

BINGHAMTON, NY

FINAL GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (FGEIS)
FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE CITY OF BINGHAMTON
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND
FORM BASED CODE

BLUEPRINT BINGHAMTON

FORWARD TOGETHER

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6.2014

a citizen-driven plan for

BINGHAMTON'S FUTURE

**FINAL GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (FGEIS)
FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE
CITY OF BINGHAMTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND FORM BASED CODE**

City of Binghamton, New York

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Date DGEIS Accepted: March 25, 2014

Date of Public Hearing: May 5, 2014

Closing Date of Comment Period: May 15, 2014

Date FGEIS Accepted: June 18, 2014 (anticipated)

Web address for electronic copy of the DGEIS: www.binghamton-ny.gov/blueprint-binghamton-seqr-documents

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS) has been prepared pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its implementing regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617). Under SEQRA, this FGEIS serves as the basis for the Findings by City Council as the Lead Agency for the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action is the adoption of the City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan Update, *Blueprint Binghamton*, herein referred to as Comprehensive Plan Update, Comprehensive Plan or Blueprint Binghamton. In accordance with 617.9(b)(7) of the SEQRA regulations, this FGEIS incorporates by reference, the DGEIS dated March 2014. The Comprehensive Plan Update, which was prepared for and is under consideration by Binghamton City Council, is available upon request.

This FGEIS includes five sections. Section 3 briefly describes the changes that have been made to the Comprehensive Plan Update in response to questions and concerns raised by the Mayor, Planning Commission, City of Binghamton Departments and the public during the comment period. Section 4 provides additional clarification on the Form-Based Code component and Section 5 discusses future site-specific SEQRA review.

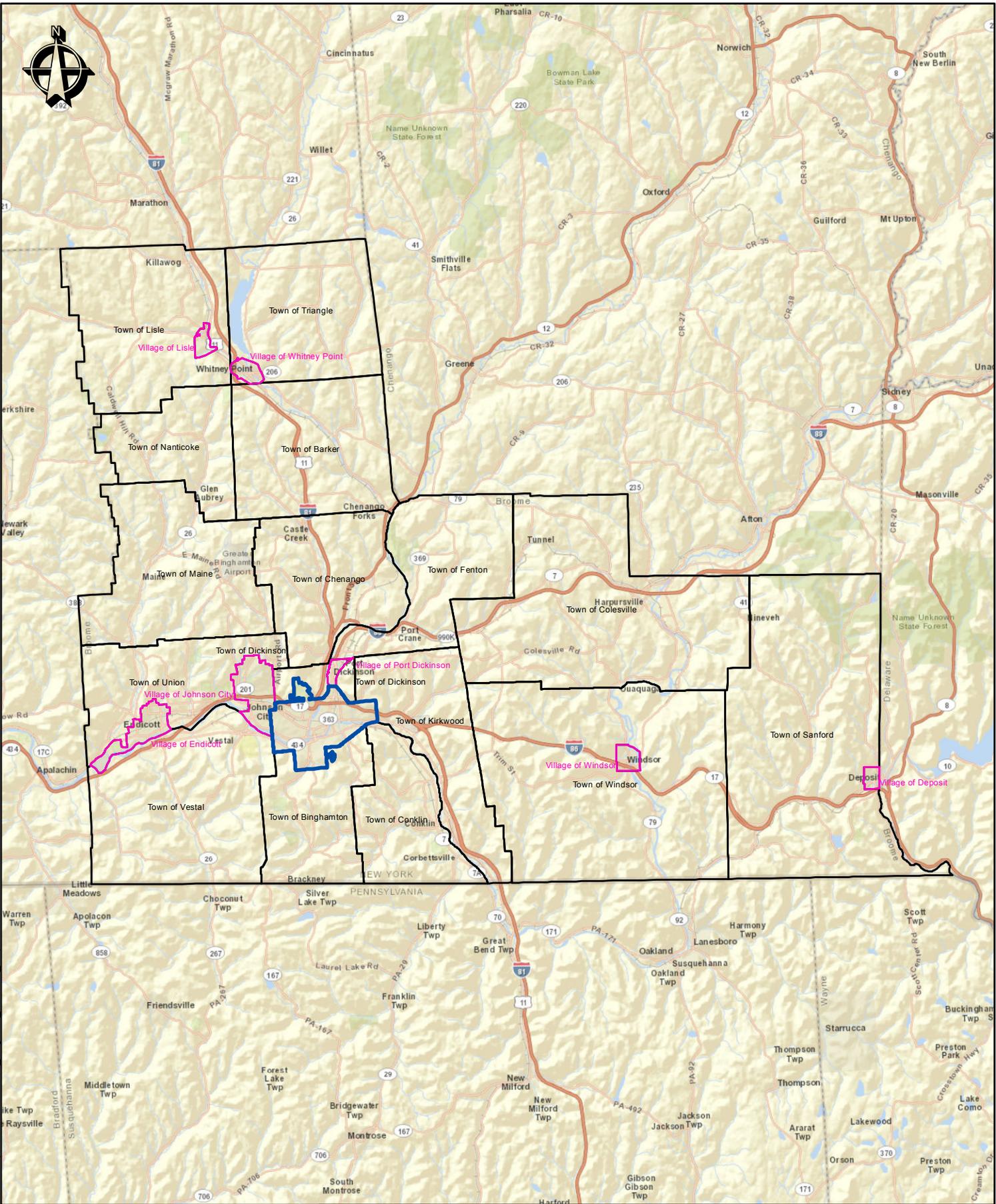
A. Generic Environmental Impact Statement

