

**UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY**  
**DOWNTOWN CAMPUS CAPITAL PLAN**  
**STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT (SEQRA)**

**DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT**  
FOR  
**DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
STATEMENT**

JANUARY 2014



**UNIVERSITY  
AT ALBANY**  
State University of New York

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction

Description of Proposed Action

Alternatives

Potentially Significant Adverse Impacts

- a. Land
- b. Water Resources
- c. Drainage
- d. Air
- e. Climate Change
- f. Plants, Animals and Habitats
- g. Aesthetic Resources
- h. Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resources
- i. Open Space and Recreation
- j. Transportation, Traffic, and Parking
- k. Energy
- l. Noise and Odors
- m. Public Health and Safety
- n. Community Character, Aesthetics and Land Use
- o. Construction
- p. Sustainability

Growth Inducing Impacts

Cumulative Impacts

DGEIS Table of Contents

## **INTRODUCTION**

Pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Part 617 of Chapter 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations; as authorized by the New York State Environmental Conservation Law Article 8; and by the adoption of a SEQRA Positive Declaration by the University at Albany, State University of New York (UAlbany), a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) is being prepared for the Downtown Campus Capital Plan. In accordance with SEQRA, the DGEIS is required to evaluate reasonably anticipated environmental impacts. This scoping document identifies the potentially significant environmental impacts to be addressed in the DGEIS.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed “action” under SEQRA is defined as the UAlbany Downtown Campus Capital Plan (the “Downtown Campus Plan”). The Downtown Campus Plan was developed as part of UAlbany’s 2012 Facilities Master Plan and includes several individual projects contemplated for the Downtown Campus that are intended to expand the programmatic and physical capacity of the Downtown Campus over the next 10 years, contingent on funding. The Downtown Campus is located at 135 Western Avenue in the City of Albany, approximately three miles east of the Uptown Campus (1400 Washington Avenue). The Downtown Campus encompasses a city block bounded by Washington Avenue (North), Western Avenue (South), N. Lake Avenue (West) and Robin Street (East).

The components of this contemplated Downtown Campus Plan that will be considered in the DGEIS include the following:

### **Renovation of Schuyler School**

- Former Albany High School building
- Highly suitable for University (as opposed to elementary and secondary) academic functions such as departmental offices, classrooms, and research
- Auditorium space

### **Construction of Thurlow Parking Structure**

- Construction of a parking structure
- Parking will replace lost capacity at the Hawley lot
- Provide additional capacity for expanded facilities at the UAlbany Downtown Campus

### **Renovation and Expansion of Page Hall**

- Historic building housing an 830 seat auditorium on the upper levels and a gymnasium at the basement level
- Potential expansion that may maximize existing specialized spaces at Page Hall as a high quality places for performances, lectures, and events

### **Construction of Hawley Library Addition**

- Construction of an addition at the northeast corner of the Downtown campus
- Will accommodate facilities for student support and academic functions. The program includes food service, a fitness center, relocation of selected functions of the Dewey Graduate Library, and an information commons.
- Space may include a paved zone with tables that may be used for outdoor seating and lounge space in good weather

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The DGEIS will include a discussion of alternatives to the project described above. These alternatives may include:

1. No Build: Under this alternative, it will be assumed that no projects will be implemented.
2. Build A - Renovation: This alternative includes the renovation of Schuyler School and Page Hall.
3. Build B – Expansion and New Construction: This alternative includes the construction of Thurlow parking structure, the expansion of Page Hall and the construction of Hawley Addition.

### **POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS**

As a matter of routine, this DGEIS will address all required environmental impact that can reasonably be anticipated, including:

- Impact on Land
- Impact on Water Resources
- Impact of Drainage
- Impact on Air
- Impact on Climate Change
- Impact on Plants, Animals and Habitats
- Impact on Aesthetic Resources
- Impact on Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resources
- Impact on Open Space and Recreation
- Impact on Transportation, Traffic and Parking
- Impact on Energy
- Impact on Noise and Odors
- Impact on Public Health and Safety
- Impact on Community Character and Land Use
- Impact on Construction
- Impact on Sustainability

These areas will be studied, as detailed below, and assessed to the level of impact, if any, and what mitigation measures, if any, could be pursued to address and offset said impacts.

