

Town of Malta – GEIS

The recent growth within Saratoga County and the Capital District has left the Town of Malta to question some issues of its future development. One of which is the topic of housing affordability and if it will be an issue to some of the families within the town. Also in question, was if this recent growth will compromise the unique landscape elements and agricultural features the town currently has. To help solve these pressing questions the Town of Malta collaborated with Behan Planning Associates, working conjunctively with another private consulting company, Clough Harbour & Associates, LLP.

The GEIS for the Town of Malta commenced in April 2005 and consisted of three main components:

Rural Character Analysis

For this study the existing environmental setting of the town were identified as well as the impacts and mitigation of the town's recent development. There are concentrations of rural character located in the northern and western sections of the town. Using an existing Open Space Study of the town taken in 2001, it was identified that there are 91 open space parcels, totaling 4,699 acres as having potential open space value.



Aerial photo of Malta Farmland

After the existing conditions of Malta's environment were addressed, the following step was to identify the potential impacts of the growing community and steps to help alleviate the stress on its open spaces and agricultural lands.

It was recommended to the Town of Malta that:

- *A Town Land Conservation Plan should be prepared.* This can be through new zoning, establishment of sending and receiving zones for transfer of development rights, a funding program for purchase of development rights, and through the continuation of direct dialogue with the farming community.
- *A set of Rural Design Principles should be followed* to set the stage for a rural design approach. These principles were found in the *Town of Malta Preliminary Rural Design Handbook*, which the town was advised to adopt for use in the conservation design process.

Affordable Housing Study

The Town of Malta has been experiencing the effects of the significant growth in the surrounding area, pressing the issue of housing affordability to its residents. According to the 2005 build-out study of the town, an estimated 4,200 people and about 1,600 new homes and housing units will be added to the town in the next 10 years. This study

included a characterization of the existing housing related conditions, including housing supply, household income and an assessment of affordability of housing in the town. An assessment of the town's planning and zoning regulatory framework was necessary as to assess the local conditions for supporting diverse housing opportunities.

Key findings included:

- an increase in home prices across all housing types
- an increase in the demand for housing, despite rising housing costs
- a high level of Malta's median household income when compared to the region as a whole.
- a rental market that has remained relatively affordable



Typical apartments in Malta

These findings led to the conclusion that the need for affordable housing is a concern that warrants additional action and review.

The work included affordability analysis, review of inclusionary zoning and other housing development strategies.



Newer developments in Malta

Fiscal Model

The impact analysis done for the fiscal situation for the Town of Malta compares the public costs and revenues associated with future growth within a community and estimates the relative impact on future property taxes between three different future land use scenarios- more commercial growth than projected, more residential growth and the addition of a chip fabrication plant in the Luther Forest Technology Campus.

The conclusions that were reached if the

- *residential development is more than the projected growth* the value of new houses will offset the demand for services
- *commercial development is more than the projected growth*, then it occurs that the tax burden would be lowered
- *addition of LFTC* would lower the relative tax burden for Town residents

With this analysis it is pertinent to consider that the most fiscally positive scenario may not be the best land use scenario and that there are factors outside of the model may have an impact on these findings as well as some factors that may be beyond the control of the Town. This model should be used to evaluate potential scenarios.