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Update to the City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan has been prepared as a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). Under SEQRA, a “Generic” EIS, or GEIS, is prepared when a proposed action represents a comprehensive program having wide application and does not involve site-specific land development projects.

The City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan Update, *Blueprint Binghamton: Forward Together* is the 2014 update of the City of Binghamton’s Comprehensive Plan, a citizen-driven effort to plan for Binghamton’s future and move the city forward together. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the City of Binghamton a Community Challenge Planning Grant to update the comprehensive plan and develop a corridor plan focused specifically on the design and redevelopment of Court and Main Streets. While the Comprehensive Plan identifies a vision, as well as goals and strategies to achieve the desired outcome, it is a city-wide plan and; therefore, more generic in nature than a site specific plan.

B. Project Location and Environmental Setting

The City of Binghamton lies in the southwestern portion of Broome County, which is one of about eight counties west of the Catskill Mountains, that shares its southerly boundary with the New York-Pennsylvania State Line otherwise referred to as the Southern Tier (Reference Figure 1-1). Broome County shares its borders with these



Path: E:\2012\12224 Bing Comp Plan\Graphics\GIS\12224_00_Regional_Location_Map.mxd

- Legend**
-  City of Binghamton
 -  Villages
 -  Towns

Figure 1-1
Regional Location Map

City of Binghamton
Comprehensive Plan Update
SEQR Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement
Broome County, New York



0 10,000 20,000
 Feet
1:360,000
1 in = 30,000 ft

other New York counties: Delaware, Tioga, Cortland, and Chenango. The city shares its borders with the Towns of Binghamton, Vestal, Kirkwood, Conklin, Dickinson, and Union and the Villages of Johnson City and Port Dickinson. The City of Binghamton occupies a land area of approximately 11-square miles and is situated about the confluence of the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers. ¹ The Chenango River is a tributary of the Susquehanna River and it flows north to south through the city's landscape. The Susquehanna River flows east to west through it. In 2010, the United State Census Bureau estimated the city's resident population at 47,376 people.

Since the last comprehensive plan in 2003, new businesses and housing have brought new life to downtown, the city's population has stabilized, and the waterfront trail and parks have given a boost to the quality of life and regional image of Binghamton. However, a plan is needed to guide planning and development, while capitalizing on existing assets. The devastating floods of the last few years and the resulting impacts reinforce the fact that the city must think proactively and prepare for tomorrow today.

