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**Regional  
Plan  
Association**  
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## **Transit-Centered Development**

The Long Island Mayors and Supervisors'  
Institute on Community Design

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Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent, non-profit regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

The nation's most influential independent regional planning organization since 1922, RPA has a storied history but is more relevant than ever in the 21st Century. RPA's First Plan in 1929 provided the blueprint for the transportation and open space networks that we take for granted today. The Second Plan, completed in 1968, was instrumental in restoring our deteriorated mass transit system, preserving threatened natural resources and revitalizing our urban centers including Stamford, White Plains, Downtown Brooklyn, Newark, and Jersey City. Released in 1996, RPA's Third Regional Plan, "A Region at Risk," warned that new global trends had fundamentally altered New York's national and global position. The plan called for building a seamless 21st century mass transit system, creating a three-million acre Greensward network of protected natural resource systems, maintaining half the region's employment in urban centers, and assisting minority and immigrant communities to fully participate in the economic mainstream. RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing.

The Institute is made possible by a generous grant from the **One Region Funders' Group** at the New York Community Trust, and its member foundations who contributed toward this project: the Fairfield County Community Foundation, Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, Long Island Community Foundation, New York Community Trust, Rauch Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and the Westchester Community

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### Project staff - RPA

**Jeff Ferzoco**, Creative and Technology Director

**Robert Freudenberg**, Senior Planner, Long Island

**Chris Jones**, Vice President for Research

**Tara Klein**, Intern

**Robert Lane**, Director, Regional Design Programs

**Juliette Michaelson**, Senior Planner

**Katie Nosker**, Research Associate

**Robert D. Yaro**, President

**You Zhou**, Intern

**Jeffrey M. Zupan**, Senior Transportation Fellow

### Mayors and Supervisors' Institute Resource Team

**Matthias Altwicker**, Principal, AB Architekten and Associate Professor of Architecture at New York Institute of Technology

**Shuprotim Bhaumik**, Principal, Economics Research Associates

**Lawrence C. Levy**, Executive Director, National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University

**Anton Nelessen**, Principal, A. Nelessen Associates, Inc.

**Signe Nielsen**, Principal, Mathews Nielsen

**Elisa Picca**, Chief Planning Officer, Long Island Rail Road

**Michael White**, Executive Director, Long Island Regional Planning Council

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Modeled on the national Mayors' Institute on City Design, the Long Island Mayors and Supervisors' Institute on Community Design provides a multi-day retreat for a select group of mayors and supervisors and a resource team of design and planning professionals. The elected officials present planning and design issues facing their community, and then participate in a wide-ranging discussion. While addressing the specific concerns raised by the mayors and supervisors, the resource team members also describe in broader terms how they have approached similar problems. Using examples from other communities, the mayors, supervisors, and resource team learn from each other.

The Mayors' and Supervisors' Institute offers public officials the rare opportunity to discuss a specific planning issue with a group of peers and some of the most respected designers and planners in the country. These institutes focus particular attention on the relationship between community planning, design, smart growth, and transportation, and how better design and development can create more livable and sustainable communities. Experts in urban design, architecture, conservation, ecology, real estate development, transportation, and other complementary fields participate in the Institute discussions, providing presentations and analyses of how alternative development patterns impact the future of communities. RPA has conducted over a dozen Mayors' Institutes, including ten in New Jersey, one in Connecticut, one in the greater Northeast region, and now three on Long Island.

The 2008 Long Island Institute was held at Adelphi University in Garden City from June 25th-27th. The five case studies focused particular attention on transit-oriented development (TOD). By creating and improving mixed-use, compact development around the Island's train stations, we can develop more livable, walkable places with access to high quality public transportation that connects residents to the greater region. Each case study engaged the resource team, mayors, and supervisors to think broadly about the future of their communities. In all cases, designing for transit played an essential role in the mayors' and supervisors' visions for their towns.