The nature of potential impacts in these topic areas is presented below. These issues will be further developed and addressed in the DGEIS. Impacts addressed will include construction and operational impacts. As many of the elements of the Downtown Campus Plan are conceptual and not fully rendered or designed, these resources will be evaluated consistent with the level of information reasonably available regarding these component projects.

#### **a. Impact on Land**

This topic relates to impacts on soils, geology, and topography and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

##### Soils

- Excavation, grading and restoration following demolition
- Excavation and grading for the construction of new buildings
- Landscaping or landscape rehabilitation following project implementation
- Disturbance of contaminated subsurface areas, if any.
- Erosion potential of existing soils
- Loss of topsoil
- Modification or impairment of rainfall infiltration to ground water
- Impacts on stability of existing buildings

##### Geology

- Subsidence effects
- Seismic or vibration risk

##### Topography

- Changes in slope or elevation during or after project implementation
- Increase in runoff potential (changes to land cover)
- Alterations of drainage patterns

#### **b. Impact on Water Resources**

This topic relates to impacts on surface waters or ground water and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

##### Surface Waters

- Affects to flow rate, periodicity or volume
- Affects to water quality

- Modification of the existence, duration or intensity of flooding
- Withdrawal
- Accessibility
- Modification or impairment of use
- Modification of evaporation rate
- New or modified discharges to surface waters
- Affects to water supplies

#### Ground Waters

- Ground water quality
- Withdrawal demand
- Recharge capacity
- Sole source aquifer status
- Proximity to water supply well fields
- Modification or impairment of use
- Modification of hydrologic system
- New or modified discharge to ground waters
- Disturbance or existing contaminated ground waters

#### **c. Impact on Drainage**

This topic relates to impacts on stormwater, erosion, drainage, inundation or flooding and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Changes in slope or elevation during or after project implementation
- Increase in stormwater runoff potential
- Alterations of drainage patterns
- Erosion potential of existing soils
- Loss of topsoil
- Modification or impairment of rainfall infiltration to ground water
- Increase in flooding potential

#### **d. Impact on Air**

This topic relates to impacts on air emissions and air quality and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Emissions and dust from construction vehicles and operations
- Modifications of transportation patterns and other activities as a result of construction activities
- Nature, concentration, mass and frequency of potential stationary source emissions
- Nature, concentration, mass and frequency of potential mobile source emissions
- Air quality modifications
- National Ambient Air Quality Standards
- New York State Ambient Air Quality Standards
- Consistency with New York State SIP

- Nature of sensitive receptors
- Exposure of, and impacts to, sensitive receptors
- Temporary construction/demolition impacts for noise, dust and vibration

#### **e. Impact on Climate Change**

This topic relates to impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Use of construction machinery
- Modifications of transportation patterns and other activities as a result of construction activities
- Modifications in the nature of fossil fuel use
- Modification of the nature of combustion sources
- Increased fossil fuel energy use
- Modification of woodlands
- Modifications of modes, intensity or nature of transportation
- Supply chain issues: use and availability of materials
- Landscaping/greenfields opportunities
- Building design considerations
- Consistency with American College and University President's Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) Guidelines
- Consistency with climate change policies
- Consistency with campus sustainability planning

#### **f. Impact on Plants, Animals and Habitats**

This topic relates to impacts on plants, wildlife and their habitat and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

##### Wildlife

- Temporary or permanent displacement of wildlife
- Temporary or permanent harassment of wildlife
- Interference with migratory patterns
- Interference with wintering, foraging, breeding or nursery habitats
- Habitats of rare, threatened endangered species, or species of special concern
- Introduction of invasive species
- Degradation of amount or quality of habitat
- Fragmentation of habitat
- Modification or loss of habitat

