) which will incorporate the DGEIS together with responses to the comments and include any supplementary material necessary to provide responses to the comments. The final step in the process is the issuance of a Findings Statement by the Lead Agency. The Findings Statement will document the environmental analysis in summary form and set forth specific conditions or criteria under which future actions may be undertaken or approved.

SCOPE OF THE DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

COVER SHEET

The DGEIS will contain a document cover that presents a project title, list of document authors and contacts, the name of the Lead Agency and a contact, the project location, SEQRA status and relevant dates (i.e. date of acceptance by the Lead Agency, date by which comments must be received, date of public hearing and final date of acceptance).

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section will describe the environmental review process and will include a brief description of proposed plan and related actions, the potentially required local, County, State, and Federal approvals and permits, project benefits, a summary of impacts and mitigation measures as well as a brief comparison of alternatives.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The County of Otsego Industrial Development Agency (COIDA) intends to conduct an environmental review of an area locally known as the Oneonta Rail Yards, approximately 200 acres comprised of 17 parcels. The study area is made up of acreage between Chestnut Street to the north and the rail lines to the south, within the City of Oneonta, and acreage spanning both sides of the rail line immediately west of the City's boundary with the Town of Oneonta (see Attachment A for a map of the study area). COIDA intends to conduct the

environmental review of the Oneonta Rail Yards as a Generic Environmental Impact Statement that evaluates existing conditions, potential impacts related to development, and the mitigation measures necessary to reduce potential impacts. The GEIS will evaluate several alternative concept plans that may include a mix of business, determine a preferred Master Plan, and establish thresholds for future development.

2.1 Project Purpose, Need and Benefit

This section will identify the history and background for the proposed action together with the economic and social benefits associated with the action. Commercial and/or business sectors that are envisioned to occupy the proposed site will be identified in this section. The location targeted for the action will be discussed relative to siting issues including local zoning and surrounding land uses, community character, transportation and other infrastructure. The anticipated direct and indirect economic impacts and growth of employment predicted to result from the action will also be discussed in general.

2.1.1 Purpose and Need

2.1.2 Anticipated Economic Benefits

2.2 Location

This section will discuss the logic and rationale that defines the project location as well as the location of any mitigation-related lands associated with the project.

2.2.1 Project Site

2.2.2 Regional Context

2.3 Preferred Redevelopment Master Plan

This section will describe the Master Plan for the action for full build-out and operations. The narrative will discuss various issues related to building design and coverage, traffic circulation, stormwater management, green space, landscaping, infrastructure, and the overall vision for the site. Building footprints, as well as associated parking areas and other site improvements, will be depicted on a plan. Permitted uses will be defined. The Master Plan will integrate the concepts of public recreational opportunities as well as habitat preservation and enhancement.

2.3.1 Development Areas

2.3.2 Site Access and Transportation

2.3.3 Water

2.3.4 Sewer

2.3.5 Power

2.3.6 Telecommunications

2.3.7 Storm Water Management

2.3.8. Wetlands/Habitat Enhancement**2.3.9. Green Space/Buffers****2.3.10. Recreation****2.3.11. Structures & Parking****2.3.12. Lighting****2.3.13. Landscaping****2.3.15. Security****2.3.16. Utility interconnection****2.4 Operations**

The Operations section of the DGEIS will describe the anticipated operational characteristics of the facilities anticipated in the Master Plan. To the extent that specific information regarding any or all planned uses is available, specific operational scenarios will be described in terms of site access, hours of operation, number of employees, types of employees, number and type of visitors/users, etc.

2.5 Construction

The anticipated phasing of construction, schedule, location of staging areas, hours of construction operations, construction vehicle routing and access will be discussed.

2.6 Permits and Approvals

The permits and approvals that are anticipated for the proposed action will be enumerated in this section.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

This section of the DGEIS will describe the existing environment setting at the project site and surrounding area. Aspects of the environment that may be either adversely or beneficially impacted by the proposed action will be identified and discussed. Where potential negative impacts are identified, mitigation measures will be described to reduce or avoid those impacts. Construction as well as non-construction impacts will be analyzed together with impacts from the operational phase of the project.

