

## **SECTION 7.0**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Typically, the potential environmental impacts of a Comprehensive Plan are evaluated through a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). To meet this requirement, the Comprehensive Plan itself can be set up to represent the GEIS (see §272-a.8 of NYS Town Law and §7-722.8 of NYS Village Law). This format enables the reviewers, the Lead Agency, Involved Agencies, Interested parties, and the public to review one comprehensive document that outlines plans for the future and the evaluation of the potential environmental implications of these plans. This section of the Comprehensive Plan has been provided to assist with the environmental review for this document.

#### **7.2 Environmental Setting**

A GEIS, like an Environmental Impact Statement, includes a section on Environmental Setting. Section 4 (Existing Conditions) of this Comprehensive Plan provides a review and analysis of the environmental settings of the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield and the Village of Oakfield, as they exist now. Section 4 includes information on the following:

- Existing Land Use (4.1)
- Farmland and Agriculture (4.1.2)
- Land Use Regulations (4.2)
- Topography and Steep Slopes (4.3.1)
- Hydric Soils (4.3.2)
- Stream Corridors and Watersheds (4.3.3)
- Flooding and Wetlands (4.3.4)
- Wildlife Conservation Areas and Significant Wildlife Habitats (4.3.5)
- Scenic Resources (4.3.6)
- Demographics and Socioeconomic Conditions (4.4)
- Transportation (4.5)
- Utilities (4.6)
- Parks and Recreation (4.7.1)
- Schools (4.7.2)
- Emergency Facilities (4.7.3)
- Government Facilities (4.7.4)
- Historic and Archeological Features (4.7.5)

### 7.3 Potential Significant Adverse Environmental Impacts

The underlying purpose and a major goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to promote appropriate land use and avoid significant adverse environment impacts in the communities that it covers. However, it is important to acknowledge and discuss potential adverse impacts. For this multi-jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan, the impacts specific to each community are outlined individually. Although this leads to some redundancy, it facilitates review of the document by all involved and interested parties.

#### *Short Term/Long Term and Cumulative Impacts*

Based on the environmental settings of the Towns of Alabama, Oakfield, and the Village of Oakfield, the following potentially significant adverse environmental impacts could occur if these communities do not plan appropriately and provide the proper tools for the management of growth and development. The reader can also refer to Section 5 (Findings and Recommendations) for an understanding of potential impacts. The Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan is designed to properly guide growth in the Towns and Village avoiding significant adverse impacts on land use and development decisions, which are made outside the framework of a community plan.

- a. ***Impacts on Land*** (See Existing Land Use Map, Prime Farmland Soils Map, Hydric Soils Map, and Environmental Features Map in Section 4)

#### **Town of Alabama**

- The Town of Alabama is very rural in nature, a characteristic that is valued by area residents. Inappropriate planning and development actions could negatively impact the character of the Town.
- The Town of Alabama has significant areas of hydric soils, wetlands and floodplains, primarily in the northern quarter of the Town and following drainage corridors. Improper development of these areas could result in drainage, flooding and/or erosion problems within the Town and in downstream areas.
- A large portion of Alabama has soils that are categorized as “prime farmland”, or “prime farmland when drained”. Over-development in areas having these soils could result in a significant cumulative loss of irreplaceable resources (prime farmland soils).
- Outside the Tonawanda Indian Reservation and State and Federal wildlife conservation areas, there are only a few significant areas of mature woodland in Alabama. Inappropriate development of these areas could have a negative impact on the rural character of the Town, wildlife habitat and important open space.

#### **Town of Oakfield**

- The Town of Oakfield is very rural in nature with the exception of the Village of Oakfield. This rural attribute helps define the character of the community with agricultural lands and open space. Inappropriate planning and development actions could negatively affect the character of the Town.
- The Town of Oakfield has only minor areas characterized by steep slopes of 15 percent or higher (northeast along Fisher Road).
- The Town of Oakfield has significant areas of hydric soils, wetlands and floodplains, primarily in the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area in the northern quarter of the Town

and, to a lesser extent, following drainage corridors in the remaining areas. Development of these areas could lead to erosion, drainage or flooding problems.

- There are some large areas of soils that are categorized as “prime farmland”, or “prime farmland when drained” in the Town of Oakfield. Over-development in areas having these soils could result in a significant cumulative loss of irreplaceable resources (prime farmland soils).
- Outside the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area, there are only a few significant areas of mature woodland in the Town of Oakfield. Inappropriate development of these areas could have a negative impact on the rural character of the Town, wildlife habitat and important open space.