##### Vegetation

- Loss or elimination of woodlands, forest or other habitat
- Introduction of invasive species
- Degradation of amount or quality of habitat

- Fragmentation of habitat
- Habitats of rare, threatened endangered species, or species of special concern Habitats
- Loss or degradation of wetlands
- Loss or disturbance of areas with wetland characteristics
- Damage to New York State-designated Critical Environmental Areas

#### **g. Impact on Aesthetic Resources**

This topic relates to impacts on aesthetic resources, such lighting, visual resources or views and noise, and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

##### Light

- Introduction of new or modified sources
- New lighting patterns
- Daytime or nighttime views
- Surrounding communities

##### Visual

- Impairment by obstruction or physical change to a scenic resource or viewshed
- Damage to scenic resources (historic or unique natural areas or structures)
- Impairment of the enjoyment of visual resources

#### **h. Impact on Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resources**

This topic relates to impacts on cultural, historical and archaeological resources, and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Historical resources (a historic building,, district, site, structure, or object)
- Archaeological sensitive areas and archaeological resources
- Resources listed on New York or federal Registers of Historic Places
- National Historic Landmarks
- Properties of religious or Native American significance
- Resources significant in architecture, engineering or science, or local culture

#### **i. Impact on Open Space and Recreation**

This topic relates to impacts on undeveloped areas and recreational opportunities and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:



- Changes in land use
- Changes to physical elements and layout of a site
- Changes in recreational opportunities
- Large forests, patches of woodland, and farm fields, village greens, public parks, state lands, wetlands, and rivers and river corridors.
- Hunting, fishing, and hiking, as well as, but not limited to hiking, mountain biking, bird watching, photography, and recreational vehicle use.

#### **j. Impact on Transportation, Traffic and Parking**

This topic relates to impacts on transportation, traffic and parking, and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Changes in traffic volume
- Changes in traffic flow patterns
- Modifications in level of service of roads and intersections
- Public transportation options and opportunities
- Safety issues
- Pedestrian opportunities
- Parking
- Temporary construction-related closures and detours for traffic (autos and trucks) and public transit.

#### **k. Impact on Energy**

This topic relates to impacts on sources of energy and energy use, and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Amount of energy used
- Nature of energy source
- Constraints on energy availability

#### **l. Impact on Noise or Odors**

This topic relates to impacts on noise and odors and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

##### Noise

- Changes in mobile source noise
- New stationary source noises
- Changes in stationary source noises

##### Odors

- Construction Vehicles
- Operating conditions related to the proposed land use activity

### **m. Impact on Public Health and Safety**

This topic relates to impacts on community services, and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Fire safety
- Police services
- Medical and healthcare facilities and services
- Emergency services
- Schools
- Community infrastructure

### **n. Impact on Community Character and Land Use**

This topic relates to impacts on the nature and intensity of land uses and consistency with existing plans and policies that may occur as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Consistency with existing land use plans
- Consistency/Incompatibility with community character and public expectations for the site and surrounding area
- Displacement of a land use
- Alteration of a land use
- Impairment or restriction of surrounding land uses
- Modification of land use density
- Socioeconomic impacts, including employment, economics, demographics, housing
- Jurisdictional modifications
- Modifications in development density
- Modifications in intensity of use
- Restrictions on use opportunities or future uses
- Recreational opportunities
- Loss or modification of open space
- Environmental justice – presence of populations of concern
- Construction-related impacts:
  - Demolition and construction will require temporary development of staging areas;
  - Temporary construction-related closures and detours for pedestrians.

### **o. Construction**

This topic relates to temporary impacts during construction and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Temporary changes, conditions and disturbances during construction

#### **p. Sustainability**

This topic relates to impacts on sustainability and involves the following considerations as a result of one or more of the proposed projects in the Downtown Campus Capital Plan:

- Designed in concert with existing environmental and sustainability plans and initiatives
- Working with SUNY Albany's Task Force on Environmental Sustainability, The Office of Environmental Sustainability, Sustainability Coordinators, and the Student Sustainability Council

#### **GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS**

The potential for growth inducing impacts of the Downtown Campus Plan will be described. The growth inducing impacts of a project applies to the extent to which an action may cause a significant increase in the local population and results in further development, the need for additional public services (e.g. fire, police, schools), the development of housing, or the encouragement of secondary or support industries.