2.0 PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PERIOD

A. Public Hearing and Comment Period Process

The public comment period on the DGEIS began on March 28, 2014 and extended through May 15, 2014. Written comments were accepted during this time and submitted to City of Binghamton Department of Planning Housing and Community Development. A public hearing on the Draft Comprehensive Plan Update and Draft Generic EIS was also held during this period. The hearing was held on May 5, 2014 at 6:30 pm at City Council Chambers, located at City Hall, 38 Hawley Street, Binghamton, New York 13901. No verbal or written comments to the DGEIS were received.

B. Public Comments and Responses

At the joint public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan Update and the DGEIS, there were no verbal or written comments on the DGEIS received from the public, involved or interested agencies, or City Council.

3.0 EDITS TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Edits have been made to the City of Binghamton Comprehensive Plan Update in response to verbal and written comments received on the Draft Comprehensive Plan Update. Comments were received during the public comment period, public hearing and from the Mayor, Planning Commission, Joint Sewage Board and various City Departments during scheduled work sessions. Several sections and

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Binghamton,_New_York

recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan Update have been modified and/or clarified as appropriate to address comments.

In general, the edits made to the Comprehensive Plan have no effect or minimize the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts that could occur as a result of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update. None of the edits affect the SEQR environmental significance.

A key addition to the Comprehensive Plan Update, Land Use and Zoning Chapter, is a recommendation for the city to review potential amendments to the zoning ordinance to improve business corridors, including consideration of new zoning for the Court Street – Main Street Corridor. This review should include a review of Form-Based Code and other zoning amendments that seek to improve development standards. An appropriate SEQR review of the proposed zoning amendments would be required in advance of adopting changes to the zoning code.

Another addition to the Comprehensive Plan Update is a reference to fracking. Fracking was not originally addressed in the Comprehensive Plan Update because of litigation that was pending during the plan development period. The plan has been revised to state that in the near future, the City should amend Blueprint Binghamton with a follow up study that explores fracking-related opportunities for economic growth, such as industrial development to accommodate materials storage and transport. The studies and amendment should also include research and documentation pertaining to the possible negative externalities that will require careful planning for and mitigation measures, including increased traffic due to materials transport, road degradation by heavy trucks, disposal of contaminated materials, demand for temporary or rental housing , and demand for water, sewer, and other public services. Cornell Cooperative Extension has been studying the short- and long-term impacts of shale development, and should be consulted as a resource. As identified in the plan, fracking opportunities and its effect on the city will be evaluated in the near future; the impacts of fracking on the City of Binghamton are beyond the scope of the Comprehensive Plan Update and have not been evaluated in this GEIS.

4.0 FORM-BASED CODE

The Proposed Action, as presented in the DGEIS is the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update and does not include the legislative adoption of the Form-Based Code (FBC). The Proposed Action (i.e. Comprehensive Plan Update) includes a recommendation to consider new zoning options, such as FBC to improve development standards as identified above.

The two alternatives to the Proposed Action, as identified in the DGEIS include the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update with the FBC, and the No Action Alternative. Section 5.0 of the DGEIS includes an initial review of the FBC; however, the city has expressed interest in further evaluating the components of FBC

separately from the Comprehensive Plan Update. The Main and Court Streets Concept Map is included as Figure 4-1.