#### **Village of Oakfield**

- The Village of Oakfield is an important rural center for the surrounding communities. There is a Central Business District (CBD), existing and some underutilized industrial spaces, and some remaining agricultural land.
- Less than nine percent of the Village is categorized as vacant, undeveloped or open space. Inappropriate planning and development/redevelopment actions could impact its character and its viability as an economic center.
- Inappropriate development of the creek corridors running through the Village could lead to flooding or erosion problems and a loss of open space.
- There are no significant areas of steep slopes or wetlands in the Village that represent constraints to development.

#### **b. *Impacts on Water*** (See *Hydric Soils Map, Watershed Boundaries Map and Environmental Features Map in Section 4*)

##### **Town of Alabama**

- Tonawanda Creek, Witney Creek, Ledge Creek, Brinningstool Creek, and numerous tributaries of these waterways run through the Town of Alabama. These creeks are important for environmental protection, open space preservation, drainage, wildlife habitat and aesthetics, particularly in the case of those that run through the two major wetland areas in the Town: Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area and the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge.
- Floodplains surround portions of some of these waterways, primarily Tonawanda Creek. Inappropriate development could lead to flooding or drainage problems, and hazards to public safety.
- Most of the Town of Alabama is within the portions of four watersheds. Ledge- Tonawanda Creek covers the west to southeast portion of Alabama. Mud Creek covers a small area in the northwest corner of Alabama. Murder Creek is located on very small area in southwest corner. The Oak Orchard Creek watershed covers the entire north central to east half of the Town. Inappropriate development in these watersheds could potentially have adverse impacts on water quality, groundwater resources and habitats in the Town and downstream of the Town.
- The Town of Alabama is dependent upon groundwater resources for their potable water supply. Improper or inappropriate development could affect these groundwater resources.
- Nearly all residences also use on-site septic systems to treat sanitary waste. The effluent of which is ultimately discharged to groundwater.
- At times the groundwater resource can be under stress due to drought conditions, accidental spills or contamination.

- The Town is investigating the possibility of extending water from Newstead into the southwest corner, and out from the Village of Oakfield (county water service). This will improve water quality and quantity for residents, but could cause additional problems with septic system failures and induce growth. Uncontrolled development could create potential groundwater resource supply problems, have adverse impacts on community character, and cause conflicts with agriculture uses.
- Town residents use on-site septic systems to treat sanitary waste. The effluent is ultimately discharged to groundwater. Lack of maintenance and failing systems can pose threats to groundwater wells.
- There are areas of wetlands and hydric soils. Inappropriate development in these areas could lead to flooding and drainage problems, and adversely impact groundwater resources and wildlife habitat.

#### **Town of Oakfield**

- The Town of Oakfield is traversed by Oak Orchard Creek and its numerous tributaries. Floodplains surround the major creeks, and many areas of wetlands are found in their vicinity. These creeks are also important for environmental protection, open space preservation, drainage, wildlife habitat and aesthetics, particularly in the case of Oak Orchard Creek, which runs through the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area. Inappropriate development of these lands could lead to flooding, erosion, and drainage problems. Threats to public safety could also result. These creeks are important for environmental protection, community character, open space preservation, drainage, wildlife habitat and aesthetics.
- The entire Town of Oakfield falls within the Oak Orchard Creek watershed. Inappropriate development could have adverse impacts on water quality, groundwater resources and habitats.
- Only some of the Town's residential areas that are located near the Village have public water. The majority of residents are dependent upon groundwater resources for potable water supply.
- Town residents use on-site septic systems to treat sanitary waste. The effluent is ultimately discharged to groundwater. Lack of maintenance and failing systems can pose threats to groundwater wells.
- The Town is investigating bringing water out from the Village of Oakfield (county water source). Uncontrolled development could create potential groundwater resource supply problems, have adverse impacts on community character, and cause conflicts with agriculture uses.
- There are areas of wetlands and hydric soils. Inappropriate development in these areas could lead to flooding and drainage problems, and adversely impact groundwater resources and wildlife habitat.