In each subsection, existing conditions and climate will be described. The subsections will also describe potential impacts of the action and mitigation measures, if necessary. The subsets of subjects under each subsection are preliminary and will be expanded or refined based on detailed analysis in each area of study.

3.1 Impacts on Land

3.1.1 Ground Disturbance, Sedimentation, and Erosion

Construction activity on the site will disturb the ground which could result in sedimentation, erosion and flooding. The GEIS will describe the overall approach taken when designing the proposed stormwater management system and will provide a draft SWPPP that include establishment of pre-development sub-catchments, design points that have been field-verified and time of concentration flow paths. Post-development drainage plans shall include this same information as well as proposed stormwater management controls for the entire site that have been designed in accordance with NYSDEC requirements. The GEIS will describe those measures designed to meet NYSDEC standards. The following will be discussed relative to the proposed action:

3.1.1.1 Existing Conditions

3.1.1.2 Potential Impacts

3.1.1.3 Mitigation Measures

3.1.2 Soil and Groundwater

Due to the industrial history of the proposed site, a soil evaluation was conducted by Malcolm Pirnie, Inc. for the USEPA Brownfields Assessment Program Phase 1 (2005) and Phase 2 (2006) Environmental Site Assessments. The evaluation for the DGEIS will provide a comparison of these reports to the current testing standards, as well as the information on limitations to development based on soil contamination, hydric soils, seasonally high groundwater, erosion potential, and low percolation rates. This section shall also include a summary of the potential erosion and sedimentation impacts due to the proposed soil disturbance.

3.1.2.1 Existing Conditions

3.1.2.2 Potential Impacts

3.1.2.3 Mitigation Measures

3.2 Impacts on Water, Habitat and Flooding

This section will describe groundwater, surface water, and wetlands (under both Federal and State jurisdiction) as well as any critical habitat within the project area.

Jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional wetlands on the project site shall be field delineated and a Wetland Delineation Report shall be included in the DEIS. This section will, through narrative, mapping, and tables, describe efforts to avoid or minimize wetland impacts as well as unavoidable impacts. It will also provide a description of measure to mitigate proposed wetland impacts. If the level of impacts warrants compensatory wetland mitigation or if vital habitat is identified on the site, the DGEIS will prepare and provide a functional assessment of the impacted wetland using ACOE methodology and provide plan and section views and planting

plans for the wetland mitigation area(s). There will be a description of the hydrology of the wetland mitigation area(s), together with plans for maintenance and monitoring.

This section will also provide a description of the surface waters found on the site. The description should include a table of ephemeral drainages and intermittent and perennial streams located on the property. Appropriate mapping illustrating the location, water index number and stream classification of these resources shall be included. There will be a description of the surface water resources on the site in terms of the regulatory jurisdictions of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), and the location of any mapped floodplain locations on or near the project site. Potential impacts on the floodplain and flood way will be discussed along with mitigation measures as appropriate.

Any proposed stream crossings, including culverted crossings, spanned crossings, etc. will be described and illustrated, as will be other types of construction activities that are proposed in proximity to surface water resources. The potential for causing soil erosion and sedimentation of surface waters on the site will be examined.

Depth to groundwater and other aquatic resources adjacent, streams, and wetlands as well as habitat within the Project Site will be identified relative to the following:

3.2.1 Existing Conditions

3.2.2 Potential Impacts

3.2.3 Mitigation Measures

3.3 Impacts on Transportation and Traffic

3.3.1 Existing Conditions

DATA COLLECTION

Background Data- Coordination with the City of Oneonta, Otsego County, and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) will be conducted to obtain background traffic and roadway information in the project study area. Information regarding other approved projects in the study area that may impact traffic on the study area roadways will be requested from the City.

Existing roadway and traffic control features and conditions, such as intersection geometry, speed limits, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, and transit will be verified in the study area. A description of road grades, turning radii, right-of-way, and intersections geometry will be documented based on field data collection and a review of available record drawings. Sight distance will be measured at the proposed site access for passenger cars and heavy vehicles.

