

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the effects of the Project on land use, social conditions, and community character. This chapter considers the effects of the Project on the areas where the potential for Project-related changes would be greatest.

Information related to existing land uses was obtained through several sources, including Digital Orthoimagery for the Town of Babylon from New York State Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Clearinghouse (2004); GIS data from the Suffolk County Real Property Tax Service Agency (December 2006); field surveys conducted in August 2009; and public reports and plans prepared by or for the Town of Babylon related to the redevelopment and revitalization of Wyandanch.

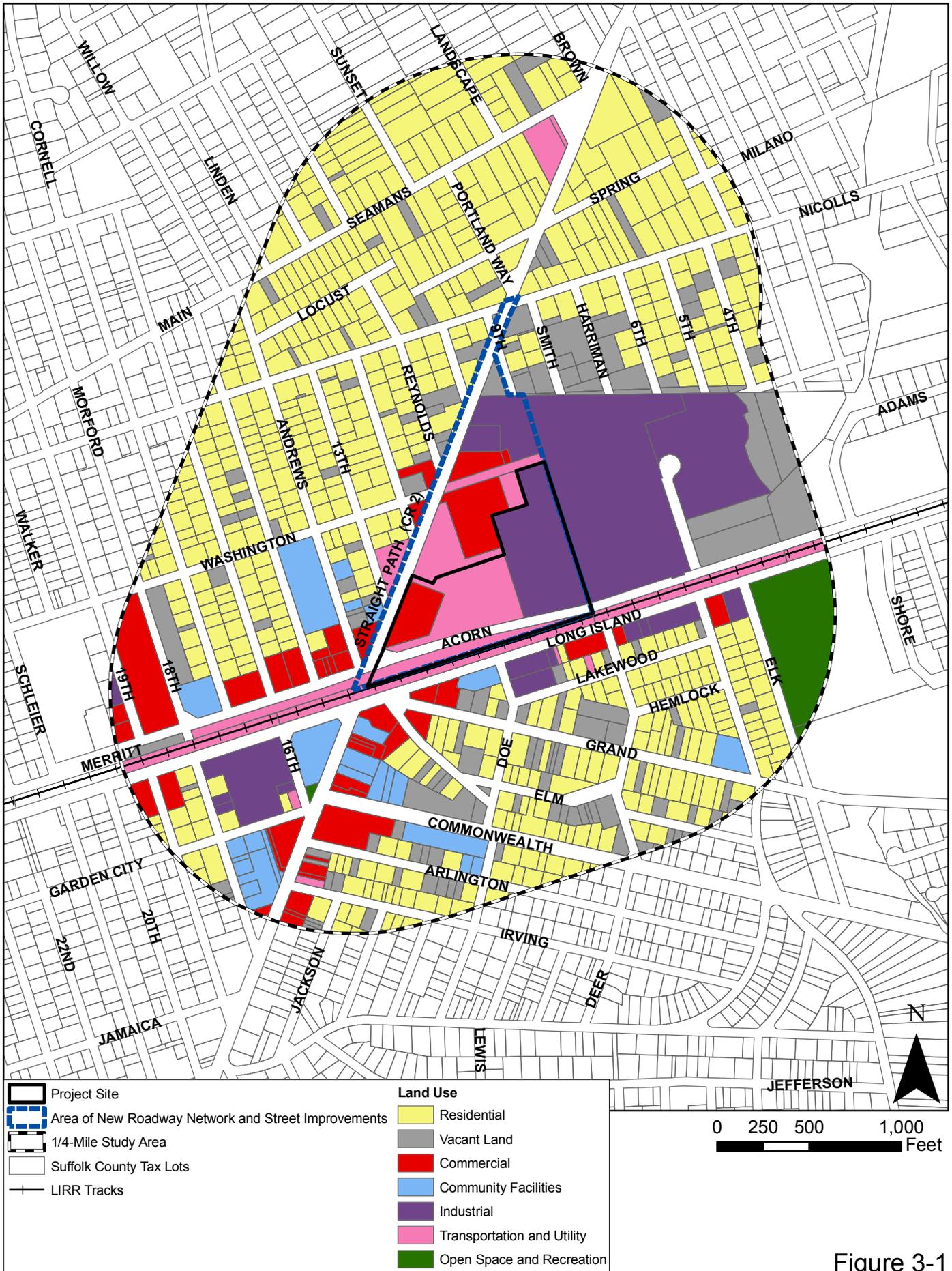
A more detailed discussion of existing land use and zoning, public policy, and socioeconomic conditions in the area that would be directly affected by the Project, and the larger ¼-mile study area are included in **Appendix 3**.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

LAND USE

As described in detail in Chapter 2, “Project Alternatives,” the Project Site encompasses an approximately 13.9-acre area located immediately north of the LIRR tracks on the east side of Straight Path. The study area established for this analysis is a ¼-mile radius around the Project Site and related off-site improvements. **Figure 3-1** shows the boundaries of the study area for the Project, and identifies the types of land uses to be found within the study area. **Table 3-1** provides a summary of the uses found on the Project site.

