

Winston Farm DGEIS – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated: June 24, 2025

What is the Winston Farm DGEIS Studying?

The Winston Farm Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) looks at how changing the zoning to a Planned Development District (PDD) for the 840-acre property could impact the local environment, economy, and community. Instead of focusing on a specific development proposal, this study helps the Town understand what types of projects could potentially happen on the site and what the impacts could be. It looks at the land, natural resources, traffic, water, wildlife, and more, based on general ideas and scenarios to guide responsible future planning.

Has anything changed since the last submission? Why does this project change matter?

Yes, the biggest change is that there is no longer a specific development being proposed. The DGEIS now focuses just on rezoning the land into a Planned Development District (PDD). This means that development of the site is not currently proposed, but once the Planned Development District zoning is adopted, there will be a process and criteria for the Town Board and Planning Board to follow when reviewing and approving development in the future.

The studies and “alternatives” or scenarios contained in the DGEIS represent hypothetical case studies that the Town can use to determine what the appropriate development of Winston Farm should look like, but they do not represent actual development proposals. These studies will help the Town Board to identify appropriate thresholds for environmental impact, and criteria to define the appropriate future development of Winston Farm when a development proposal is submitted under the PDD regulations.

What are “thresholds” and “criteria”?

For a Generic EIS, a **threshold** identifies at what point a potential impact has been thoroughly studied and effectively mitigated or warrants additional environmental review or supplemental studies. For example, a development proposal that demonstrates fewer vehicular trips than the threshold identified by the Town Board would not require additional environmental review.

Criteria are the requirements identified by the Town Board that would apply for future development within the PDD to ensure that identified impacts are properly mitigated, and that the goals for development are met. For example, a required percentage of open space on the site.

Thresholds and criteria proposed in the DGEIS will be reviewed and vetted by the Town Board as public and agency comments are considered. They will be confirmed and finalized by the Town Board in the Findings Statement. Some criteria may end up in the PDD language, and all future development within the PDD will be compared against the thresholds and criteria identified in the Findings Statement.

What is a Planned Development District?

A PDD is a special zoning tool that allows the Town and future developers to work together on a development plan for Winston Farm that aligns with the Town's and the developers' goals. It encourages flexibility and thoughtful design, rather than following rigid zoning rules. This tool is utilized successfully throughout NYS and across the country to realize a shared vision that might include or emphasize various community planning goals. There are many successful PDDs in the Hudson Valley that include homes, shops, parks, and public spaces, including in Dutchess County with Eastdale Village in Poughkeepsie, Traditions at Red Hook, and Bellefield in Hyde Park. These projects followed a similar process to Winston Farm: SEQR is performed, zoning is drafted, and a plan is put forth, approved, and developed. The Winston Farm PDD would include guidelines and standards for future development, including design, infrastructure, and the approval process.

How Will the Winston Farm PDD Work?

The PDD for Winston Farm will include basic rules/criteria and guidelines to make sure future development is thoughtful, responsible, and aligned with the Town's goals. This would include:

1. **A Big-Picture Master Plan (aka master development plan) standards and criteria:** The Town will review a general plan that shows how the 840 acres could be used over time, such as where homes, shops, parks, and roads might go. This plan must match the environmental studies and goals already laid out. Any future projects must follow this big-picture plan.

2. **Step-by-Step Development standards and criteria:** Development can happen in phases as the market allows. The PDD may outline at what point certain amenities or infrastructure improvements must be developed, and the materials that must be submitted for site-specific development review and approvals.
3. **Procedures for Approval Process:** The PDD will outline who reviews each project, how long reviews take, what standards must be met, and when extra studies or changes might be needed. This helps everyone, from the Town to the community to developers, know what to expect.

How is a PDD different from the current zoning?

The current zoning allows standard housing and commercial development based on fixed rules set forth in the Town's zoning code, which often results in single-use areas with limited flexibility in layout and design of the site. A PDD allows the Town Board flexibility to set custom rules that encourage a creative, well-planned development. It allows the entire site to be planned as a whole, including locations of roads, buildings, sensitive features, and open space. This allows for phased development to occur over a long period of time based on an approved development plan. This approach requires regular check-ins through the review process to help protect natural resources and respond to market conditions that support a stronger local economy.

How are public comments addressed in the FGEIS? When will they be made available?

All comments submitted during the public review period, whether spoken, emailed, or written, will be grouped by topic and answered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS). The full list of comments and responses will be shared publicly once the FGEIS is complete. The Town Board will oversee this process to make sure everything is addressed properly.

What is considered a "substantive" public comment?

A substantive comment is one that speaks to the facts, studies, or findings in the DGEIS. General opinions for or against future development are welcome but are not considered substantive unless they point out specific concerns or questions about the data that has been collected or the process of establishing the PDD.

What are the next steps of this process?

1. **Review of Draft GEIS.** The public comment period has started and affords the public, agencies, and Town consultants the opportunity to review the DGEIS and provide comments and recommendations to the Town Board for their consideration. The public comment period ends on July 28, 2025.
2. **Prepare Final GEIS:** Once the public comment period closes, the project sponsor will prepare a draft of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and submit it to the Town Board. The Town Board will then have up to 45 days to review, revise if needed, and accept the FEIS as complete. Once accepted, the FEIS must be made available for public and agency review for at least 10 days (and up to 30), though no additional public comments will be taken during this time.
3. **Prepare Findings Statement:** Within 30 days of completing the FGEIS, the Town Board will adopt a **Findings Statement** outlining how future development must meet environmental and planning goals.
4. **Adopt PDD Zoning:** The Town Board can then officially adopt the new PDD zoning as outlined in the Town Zoning Law.

Once the PDD is in place, a development team may submit a master plan to begin the development review process pursuant to the PDD regulations and environmental findings.