

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter characterizes and discusses the Proposed Project's potential impacts to the Study Area in terms of land use, community character, including community services and facilities, and public policy. Land use is the activity occurring on a particular piece of land and in the structures that occupy the land. Land uses may be categorized broadly (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial) or in more detail (e.g., single-family residential, multi-family residential, warehousing, and manufacturing). Patterns of land use typically develop over time but may be disrupted by projects that affect the fabric of the communities in which they are sited. Other projects are consistent with established land use patterns and have no adverse impact. Likewise, community character considers all of the factors that make a community what it is, e.g., cohesion among its neighborhoods and its residents, mobility between these neighborhoods, and the viability, effectiveness and efficiency of the services that provide for the residents and businesses of that community. Some projects adversely impact community character, while others support and contribute to it. Finally, public policy as expressed by comprehensive plans and other studies is a statement by the residents of a community, through their elected and appointed officials, that illustrates how they want their community to develop. Some projects are consistent with such public policy and some are not.

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS AND IMPACTS

Because the Proposed Project would occur mostly within LIRR right-of-way (ROW) or within the footprint of existing roadways, potential impacts primarily would be short-term and occur during the construction phase rather than the operational phase (see Chapter 13, "Construction").

Under the Proposed Project, though a limited number of individual commercial sites would be acquired and repurposed for transportation use, no changes to land use patterns would occur either in the build year (2020) or analysis year (2040). Land use within the LIRR ROW would continue to consist of railroad transportation. Use of the ROW for ancillary purposes such as power transmission to serve the transportation facility also would continue, though the location of specific utilities would be altered where required by the proposed track alignment. Transportation land use within existing roadways would continue. Use of properties abutting roadways would not be subject to adverse impacts with a small number of exceptions in which small slivers of non-residential property associated with other uses would be acquired and converted to transportation use; additionally several existing commercial structures would be acquired, demolished and repurposed to accommodate the proposed transportation use. The Proposed Project would not impact general land use patterns of the communities in the Study Area. Residential areas within the Study Area would remain residential. Commercial areas would remain commercial. Other use patterns also would persist. Any deviation from the existing land use patterns would occur with or without the Proposed Project as a result of other planned projects and reasonably foreseeable changes.

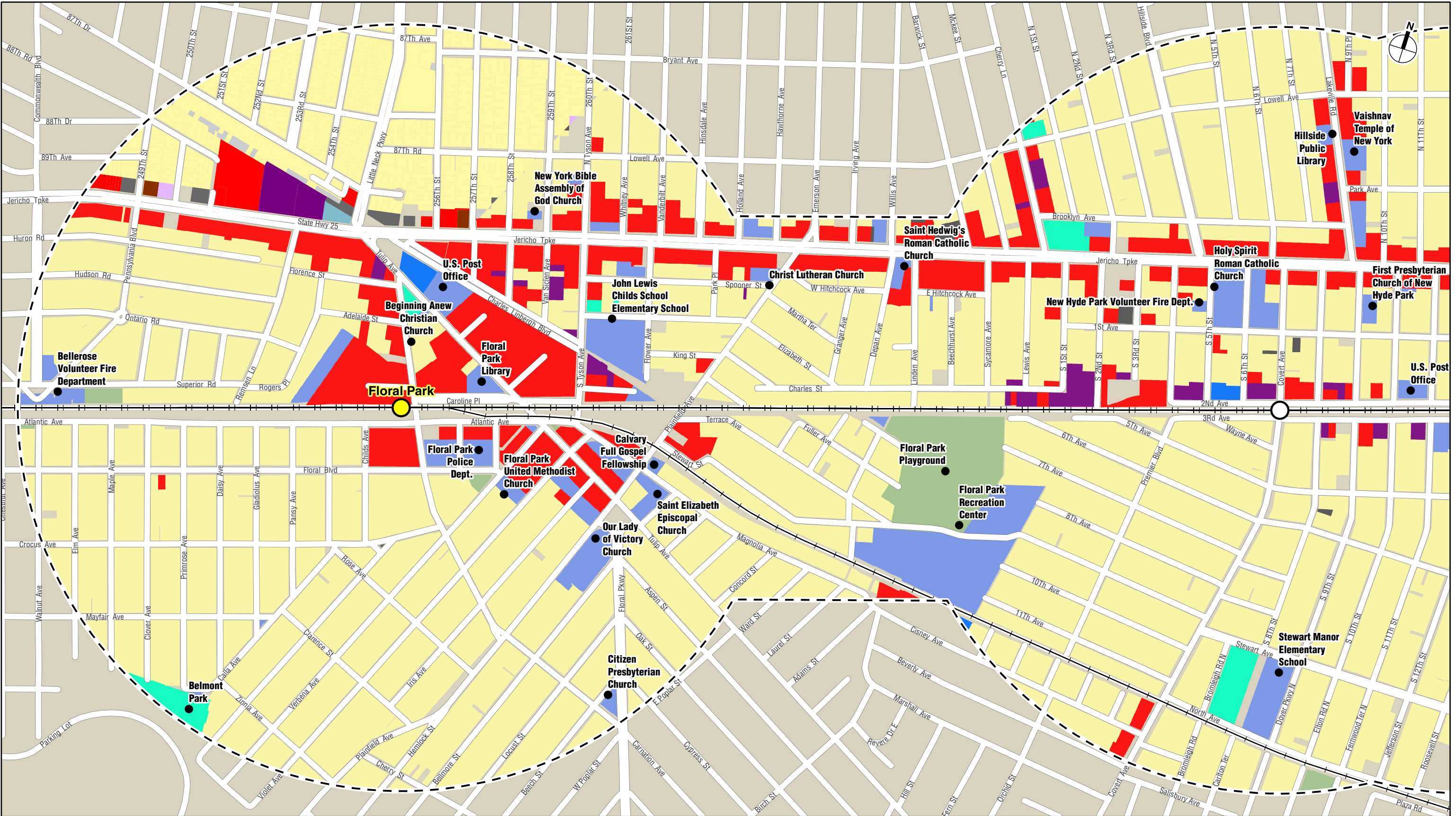
Under the Proposed Project, community character would not change within the 2020 or 2040 analysis year timeframes. While a number of individual commercial parcels along the existing 9.8-mile railroad corridor (Project Corridor) would be affected in order to accommodate the Proposed Project, impacts to these individual parcels would not result in significant adverse impacts to the communities in which those parcels are located because general land use patterns and the institutions that characterize and define these communities would not change. The addition of a third track within the existing LIRR ROW and additional trains would not have any negative impact on the character of the communities within the Study Area because those communities currently border the LIRR ROW and are already characterized by the presence of this busy commuter rail line. The addition of a third track in the Project Study Area would improve mobility within the Study Area communities that would benefit those communities and the people who live in them, work in them, or would like to work in them, as well as community businesses that stand to benefit from improved transportation connectivity. The construction of grade-separated crossings within these communities would improve vehicular and pedestrian safety; better facilitate north-south traffic movement; decrease idling times when gates are down and thereby improve air quality; and eliminate the need for crossing gates, their attendant bells, and train whistles, thereby reducing noise related to railroad operation. These would be beneficial impacts in terms of community character.

The Proposed Project would not result in adverse impacts in terms of public policy in the foreseeable future, including both the 2020 and 2040 analysis year timeframes. All components of the Proposed Project—rail, grade crossings, station improvements and parking—are consistent with the policies set forth in the applicable land use and transportation plans, the salient points of which are summarized below. Increasing grade crossing safety, reducing congestion, noise and idling time at crossings, improving operational rail flexibility and resiliency, and providing for consistent bi-directional and intra-Island passenger rail service support the goals and objectives expressed in the land use and transportation plans of the Study Area communities.