#### **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Cumulative impacts are those impacts "...that result from the incremental or increased impacts of an action(s) when the impacts of that action are added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions." (NYSDEC 1992) The Downtown Campus Plan represents a number of projects on the Downtown Campus that may be interrelated or result in cumulative impacts with respect to each other. For this very reason, the Downtown Campus Plan components are being evaluated and addressed collectively in this DGEIS. In addition, there may be other unrelated projects occurring in the vicinity of the Downtown Campus that may result in cumulative projects. Information about potential or existing projects will be obtained from City and County Planning departments and local economic and business groups.

**Draft Table of Contents for  
Downtown Campus Capital Plan  
Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement  
State University of New York at Albany**

**Cover Sheet**

**Table of Contents**

**Executive Summary**

**Chapter 1: Project Overview**

1.1 Project Description

- 1.1.1 Project Purpose (Public Need and Benefit)
- 1.1.2 Background and History
- 1.1.3 Project Location
- 1.1.4 Elements of the Capital Project Plan
- 1.1.5 Construction Activities
- 1.1.6 Operation and Maintenance Requirements
- 1.1.7 Project Schedule (including phasing)
- 1.2 Regulatory Review and Approvals
  - 1.2.1 State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
  - 1.2.2 Permits and Approvals
  - 1.2.3 New York State Executive Orders and Policies

**Chapter 2: Alternatives Considered**

- 2.1 Purpose
- 2.2 No Action Alternative
- 2.3 Alternative Sites
- 2.4 Alternative Magnitude

**Chapter 3: Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation**

3.1 Land (soils, geology, topography)

- 3.1.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.1.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.1.3 Mitigation Measures

3.2 Water Resources (surface waters, ground water)

- 3.2.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.2.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.2.3 Mitigation Measures

- 3.3 Drainage
  - 3.3.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.3.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.3.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.4 Air
  - 3.4.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.4.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.4.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.5 Climate Change
  - 3.5.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.5.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.5.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.6 Plants, Animals and Habitat (wildlife, vegetation, habitats)
  - 3.6.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.6.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.6.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.7 Aesthetic Resources
  - 3.7.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.7.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.7.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.8 Cultural, Historical and Archaeological Resources
  - 3.8.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.8.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.8.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.9 Open Space and Recreation
  - 3.9.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.9.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.9.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.10 Transportation, Traffic and Parking
  - 3.10.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.10.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.10.3 Mitigation Measures
  
- 3.11 Energy
  - 3.11.1 Existing Conditions
  - 3.11.2 Potential Impacts
  - 3.11.3 Mitigation Measures

### 3.12 Noise and Odors

- 3.12.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.12.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.12.3 Mitigation Measures

### 3.13 Public Health and Safety

- 3.13.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.13.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.13.3 Mitigation Measures

### 3.14 Community Character and Land Use

- 3.14.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.14.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.14.3 Mitigation Measures

### 3.15 Construction

- 3.15.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.15.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.15.3 Mitigation Measures

### 3.16 Sustainability

- 3.16.1 Existing Conditions
- 3.16.2 Potential Impacts
- 3.16.3 Mitigation Measures