In the larger ¼-mile study area radius, commercial, transportation, and industrial uses line most of Straight Path (which runs north-south through the study area). Commercial, transportation, and industrial uses also line the east west corridor created by the railroad tracks and adjacent streets. A number of community facility uses are also clustered near the intersection of Straight Path and the LIRR tracks. Away from these north-south and east-west corridors, the rest of the study area is occupied by single-family residential uses and vacant lots.



Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility

**Figure 3-1
Land Use**

Table 3-1
Land Use on the Project Site

Suffolk County Tax Lot No.	Address	Land Use	Area (Acres)	Owner
40-2-11	1589 Straight Path	Retail Strip with Parking Lot (a mix of small retail stores, including restaurants, convenience stores, and a tax preparation service)	1.4	Nessien Holding LLC
40-2-12	305 Acorn St	Portion of 684-space Commuter Parking Lot (approximately 500 commuter parking spaces on this parcel)	3.8	Suffolk County
40-2-13 (portion of)	Long Island Ave	LIRR Commuter Parking Lot and train station (approximately 142 commuter spaces on this parcel)	1.5	Metropolitan Transportation Authority
40-2-14	4 Washington Ave	Vehicle Storage for Car Dealer (Huntington Honda)	5.7	Mobile Management Inc.
NA	Acorn Street	Roadway	1.5	Town of Babylon
Total			13.9	
Source: New York State Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Clearinghouse (2004), Suffolk County Real Property Tax Service Agency (December 2006), AKRF Field Visit (August 2009).				

ZONING

The Town of Babylon maintains zoning jurisdiction in the hamlet of Wyandanch. However, buildings and structures owned by the Town of Babylon are not subject to zoning, nor is any zoning mapped on properties owned by the MTA (such as the railroad tracks and train station).

The Project Site is zoned G Industrial (the LIRR lot is not subject to zoning). This district allows any use permitted in the E Business zoning district (see the more detailed description of area zoning in **Appendix 3**), including retail and personal service shops, banks, theaters, and offices, as well as specific other uses when permitted by the Town of Babylon Board of Appeals. In addition, certain other uses are allowed by special permit from the Planning Board, and as special exception uses by the Board of Appeals. Building heights are restricted to 35 feet, the minimum lot area required is 15,000 square feet, and the maximum building area is 40 percent.

The G Industrial district also permits “any other lawful use,” except for specific prohibited uses as set forth in the zoning code (these are generally heavy manufacturing uses, but also include fuel tanks, gas stations, airfields and airports, among others). Uses that are noxious or offensive by the emission of odor, dust, fumes, gas, vibration or noise are prohibited. All dwellings are also prohibited in the G Industrial district. At locations where a G Industrial zoned property abuts a residential zone or property with a residential use, a 5-foot-wide landscaped buffer is required.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the most recent population estimate for the Wyandanch Census-Designated Place (CDP), for 2008, is 11,690. The areas that would be directly affected by the Project do not contain any residential units or population.

Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning, Social Conditions, and Community Character

Census data was also reviewed to determine the size of transit-dependent populations in the hamlet of Wyandanch, as compared to Suffolk County. This analysis considered age, disability status, and means of commute to work as factors that characterize transit-dependent users. The study area has nearly double the amount of commuters than Suffolk County, with approximately 12 percent of residents using public transportation to commute to work within the study area. These results are indicative of the area’s proximity to ample transit service and to major employment centers.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Table 3-2 provides a summary of the economic characteristics of the Project Site parcels. As shown in the table, an estimated 62 employees work on the Project Site (not including the LIRR Wyandanch station, which will be unaffected by the Project), mostly in the retail stores in the strip mall on Straight Path. The Huntington Honda parcel is not used for active car sales, but provides storage space for vehicles on its surface parking lot; the on-site building is in disrepair.