C. METHODOLOGY

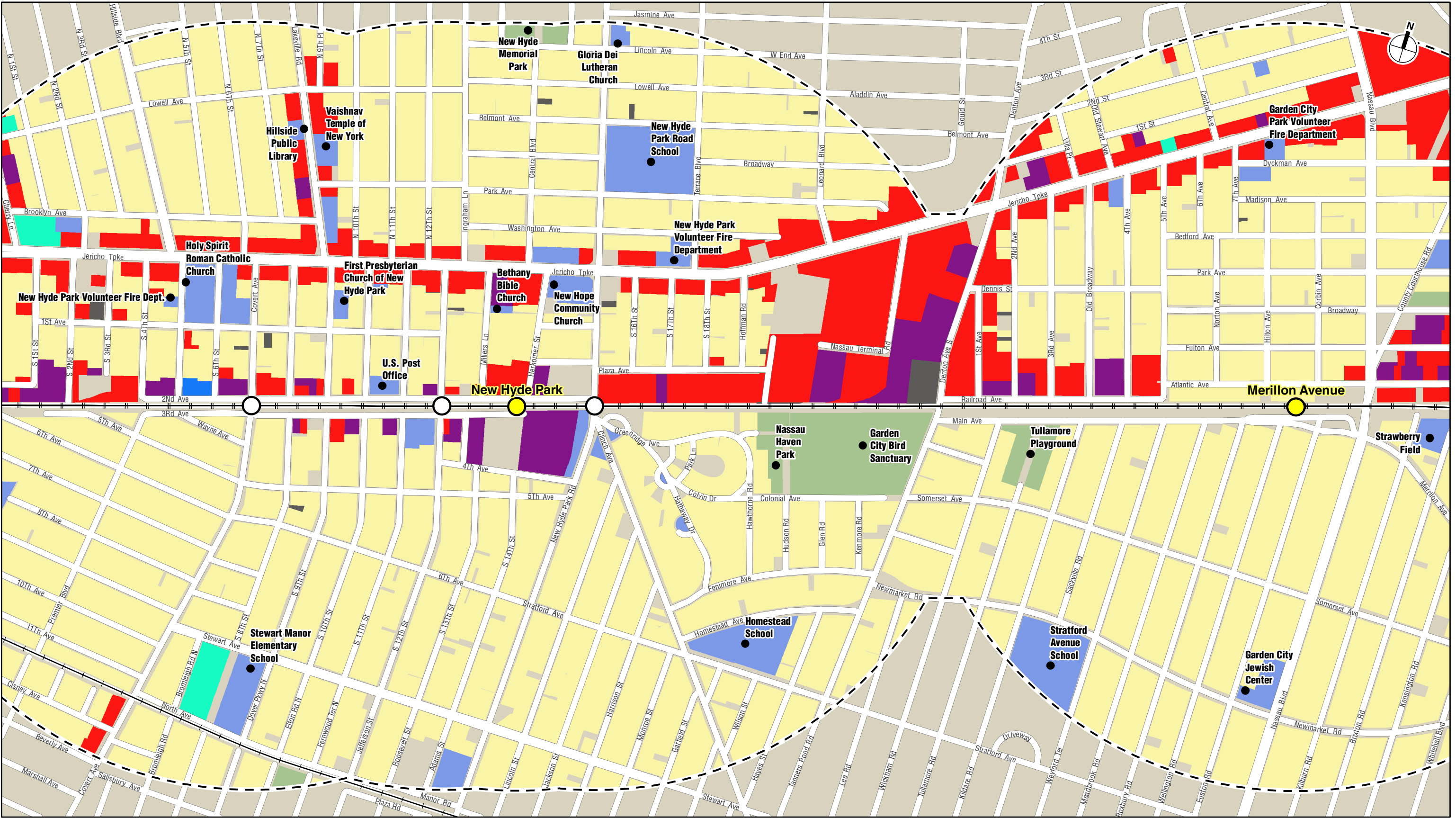
The Study Area for the Land Use, Community Character, and Public Policy analysis consists of the areas along the LIRR alignment between Floral Park and Hicksville that potentially would be affected by the Proposed Project (see **Figures 2-1A through 2-1G**). In particular, the Study Area is defined as the area within one-quarter mile of the centerline of the LIRR ROW, with one-half mile radius around each rail station within the 9.8-mile long Project Corridor. This definition of the Study Area is suitable for use in the analysis of potential impacts to land use, as the connection of land use change to a linear transportation project such as the Proposed Project become more tenuous the further from the project such changes occur. Having a clearly defined, compact Study Area makes the analysis of potential land use impacts geographically meaningful. On the other hand, and more generally, any discussion of community character defies the drawing of concrete boundaries. Community is as much a feeling as it is a collection of structures and the people who live and work there. This quality of communities is considered in this analysis. In terms of defining a Study Area for community character, the Study Area depicted in **Figures 2-1A through 2-1G** serves as a baseline. Defining community character may require the expansion or contraction of this Study Area depending upon the nature of each community considered.

The Study Area comprises portions of the following locations: Village of Floral Park, Village of New Hyde Park, Hamlet of Garden City Park, Village of Garden City, Village of Mineola,



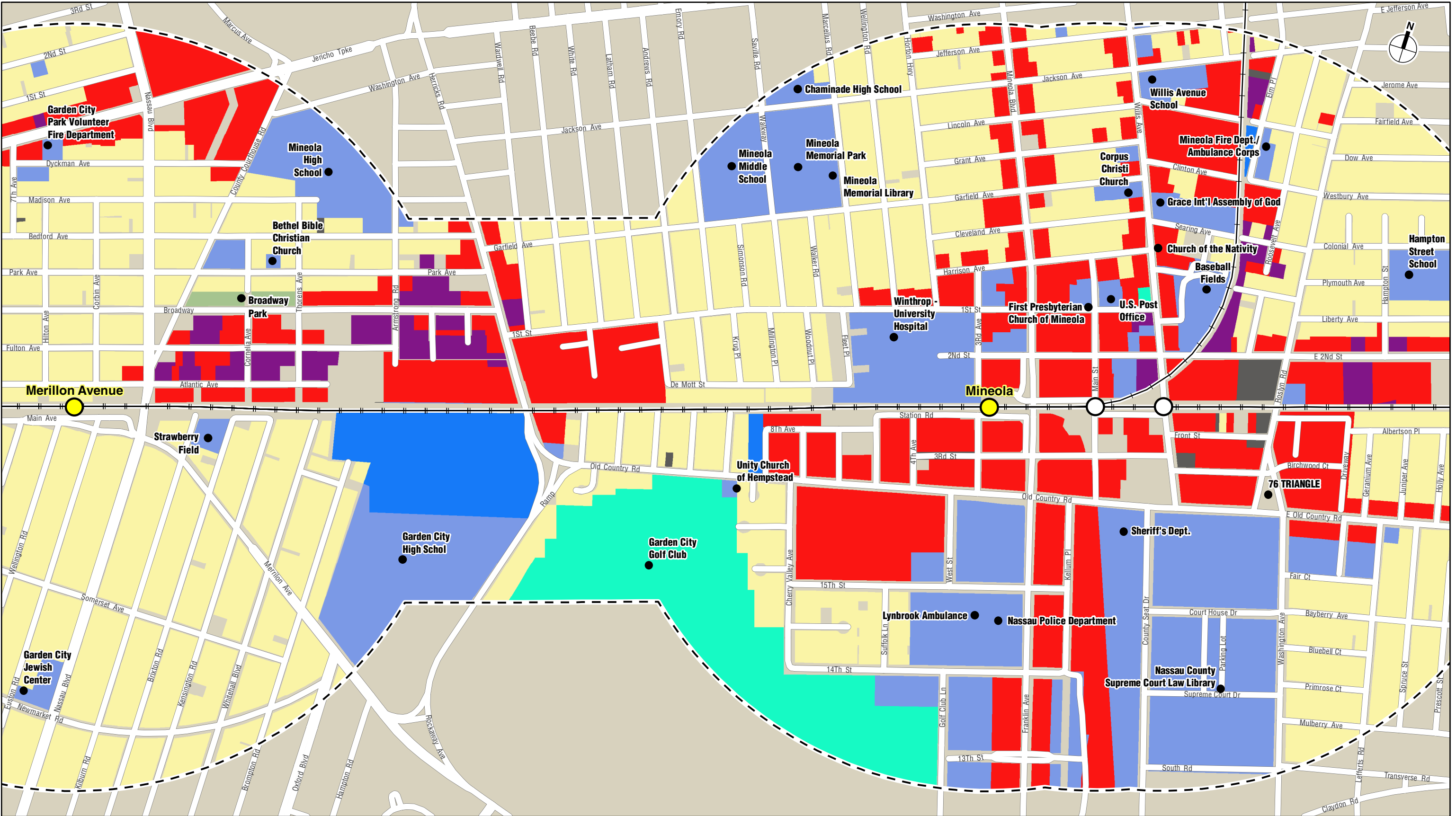
LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hicksville