Accident Data- Accident data will be obtained from the NYSDOT for the latest three years of available data for the areas immediately adjacent to the project site. The project team will coordinate with the County of Otsego IDA to obtain the data as part of a public entity FOIL request. The following locations will be requested:

- Interstate 88 between and including Exits 13 and 15

- NY Route 205 between and including County Road 48 and Chestnut Street (NY Route 23)
- Chestnut Street (NY Route 23) between and including NY Route 205 and Main Street
- County Road 8 between and including NY Route 205 and Fonda Avenue
- NY Route 7 between and including NY Route 205 and Chestnut Street (NY Route 23)

Traffic Counts- Peak hour turning movements counts will be conducted during the AM peak hour from 6:00 to 9:00 AM and during the PM peak hour from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the following intersections:

- Oneida Street/Lower River Street/Country Club Road
- Chestnut Street/Ceperley Avenue
- Chestnut Street/Murdock Avenue
- Chestnut Street/Fonda Avenue
- NY Route 205/Oneida Street/NY Route 7
- NY Route 205/Country Club Road
- Chestnut Street/Main Street

In addition to the above intersections listed in the scoping document, counts will be completed at the following additional intersections that provide direct access to the site:

- Roundhouse Road/Fonda Avenue
- Roundhouse Road/Lower River Street/Ceperley Avenue

Heavy vehicles and busses will be documented during the data collection and pedestrian travel will be noted.

3.3.2 *Potential Impacts*

TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

No-Build Condition- Future AM and PM peak hour traffic volumes without considering the development of the site will be determined for a single design year based on documented volume growth rates for the study area and traffic associated with other approved projects impacting the study area.

Future Condition- The peak hour trip generation for the site will be estimated using data published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) in the latest edition of the *Trip Generation Manual*. The use of rail within the site as a means of transportation will be considered in the evaluation of peak hour trips.

The site generated trips will be distributed onto the adjacent roadway network at the study area intersections. The distributed trips will be added to the future no-build peak hour traffic volumes to develop future build traffic volume conditions.

Traffic Analysis- Traffic analysis will be conducted for the study area intersections for the existing, no-build, and build conditions according to the procedures outlined in the *Highway*

Capacity Manual. The analysis will result in a level of service defining the intersection operations in terms of average vehicle delay. A comparison between the existing, no-build, and build conditions will be made to determine the impacts to the study area after completion of the development project. The need for mitigation to offset any traffic impacts resulting from the project and to provide adequate access to the project site will be identified.

The measured sight distance will be compared to industry guidelines. Recommendations to improve sight lines will be made where applicable.

Accident Analysis- The accident data will be reviewed and summarized in tabular form summarizing the number and type of accidents that have occurred over the three-year period and to identify any prevalent accident types. If applicable, recommendations to improve safety in the study area or a discussion of potential impacts to safety associated with the project will be identified.

3.3.3 *Mitigation Measures*

A technical report will be prepared to summarize the results of the traffic evaluation and will include the following:

- A summary of existing and future traffic volumes at the study area intersections
- A summary of the AM and PM peak hour site trip generation
- A summary of the intersection analysis results and a detailed discussion of the site access operations
- A summary of the accident evaluation and any recommendations to improve safety in the study area
- A summary of the sight distance evaluation at the site access intersections and any mitigation recommended to improve sight lines
- Summary of any traffic impacts and proposed mitigation

3.4 **Impacts on Energy**

The expected short- and long-term uses of energy resources and the anticipated levels of consumption will be discussed. The project may require high energy demands that may necessitate upgraded utility infrastructure. The project may utilize more than 2,500 MWh per year and involve the heating and cooling of over 1 million square feet of building area which may demand power system improvements, therefore, the capacity of supply must be explored. The following will be discussed relative to the proposed action:

3.4.1 *Existing Conditions*

3.4.2 *Potential Impacts*

3.4.3 *Mitigation Measures*

3.5 **Impacts on Community and Human Health**

3.5.1 **Land Use and Zoning**

This section will describe the existing land uses in general in the Project Area as well as current or imminently pending Land Use Master/Comprehensive Plans and zoning for the affected community. For the Project Site Area, existing zoning and permitted uses will be discussed and any anticipated need for zoning changes to accommodate the action identified relative to:

3.5.1.1 Existing Conditions

3.5.1.2 Potential Impacts

3.5.1.3 Mitigation Measures

3.5.2 Community Services

The Community Services section of the DGEIS will incorporate a general description of public services such as potable water, sewer treatment, police, emergency services, schools, and sanitation for as they may relate to the proposed action. The following will be discussed relative to the proposed action:

3.5.2.1 Existing Conditions

3.5.2.2 Potential Impacts

3.5.2.3 Mitigation Measures

3.5.3 Visual Resources

A Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed project shall be performed and included in the DGEIS. This section will: Characterize the existing viewshed and discuss the general locations from which views into the project site are available and the character/context of these existing views; identify public roads and state lands from which the project will be visible; summarize from where and how views into the project site will be affected by construction of the proposed project; provide an assessment of the significance of the changes in views; and provide measures that will be incorporated into the project design that will mitigate potential impacts.

3.5.3.1 Existing Conditions

3.5.3.2 Potential Impacts

3.5.3.3 Mitigation Measures

3.5.4 Human Health

The project site is located within 1500 feet of Hartwick College, Riverside Elementary School, Early Head Start, Angels Daycare, Fox Adult Day Center, Oneonta Specialty Services, and United Health Services. An evaluation is required to understand the potential impacts that may occur. The following will be discussed relative to the proposed action:

3.5.4.1 Existing Conditions

3.5.4.2 Potential Impacts

3.5.4.3 Mitigation Measures

3.5.5 Cultural Resources

The rail yards area of the City of Oneonta has cultural and historical significance in the City and in the region. The redevelopment of the rail yards may impact the cultural and historical significance of the site, the impacts and mitigations for which must be assessed. The following will be discussed relative to the proposed action:

3.5.5.1 Existing Conditions

3.5.5.2 Potential Impacts

3.5.5.3 Mitigation Measures

4.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

The cumulative impact of other proposed projects that existed at the time of receipt of the initial EAF will be discussed. Specifically, the following will be discussed:

4.1 Background Growth and Development Trends

4.2 Cumulative Impact with other Proposed Actions

4.3 Summary

5.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternative Master Plans for the Primary Development Area will be presented together with alternatives for access and infrastructure. The merits and drawbacks of the various alternatives will be discussed. A No-Action alternative and alternative sites that accommodate the preferred Master Plan will also be described.

5.1 Alternative Master Plans

This section will present alternative development concept plans and will summarize the impacts and benefits of such plans as compared to the proposed Master Plan. The alternative concept plans will identify and evaluate scale, design, timing, and land use.

5.2 Alternative Infrastructure to Support the Project

This section will be dedicated to the alternatives for access and infrastructure on the needs on the site.

5.3 Alternative Sites

This section will evaluate the potential to locate the proposed action on alternate sites, provided that such alternative locations exist with adequate resources to support the preferred Master Plan.

5.4 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative the site would remain undeveloped by COIDA. This section will describe future conditions under current zoning and land ownership.

6.0 UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

This section will summarize any unavoidable adverse impacts as a result of the project. Impacts that cannot be mitigated will be defined and quantified, and reasons given as to why they cannot be mitigated.

7.0 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

This section will discuss the commitment of resources such as materials and energy that cannot be retrieved or avoided as a result of the project. This section will acknowledge the irreversible commitment of the site to the proposed use.

8.0 GROWTH INDUCING ASPECTS

Both positive and negative effects of growth inducing aspects associated with the proposed project will be considered relative to the potential social and economic influences that the project may have on the surrounding community.

9.0 EFFECTS ON USE AND CONSERVATION OF ENERGY

This section of the DGEIS shall discuss the effects that the proposed project would have on energy consumption, including the benefits that can occur as a result of project measures that are proposed to conserve energy.

APPENDICES

The Appendices of the Draft GEIS will incorporate studies, reports and documentation to support the environmental review discussed in the main text of the Draft GEIS. Such studies, reports and documentation may include, but are not limited to:

- A. Preferred Master Plan**
- B. Alternative Concept Plans**
- C. Energy Analysis and Related Correspondence**
- D. Wetlands Delineation and Regulatory Correspondence**
- E. Habitat Impact and Mitigation Report**
- F. Cultural Resources Study**
- G. Stormwater Management Conceptual Plans**
- H. Traffic Impact Study**