### 2008 Long Island Mayors and Supervisors' Institute Participants

**Hon. Steve Bellone**, Supervisor, Town of Babylon  
**Hon. Mary W. Bossart**, Mayor, Village of Rockville Centre  
**Hon. Phil Cardinale**, Supervisor, Town of Riverhead  
**Hon. Linda A. Kabot**, Supervisor, Town of Southampton  
**Hon. Jon Kaiman**, Supervisor, Town of North Hempstead  
**Hon. Peter Bee**, Mayor, Garden City (observer)

### Resource Team Presentations

#### Community Design 101

**Matthias Altwicker**, Principal of AB Architekten and Associate Professor of Architecture at New York Institute of Technology, began the Institute with an introduction to community design. Altwicker defined community design as the nexus of urban planning and architecture, declaring its power to translate a community's self-image into reality. As Long Island's population growth continues, he noted that expansion must be accommodated by existing or new infrastructure. By 2030, about half of the buildings in which Americans live, work, and shop will have been built after the year 2000, providing an incredible opportunity to mold communities in a sustainable manner.

Altwicker pointed out how concentrating development (particularly LEED certified development) around public transportation is one way to promote sustainability. Not only does it facilitate walkability, it gives residents more modes of transportation to choose from and provides for a variety of housing and family types while preserving the surrounding landscape in its natural form.





### What is TOD?

**Rob Lane**, Director of Regional Design Programs at RPA, gave an informative description of transit-oriented development (TOD) and demonstrated why it is an important development concept. Lane began by detailing Long Island's development history of sprawl and highlighted areas of opportunity moving forward. First, use what is already there - Long Island was settled around rail infrastructure, so it is important to rediscover the values in which Long Islanders are already invested. Secondly, build healthy communities - Americans are struggling with an obesity problem. It is necessary to build activity into daily life by creating walkable neighborhoods around multiple modes of transportation like trains, bicycles, and buses. Finally, the planet is getting hotter - global warming is very closely linked to vehicle miles traveled and the pollution emitted by cars. While this trend may not be reversible, it can be bent by getting people out of their carbon-emitting personal vehicles and onto more efficient modes of transportation.

Lane described TOD as having three performance measures: 1) it creates a place with an identity by acting as a focal point for civic pride and allows for multiple uses of the train station; 2) it increases transit ridership and decreases automobile dependence by promoting other modes of transit; and 3) it captures growth in a compact, mixed-use environment. Studies show that many people want these TOD communities today, especially in light of high gas prices. Additionally, the plan for East Side Access to Grand Central Station is expected to increase transit ridership for Long Island commuters. While TOD is not a magic solution to every development problem, it is an essential component to improving quality of life.

### Landscape and Sustainability Design

**Signe Nielsen**, Principal of Matthews Nielsen, spoke about the importance of greening land use through sustainable design and indicated that green technologies can be successful on Long Island. The soil on Long Island makes it possible to utilize bioretention basins, whereby water can be cleansed naturally by vegetation before entering the Island's aquifers. It is similarly important to consider how the materials used on paved

surfaces can have an impact. Where possible, Nielsen recommended the importance of minimizing impervious, asphalt pavement. Low-volume roads and parking lots make it possible to use pervious pavement - such as decomposed granite - which allows water to run off in a natural way. Municipalities should aim to narrow roads and add bike lanes where possible. Nielsen warned that Americans must also change their mindset on lawns due to the excessive water and fertilizer use that comes with them; instead, they should aim to use vegetation that requires less water.

There are countless examples of successful changes that can be made to increase sustainability: add vegetation to parking lots to maximize pavement shading; green parking garages by keeping them open to natural ventilation; incorporate vegetation into existing railway walls and embankments; reuse Brownfields; encourage habitat preservation by connecting patches of green for easy animal mobility; and green our town codes (following New York City's lead on outlawing building with non-native wood). Nielsen's presentation provided the mayors and supervisors with useful new tools to bring back to their communities.