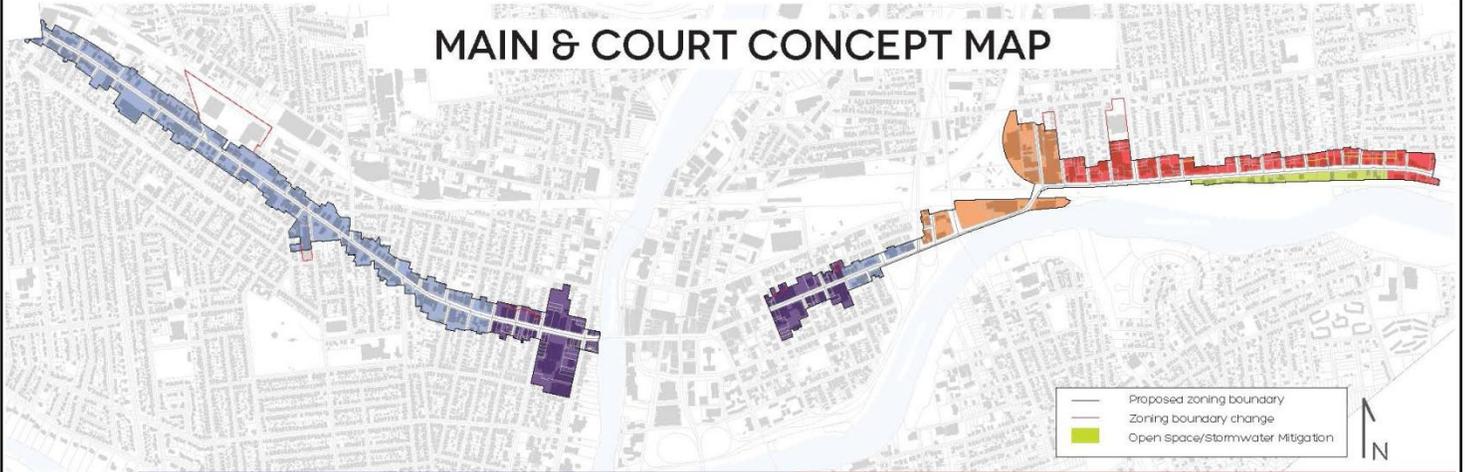
The DGEIS concluded that when compared to existing zoning, the FBC would have a positive impact on aesthetics and community character and would not result in an adverse impact on stormwater or natural resources. With regard to economic development, since the physical form of the proposed building and site are provided in detail, expectations would be clearer and the intent is that the site plan review process would be simplified for developers and the city. However, requirements for building facades, changes in parking and streetscape work (inclusive of sidewalks and landscaping) needed to develop sites from their existing state to comply with the FBC, may place added costs on the private developer.

Due to the nature of the FBC, development under the FBC scenario is not expected to place an additional burden on municipal services when compared to development under existing zoning code. The timeframe and rate at which growth will occur is influenced by many factors and is difficult to predict. Therefore, the overall impact of the FBC on traffic and parking is difficult to assess. Traffic volumes are directly influenced by building use and trip generation. Since the building uses permitted within the corridor under the FBC option would not substantially differ from allowable uses under current zoning, an obvious increase in trip generation or truck traffic is not anticipated. Additionally, a preliminary assessment of potential development potential under the FBC scenario suggests that a reduction in overall development density would occur compared to existing conditions. This preliminary assessment was based upon consideration of building heights permitted under current zoning and the FBC scenario as well as other FBC characteristics. The Existing Land Use and Zoning maps are included as Figures 4-2 and 4-3 respectively. The Proposed Land Use map is included as Figure 4-4.

A comprehensive full build-out analysis to estimate the overall development potential of the Main Street/Court Street Corridor under current and planned zoning scenarios was not performed. However, similar to development projects under existing zoning code, individual projects have the potential to adversely affect peak hour traffic volumes, patterns and parking. As the FBC option is further evaluated the city should investigate options for ensuring traffic and parking studies are conducted for development projects with the potential to result in impacts. Recommendations include requiring traffic and parking studies for certain uses or for projects that are anticipated to result in a specific threshold of new trips during the roadways peak hour.

The FBC and identified alternatives to the FBC will be further evaluated under SEQRA as appropriate. The nature of the supplemental review will ultimately be dependent on the nature of the FBC and recommended alternatives.