#### **Village of Oakfield**

- Two creeks run through the Village of Oakfield. Flooding is not a particular problem. However, inappropriate development within the floodplain could lead to flooding, erosion and threats to public safety. Drainage problems could also result. In a village setting, creeks are important for flood mitigation, community character, open space preservation, drainage, and aesthetics.
- All of the Village of Oakfield is within the Oak Orchard Creek watershed. Inappropriate development could have adverse impacts on water quality and/or groundwater resources for downstream communities. Habitats could also be affected.

- The only areas of wetlands and hydric soils in the Village are those areas associated with the creek corridors. Inappropriate development in these areas could lead to flooding and drainage problems, and adversely impact groundwater resources.

**c. *Impacts on Plants and Animals (See Digital Orthoimagery and the Environmental Features Map in section 4)***

**Town of Alabama**

- The NYS Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and John White Memorial State Game Farm are significant resources for wildlife habitat, which together cover approximately 25 percent of the northern portion of the Town. The Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge (part of the larger Alabama Swamp complex) provide excellent bird and fish habitat, including state-listed endangered, threatened and special concern bird species. Because these areas are under the ownership and management of State and Federal conservation agencies it is not anticipated that any changes resulting from the implementation of this Comprehensive plan will result in significant adverse impacts. Areas just outside of these resources could have some effect on them.
- Outside the wildlife conservation areas, the Town’s expansive areas of agricultural fields, open meadows, and old fields, as well as the wetlands and creek corridors, provide a variety of habitats for many non-threatened and non-endangered plant, avian and animal species. These areas also provide an important element of the rural character of the Town. Inappropriate development and poor site planning could adversely impact these resources.

**Town of Oakfield**

- The NYS Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area (part of larger Alabama Swamp complex) is a significant wildlife habitat resource in the northeast corner of the Town. Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area, together with the Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge provide excellent bird and fish habitat, including state-listed endangered, threatened and special concern bird species. Because the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area is under the ownership and management of the State Department of Environmental Conservation, it is not anticipated that any changes resulting from the implementation of this Comprehensive plan will result in significant adverse impacts to this area.
- Outside the wildlife conservation areas, the Town’s expansive areas of agricultural fields, open meadows, and old fields, as well as the wetlands and creek corridors, provide a variety of habitats for many non-threatened and non-endangered plant, avian and animal species. These areas also provide an important element of the rural character of the Town. Inappropriate development and poor site planning could adversely impact these resources.

**Village of Oakfield**

- There are areas within the Village of Oakfield with open fields, hedgerows, wooded areas and creek corridors. The creek corridors through the Village also are important habitats for a variety of vegetation, avian and animal species. Inappropriate development or poor site design could have a negative impact on these areas.

**d. *Impacts on Agricultural Land Resources (See the Agricultural Data Map, Existing Land Use Map, and Prime Farmland Soils Map in Section 4.0)***

**Town of Alabama**

- Agricultural land resources are an important part of the rural character of the Town and the region. Agricultural land use is still an important part of the local land use pattern and local economy. Large areas of “prime farmland soils” and “prime farmland soils when drained” are important to the continuation of agriculture as an industry and as a way of life. Agricultural land resources are a critical element that helps define the Town’s rural character. Inappropriate or uncontrolled development could have a negative impact on these resources.
- Agricultural lands comprise a significant proportion of the Town of Alabama land use. Nearly all lands in the Town, excluding lands in the wildlife management areas and Tonawanda Indian Reservation, are within the State-designated Agricultural District No. 2. Location within an Agricultural District provides benefits (agricultural value assessment) and generally encourages landowners to continue to leave farmland in production. Although increased development pressures could have a major negative impact on these resources, the Agricultural District designation helps to somewhat reduce the potential for development that would significantly affect these agricultural resources.

**Town of Oakfield**

- Agricultural land resources are an important part of the rural character of the Town and the region. Agricultural land use is still an important part of the local land use pattern and local economy. Large areas of “prime farmland soils” and “prime farmland soils when drained” are important to the continuation of agriculture as an industry, and as a way of life. Agricultural land resources are a critical element that helps define the Town’s rural character. Inappropriate or uncontrolled development could have a negative impact on these resources.
- Agricultural lands comprise a significant proportion of the Town of Oakfield land use. Nearly all lands in the Town, excluding lands in the Wildlife Management Areas are within the State-designated Agricultural District No. 2. Location within an Agricultural District provides benefits (agricultural value assessment) and generally encourages landowners to continue to leave farmland in production. Although increased development pressure could have a major negative impact on these resources, the Agricultural District designation helps to somewhat reduce the potential for development that would significantly affect agricultural resources.