### Economic Development and TOD

**Shuprotim Bhaumik**, Principal of Economics Research Associates, focuses his work on urban real estate and the pre-development process. He began his talk by explaining that TOD is a transit-driven process that encourages mixed uses, pedestrian orientation, relaxed parking requirements, and population density. Contrary to popular conception, Long Island actually grew up around its train stations and has a rich history steeped in transit-oriented development. In recent years, Long Island has deviated from this history, in favor of lower density suburban developments. However, many recent trends make this sort of development less economically viable. For instance, Bhaumik pointed out that rising fuel prices are having a tremendous impact on people's behavior. In the first three months of 2008, there was a 3.3% increase in people using public transit and a 2.5-3% decrease in automobile use. Other demographic trends show that the population is shifting on Long Island. Many people in the 25-44 age range are leaving



to find more affordable, middle-income, or rental housing, which is not readily available on the Island. From 1997 to 2006, Nassau County's median home prices increased 250% while incomes stagnated.

In order for Long Island to be economically competitive in the New York Metropolitan Region, Bhaumik contended that the Island will have to rediscover its transit-oriented roots, and focus its economic development in communities with multiple modes of transportation. Bhaumik encouraged mayors and supervisors not to be passive in this process; a community can offer various incentives, including site assemblage, tax increment funding (TIF) programs, subsidized housing units, streamlined review, and property tax abatement. Other preferred developer benefits a community can offer include supportive land use designation, tax incentives, public sector participation, aid in remediating Brownfield issues, and reduced parking requirements. With these tools, Bhaumik demonstrated that there are numerous options for mayors and supervisors to tackle TOD in their own communities.

### Keynote Address: Designing for Transit

**Anton "Tony" Nelessen**, Principal at A. Nelessen Associates, Inc. and professor at Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, began his talk by asserting that - in the history of planning - now is the best time to plan. America's fundamental assumptions, environment, and economy are in a state of flux. The world is dealing with increased inflation, a stock market drop, high oil prices and energy costs, climate change, demographic changes, unsustainable auto-dependency, and overly congested traffic patterns. According to Nelessen, "we have produced the most ineffective, unsustainable land use pattern in the history of the planet." However, this presents an opportunity to critically examine the current ways of life and take a fresh look at where and how to grow for the future.

America's changing demographics and economy will provide a particularly strong impetus for change. For instance, the American tendency to develop large, single family homes may fade away as more baby boomers become empty nesters and prefer to downsize from

their 4-bedroom home in the suburbs to a one-bedroom condo in a walkable neighborhood. Their twenty-something children, too, are more likely to prefer a less-expensive apartment with transit opportunities than a more-expensive house far away from cultural opportunities. In fact, less than a quarter of the population currently consists of two-parent households with children. Given this extraordinary statistic, the housing market will need to adjust to the changing face of American families.

With the rising gas prices, falling stock market, rising food prices, and the deepening mortgage crisis, there will be even more support for dense housing surrounding transit hubs. People will no longer be able to afford the time and money it takes to live in remote suburbs. This move to cities is just what is needed to be competitive in the increasingly globalized economy. To further increase America's competitive edge, it is absolutely necessary to invest in green technology and infrastructure. It will not be sufficient to simply re-invest in cities, however; it is also necessary to aggressively retrofit the suburbs to become more sustainable. The good news is that the technology needed for such improvements exists already.



# The Promise of Long Island Downtowns

*Adapted from research conducted for the Rauch Foundation 2008 LI Index - <http://longislandindex.org>*

Long Island's downtowns hold great potential to serve as the centers of growth and affordability across the Island. Not only is there the most capacity to add new housing stock in downtowns, many of the Island's downtowns already serve as dense centers of economic activity, culture and access to transportation. Such characteristics create a rare opportunity to develop livable, affordable places that are attractive to diverse populations of young and old, different races and varied income levels.

## **SOLUTION TO A HOUSING CRISIS**

Over the last few decades, Long Island has been facing a growing crisis: a shortage of affordable housing for all Long Islanders. In its wake, the Island has suffered losses including the "brain drain" of young people leaving for better jobs and cheaper housing, the migration of empty nesters to more dense, suburban, downtowns that meet their needs, across the country, and an overall inequitable housing environment for Long Island's residents.