Land Use
Figure 2-1A



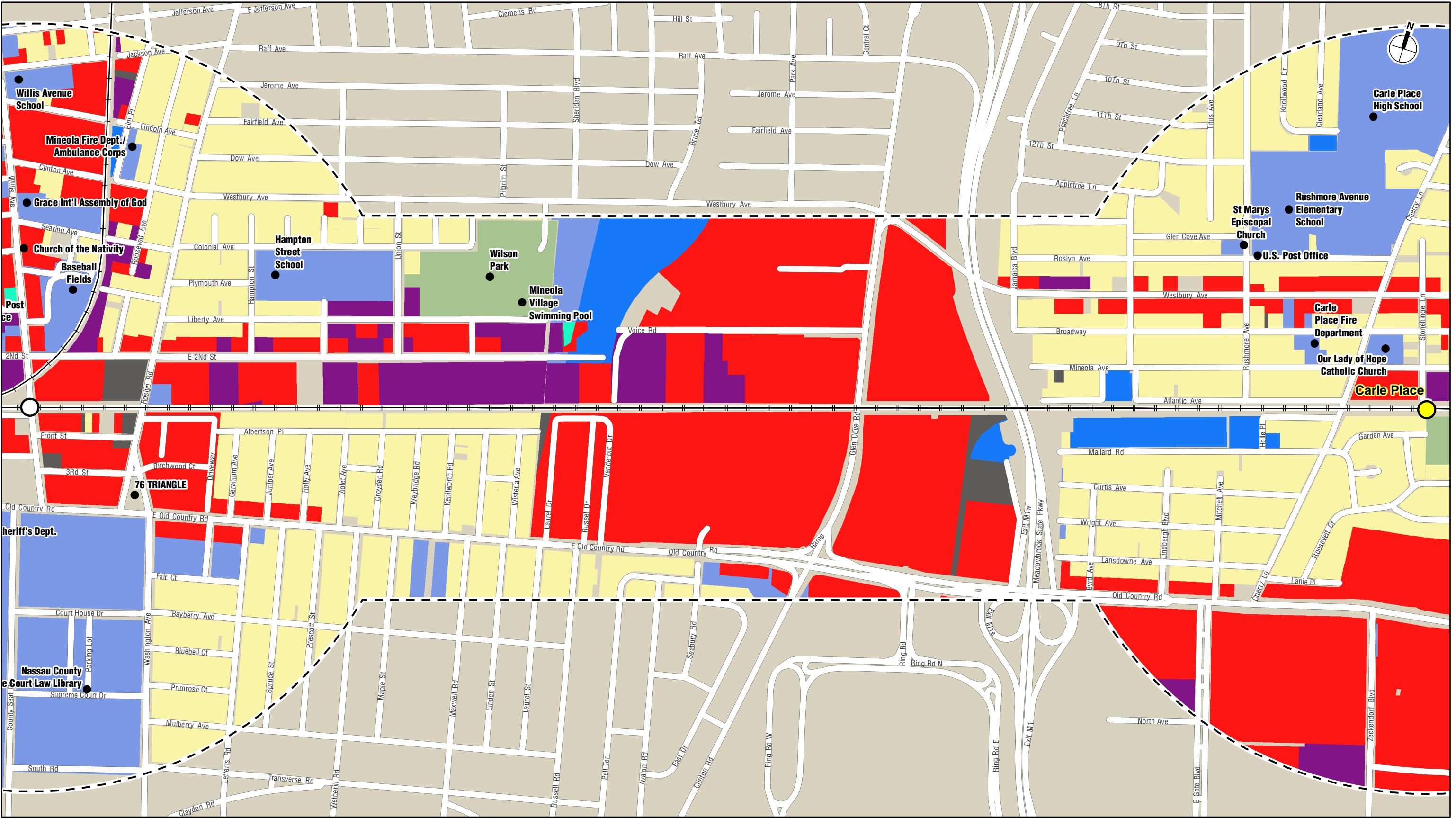
**LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hicksville**

**Land Use
Figure 2-1B**



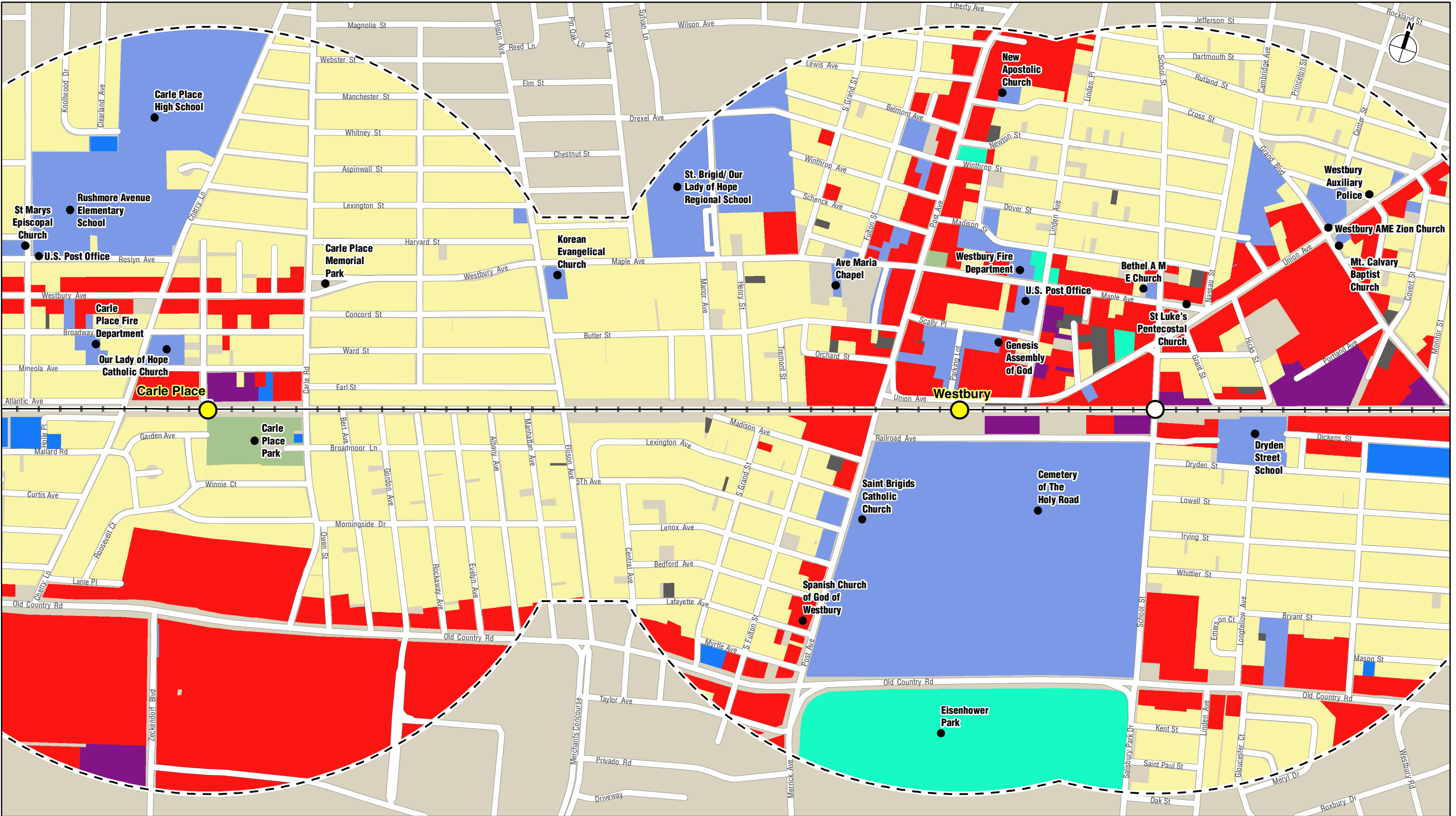
LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hicksville

Land Use
Figure 2-1C



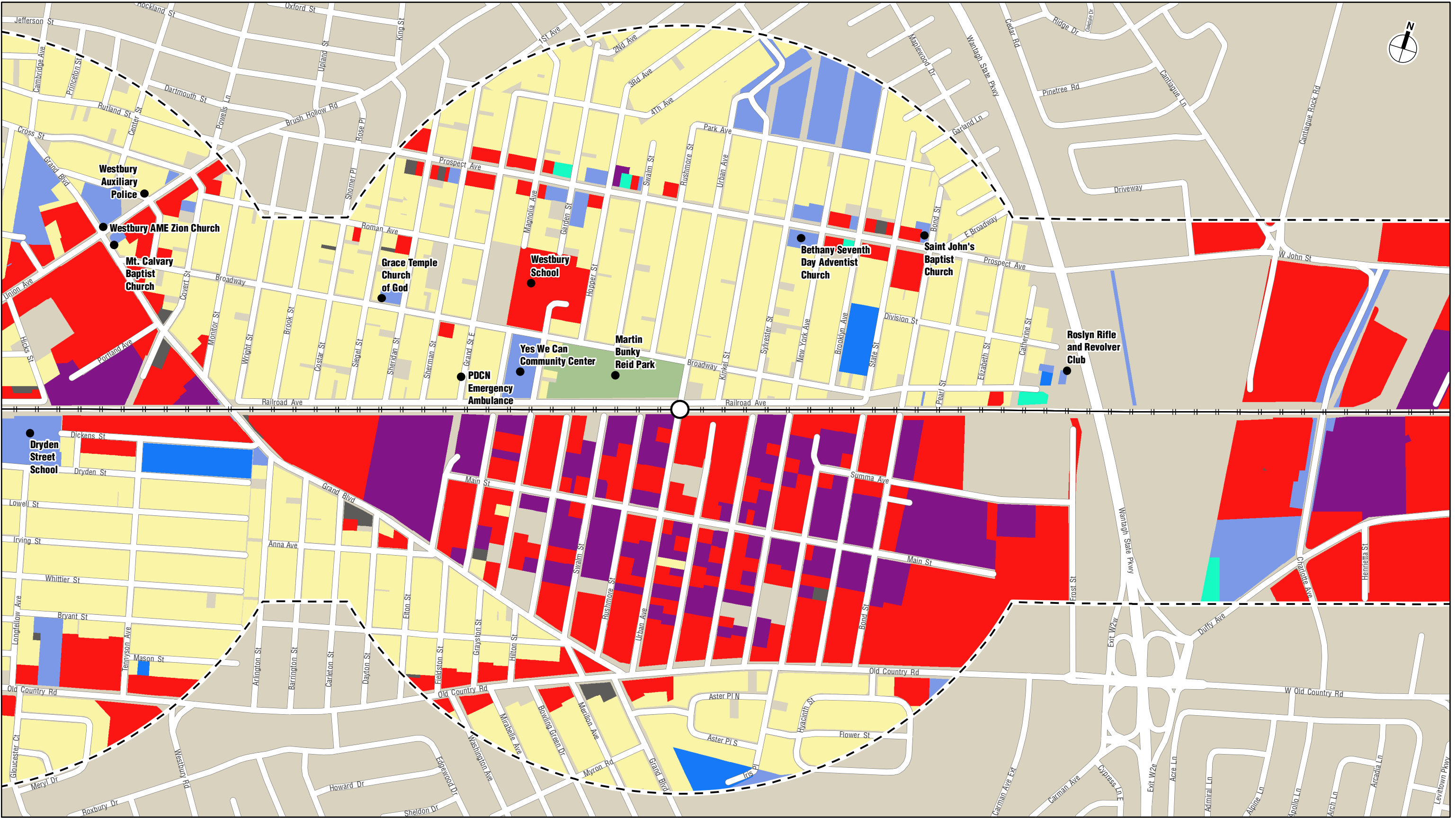
**LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hicksville**