**Village of Oakfield**

- Agricultural lands are not a significant resource within the Village of Oakfield. The agricultural lands in the surrounding communities are an important component of the character of the Village and the region. It is not anticipated that the actions called for in this Comprehensive Plan will impact agricultural resources related to Village.

**e. *Impacts on Aesthetic Resources***

**Town of Alabama**

- The aesthetic resources of the Town of Alabama include significant views, rural landscapes of farm fields and wood lots, open space (characterized by the Tonawanda Wildlife Management Areas and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge), and creek corridors. The hamlets also provide an aesthetic resource contributing to the character of the Town. These resources contribute to the quality of life and community character of the Town, and could be negatively affected by inappropriate development.

**Town of Oakfield**

- The aesthetic resources of the Town of Oakfield include significant views, rural landscapes of farm fields and wood lots, open space (characterized by the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Areas), and creek corridors. The hamlets also provide an aesthetic resource contributing to the character of the Town. Inappropriate development could result in negative impacts on the quality of life and community character of the Town.

**Village of Oakfield**

- The aesthetic resources of the Village include views of the rural landscape surrounding the Village, but more significantly, the buildings and landmarks in the central business district and the residential housing stock also contribute to the Village’s aesthetic character. These resources could be negatively affected by inappropriate in-fill development or redevelopment of existing facilities that are incompatible with the surrounding area in terms of architectural style and scale, or based on poor site design.

**f. *Impacts on Historic, Cultural and Archeological Resources***

**Towns of Alabama and Oakfield and Village of Oakfield**

- The historic resources of each municipality are described in Section 4.7.5. Oak Orchard Creek Marsh (located within the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area) was designated as a National Natural Landmark in May of 1973. This relatively undisturbed marsh is rare for this part of New York State. Although inappropriate development or management could negatively impact this resource, it’s location within the publicly owned and managed wildlife areas makes it unlikely that changes resulting from the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan will result in negative impacts.

**g. *Impact on Open Space, Parks and Recreation (See Community Features Map)***

**Town of Alabama**

- Parks and recreation resources in the Town of Alabama are identified in Section 4.7.1.
- A significant area (approximately the north quarter of the Town) is within the NYS Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area, Iroquois National Refuge conservation areas and the John White Memorial Game Farm. These areas provide significant open space and recreation opportunities for the Town, as well as the region. Because these areas are under the ownership and management of State and Federal conservation agencies it is not anticipated that any changes resulting from the implementation of this Comprehensive plan will result in significant adverse impacts to recreation or open space resources.

**Town of Oakfield**

- Parks and recreation resources in the Town of Oakfield are identified in Section 4.7.1.
- The NYS Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area provides significant open space and recreation opportunities for the Town as well as the region. Because this area is under the ownership and management of the State Department of Environment Conservation, it is not anticipated that any changes from the implementation of this Comprehensive plan will result in significant adverse impacts to open space or recreational resources.

**Village of Oakfield**

- Parks and recreation resources located in the Village of Oakfield are identified in Section 4.7.1.
- The Village also has important recreation areas including: ball diamonds at the Oakfield Fire Hall, Village square at Pearl/Drake and Main Street, Village open space off Mill Street and the Town of Oakfield Park on Drake Street.
- Inappropriate development could have an adverse effect upon these resources. Although present growth trends in the Village are stable, growth trends around the Village in the Town of Oakfield could place increased demand on these resources.

**h. *Impact on Critical Environmental Areas***

**Towns of Alabama and Oakfield and Village of Oakfield**

- There are no designated Critical Environmental Areas in any of the three study communities.

**i. *Impact on Transportation (See Transportation Map)***

**Town of Alabama**

- The transportation system in the Town of Alabama is heavily dependent upon roadways and automobiles. Public transportation is very limited, and there are no active rail lines.
- The major roadway corridors in the Town are described in Section 4.5.1. They include Routes 77, 63 and 262.
- Travel for pedestrians and bicyclists can be difficult in the Town. There are no designated bicycle routes or paths. The abandoned Penn-Central railroad corridor is informally used for hiking, bicycling and snowmobiling, although no formal designation exists.
- Additional development in the Town has the potential to increase demands on the transportation network. More intensive development may also increase potential conflicts between automotive and non-automotive modes of transportation.
- The Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan does not recommend development patterns that will significantly alter the transportation patterns of the community.