Increasing the supply of housing at all price levels requires changes in a range of policies, from state housing subsidies to local zoning. However, the notion that Long Island is "built-out" and has no room for growth is not true if we look to already developed places that have the capacity to add new housing. There are dozens of places where this is possible:

- There are 99 Long Island Rail Road stations, many surrounded by surface parking lots and underutilized property that could be the location of "transit villages."
- Aging commercial strips and shopping malls offer other possibilities for redevelopment as new homes, retail stores, offices or a mix of those.
- There are a few large development projects, such as proposals for the area known as the Nassau Hub surrounding the Coliseum and Roosevelt and Mitchell Fields and Suffolk's redesign for the old Pilgrim State site.

One of the greatest opportunities to build significant

new mixed-income housing is represented by more than 100 downtowns in Nassau and Suffolk. Some village centers are already vibrant places that may have limited room for new development. Many, however, have opportunities for infill and redevelopment that could increase their attractiveness as places to work, shop and play while accommodating multi-family housing. Across the Island, a handful of towns and villages are already finding ways to build new housing that is both affordable and attractive to young singles and families, moderate income workers such as teachers, technicians or nurses, and retirees looking to leave their empty nest but stay close to family and friends. Several others are exploring new futures through redevelopment plans and community vision projects.

In addition to providing places where housing can be expanded, better utilizing our downtowns makes sense for a number of reasons:

- Downtown apartments are typically less expensive than single-family houses and are within the reach of a wider range of buyers or renters.
- Downtowns offer a lifestyle that is preferable for a large portion of the population, from young adults to retiring baby boomers.
- By encouraging transit use and shorter trips to work and shop, they reduce pressure on the road system.
- Apartments cost less in infrastructure (water/sewer lines, road maintenance, etc.) than single family houses.

## **A QUESTION OF CAPACITY**

How much capacity do Long Island's downtowns have for additional housing? A definitive estimate of how much new housing can be accommodated in Long Island's downtowns would require a village-by-village analysis of infrastructure capacity and potential development and redevelopment sites. Even this analysis would really be secondary to the question of community consensus and political will. In theory, there is an almost unlimited capacity to "build up" if the regulato-



ry environment allows it and sufficient investments are made in transportation, sewers and other infrastructure. In reality, there is a limit to how much density can be added to these downtowns without changing their fundamental suburban character. However, many downtowns could substantially increase residential development in a variety of ways without crossing the line from “suburban” to “urban.” In small and mid-sized places, second-floor apartments, infill townhouses and station-area developments could substantially increase housing options without significantly adding to height or changing the small town feel. In fact, they could enhance the sense of place with a real Main Street and neighborhood centers. Many larger places have significant capacity for apartment or condominium buildings in areas that are either already relatively dense, or that have large numbers of underdeveloped parcels in the center of town.

### **IS LONG ISLAND READY?**

But are Long Island residents ready to embrace downtown living? Long Islanders historically have had reser-

vations about density and height. In fact, many residents moved to the Island to escape the confines of an overly dense and tall New York City. And according to previous surveys for the Long Island Index, most enjoy the suburban lifestyle that predominates in Nassau and Suffolk. However, the 2008 Long Island Index survey indicates that a substantial number would consider moving to more centrally located neighborhoods under the right circumstances. Four in ten of those surveyed said that they could imagine themselves living in an apartment, condo or townhouse in a local downtown, a much higher percentage than the number of Nassau and Suffolk residents currently living downtown. Nearly half of all young adults interviewed could see themselves living in a local downtown. Low- and middle-income residents were equally likely to imagine themselves living downtown. Younger residents were more likely to say that they could see themselves living in an apartment or townhouse in a village or town center. So, as both the capacity and demand for downtown living comes into focus, what is finally needed is the will to proceed.