MAIN & COURT CONCEPT MAP



MAIN STREET
DOWNTOWN TRANSITION
INDUSTRIAL MIX
COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

LEGEND	
	Proposed zoning boundary
	Zoning boundary change
	Open Space/Stormwater Mitigation

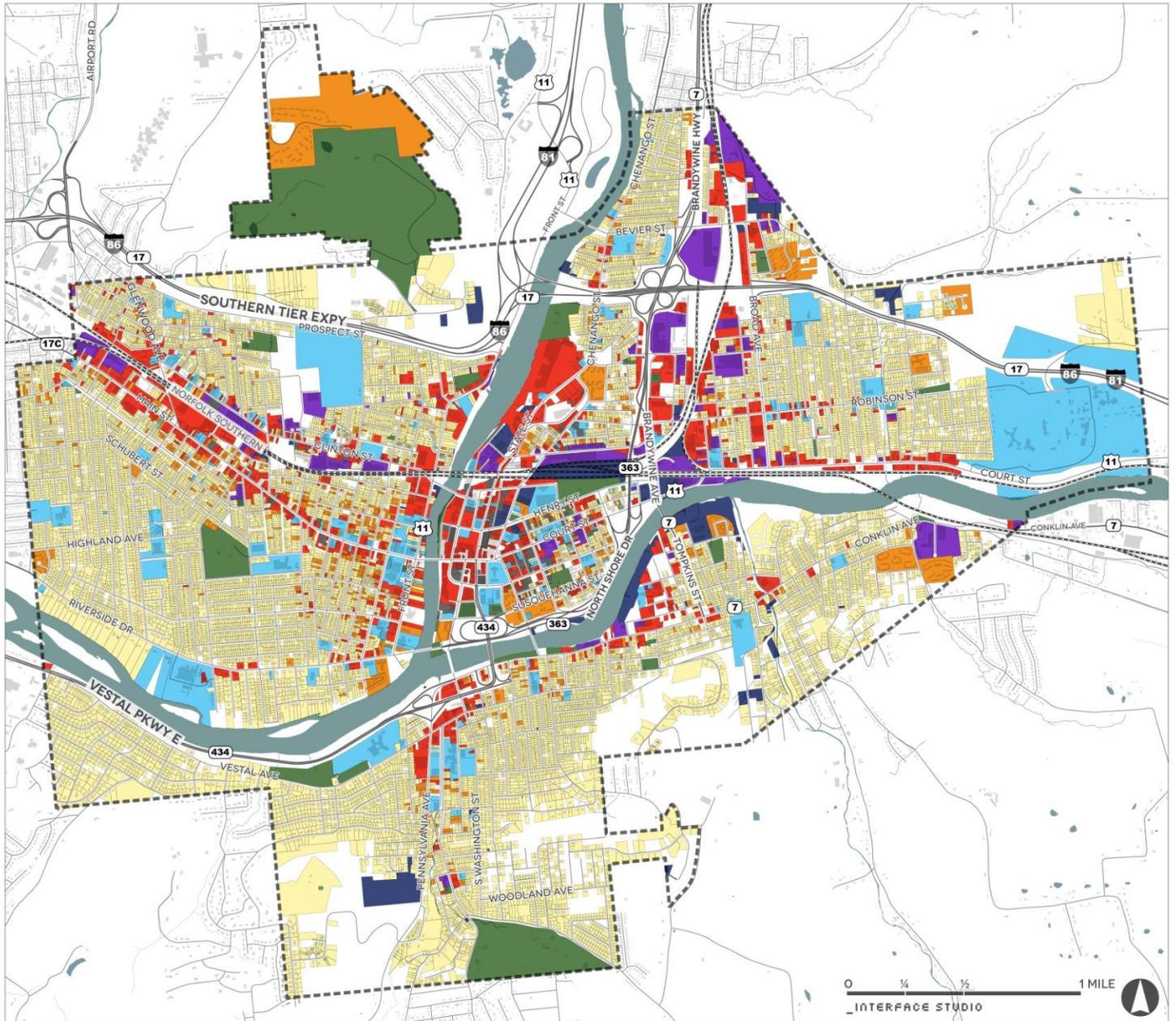
Figure 4-1
 Main & Court Concept Map

 City of Binghamton
 Comprehensive Plan Update
 SEQR Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement
 Broome County, New York