**Land Use
Figure 2-1D**



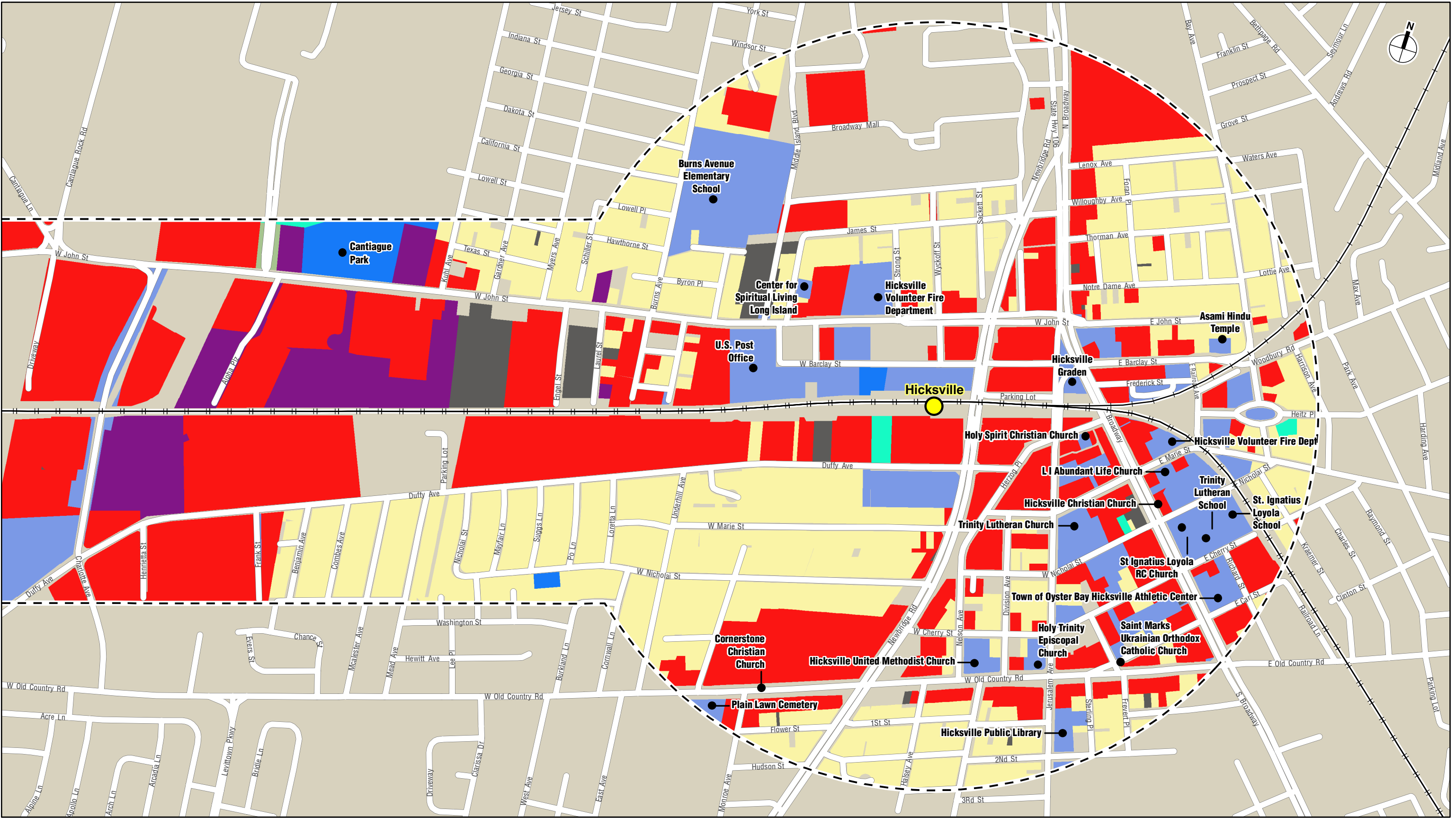
**LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hicksville**

**Land Use
Figure 2-1E**



**LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hicksville**

**Land Use
Figure 2-1F**



LIRR Expansion Project
Floral Park to Hickville

Land Use
Figure 2-1G

Hamlet of Carle Place, Village of Westbury, Hamlet of New Cassel, Hamlet of Hicksville, Town of Hempstead, Town of North Hempstead, and Town of Oyster Bay, all within Nassau County, New York.

Existing and reasonably foreseeable future land uses, community character development and public policy related to land use within the Study Area were identified to provide a baseline for analysis of potential impacts due to the implementation of the Proposed Project. Information and data were compiled from aerial photographs, the planning documents listed below, municipal planning department data, consultation with local and regional planning officials, Geographic Information System (GIS) databases, and field reconnaissance. Using the baseline data developed in this fashion, the activities that comprise the Proposed Project were analyzed to determine their compatibility with existing land use, community character and public policy within the Study Area. The potential for the Proposed Project to change land use or community character, or to run counter to public policy, was examined.

PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Of the municipalities within the Study Area, only Mineola has a planning document, the “Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Mineola,” that both establishes a baseline condition in terms of land use and assesses the municipality’s prospective future land use patterns. Other documents that provide a planning context for and apply generally to the municipalities in the Study Area include documents developed by the following entities, only the first one of which is legally authorized under federal law to direct transportation planning, including planning for rail, in the Study Area.

NEW YORK METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for New York City, Long Island, and the lower Hudson Valley. As a federally designated MPO, NYMTC is required by federal regulations (23 U.S.C. §§134-135) to develop a 25-year regional transportation plan to guide transportation decision-making in the NYMTC region. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is updated every four years. NYMTC’s “Plan 2040 Regional Transportation Plan” (Plan 2040) set forth the region’s transportation needs and goals for the years 2015-2040, addressing major aspects of the region’s transportation network, including roads and bridges, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, ridesharing and demand management, special needs transportation and the movement of goods. Plan 2040 includes a previous iteration of the Proposed Project, in conjunction with the East Side Access Project.

Plan 2040 is founded on what it calls “The Shared Vision,” which comprises three elements:

- Shared Goals that provide a general framework under which decisions about regional transportation are made:
 - Enhance the regional environment, including reducing traffic congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and implementing transit improvements
 - Improve the regional economy, including improving regional mobility
 - Improve the regional quality of life, including increased intra-regional mobility and accessibility for commuting, recreation and tourism
 - Provide a convenient and flexible transportation system within the region, including increased rail reliability and transit ridership

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- Enhance the safety and security of the transportation system, including reducing the rate of injuries and fatalities on the region’s transportation systems
- Build the case for obtaining resources to implement regional investments
- Improve the resiliency of the regional transportation system
- Shared Land Use Designations that help determine where transportation can most efficiently improve mobility and contribute to regional economic strength, e.g., locations where transportation resources can attract residents and businesses while providing efficient, sustainable and cost-effective mobility
- Strategic Transportation Initiatives throughout NYMTC’s planning area, comprising potential strategic transportation initiatives and investments that are deemed critical actions for maintaining and enhancing transportation in the area

The Plan 2040 document recognizes the transportation-related challenges facing the region, including mobility of people and freight, safety, resiliency, air quality, and financial constraints. Plan 2040 specifically recognizes the Proposed Project as being critical for supporting the sustainable regional transportation system.

NASSAU COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

The Commission prepared but has not adopted its “2010 Nassau County Master Plan.” The goals and objectives set forth in that document include, in pertinent part:

- Encourage growth of skilled industries (e.g., health care, information technology)
- Protect economically viable commercial land uses by concentrating development in targeted growth areas
- Improve transportation infrastructure and encourage travelers to select alternatives to automobile use
- Encourage transit-oriented development

LONG ISLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

The Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC) is an organization that was established to promote the physical, economic and social health of Long Island. To help Long Island decision-makers achieve those goals, the LIRPC commissions the development of planning documents containing recommendations regarding goals and objectives and the rationale for setting those goals and objectives.