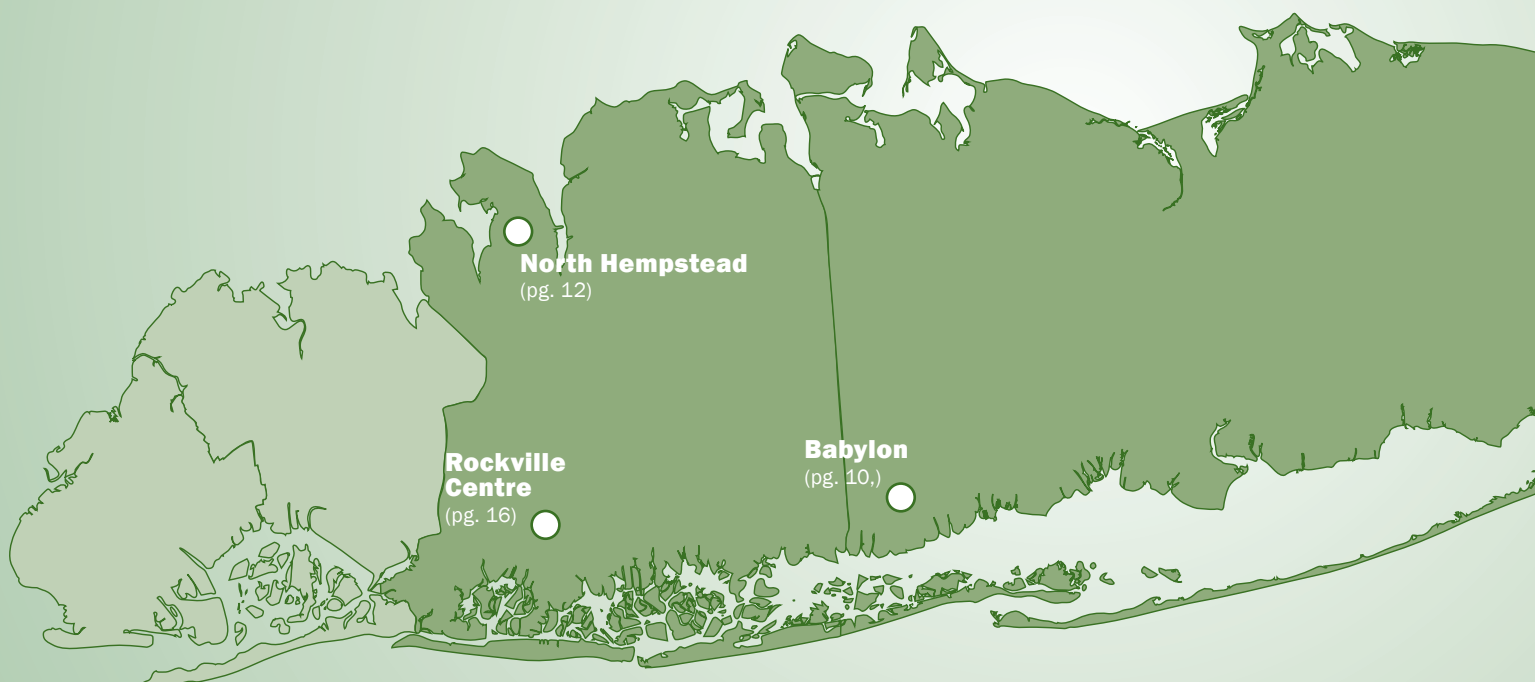
**Babylon: Copiague** As a well-established, residential commuter community, Copiague's declining industrial core represents promising opportunity for transit-centered development. Residents have already shown acceptance of such development and the addition of retail and dense residential units could help to better define the community's downtown. The three development sites around the rail station should be studied for the best uses that will preserve the community's residential spirit, while creating a more walkable, usable downtown that is connected to the amenities surrounding it.



**North Hempstead: Port Washington** Once a rural community, Port Washington is now a major commuter mecca, with the community's train station attracting commuters from many neighboring towns. Port Washington's challenge is to leverage this demand to help its downtown thrive while also generating some innovative parking and transit solutions.