**Town of Oakfield**

- The transportation system in the Town of Oakfield is heavily dependent upon roadways and automobiles. Public transportation is very limited, and there are no active rail lines.
- The major roadway corridors in the Town are described in Section 4.5.1. They include Routes 63 and 262.
- Travel for pedestrians and bicyclists can be difficult in the Town. There are no designated bicycle routes or paths. The abandoned Penn-Central railroad corridor is informally used for hiking, bicycling and snowmobiling, although no formal designation exists.
- Additional development in the Town has the potential to increase demands on the transportation network. More intensive development may also increase potential conflicts between automotive and non-automotive modes of transportation.
- The Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan does not recommend development patterns that will significantly alter the transportation patterns of the community.

**Village Oakfield**

- The transportation system in the Village of Oakfield is strongly oriented toward the automobile.
- The major roadway corridors in the Town are described in Section 4.5.1. They include Routes 63 and 262 and North/South Pearl Street.



- The Village also has a higher proportion of pedestrian and bicyclist traffic. This is because activity centers are close enough to support non-vehicular traffic, and the physical infrastructure (sidewalks, streets) makes it easier to walk or bike. Traffic congestion is not a problem.
- NYS Department of Transportation is in the planning stages to reconstruct Main Street (Route 63) through the Village center in the near future. This redesign may incorporate improved pedestrian and streetscape features.
- Additional development in the Town and redevelopment in the Village have the potential to adversely impact the transportation network. In particular, more intensive development and/or redevelopment may result in potential conflicts between automotive and non-automotive modes of transportation.

**j. *Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood (See Vision Maps)***

**Town of Alabama**

- The population of the Town of Alabama slightly decreased (5.9%) between 1990 and 2000. Population projections suggest that there will be growth (12.5%) over the next three decades. However, current trends suggest the population will remain relatively stable.
- The rate of residential construction in Alabama, since 1990, has been modest. The Comprehensive Plan does not encourage or facilitate uncontrolled development, but rather directs reasonable growth within use and design parameters in limited areas.
- The Town’s Goals and Objectives (Section 3.2.1) clearly support controlling growth to protect community character.
- The hamlets of Alabama, Wheatville, Basom and South Alabama serve as activity centers (residential/business/public facilities) for the Town. The Town recognizes the importance of these hamlets and wishes to provide support for local businesses.
- The Town’s goals and objectives clearly indicate the preference for directing growth toward the hamlet areas, and to control the rate of growth in areas without services or along rural road frontages, in order to protect community character.
- The Comprehensive Plan recommends that public water service be extended into the Town of Alabama, primarily to serve the existing residences within the hamlet areas and allow limited development in the surrounding areas. Although it is possible that public water may induce higher growth rates, it is more likely that the availability of public water will steer what limited growth that does occur, to the desired areas.

**Town of Oakfield**

- The population of the Town of Oakfield (including Village) slightly decreased (3.4%) between 1990 and 2000. Population projections suggest the Town will grow by 3.0% between 2000 and 2030.
- The rate of residential construction in Oakfield, since 1990, has been modest. The Comprehensive Plan does not encourage or facilitate uncontrolled development, but rather directs reasonable growth within use and design parameters in limited areas.
- The Town’s goals and objectives (Section 3.2.2) clearly support controlling growth to protect community character.
- The Town has limited non-residential development. The Village Oakfield serves as the central business district and service center for the Town of Oakfield.
- The Town’s goals and objectives indicate the preference for directing growth (beside the Village) toward the hamlet areas of Five Corners and East Oakfield, and to control the rate of

growth in areas without services or along rural road frontages, in order to protect community character.

- The Comprehensive Plan recommends that public water service be extended further into the Town of Oakfield, primarily to serve the existing residential hamlets and allow limited development in the immediately surrounding areas. Although it is possible that public water may induce higher growth rates, it is more likely that the availability of public water will steer what limited growth that does occur to the desired areas.

#### **Village of Oakfield**

- The population of the Village of Oakfield declined between 1990 and 2000. Because the Village is primarily "built-out", projections suggest slight decreases in population from 2000 to 2030.
- Similar to the Town of Oakfield, the rate of residential construction in Oakfield, since 1990, has been flat. The Village of Oakfield provides the central business district and service center for the region. The Village is very supportive of the business district and supports efforts for continued investment in, and revitalization of, these businesses in order that the Village may continue to effectively fulfill its function into the future.
- The Comprehensive Plan outlines recommendations and actions to strengthen the Village without adversely changing its character.