The “Long Island 2035 Visioning Initiative” was prepared for the LIRPC, using a workshop approach, by a team consisting of the RPA, the University Transportation Research Center (UTRC), Sustainable Long Island, and Vision Long Island, and was funded by NYMTC and UTRC. Published in 2009, the document recognized that “Long Island’s transportation network is confronting its limitations as highway congestion increases and the transit system becomes increasingly unable to meet growing demand for reverse commutation and intra-Island...travel.” Workshop participants suggested improvements to public transportation, including rail, and favored mixed-use development in downtowns near LIRR stations.

In 2010, the LIRPC published the “Long Island 2035 Regional Comprehensive Sustainability Plan,” which applies to the Study Area. That document sets forth sustainability-related objectives, of which the following are relevant to the Proposed Project:

- Boost economy by attracting new businesses and additional workforce

- Create vibrant, transit-supported communities
- Establish transit-served job centers
- Take action to manage congestion and make transit competitive.

VILLAGE OF MINEOLA

In 2005 the Village of Mineola adopted the “Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Mineola.” The document recognizes the important role that the LIRR and its Mineola station have played in the village, stating that the LIRR is more than a means of transportation, but also functions as an organizing structure for land use and development. “The Mineola railroad station serves commuters from the village and surrounding communities, and is also well used by employees of and visitors to County offices, Winthrop University Hospital and other employers in the area. It will only grow in significance if current transit plans are carried out.” Also, a pertinent objective set forth within the Plan is a “major redevelopment and redesign study for the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) station area.”

REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION

The Regional Plan Association (RPA) is a private, independent nonprofit organization that produces planning and development policy documentation that addresses such policy areas as transportation, transit-oriented development, and economic development. The RPA currently is developing a planning document for the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut tristate region, with the expectation that the document, to be titled “A Region Transformed,” RPA’s fourth regional plan, will be released in 2017.

Information on RPA’s website concerning the plan indicates that “A Region Transformed” will address several critical issues that coincide with the goals and objectives of the Proposed Project:

- Desire for reduction in reliance on automobiles
- Need to provide for projected increase in population and employment within one-half mile of existing commuter rail stations through transit infrastructure and transit-oriented development investments
- Need to provide for projected increase in the number of people using transit, to one-third of all work trips
- Desire for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050, which would require reduction of emissions from passenger automobiles and trucks
- Desire for targeted development in existing or new transit-oriented centers to create compact, vibrant communities
- Improved transit options and the concomitant decrease in roadway congestion on Long Island is a central theme of “A Region Transformed.”

STATE SMART GROWTH PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY ACT

Article 6 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law requires any “State Infrastructure Agency” (including LIRR and NYSDOT) to consider the consistency of the construction, or reconstruction, of new or expanded public infrastructure with a set of Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Criteria. The law requires that the chief executive officer of a State Infrastructure Agency must provide a written “Smart Growth Impact Statement” attesting that the project, to the extent practicable, meets the Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Criteria.

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Where a project cannot meet these criteria, or compliance is considered to be impracticable, the Smart Growth Impact Statement shall provide a detailed statement of justification.

The Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Criteria are:

- “A. To advance projects for the use, maintenance or improvement of existing infrastructure;
- B. To advance projects located in municipal centers [defined as “areas of concentrated and mixed land uses that serve as centers for various activities”];
- C. To advance projects in developed areas or areas designated for concentrated infill development in a municipally approved comprehensive land use plan, local waterfront revitalization plan and/or brownfield opportunity area plan;
- D. To protect, preserve and enhance the State’s resources, including agricultural land, forests, surface and groundwater, air quality, recreation and open space, scenic areas, and significant historic and archaeological resources;
- E. To foster mixed land uses and compact development, downtown revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, the enhancement of beauty in public spaces, the diversity and affordability of housing in proximity to places of employment, recreation and commercial development and the integration of all income and age groups;
- F. To provide mobility through transportation choices including improved public transportation and reduced automobile dependency;
- G. To coordinate between State and local government and intermunicipal and regional planning;
- H. To participate in community based planning and collaboration;
- I. To ensure predictability in building and land use codes; and
- J. To promote sustainability by strengthening existing and creating new communities which reduce greenhouse gas emissions and do not compromise the needs of future generations, by among other means encouraging broad based public involvement in developing and implementing a community plan and ensuring the governance structure is adequate to sustain its implementation.”

All of the documents cited above were developed with the same understanding – that future development and productivity in a densely developed area that is renowned for its congested highways will require capacity-increasing transportation investments.

D. EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section identifies the existing land use, community character, and public policy related to land use within the communities that comprise the Study Area. These conditions, together with changes in land use projected to occur in the future without the Proposed Project (see below), serve as a baseline for the purpose of assessing potential impacts of the Proposed Project.

Land uses within the Study Area primarily are residential and commercial, although industrial, institutional and parkland/recreational uses also occur. The types, amounts and percentages of land uses within the Study Area are listed in **Table 2-1**. The patterns of use are indicative of a developed suburban setting with varying population densities. Aerial photography, field inspections, online database research and local planning information confirm that the Project Corridor is highly developed, particularly in the downtown areas where the LIRR stations exist. Between those downtown areas, development is present but generally less dense. Industrial uses typically are found between stations along the LIRR tracks on the edges of the Study Area communities.

Table 2-1
Existing Land Use

Land Use Classification	Acres within Study Area	Percent of Total
Residential	1698	±40.1
Commercial	1828	±43.2
Industrial	154	±3.6
Institutional	497	±11.7
Parks/Open Space	56	±1.3
TOTAL	4233	100
Note: Acreage in this table does not include water features or roadways		
Source: ArcGIS		

The LIRR, chartered in 1834, played a critical role in the development of Long Island and the establishment of its land use patterns. For example, “[t]he Village’s (Mineola) Long Island Railroad station predated the incorporation of Mineola, and the railroad still is central to the village and its transportation system.”¹ Indeed, “[m]uch of the Island’s early settlement occurred close to rail,”² and was largely determined by its proximity. This phenomenon is evident insofar as all of the stations within the Study Area are centrally located within their towns, i.e., each municipality within the Study Area has at least one LIRR Station, around which development, patterns of land use, and communities of varying character have radiated outward.

Communities within the Study Area that emerged following the establishment of the LIRR have a range of residential densities but generally comprise suburban neighborhoods of single-family houses largely radiating from a central downtown through which the LIRR corridor traverses and in which the LIRR stations are located. As such, these stations serve as the hubs of the communities through which the railroad passes. The downtown areas typically consist of a mix of commercial and institutional uses that serve the surrounding residential or industrial areas.

There is a wide range of community facilities located throughout the Study Area, concentrated in the downtown areas that serve each community (see **Figures 2-1A through 2-1G**). These facilities include schools, places of worship, police stations, fire stations, emergency medical service (EMS) facilities, hospitals, post offices and parks/open spaces. A list of community facilities within the Study Area is included below for each community within the Study Area.

Land use and community character, along with critical features that drive the continuation of land use patterns and help define that community character are described for each municipality in the Study Area below. Zoning within the Study Area is broadly representative of the existing land uses, with density constrained by height and building coverage restrictions reflective of existing built form.

FLORAL PARK

The Village of Floral Park occupies 1.4 square miles (sq. mi.) in the Towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead on the western boundary of Nassau County, adjacent to the Queens borough of New York City. It has a population of 15,863 according to the 2010 census, with a population density of 11,331 people per square mile.

¹ Mineola Community Planning Committee, *Comprehensive Master Plan for the Village of Mineola*, 2005.

² Long Island Regional Planning Council, *Long Island 2035 Visioning Initiative*, 2009.

Within the Study Area, Floral Park is characterized by commercial and institutional land use located along the Jericho Turnpike corridor and radiating mostly north from the LIRR Floral Park station along Tulip Avenue, Commonwealth Boulevard, Plainfield Avenue, Carnation Avenue, South Tyson Avenue, with a lesser amount of commercial development south of the station along Atlantic Avenue, Tulip Avenue, and its cross streets. A small amount of residential development is interspersed among these commercial establishments, although residential land use is chiefly located in the area surrounding the village's cohesive, walkable commercial/institutional core. The community thus can be characterized as a geographically small but densely populated village, with a central commercial/institutional core surrounded by residential neighborhoods. A photograph of the Floral Park Downtown is included as **Figure 2-2, Photograph 2** and a photograph of a typical Floral Park residential area is included as **Figure 2-3, Photograph 3**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Floral Park include:

- Floral Park Recreation Center and Playground, which are collocated adjacent to and south of the LIRR ROW. This facility has an ice rink, seven baseball/softball fields, basketball and tennis courts, a pool, and an indoor recreation center.
- Centennial Hall. While not listed on the State/National Register of Historic Places, it is an iconic structure in the Village, and houses the Floral Park Historical Society Museum. Development of the property on which the Centennial Hall sits is under consideration by the Village, but the structure itself is expected to remain.
- U.S. Post Office
- Floral Park Library
- Floral Park Police Department
- Floral Park Fire Department
- John Lewis Childs School Elementary School
- Beginning Anew Christian Church
- Floral Park United Methodist Church
- New York Bible Assembly of God Church
- Our Lady of Victory Church
- Citizen Presbyterian Church
- Calvary Full Gospel Fellowship
- Saint Elizabeth Episcopal Church
- Christ Lutheran Church
- Saint Hedwig's Roman Catholic Church

NEW HYDE PARK

The Village of New Hyde Park occupies 0.81 sq. mi. in the Towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead with a population of 9,712 according to the 2010 census. The population density is 11,990 people per square mile.