## CASE STUDIES

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS





**Riverhead: Downtown Riverhead** Redevelopment opportunities currently underway in the heart of the downtown will usher in a revitalized center for Riverhead. Development near the train station should take into account connections to the downtown and waterfront while ensuring smooth circulation through the area. Parking demand is very high in this area and creative solutions may have to be employed to meet it.



**Rockville Centre** Already a transit-centered, “cool” downtown, the Village of Rockville Centre seeks to accommodate shoppers, commuters, residents and employees with adequate parking to support its many amenities. As new development occurs in the downtown, finding ways to improve circulation while creating a more walkable, interconnected community with access to natural resources is a priority for the Village.



**Southampton: Speonk** As a central commuter rail station, Speonk serves the working class community that lives around it. With a mix of uses including industrial and agricultural, and tracts of developable land, Speonk has opportunities to find a balance between each and develop the area as a residential community with a transit-hub and an economic center for light industry in the Town.



# Babylon: Copiague

Supervisor Steve Bellone  
Suffolk County

**Square Miles** 3.7  
**Population** 21,922



## KEY ISSUES

Explore redevelopment and infill opportunities for the available vacant sites

Facilitate greater connections between the downtown and nearby amenities

Create a more walkable community with less traffic congestion on Great Neck Road

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

As a well-established, residential commuter community, Copiague's declining industrial core represents promising opportunity for transit-centered development. Residents have already shown acceptance of such development and the addition of retail and dense residential units could help to better define the community's downtown. The three development sites around the rail station should be studied for the best uses that will preserve the community's residential spirit, while creating a more walkable, usable downtown that is connected to the amenities surrounding it.

## BACKGROUND

Copiague is an unincorporated hamlet in the Town of Babylon, located on the Babylon line of the Long Island Rail Road. The station is at the cross streets of Marconi Boulevard and Great Neck Road, the latter of which serves as the hamlet's main street, running north-south. The elevated station features prominently in the downtown area and was recently renovated. It connects to several Suffolk County Transit Bus lines. The station is at a central point in the hamlet, with retail, housing, offices, and some mixed use buildings surrounding it. Near the station is a small public plaza, and on either side of the tracks is a strip of declining and vacant industrial buildings.

While Copiague has the spine of a TOD development, the downtown is underutilized. Many recent revitalization efforts have occurred—including façade improvements to the station, streetscape beautification projects to increase walkability, expansion of Gateway Park along the hamlet's northern border, two new mixed-use buildings, and an upcoming visioning process planned—but there is still a stigma against Copiague that the town wants to see disappear. While there is not much vacant land in this area, there is a great deal of redevelopment opportunity.

Copiague's vision is to create a walkable, pedestrian-friendly community with a vibrant downtown. A place where people passing through - perhaps on the way to the popular Tanner Park to the south - take notice of the vibrancy and attractive downtown features.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The completion of the MTA's East Side Access project will increase the amount of service to New York City and shave valuable minutes off of commute times, leaving Copiague as a prime location for TOD to take advantage of this shifting commutershed.

### Making a true Main Street

Great Neck Road has tremendous potential to become a thriving, pedestrian-oriented Main Street. The area of opportunity for Great Neck Road in Copiague stretches from Gateway Park at the north end, to the local public school at the south end. Efforts could be made to further expand Gateway Park and have it truly live up to its name. Beautification efforts - already begun along this stretch - should

be continued, as should efforts to make the street and sidewalks more green and pedestrian-friendly. Bike lanes that lead to Tanner Park at the waterfront should be considered, and could maximize the park's potential as an economic development tool for the new downtown.

The small public plaza near the station could be expanded further as a destination for those utilizing "Main Street" Copiague. The space can be used to help integrate the station as the center of Copiague and should reflect the hamlet's character.