Not to Scale

EXISTING LAND USE



LEGEND

- COMMERCIAL
- COMMUNITY SERVICES
- INDUSTRIAL
- MULTI-RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING
- PUBLIC SERVICES
- RECREATIONAL
- RESIDENTIAL

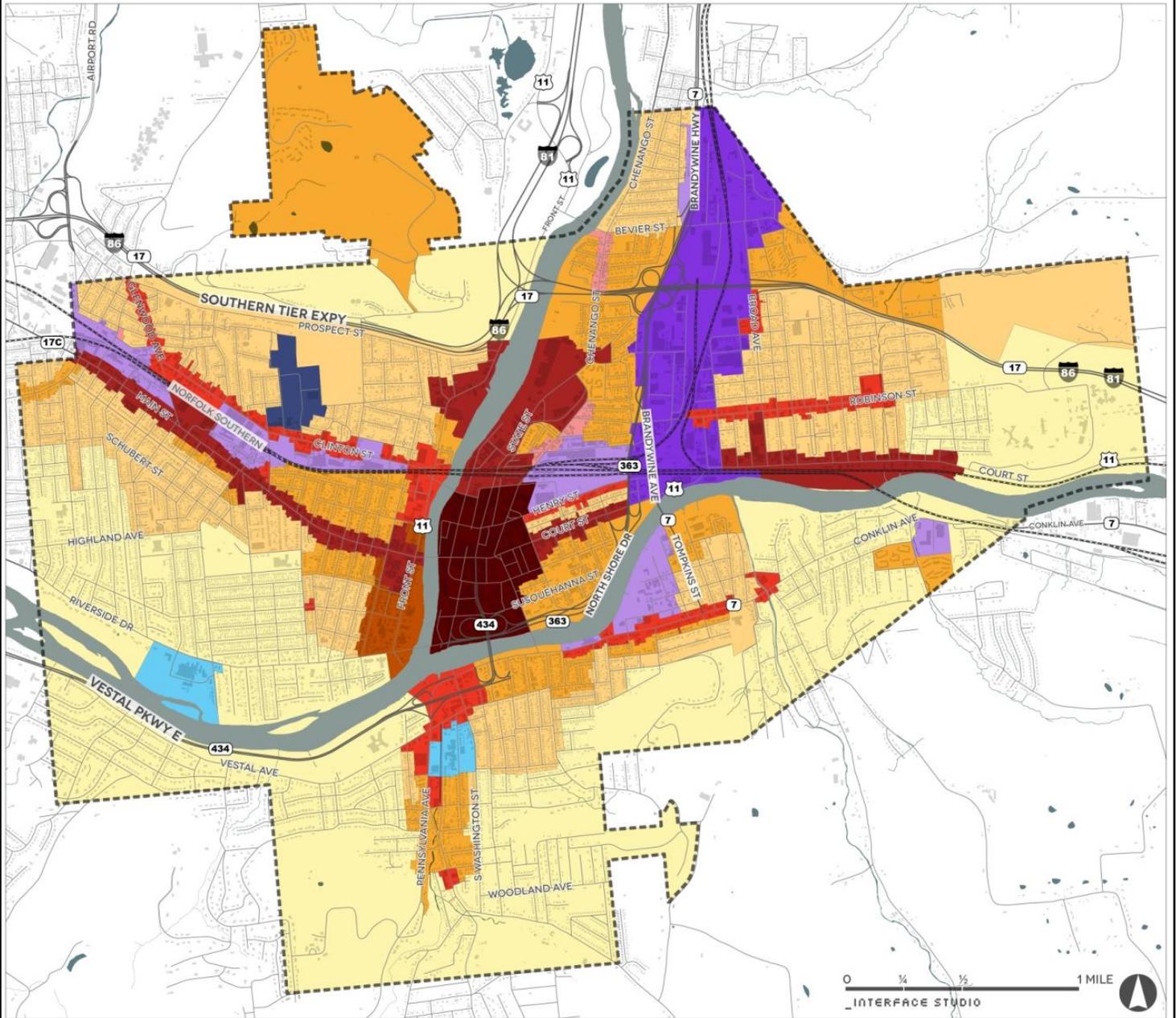
Figure 4-2
Land Use Map

City of Binghamton
Comprehensive Plan Update
SEQR Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement
Broome County, New York