Within the Study Area, New Hyde Park is characterized as largely residential (75 percent single-family residences), served by commercial and institutional uses along the Jericho Turnpike, Lakeville Road, Second Avenue, Third Avenue and Plaza Avenue corridors north of the LIRR



Downtown (Tulip Avenue and Iris Avenue) 2



Typical residential neighborhood (Spooner Street and Flower Avenue) 3



Typical industrial land uses (Baer Place) 4



Typical residential neighborhood (South 9th street) 5

New Hyde Park station. A large commercial/industrial area is located on the village's eastern boundary within the Study Area. Rather than forming a cohesive "downtown" as in Floral Park, New Hyde Park's non-residential uses are linear in nature. Residential uses are located between the commercial/institutional corridors, and radiating outward from them. A photograph of the New Hyde Park downtown area is shown in **Figure 2-3, Photograph 4**, and a photograph of a typical New Hyde Park residential area is included as **Figure 2-3, Photograph 5**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in New Hyde Park include:

- Memorial Park, where the village hosts a summer concert series
- Michael J. Tully Park
- Village Hall, which served as the second school building in the area.
- U.S. Post Office
- Hillside Public Library
- New Hyde Park Volunteer Fire Department
- New Hyde Park Road School
- Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church
- Vaishnav Temple of New York
- First Presbyterian Church of New Hyde Park
- Bethany Bible Church
- New Hope Community Church

GARDEN CITY PARK

Garden City Park is a hamlet and census-designated place that occupies 3 sq. mi. in the Town of North Hempstead. It has a population of 7,806 according to the 2010 census and a population density of 2,602 people per sq. mi.

Within the Study Area, Garden City Park is characterized mainly by residential use, which surrounds the LIRR Merillon Avenue station. Commercial, institutional and industrial uses are concentrated along the hamlet's western boundary (Denton Avenue), its eastern boundary (Herricks Road), Jericho Turnpike, and otherwise is clustered east of the LIRR station between the LIRR tracks and Broadway. This configuration provides a residential core with no discernable downtown and outlying services. A photograph of the Garden City Park downtown area is included as **Figure 2-4, Photograph 6**, and a photograph of a typical Garden City Park residential area is shown in **Figure 2-4, Photograph 7**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Garden City Park include:

- Broadway Park
- Garden City Park Volunteer Fire Department
- Mineola High School
- Bethel Bible Christian Church



Typical residential neighborhood (Hilton Avenue) 6



Typical industrial land uses (Railroad Avenue) 7

GARDEN CITY

Garden City is a village within the Towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead. According to 2010 census data, the population of Garden City is 22,371, with a population density of 4,221 people per square mile. The village extends south from the LIRR Main Line, with the village center and most of its significant features (e.g., Adelphi University, Roosevelt Field and St. Paul's Recreation Complex) largely or entirely outside of the Study Area. The village center largely radiates to the east from the LIRR Garden City station (Hempstead Branch), which again is outside of the Proposed Project Study Area.

Within the Study Area, Garden City is characterized chiefly by residential, institutional (Garden City High School) and recreational (Garden City Golf Club) uses. A photograph of the Garden City downtown area is included as **Figure 2-5, Photograph 8**, and a photograph of a typical Garden City residential area is shown as **Figure 2-5, Photograph 9**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Garden City include:

- Garden City Bird Sanctuary, a seven-acre stormwater basin that has been converted to dual use as a preserve, abuts the LIRR ROW to the south.
- Nassau Haven Park
- Tullamore Playground
- Garden City Golf Club
- Strawberry Field, an approximately 2/3-acre neighborhood park
- Nassau County Supreme Court Law Library
- Lynbrook Ambulance
- Homestead School
- Stratford Avenue School
- Garden City High School
- Garden City Jewish Center
- Unity Church of Hempstead

MINEOLA

The Village of Mineola occupies 2.2 sq. mi. in the Towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead, with a population of 18,799 according to the 2010 census. The population density is 8,545 people per square mile.

Within the Study Area, Mineola is characterized by a mix of institutional, commercial and residential uses, which, along with the presence of multiple taller structures within the downtown, give it a more urban feel than its neighboring municipalities. Winthrop University Hospital, associated medical care facilities and the Nassau County government center are located in Mineola occupying significant and centrally-located portions of the village. Commercial uses are spread through the village in the Study Area, with the exception of the northwestern and southeastern parts of the village, which are chiefly residential. The LIRR Mineola station is located at the heart of downtown, with commercial uses radiating from it. These uses are located mostly north of the LIRR ROW along Mineola Boulevard, Main Street and Willis Avenue, south along Franklin Avenue, and east and west along First Street, Second Street, and Old Country Road. The residential areas form distinct neighborhoods outside of the commercial/institutional



Typical industrial land uses (Atlantic Avenue) 8



Typical residential neighborhood (Brompton Road) 9

core, although multifamily residences also are found within the downtown area. According to the Village's Comprehensive Master Plan, the combination of the area roadway system and the LIRR corridor has "helped to create comfortable neighborhoods comprised of generally similar lot sizes and housing styles." A photograph of part of the Mineola downtown is included as **Figure 2-6, Photograph 10**, and a photograph of a typical Mineola residential area is shown as **Figure 2-6, Photograph 11**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Mineola include:

- Mineola Memorial Park
- Wilson Park and Mineola Village Swimming Pool
- Baseball fields off Willis Avenue
- 76 Triangle, a small public park
- U.S. Post Office
- Mineola Memorial Library
- Nassau County Police Department
- Mineola Fire Department/Ambulance Corps
- Winthrop University Hospital
- Chaminade High School
- Mineola Middle School
- Willis Avenue School
- Hampton Street School
- First Presbyterian Church of Mineola
- Corpus Christi
- Grace International Assembly of God
- Church of the Nativity

CARLE PLACE

Carle Place is a hamlet and census-designated place that occupies 0.935 sq. mi. within the Town of North Hempstead. According to the 2010 Census, it has a population of 4,981 and a population density of 5,327 people per square mile. The hamlet is bounded by Northern State Parkway to the north, Carle Road to the east, Old Country Road to the south and Meadowbrook Parkway to the west.

Within the Study Area, Carle Place may be characterized as a small, densely populated town with a walkable downtown core along Westbury Avenue north of the LIRR Carle Place station, and otherwise consisting of established neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, the Carle Place school complex to the north and commercial uses along Old Country Road to the south. A photograph of the Carle Place downtown is included as **Figure 2-7, Photograph 12**, and a photograph of a typical Carle Place residential area is shown as **Figure 2-7, Photograph 13**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Carle Place include:

- Carle Place Park, which is adjacent to and south of the LIRR Carle Place Station.
- U.S. Post Office



Downtown (Mineola Boulevard) 10



Typical residential neighborhood (De Mott Street) 11



Near train station (Mineola Avenue) 12



Typical residential neighborhood (Earl Street) 13

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- Carle Place Fire Department
- Rushmore Avenue Elementary School
- Carle Place High School
- St. Mary's Episcopal Church
- Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church

WESTBURY

The Village of Westbury occupies 2.4 sq. mi. in the Town of North Hempstead, with a 2010 population of 15,146 according to census data. The population density is 6,311 people per square mile. The LIRR first established a station there in 1837 and it has served as a community hub since that time.

Within the Study Area, Westbury is characterized by a dense commercial and institutional downtown comprising Post Avenue, Maple Avenue, Union Avenue, and Grand Boulevard, generally to the north and east of the LIRR Westbury station. Farther to the east, to the west, and northeast are residential neighborhoods. To the south of the station is the Holy Rood Cemetery. Westbury has a sizeable, walkable commercial core surrounded by residential, industrial and other commercial uses. A photograph of part of the Westbury downtown is included as **Figure 2-8, Photograph 14**, and a photograph of a typical Westbury residential area is shown as **Figure 2-8, Photograph 15**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Westbury include:

- Eisenhower Park
- Carle Place Memorial Park
- U.S. Post Office
- Westbury Auxiliary Police
- Westbury Fire Department
- St. Brigid/Our Lady of Hope Regional School
- Korean Evangelical Church
- Ave Maria Chapel
- Spanish Church of God of Westbury
- Saint Brigid's Catholic Church
- New Apostolic Church
- Genesis Assembly of God
- Bethel AME Church
- St. Luke's Pentecostal Church
- Westbury AME Zion Church

NEW CASSEL

The Hamlet of New Cassel occupies 1.5 sq. mi. in the Town of North Hempstead, with a 2010 population of 14,059 according to census data. The population density is 9,373 people per square mile.