### **7.4 Adverse Environmental Impacts that Cannot be Avoided**

With or without the adoption and implementation of the Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan, the three-community study area will continue to have limited new development, some reuse, and pressures to sell-off building lots in the agricultural areas. There will continue to be concerns regarding water quality and quantity and, therefore, an increasing demand for public water. The adoption of this plan will allow the Towns and Village to better manage growth and development, and reduce potential environmental impacts. All development actions taking place after the adoption of this plan will still be subject to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process on a site/project specific basis. This comprehensive plan will assist with the review of development actions. In the instance of a rezoning request, this plan will have a much greater impact on that decision and the SEQR process. Zoning must be in accordance with the community's comprehensive plan.

### **7.5 Growth Inducing Aspects of the Plan**

Most of the implementation actions outlined in this plan will help to control and moderate growth within the three communities. Certain actions will act to encourage development in and around the hamlet areas of Oakfield and Alabama. Specifically, redevelopment in and around the Village of Oakfield is encouraged and public water is recommended for the smaller hamlet areas in each of the Towns.

These areas have been deemed to be the most appropriate areas for development. While the Comprehensive Plan indicates some areas for growth (see Long Term Growth Boundaries on Vision Map), it equally provides rationale for restricting growth in a majority of the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield. The extension of public water and development in the more rural areas of the Towns will not be encouraged as a high priority action, unless shown necessary for health and safety reasons.

### **7.6 Mitigation Measures**

It is the objective of this Comprehensive Plan to help reduce the potential impacts that could be caused by future development in the three study communities. This can be accomplished by providing techniques for guiding development that may occur, such as amending zoning, adopting other development regulations, or providing tools to help mitigate the possible impacts of development (limiting infrastructure, increased/improved design standards for development, etc.). This Comprehensive Plan provides techniques for guiding the direction of growth in the partnering communities, and the tools for minimizing impacts to a level that does not create significant adverse environmental impacts. The following section discusses the recommendations of the Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan, analyzing why and how they help mitigate the potential impacts of future growth.

**a. *Impacts on Land***

**Towns of Oakfield and Alabama**

- To protect the rural character and environmental resources of the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield and the Village of Oakfield, this plan recommends zoning revisions, aesthetic regulations, infrastructure limitations, new development regulations and guidelines, and protection and preservation of important features.
- Agricultural lands in the Towns will be protected. Depending upon the situation, the land will be preserved through various techniques:
  - Town of Alabama: amendment of the Agricultural-Residential (A-R) zoning district, recommending the use of rural development guidelines, adopting a Right to Farm Law, and the use and adoption of more flexible zoning techniques (open development areas, zoning overlay districts and cluster provisions for residential subdivisions).
  - Town of Oakfield: amendment of the Residential and Agricultural (R and A) zoning districts, recommending the use of rural development guidelines, adoption of a Right to Farm Law, and the use and adoption of more flexible zoning techniques (open development areas, zoning overlay districts and clusters provisions for residential subdivisions).
  - Lateral Restrictions on some proposed public water extensions. (See Vision Map).
  - Use of Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) for farmland preservation.
  - Utilizing prime farmland soils information when making land use decisions.
  - Participation in the NYS Agricultural Districting program.
  - Adopting **Minor Subdivision** Regulations.
- In general, the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield are presently not experiencing high rates of growth and are under minimal pressure for development. The Comprehensive Plan generally allows these communities to continue this course by providing techniques to protect the community's land resources, and also ways of directing growth to appropriate areas. This is a pro-active approach rather than being re-active to development pressure and demands for growth.
- Where practicable, residential subdivision is recommended to be encouraged in and around the Village and designated hamlet “Long-term Growth Boundaries” (See Vision Map).

**Village of Oakfield**

- The plan calls for growth in the Village to be primarily in the form of redevelopment, re-use or in-fill development.
- The adoption of a zoning overlay district could provide architectural and site design guidelines in the central business district.
- The Plan calls for protection of some of the remaining important open space features in the Village and expanding the amount of public parkland.

- The Plan directs growth away from the creek corridors.