**Table 3-2
Ownership, Tax Revenue, and Employment on the Project Site**

Tax Lot No.	Parcel Address	Description	On-Site Structure	Owner	Total Tax Revenue (\$)	Estimated Employment ¹
40-2-11	1589 Straight Path	Retail Strip with Parking Lot	Yes	Nessien Holding LLC	45,806.46	58
40-2-12	305 Acorn St	Portion of Commuter Parking Lot	No	County of Suffolk	0.00	0
40-2-13	Long Island Ave	LIRR Commuter Parking Lot	Yes	Metropolitan Transportation Authority	0.00	0 ²
40-2-14	4 Washington Ave	Vehicle Storage for Car Dealer (Huntington Honda)	Yes	Mobile Management Inc	89,337.83	4
TOTAL					\$135,144.29	62

Note: ¹ Estimated employment is provided in full-time equivalents.
² Employment at the LIRR Parcel does not include employees in the train station, since the train station will be unaffected by the Project.

Sources: Suffolk County Real Property Tax Service Agency, 2007.
 Employment for retail center based on standard assumption of 1 employee per 400 square feet of retail space.
 Employment for the Suffolk County commuter parking lot and LIRR commuter parking lot is based on visual observations.
 Employment for Huntington Honda is based on information supplied by the site owner/operator, February 2010.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Project Site and areas where the off-site elements of the Project would be implemented are notable for their lack of a defined street grid, large industrial buildings, and large expanses of surface parking. Although the LIRR Wyandanch station is a focal point for the downtown, it does not create a sense of a downtown place because of the large surface parking areas and the lack of traditional downtown-style retail facilities. Moreover, heavy truck traffic on Straight Path and the nearby strip retail mall both are typical of an automobile-centric, suburban environment rather than a traditional pedestrian-friendly downtown area.

C. THE PROJECT

LAND ACQUISITION AND DISPLACEMENT

To implement the Project, the Project Sponsor will acquire the three tax parcels on the Project Site. This will result in the displacement of the two private businesses on the Project Site—a retail strip owned by Nessien Holding LLC and a vehicle storage facility for Huntington Honda owned by Mobile Management Inc. All relocation activities and assistance will conform to the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (“the Uniform Act”), and applicable state laws.

LAND USE

With the Project, the existing land uses on the Project Site will be replaced by the proposed Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility including a new structured parking facility, new public open space, a drop-off area near the plaza, and pedestrian amenities.

The proposed parking garage will consolidate the existing surface parking on the Project Site into one structure, and will greatly increase parking capacity on the Project Site. The proposed public plaza will be a new use that will benefit the community by providing a public gathering place that will create a sense of place for downtown Wyandanch.

In addition, the Project also includes creation of a new street network in the portion of the Urban Renewal Area designated as Strategic Site A. The new street network is the critical first step in redevelopment of Strategic Site A as identified in the Town of Babylon’s *Final Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan*. As described earlier, that redevelopment will include an entirely new development of housing, retail, and office space in place of the existing mix of commercial and industrial uses now located immediately to the north of the Project Site. The street network must be in place before the rest of the development anticipated can proceed. The new street network is also necessary to support the proposed intermodal facility, by enhancing traffic circulation and providing an alternate route for trucks and other traffic.

The Project is not expected to result in any significant adverse land use impacts.

Conversely, the following summarizes the land use benefits are anticipated to occur as a result of the Project:

- Development of an intermodal facility that will serve as a key location where multiple transit modes can operate in a centralized manner to provide better service to area residents and visitors as well as provide a hub for downtown.
- Traffic calming measures along Straight Path that will help ensure pedestrian and traffic safety, encourage walkability, and improve the aesthetics of the roadway.
- Reduction or elimination of the potential for flooding through the implementation of a number of proposed drainage improvements, including plantings on the proposed plaza, sidewalks, and landscaped median along Straight Path. In addition, the Project will also handle stormwater through a system of underground leaching basins and the piping of stormwater from the proposed garage to the existing retention basin on Straight Path.
- Elimination of truck traffic from the problematic intersection at Straight Path and Acorn Street.
- Allowing train commuters to move freely between the station and platform and their parked vehicles without having to cross a heavily traveled, high-speed truck route mid-block

without traffic control. This will result in more pedestrian traffic and increased patronage to the area's commercial uses.