Downtown (Post Avenue) 14



Typical residential neighborhood (Manor Avenue) 15

Within the Study Area, New Cassel essentially is separated into unequal quadrants. To the northwest and southeast, the municipality is almost entirely dedicated to commercial and industrial uses, while the northeast and southwest sections are chiefly characterized by residential neighborhoods. There is no downtown core. A photograph of the New Cassel industrial area is shown as **Figure 2-9, Photograph 16**, and a photograph of a typical New Cassel residential area is included as **Figure 2-9, Photograph 17**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in New Cassel include:

- Martin Bunky Reid Park
- Yes We Can Community Center
- PDCN Emergency Ambulance
- Dryden Street School
- Westbury School
- Mt. Calvary Baptist Church
- Grace Temple Church of God
- Bethany Seventh Day Adventist Church
- Saint John's Baptist Church

HICKSVILLE

The Hamlet of Hicksville occupies 6.8 sq. mi. in the Town of Oyster Bay, with a 2010 population of 41,547 according to census data. The population density is 6,110 people per square mile. The LIRR Hicksville Station is the busiest LIRR station east of Jamaica.

Within the Study Area, Hicksville is characterized by industrial, commercial and institutional uses along the LIRR tracks and a commercial/institutional downtown core extending north-south along Newbridge Road, Jerusalem Avenue and Broadway. Residential uses are interspersed with these other uses, with more consistent residential use projecting outward from downtown. Hicksville communities are characterized by large, dense neighborhoods served by commercial centers within short driving distance. A photograph of part of the Hicksville downtown area is shown as **Figure 2-10, Photograph 18**, and a photograph of a typical Hicksville residential area is included as **Figure 2-10, Photograph 19**.

Community resources and significant features within the Study Area in Hicksville include:

- Cantiague Park
- Hicksville Garden
- Town of Oyster Bay Hicksville Athletic Center
- U.S. Post Office
- Hicksville Public Library
- Hicksville Volunteer Fire Department
- Burns Avenue Elementary School
- Trinity Lutheran School
- St. Ignatius Loyola School
- Center for Spiritual Living Long Island



Typical industrial uses (State Street) 16



Typical residential neighborhood (Sylvester Street) 17



Downtown (Duffy Avenue) 18



Typical residential neighborhood (Myers Avenue) 19

- Cornerstone Christian Church
- Hicksville United Methodist Church
- Holy Spirit Christian Church
- Trinity Lutheran Church
- Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
- Long Island Abundant Life Church
- Hicksville Christian Church
- Saint Marks Ukrainian Orthodox Catholic Church
- Asami Hindu Temple

E. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

In the Future without the Proposed Project, land use and community character in the Study Area are not expected to change substantially. This conclusion is supported by existing public policy as set forth in the planning documents listed above. These documents call for maintaining community character, invigorating the Long Island economy by attracting businesses and workers, and improving the transportation network in general and transit in particular. Recent and present activities, such as the expansion of the Winthrop-University Hospital, along with future activities independent of the Proposed Project are expected to support this objective. Known future projects include a transit-accessible multifamily residential development project and the creation of the Mineola Village Green, which, if constructed, will consist of apartments, retail and restaurant space in downtown Mineola proximate to the LIRR Mineola Station. Other reasonably foreseeable projects that are entirely independent of the Proposed Project are shown in **Table 2-2**. These land use development projects would not likely change the overall land use or community character of the Study Area substantially.

Also, it should be noted that “[l]ess than 9% of Long Island’s total land – about 70,000 acres- is currently both undeveloped and available for development of new residential, commercial or industrial activity.”³ Due to the general unavailability of developable land, a majority of which is located in Suffolk County at a significant distance from the Study Area,⁴ the existing mix of land uses in the Study Area is expected to persist. Any perceivable development trend is characterized by redevelopment within existing general use categories. Pertinent planning documents express a desire to maintain the character of the municipalities within the Study Area while also fostering transit-oriented development. According to these documents, it appears that no changes in land use patterns are planned.

³ Long Island Regional Planning Council, *infra*.

⁴ *Ibid*.

Table 2-2
No-Build Projects in the Study Area

Municipality	Description of Project	Status
Floral Park	Minor development projects that would not significantly impact land use or community character	Various stages
New Hyde Park	Minor development projects that would not significantly impact land use or community character	Various stages
Garden City	Minor development projects that would not significantly impact land use or community character	Various stages
Garden City Park	Minor development projects that would not significantly impact land use or community character	Various stages
Mineola	Two four-story rental residential buildings (163,210 sf and 174,855 sf) on 2.24 ac at 120, 121, and 127 Searing Avenue	Approved
Mineola	Mixed-use village green proximate to the LIRR station with 296 apartments, 6975 sf retail space and 6975 restaurant space on 1.51 ac	Approved
Mineola	Nine-story apartment building with 315 units at 250 Old Country Road	Approved
Mineola	Winthrop University Hospital is considering constructing a cogeneration plant at the site of the existing parking lot and several Winthrop-owned residences on the south side of the hospital	Not formally proposed
Mineola	Winthrop University Hospital is considering constructing a multilevel parking deck at the site of the existing parking lot on the south side of the hospital	Not formally proposed
Mineola	New multifamily residential redevelopment on 8th Avenue adjacent to the LIRR ROW	Not formally proposed
Westbury	Village considering alternate uses for the parcels bounded by Maple Avenue to the north, School Street to the east, Union Avenue to the south, and Sullivan Lane to the west. Among the uses considered is multi-family housing	Not formally proposed
Westbury	Redevelopment of the parcels south and west of Sullivan Lane, bounded by Linden Avenue and Union Avenue	Not formally proposed
Westbury	Renewal projects along the Project Corridor and Maple Avenue	Not formally proposed
Westbury	A recent \$10 million grant from the State is expected to be used for: incentivization of private development; downtown enhancements potentially including TOD in the vicinity of the Westbury LIRR station; enhancing the transition from the LIRR station to downtown; and other planning	Under consideration
Westbury	Private redevelopment on Post Avenue between Orchard Street and Butler Street, and on Maple Avenue between Post Avenue and Fulton Street	Not formally proposed
Hicksville	A zoning change is expected to foster TOD around the LIRR station	Proposed
North Hempstead	Construction of a four-story, 120 room hotel at 20 Westbury Avenue, Carle Place	Proposed
North Hempstead	Expand an existing shopping center into a newly acquired adjoining lot, partially demolishing an existing building, constructing four new free-standing buildings for a net increase of 13598 sq ft of retail space, and reconfiguring and expanding the parking area, all at 211-217 Old Country Road, Carle Place	Proposed
North Hempstead	Construction of a 9,016 sf church at 859 Prospect Avenue, Westbury	Proposed
North Hempstead	Construction of a two-story, 24,421 sf building for use as a chapel and community center at 992 Prospect Avenue, Westbury	Proposed
North Hempstead	Construction of a 1,900 sf commercial building at 26 Urban Avenue, Westbury	Proposed
North Hempstead	Construction of a 11,675 sf addition to two existing buildings totaling 21,634 sf for storage and baling of junk at 114 Sylvester Street, Westbury	Proposed
North Hempstead	Construction of a 75-unit senior housing complex and community room at Grand Street and Broadway, Westbury	Proposed
Source: Consultation with municipal planning personnel, 2016.		

F. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

This chapter evaluates the likelihood that the operational phase of the Proposed Project would adversely impact land use, community character or the operation of community facilities and services, or be contrary to public policy. Potential construction-related impacts are addressed in Chapter 13.

As discussed in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the Proposed Project would involve the installation of an additional track to complete a continuous third Main Line track between the Floral Park and Hicksville stations; construction of retaining walls and relocation of utilities along portions of the LIRR ROW, elimination of seven grade crossings to provide grade-separated crossings or potentially, in one or two cases, full closures to vehicular traffic; various station improvements and modifications to accommodate a third track (e.g., ADA accessibility, enhanced pedestrian access, and improved platform and passenger waiting areas), and other related railroad infrastructure improvements.

Under the Proposed Project, operations would take place almost exclusively within either the existing LIRR ROW or areas of existing roadway transportation use. The exception to this is that several commercial parcels and pieces of commercial parcels would be acquired for transportation use. In sum, the Proposed Project would require ten partial acquisitions and four full acquisitions of approximately three acres of commercial property. The full acquisitions would require the demolition of appurtenant structures and conversion of the parcels to transportation use. (See Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” for a discussion of potential relocation of businesses and effects on communities). While the Proposed Project would impact these individual parcels in separate locations throughout the entire Study Area, it would not alter patterns of land use either in the build year (2020) or the 2040 analysis year. Over the entire 9.8-mile Project Corridor, only four non-residential buildings would be removed. Residential areas would be unaffected and thus remain residential, commercial areas would remain commercial, and so on. No significant adverse impact would occur to open space or parkland, either physically or in terms of use.