Scale As Shown

ZONING



LEGEND

- C-1 SERVICE COMMERCIAL
- C-2 DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT
- C-3 MEDICAL
- C-4 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- C-5 NEIGHBORHOOD OFFICE
- C-6 LIMITED NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- I-1 URBAN BUSINESS PARK
- I-2 LIGHT & MEDIUM INDUSTRIAL
- I-3 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- R-1 RESIDENTIAL SINGLE UNIT DWELLING
- R-2 RESIDENTIAL ONE & TWO UNIT DWELLING
- R-3 RESIDENTIAL MULTI UNIT DWELLING

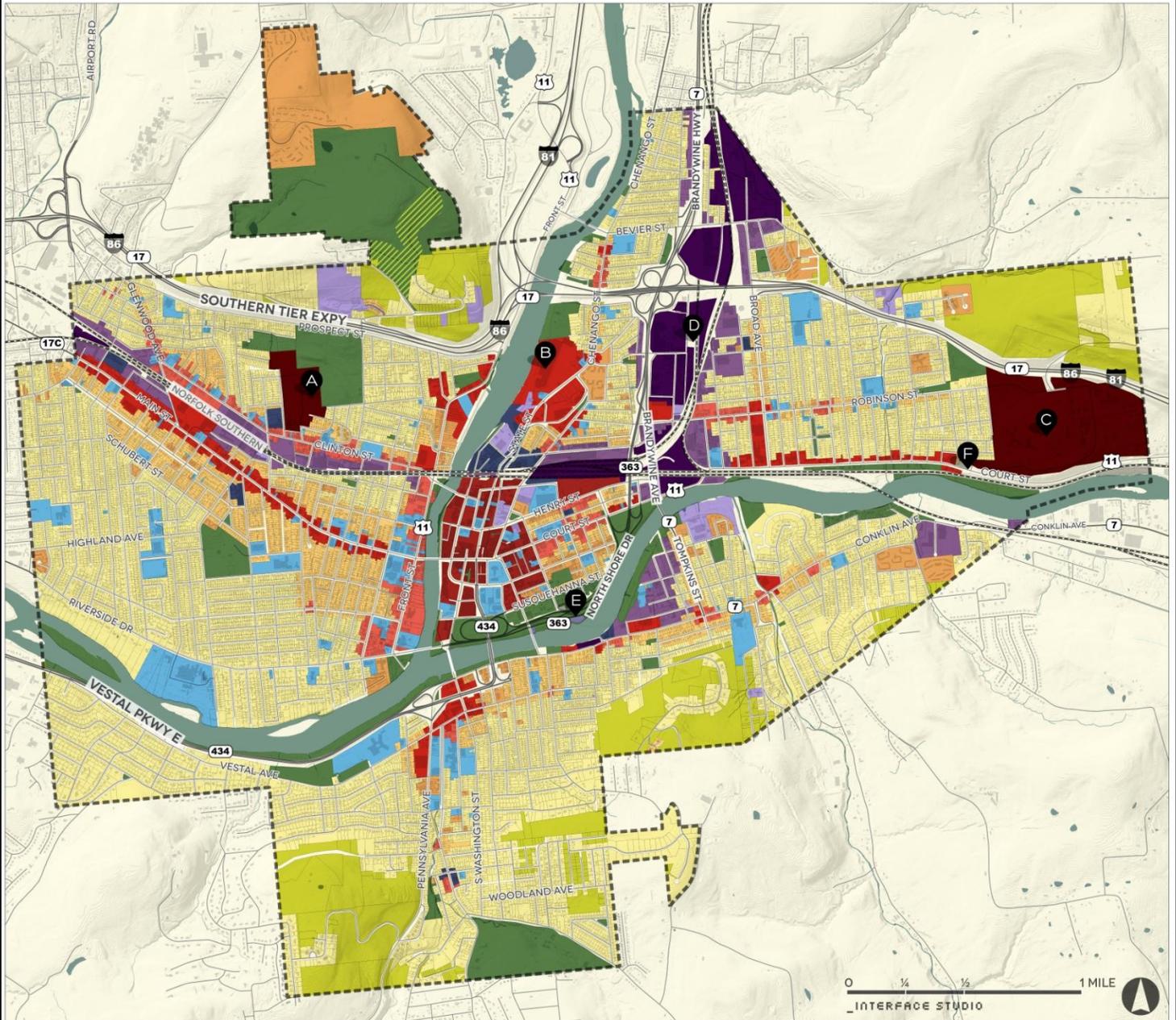
Figure 4-3
Zoning Map

City of Binghamton
Comprehensive Plan Update
SEQR Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement
Broome County, New York



Scale As Shown

PROPOSED LAND USE



LEGEND

- DOWNTOWN
- TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL
- GENERAL COMMERCIAL
- GENERAL INDUSTRY
- LIGHT INDUSTRY
- PRODUCTION / MIXED-USE
- URBAN BUSINESS PARK
- SINGLE - FAMILY DETACHED
- SINGLE + TWO FAMILY
- MULTI - FAMILY
- ESTATE RESIDENTIAL
- ESTATE RESIDENTIAL - GOLF COURSE
- INSTITUTIONAL
- UTILITIES
- PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Figure 4-4
Proposed Land Use Map

City of Binghamton
Comprehensive Plan Update
SEQR Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement
Broome County, New York



Scale As Shown

5.0 SUBSEQUENT SEQR ACTIONS

The purpose of this GEIS is to examine the potential impacts and effects of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update (Proposed Action) and alternatives including the Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update with the Main Street/Court Street Form-Based Code and the No-Action Alternative. The Generic EIS allows a broader, more general review of strategies and recommendations that affect an entire community and do not involve site specific land development and disturbance.

5.1 Recommendations Proposed by the Comprehensive Plan and Form-Based Code Potentially Requiring Future Site-Specific SEQR Review