**b. *Impacts on Water***

**Towns of Alabama, and Oakfield and Village of Oakfield**

Smart Growth Plan

- The Comprehensive Plan mitigates potential impacts from growth through its general support of the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan. The Comprehensive Plan builds upon the concepts in the Smart Growth Plan by establishing “Short-term and Long-term Growth Boundaries” (see Vision Map). Where public water is proposed to be extended, the plan also calls for lateral restrictions or other protective techniques to control growth outside of the designated areas. The Comprehensive Plan does not anticipate significant increases in residential growth rates, but it does provide the Town’s enhanced land use controls to best guide that growth and minimize potential adverse impacts.

Surface Water

- An objective of the Comprehensive Plan is the protection of the important stream corridors and floodplains within the three-community study area.
- Increased drainage standards, and avoidance of poor soil areas, will also reduce potential impacts from development on surface waters.

Groundwater

- Directing growth to areas where public water extensions are recommended will help in the protection of groundwater resources in the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield.
- In Alabama and Oakfield, the extension of public water will relieve the problems associated with strained private wells and failing or faulty septic systems, alleviating health and safety concerns due to water quality and quantity.
- The plan suggests employing education and awareness programs for local residents as they relate to the maintenance and repair of septic systems.

**c. *Impacts on Plants and Animals***

**Towns of Alabama, and Oakfield and Village of Oakfield**

- As discussed previously in this section, the three communities will be undertaking efforts to protect and preserve the stream corridors and open space areas. By targeting these important habitats for protection, the Towns are minimizing potential impacts to the flora and fauna of the region.
- The plan also identifies important features like floodplains, wetlands and unique environmental features, so that they can be properly incorporated into site designs and preserved. The plan also enhances the ability of the communities to plan together and save more contiguous features in the region.
- The Comprehensive Plan recommends adopting **minor and** major subdivision regulations and cluster provisions in the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield in an effort to protect environmentally sensitive or resource-constrained areas.

**d. *Impacts on Agricultural Land Resources***

**Towns of Alabama and Oakfield**

- The mitigation actions recommended above for minimizing potential impacts to the land also apply to potential impacts to agricultural land resources in the Towns of Alabama and

Oakfield. In some cases agricultural land resources will be preserved through one or more of the following techniques:

- Town of Alabama: amendment of the Agricultural-Residential (A-R) zoning district, requiring the use of rural development guidelines, adopting a Right to Farm Law, and utilizing more flexible land use techniques (open development areas, zoning overlay districts and cluster provisions for residential subdivisions).
- Town of Oakfield: amendment of the Residential and Agricultural (R and A) zoning districts, requiring the use of rural development guidelines, adopting a Right to Farm Law, and utilizing more flexible land use techniques (open development areas, zoning overlay districts and cluster provisions for residential subdivisions).
- Lateral Restrictions on some proposed public water extensions (see Vision Map).
- Use of Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) for farming.
- Use of prime farmland soils information in making land use decisions.
- Participation in the NYS Agricultural Districting program.
- Each of the Towns will seek to manage growth and development and focus on the common goal of agricultural preservation. This involves balancing the need to maintain viable farming operations and contiguous farmland with the need to provide opportunities for residential growth.

**e. *Impacts on Aesthetic Resources***

The preservation of community character is one of the major goals of the Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan.

**Towns of Alabama, and Oakfield**

- Community character includes the aesthetic resources in the Towns, such as scenic views, open space, farmland, locally significant and historic structures, and the communities' overall rural quality of life. Each Town has identified community character as a significant resource, and has outlined actions to proactively protect and preserve those features that establish community character in their area.

**Village of Oakfield**

- The Village has identified significant visual and cultural resources, as well as methodologies for protecting and preserving these features. The Village has a central business district and plans to improve the streetscape in this area.
- The aesthetics of the CBD will also be protected through recommended code revisions, the adoption of a zoning overlay district, and a recommended façade improvement program.

**f. *Impacts on Historic and Archaeological Resources***

- In considering future development proposals that require discretionary approvals (site plans and subdivisions) the Towns and Village must consider impacts to cultural resources. These reviews are coordinated with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and will result in the identification of cultural resources and appropriate methods for minimizing potential impacts to these resources.

**g. *Impacts on Open Space, Parks and Recreation***

- The plan identifies the key open space and recreation features in the three-community study area.

- The wildlife management areas have a total of approximately 19,000 acres. All of these are under the control of New York State and the federal Department of the Interior and, therefore, are outside the direct jurisdiction of the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama.
- The Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan avoids recommending development of infrastructure extensions in the vicinity of the wildlife management areas. The exception is the John White Memorial Game Farm, which is a more active educational and training facility (presently unutilized), located between the hamlets of Alabama and Basom in the Town of Alabama.
- The Comprehensive Plan also provides methodologies to protect and preserve open space resources from potential adverse development impacts.
- The communities can cooperatively plan to ensure that open space features are protected to the maximum extent possible, recreational needs are efficiently provided, and parks are connected and considered in development scenarios in each community.