For example, the construction of the grade crossings at School Street and Urban Avenue would require the full taking of two commercial parcels and the partial taking of one commercial parcel in New Cassel. These takings would be focused in an area characterized by existing transportation use. The commercial nature of the land use in the area of these takings would not be affected by the relocation of two businesses and the taking of a sliver of land from an additional parcel. Land use patterns in the immediate vicinity would remain commercial, and land use in the municipality as a whole would not change. Likewise, the character of the communities surrounding the School Street and Urban Avenue grade crossings would not change, because mobility and access would not change, community resources would not be affected, and the landscape would not change significantly.

Currently, the area in which the Proposed Project would be constructed is almost entirely dedicated to transportation use, and would continue to be. This applies to both the railroad and the roadways that cross it. Any negative impacts to community character would occur only if new infrastructure or new circumstances that change the way transportation use is carried out would substantially change the landscape and feel of the communities in the Study Area or would disrupt those existing communities. The Proposed Project does not introduce a new transportation use and does not significantly expand the footprint or change the nature of the existing transportation uses, beyond the aforementioned non-residential property acquisitions.

In the operational phase, the installation of the third track and related railroad infrastructure improvements within the existing LIRR ROW would have no impact, adverse or beneficial, on community character within the Study Area. The operation of trains on a third track would be entirely consistent with the railroad use that currently characterizes the LIRR ROW.

The elimination of grade crossings would confer a benefit to Study Area communities in terms of community character because the elimination of crossing gates and their attendant bells and flashing lights—and of the idling cars waiting at those gates—would eliminate intrusive train-related noise and air quality impacts related to idling cars and thus enhance the residential character of these primarily residential communities. Emergency vehicle access would be improved by elimination of potential gate-down time at railroad crossings.

The construction of pedestrian walkways over the existing and proposed tracks at South 12th Street in New Hyde Park, Main Street in Mineola, and Willis Avenue in Mineola, and at the LIRR Merillon Avenue and Carle Place stations potentially would constitute a change in visual character in the immediate proximity of those walkways. These new features would present visual changes but would not be considered significant adverse impacts to land use and community character, particularly because they involve transportation features appurtenant to transportation facilities (e.g., roads, railroad ROW) in a transportation corridor. The network of neighborhoods and the general landscape upon which community character is based would not incur significant adverse impacts from the addition of a pedestrian crossing.

If the full road closure options for South 12th Street in New Hyde Park and Main Street in Mineola are selected, new dead ends at the LIRR ROW for both streets would be created, thus altering the existing street pattern. Closing these crossings would require both vehicular and pedestrian traffic to choose other options for crossing the LIRR tracks. From South 12th Street, the closest crossing is approximately 1,280 feet to the west at Covert Avenue and approximately 1,045 feet to the east at New Hyde Park Road. From Main Street, the closest crossing is approximately 440 feet to the west at Mineola Boulevard and approximately 755 feet to the east at Willis Avenue, routing via 2nd Street. While the rerouting may cause a minor inconvenience to motorists and pedestrians, because the LIRR tracks currently form a neighborhood-defining boundary within these communities and have done so since the neighborhoods first developed and radiated from the tracks as long ago as 1834, distinct neighborhoods do not straddle the tracks. Accordingly, closure of these two streets at the rail crossing would not bisect any existing neighborhood, and therefore community character would not bear any adverse impacts as a result of these possible closures. Emergency service access would continue to have unrestrained access to all portions of communities within the Study Area with or without the full road closure of South 12th Street and Main Street because they would cross the tracks unimpeded at other crossings.

In general, while 14 individual parcels within the Study Area would be fully or partially acquired, general community land use areas would not be altered. Access to community facilities not only would remain, but would be enhanced by the separation of grade crossings that would improve north-south vehicular and pedestrian access. This would apply to both the 2020 build year and the 2040 analysis year.

While the potential closure of up to two north-south roads would eliminate north-south travel on those roads, the separation of adjacent crossings would limit the impact of these closures on communities insofar as unfettered access to entire communities for motorists and pedestrians would be maintained and enhanced at the remaining grade separated crossings.

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To the extent that the elimination of grade crossings and their associated gates, bells and train whistles would constitute a change in community character, such a change would be considered a benefit rather than an adverse impact. Elimination of these grade crossings would enhance the residential nature of these communities because it would improve air quality, increase mobility and vehicular and pedestrian safety, and reduce noise impacts from railroad operation.

In terms of public policy, the Proposed Project is consistent with all pertinent planning documents, and supports the objectives of these documents. In particular, insofar as these documents cite as objectives the promotion of economic growth, maintenance of established communities, and improvements in transportation in general and rail and transit specifically, the Proposed Project would be a key contributor towards the accomplishment of these objectives.

New structures within the Proposed Project (e.g., pedestrian overpasses or parking garages) are proposed to continue the existing transportation use and would be considered consistent with the overall land use and zoning of the Study Area. New tiered parking decks in Mineola, Westbury, and Hicksville would be sited in locations in which these structures would not constitute significant adverse impacts in terms of land use or community character, e.g., the structures would be unobtrusive considering their surroundings, and consistent with general land use patterns. No changes are proposed to zoning codes within Study Area communities.

With regard to the Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act compliance, LIRR has prepared this statement evaluating the Proposed Project's compliance with the Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Criteria. Text in normal type below replicates the Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Criteria. Italicized text following each item describes how the Proposed Project would meet these criteria.

"A. To advance projects for the use, maintenance or improvement of existing infrastructure;"

The Proposed Project would improve existing infrastructure.

"B. To advance projects located in municipal centers [defined as "areas of concentrated and mixed land uses that serve as centers for various activities"];"

The Proposed Project involves the improvement of the LIRR Main Line corridor, which is served by stations in municipal centers. It is expected that improvements to transit service fostered by the Proposed Project would have a concomitant beneficial effect on the municipal centers that these stations serve.

"C. To advance projects in developed areas or areas designated for concentrated infill development in a municipally approved comprehensive land use plan, local waterfront revitalization plan and/or brownfield opportunity area plan;"

The Proposed Project is located in a highly developed area of Long Island. It involves only the improvement of existing transportation facilities.

"D. To protect, preserve and enhance the State's resources, including agricultural land, forests, surface and groundwater, air quality, recreation and open space, scenic areas, and significant historic and archaeological resources;"

This DEIS evaluates the potential impacts of the Proposed Project on the requisite resources, and has determined that the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to these resources.

- “E. To foster mixed land uses and compact development, downtown revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, the enhancement of beauty in public spaces, the diversity and affordability of housing in proximity to places of employment, recreation and commercial development and the integration of all income and age groups;”

The Proposed Project is expected to enhance public transit reliability, which in turn supports TOD and other station- and downtown-centric development in the Study Area.

- “F. To provide mobility through transportation choices including improved public transportation and reduced automobile dependency;”

The Proposed Project is aimed squarely at improving public transportation and reducing automobile dependency, as set forth in the purpose and need.

- “G. To coordinate between State and local government and intermunicipal and regional planning;”

LIRR has engaged in an unprecedented public outreach effort (see Chapter 21, “Public Outreach”) for the Proposed Project in order to ensure that all interested parties were involved in the decision-making process. LIRR has conducted extensive outreach and coordination with State and local government in the design and development of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project is consistent with all applicable planning documents and, moreover, is considered a project of regional significance and its implementation is considered an act of regional planning.

- “H. To participate in community based planning and collaboration;”

LIRR has conducted extensive outreach and collaboration with State and local government and affected residents regarding the Proposed Project and the minimization of significant adverse impacts to local stakeholders.

- “I. To ensure predictability in building and land use codes; and”

The Proposed Project does not affect the predictability of any building and land use codes.

- “J. To promote sustainability by strengthening existing and creating new communities which reduce greenhouse gas emissions and do not compromise the needs of future generations, by among other means encouraging broad based public involvement in developing and implementing a community plan and ensuring the governance structure is adequate to sustain its implementation.”

As stated in Chapter 17, “Climate Change/Sustainability,” of this document, the Proposed Project would result in a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating grade crossings and, thereby, idling times for automobiles. While the Proposed Project does not specifically and would not formally encourage public/governmental relations in terms of development of community plans, it does provide the transportation infrastructure around which such plans may be centered.

G. MITIGATION FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Because the Proposed Project would not result in any significant long-term adverse impacts in terms of land use, no mitigation is necessary.

Likewise, the Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts to community character, or run counter to public policy. Community access to residences and neighborhoods

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and to commercial, governmental, institutional and recreational facilities would be maintained and the communities themselves would not bear any adverse impact. In fact, the elimination of grade crossings would enhance the existing residential nature of the Study Area communities. Coordination with emergency service providers would ensure that any permanent road closures would enable those providers to develop routes that account for those closures and maintain access to the communities that rely on their services. *