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update will change the framework and specific details that apply to individual development projects compared to existing regulations and objectives presented in the current plan. However, after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update, individual site development projects will still require SEQR reviews in accordance with 6 NYCRR Part 617.

As recommendations identified in the Comprehensive Plan Update are implemented as projects they will be subject to review under SEQR. For example, amendments to the existing city zoning code and implementation of Industrial Preservation Areas may require further review. Additionally, proposals for re-development of Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOAs), senior housing developments, and trail extensions would also warrant SEQR review. Other types of projects including recommendations identified in the Infrastructure mini plan may warrant feasibility studies to examine the suitability of various technologies, cost savings, and potential impacts.

The intent of the FBC is to streamline the review process such that projects conforming to the code would not require a detailed site plan review process. A checklist would be used to confirm that all the components have been appropriately met. Assuming a FBC for the Main and Court Street Corridor is drafted to meet the city's needs, reviewed under SEQR as necessary to supplement this GEIS and adopted those individual projects would not require further review under SEQR. Since the projects would be constructed in accordance with the elements of the code, which were crafted to preserve and enhance the character; ensure a higher quality of development for new construction, and promote mixed use and ensure adequate transitions for the corridor to adjacent residential neighborhoods, they would meet the objectives of the comprehensive plan and not adversely impact the corridor. Storm water management requirements would still apply to individual development projects as appropriate under the SPDES permit program, City of Binghamton MS4, and Urban Runoff Reduction Program. As indicated previously, certain site development projects may warrant traffic and parking studies. The City should evaluate options for incorporating a requirement for traffic and parking studies for certain projects under a FBC scenario.