

LAND USE PATTERNS

In developing a community profile for Dryden one of the most basic analyses to be undertaken involves the way land in the town is being used. Past patterns of growth, current trends and the variety and extent of development become quickly apparent when the land use survey is made and mapped.

Dryden is the largest town in Tompkins County having an area of 94.9 square miles or 60,736 acres. Cutting east and west through the middle of this expanse is the boundary of two distinct physiographic features: the heavily glaciated Erie-Ontario Plain to the north and the Allegheny Plateau to the south. This physical distinction has had a decided effect on the land use and circulation patterns in the town. In general the relatively flat area north of Route 13 has been more hospitable to road building and extensive and varied development than the more severe terrain to the south.

The town of Dryden can be described as being rural in character with concentrations of development occurring in a few well defined areas. Chief among these are the villages of Dryden and Freeville which account for only 2.75 percent of the total town area but contain 22.5 percent of the total town population.

Building location within the town has been a function of several factors. Two of these are topography and soils which have tended to direct growth along valley floors and have also restricted the intensity of development on the poorly drained and slowly permeable soils in the north-western quadrant. Road systems are also an important determinant of building location. As with all rural areas the development in Dryden is related quite closely to a system of highways and local roads which have been built over an extended period of time. The villages of Dryden

and Freeville developed at the intersection of early "bridle roads" which later became important highways. At present major highways serve as loci for most of the scattered building throughout the town with fairly intensive strip developments fronting on Routes 13, 366 and 79.

Another factor affecting the location and extent of various land uses in the town has been the proximity of employment centers. More residential development is concentrated in the western half of the town, within easy commuting distance from Ithaca and Cornell, than in the eastern half. In terms of commercial or industrial growth, however, this relationship to Ithaca has had a retarding effect. In a history of Dryden written in 1898 George Goodrich observed, "The proximity of Varna to Ithaca has always interfered with its (Varna's) prosperity as a business center..."¹ The cities of Cortland and Ithaca still determine to a considerable degree the land use characteristics in the town of Dryden. These two urban centers limit the amount of local commercial development that can be attracted to, and supported in, Dryden and until the 1960's they largely pre-empted industrial development. On the plus side, however, they have provided major employment opportunities for an increasing number of people who have chosen to live in the easily accessible rural environment of Dryden.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Most of the housing in Dryden is of the single family type. Responses to the Citizen Questionnaire (see Appendix) indicate that 86.8 percent of the residents live in single family homes. Over 88 percent of the respondents said that they owned the house in which they were living. Assuming one acre as an average lot size, single family residential use accounts for 1426 acres or just over 2.4 percent of the total land area in Dryden outside of villages. This includes mobile homes not located in mobile home parks. In addition, in July 1966, there were 28 two-family and

¹Op. cit., p. 131.

18 multi-family structures in the area and many of these were converted single family houses. There are also 13 mobile home parks located throughout the town and this type of shelter is apparently an efficient and practical solution to many of the area's residents. (see also HOUSING).

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Commercial land uses in the planning area are located primarily in the village of Dryden and strung out along Routes 366 and 13. In addition smaller commercial concentrations can be found in Varna and Etna. One tenth of one percent of the land in the town is devoted to commercial purposes while, in the villages of Dryden and Freeville, commercial land occupies 5.2 percent and 2.2 percent respectively of the total area (this includes mixed commercial and residential). With the exception of groceries most of the major shopping activity of town residents occurs in the Ithaca area. The commercial land uses that have developed in the town of Dryden are, therefore, more directly related to local or highway oriented service and to daily need.

The village of Dryden, on the other hand, serves a more concentrated population and provides a more comprehensive commercial center with the usual service and commodity outlets and, in addition, banking facilities and hardware, feed, lumber and machinery supplies to accommodate the area's farm population. The village commercial core is situated on a major highway and is approximately half way between Ithaca and Cortland. It fills an important role in providing a fairly large population with a level of goods and services which falls in between the facilities offered at the larger city centers and the small, local-service grocery, gas station or drive-in. Freeville, however, and the other areas of some residential concentration such as Etna, Varna and Ellis Hollow, do not share the locational or population advantages of Dryden and, therefore, have experienced only minor commercial development.

PUBLIC, SEMI-PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By far the largest land owner in the town of Dryden is Cornell University with holdings of approximately 5,975 acres, or 9.8 percent of the total town area. These holdings are largely concentrated in the western half of the town along the town of Ithaca boundary and represent the effect of a continually expanding and enlarging University operation. In the wooded hill area to the south and east the New York Conservation Department has about 3,765 acres (6.2 percent) in a reforestation program.

About one percent of the land area of the town is occupied by George Junior Republic, located in and east of the village of Freeville, and the Dryden Central High School located north of the village of Dryden. In addition the planning area contains a variety of schools, churches and community centers and public buildings which serve more localized areas and provide visual symbols and a focus for community activity. Most notable of these is the Ellis Hollow Community Center.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Industrial land uses consist largely of public utility installations and easements, gravel and stone quarrying and a scattering of service industries such as welding, garages and equipment repair, printing, warehousing and machine and tool shops. A concentration of industrial activity is developing at the junction of Route 366, east of Varna, and the new limited access highway, Route 13. The New York State Electric and Gas Co. has its main office here and a number of other industrial and commercial uses have also located in this area since the new highway was completed. Industrial development is limited in the town and accounts for less than one-half of one percent of the total land area.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN LAND

Agricultural and open land predominate in Dryden. Farm land and vacant land account for about 58 percent of the total area. To this must be added another 21 percent for land which is wooded (excluding State reforestation areas). Topography and poor soils have had serious limiting effects on agricultural development and much of the land in the southern half of the town, as well as the northwest quadrant, is not well suited to profitable agricultural activity for this reason. Better farm land is situated in the northeastern quadrant and it appears that this area, if any, will continue in the future as viable farm land. Within the villages there are also vast areas of undeveloped land some of which is used for marginal farming. Over 50 percent of the land area of both villages is undeveloped and is agricultural or vacant. In Freeville another 16 percent owned by George Junior Republic is also devoted to agriculture.

The following chart and graphs show how land is used in the town of Dryden and the two villages. Measurements are approximate and are based on the assumption of one acre per parcel for rural residences and smaller land occupancies.