- Creation of a sense of “place” for downtown Wyandanch, which will include a central destination for the community and visitors with easy access to transit, and a place for residents and visitors to gather or wait comfortably for public transit.
- Improvement of the current poor state of pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Increased parking capacity on weekdays.
- Creation of a new plaza for community access to public open space.
- Creation of a new street grid near the Project Site that appropriately and adequately lays out developable parcels for redevelopment as part of the Town's Revitalization Plan.

ZONING

The Project will not result in significant adverse zoning impacts. The proposed intermodal transit facility and public plaza will be consistent with the anticipated future zoning of the Project Site, which is expected to facilitate higher-density, mixed-use development. (The Town of Babylon is currently developing a new Form-Based Code to facilitate the higher-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development in downtown Wyandanch.) Since the new zoning districts are not yet in place, the specific requirements related to parking garages are unknown. However, under the new form-based code currently being developed for downtown Wyandanch by the Town of Babylon, garages would not be considered special exception uses. Additionally, since the Town will own the garage, it will not be subject to zoning.

PUBLIC POLICY

Development of an intermodal transit facility and public plaza on the Project Site is consistent with, and a critical first step for, the various public policies that are being implemented to revitalize downtown Wyandanch. As set forth in the *Final Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan*, an intermodal transit facility in downtown Wyandanch is proposed to encourage TOD, smart growth, and mixed residential, retail, and office uses; improve parking conditions; consolidate existing parking areas in the vicinity of the LIRR Wyandanch station; introduce a public plaza providing much needed open space and a place for community gathering for area residents and workers; and create a garage that is functionally connected to the train station. The proposed new street grid and improvements to Straight Path near the Project Site are also critical first steps in the future development of downtown Wyandanch in accordance with the established public policies for the area.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING

The Project will not result in direct displacement of residents or provide residential units on the Project Site. The Project will benefit low-income and transit-dependent populations. The changes on the Project Site resulting from the Project are expected to serve as a catalyst for future redevelopment and contribute to the area's sense of place (see also Chapter 14, “Indirect and Cumulative Impacts”).

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Project will require displacement of the businesses in the retail center and the Huntington Honda vehicle storage facility on the Project Site. An estimated 62 employees will be affected,

Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility

mostly in the retail shopping center. In addition, the property taxes currently generated by these two privately owned tax parcels will no longer accrue to the Town once the Project Site is in public ownership. With the following mitigation measures, there will not be any significant adverse displacement impacts as a result of implementing the Project:

- All relocation activities and assistance will conform to the provisions of the Uniform Act, as well as applicable State laws. In accordance with these laws, owners and tenants of affected properties will be provided compensation and relocation assistance. Owners of properties that will be acquired will be compensated at fair market value and relocation benefits will be provided for displaced businesses. With such assistance, businesses and tenants that will be displaced as a result of the Project will likely be able to relocate close to their existing locations with minimal disruption to business activity and minimal loss of employment.

In relationship to the larger study area, the Project will be an important first step to fulfill the goals of the *Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan* by removing incompatible uses in the core downtown area and replacing them with more appropriate uses—in this case, an intermodal transit facility and public plaza. As discussed previously, industrial uses are currently a healthy component of Wyandanch’s economy and should be relocated within the hamlet outside of the downtown core. The proposed intermodal transit facility is also anticipated to act as a catalyst for the future redevelopment of downtown Wyandanch with mixed uses.

Development of the new street grid to the north of the Project Site is a critical first step in the future redevelopment of downtown Wyandanch. As discussed in Chapter 14, “Indirect and Cumulative Impacts,” the Project is anticipated to act as a catalyst for future redevelopment in downtown Wyandanch, which will involve replacing underutilized uses with active, tax-generating uses to stimulate the local economy and result in positive fiscal benefits for the Wyandanch community and the Town of Babylon as a whole.

As described in Chapter 1, “Purpose and Need,” the Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan represents the type of livable community and sense of place that are the goals of the new federal Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Further, it is an example of the integrated approach to sustainable redevelopment and revitalization called for by the Partnership’s livability principles, including for TOD housing, enhanced transportation facilities and connectivity.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Project is part of the Town of Babylon’s larger effort to redevelop and revitalize downtown Wyandanch and a critical component and, as such, will contribute to an overall improvement in the community character of the area. Replacing surface parking, a retail center, and an industrial use with an intermodal transit facility and plaza will create a new focal point in the community, and the plaza will provide a place for community gathering, which is currently lacking in the area. These anticipated benefits will contribute to the area’s sense of place and encourage the resurgence of a community that area residents can be proud of. Therefore, the Project is anticipated to have positive benefits with respect to community character. *