## **Chapter 4: Unavoidable Adverse Environmental Impacts**

## **Chapter 5: Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources**

## **Chapter 6: Growth Inducing Aspects**

## **Chapter 7: Cumulative Impacts**

## **Chapter 8: Effects on the Use and Conservation of Energy**

## **Chapter 9: SEQRA Thresholds for Further Evaluation**

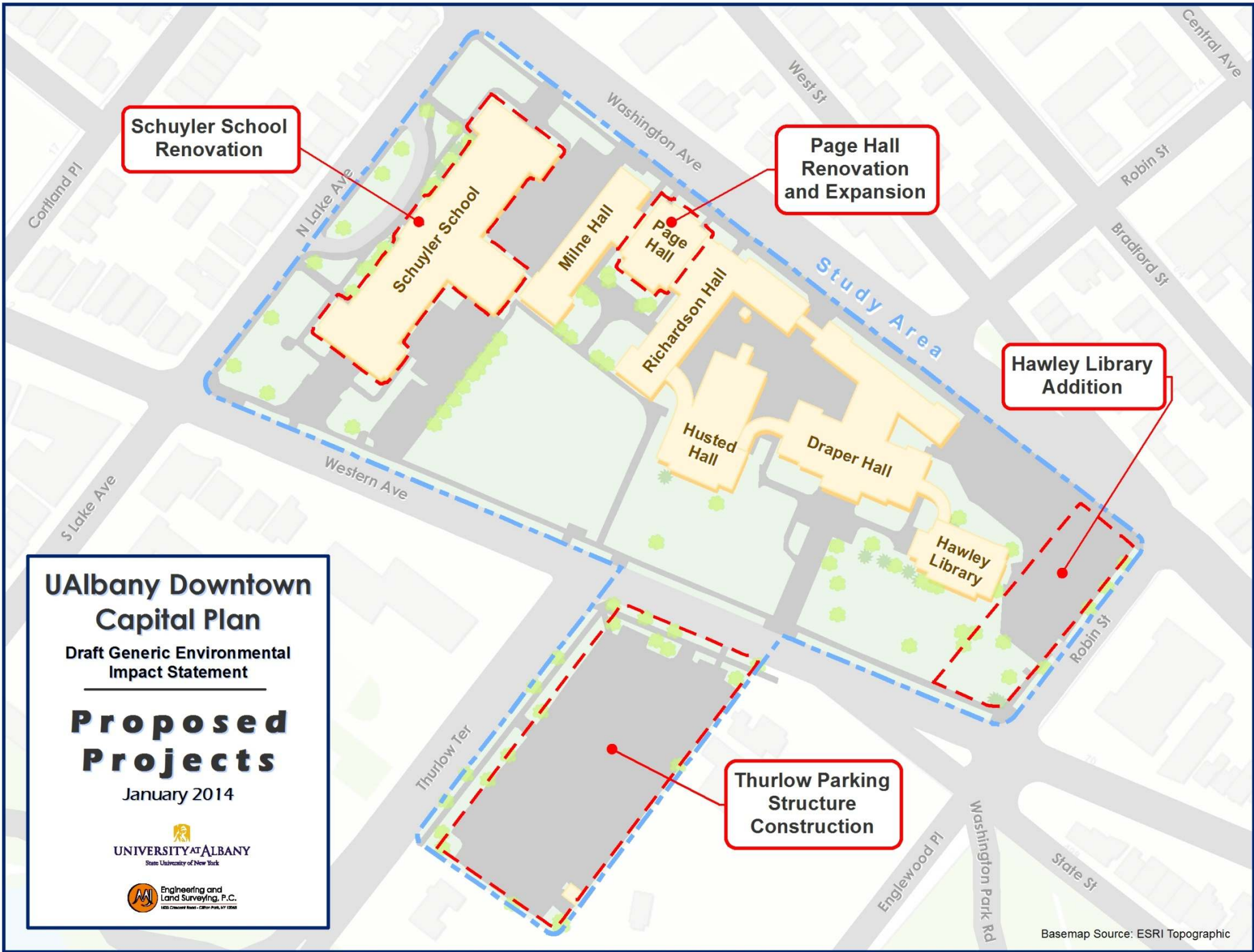
- 9.1 Summary
- 9.2 Key Issues for Future Evaluation
- 9.3 Supplemental Review

## **References**

References cited in the document will be identified by title, source and date.

## **Appendices**

- SEQRA Documents
- Study Area Map



# UAlbany Downtown Capital Plan

Draft Generic Environmental  
Impact Statement

## Proposed Projects

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