**h. *Impacts on Critical Environmental Areas***

- There are no Critical Environmental Areas, designated through SEQQR, in the Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan study area.

**i. *Impacts on Transportation***

- Transportation in the Oakfield-Alabama study area is heavily reliant on roadways and automobiles. There are no significant transportation issues/deficiencies that will be exacerbated by the plan.
- A major recommendation of this plan is to work with the New York State Department of Transportation and the Genesee Transportation Council to implement streetscape improvements along Route 63 in the Village of Oakfield and down to the school property in the Town of Oakfield.
- To avoid sprawl, growth is being targeted around the Village and existing hamlets in the Towns. This helps to preserve community character and protect environmental features by reducing the potential for potential transportation-related impacts.
- The Oakfield-Alabama Comprehensive Plan also identifies a potential multi-use trail along the abandoned Penn-Central railroad grade to provide for non-vehicular related travel and recreation.

**j. *Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood***

- Growth rates and pressure for development in the three communities is low, and for planning purposes, this is not projected to dramatically change. The plan for each community directs and accommodates growth within appropriate areas, without impacting resources or the character of the community.
- It is clear from the goals and objectives of the three communities, that community character and quality of life should not be adversely impacted by growth. Many of the recommendations of the plan provide ways to achieve this through the direction of growth to the Village and hamlet areas, emphasis on the protection of agricultural land uses, and the preservation of significant natural resources.
- The recommendations for public water extensions focus future development in and around the Village and the hamlet areas, providing residents who are currently experiencing water quality and quantity problems with the opportunity to obtain public water. The recommended “Long-term Growth Boundaries”, as shown on the Vision Maps, are not intended to create demand for development but, rather, they provide the communities a means for controlling and guiding growth in a manner that minimizes potential environmental impacts.

## 7.7 Evaluation of Alternatives

Throughout the planning process, alternatives for helping the three municipalities achieve their goals and objectives were evaluated. These recommendations and implementation alternatives were evaluated for not only their desired results, but also to assess their potential impact on the environment, the needs of local residents, private property rights, quality of life, and the vitality of each community.

It should be noted that long term recommendations have not been thoroughly evaluated in this section. These actions have only been outlined for consideration under circumstances where the Towns and Village experience greater levels of growth pressure as the result of the implementing short term recommendations, or where short term recommendations are not achieving the desired results.

### No-Action Alternative

#### **Town of Alabama**

- The No Action alternative (not adopting the Comprehensive Plan) was considered for the Town of Alabama. However, this alternative does not adequately enable the Town to direct and manage growth trends to achieve the Town's vision.
- The No Action alternative does not allow the Town to properly plan for its chosen future, or to better direct and manage growth and development.
- The No Action alternative does not support the concentration of development and revitalization activities in the hamlet areas.
- The No Action alternative does not address local need for public water supply.
- The proposed plan would more effectively allow the Town to realize its future goals, and provide greater protection to the environment than the continuance of present trends under the No Action alternative.

#### **Town of Oakfield**

- The No Action alternative (not adopting the Comprehensive Plan) was considered for the Town of Oakfield. However, this alternative does not adequately enable the Town to direct and manage growth trends to achieve the Town's vision.
- The No Action alternative does not allow the Town to properly plan for its chosen future, or to better direct and manage growth and development.
- The No Action alternative does not support the concentration of development and revitalization activities in the hamlet areas.
- The No Action alternative does not address the local need for public water.
- The proposed plan would more effectively allow the Town to realize its future goals, and provide greater protection to the environment than the continuance of present trends under the No Action alternative.

#### **Village of Oakfield**

- The Village of Oakfield is largely built-out. The No Action alternative (not adopting the Comprehensive Plan) does not provide methods to guide revitalization and redevelopment activities within the CBD.
- The No Action alternative does not provide for a higher level of protection to the environmental features in the Village, or more effectively manage future growth and

development in a manner that is consistent with the desired goals, as articulated by area residents and officials.

- The No Action alternative would not enable the Village to make effective use of its infrastructure or plan growth effectively with the Town of Oakfield.