Following the example of the two new mixed-use buildings recently built on the corner of Great Neck Road and Oak Street, further efforts should be made to redevelop the spaces along the Great Neck Road into a mixed-use "Main Street". Infill development - at places such as the currently underutilized surface lot off of Oak Street - could usher in a number of vibrant, mixed uses and tiered parking opportunities. These spaces offer great opportunity to increase density at the heart of the downtown. Making these areas walkable and with commercial storefronts, will help Copiague to become a vibrant example of transit-centered development in the region.

### Developing the rail corridor

The resource team saw great potential for development opportunities along Copiague's rail corridor. Recommendations centered on infill opportunities at industrial lots and underutilized spaces immediately to the north and south of the tracks. Buffered by vegetation, new rows of townhouses could create a residential edge in close proximity to the rail station. The abundance of empty space directly under the elevated tracks could serve as shared parking for residents, commuters and visitors to the downtown.

While new developments occur, commuter parking could be shifted to underused lots - including one on the east side of Copiague. Changing the walking patterns of commuters to go through the downtown would bring more people in contact with local retailers and could help spur the local economy.

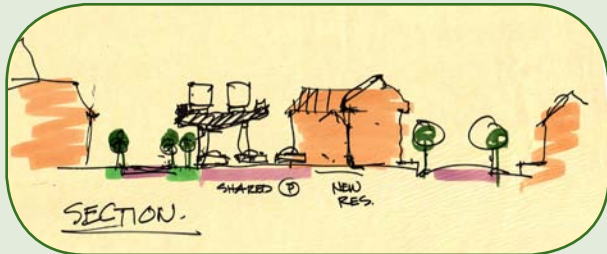
### A new street grid pattern

The community should also consider creating new streets in a grid pattern west of Great Neck Road and on either side of the rail track structure and through the new residential area described above. With smaller blocks and through-streets, the scale becomes more pedestrianized and people become more willing to walk. This will also ease traffic on Great Neck Road, as there is not currently an alternative north-south through-street. Further infill development at the edges of this new gridded area could extend the new residential area of Copiague. One particular use for the area could be that of live-work studios that support the industrial park to the northwest.





## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



Utilize the industrial lots and empty spaces along the rail corridor to create a new residential area with shared parking for residents and commuters (section above).

Create a street and block grid pattern to establish a new residential area with access smooth circulation.

Develop live-work studios that support the industrial park to the north.

Create a true downtown gateway at the existing community park.



Structured parking, wrapped with mixed uses.

Create a true "Main Street" along Great Neck Rd. through infill development with mixed-uses like those developed on the corner of Oak St.



# North Hempstead: Port Washington

Supervisor Jon Kaiman  
Nassau County

**Square Miles** 11 (4.7 unincorporated)  
**Population** 28,545



## KEY ISSUES

Identify opportunities to accommodate parking for residents, commuters and employees

Determine methods to reduce congestion in the downtown

Identify future development opportunities that can be phased in over time

Facilitate connections between the central downtown and the civic waterfront spaces

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Once known for sand-mining, Port Washington is now a major commuter mecca, with the community's train station attracting commuters from many neighboring towns. Port Washington's challenge is to leverage this demand to help its downtown thrive while also generating some innovative parking and transit solutions.

## BACKGROUND

As an unincorporated hamlet in the town of North Hempstead, Port Washington is a spirited, progressive, and affluent community with an active but struggling downtown. One of the hamlet's most important identifiers is the peninsula. While this gives the downtown access to two distinct waterfronts, geography and current infrastructure serve as obstacles for true connections to these civic spaces. Further, being located on a peninsula nourishes a "cul-de-sac mentality" that dissuades Port Washington's downtown from attracting visitors. There are very few people just passing through, which keeps the local economy from flourishing. To help these businesses, the Town has established a Business Improvement District for the two streets that comprise the downtown's retail center -Port Washington Boulevard and Main Street - as well as on Shore Road.

The Port Washington station is the last stop on the Port Washington branch of the LIRR, and is located on Main Street between Haven Avenue and South Bayles Avenue. The station connects with one MTA Long Island bus line, the N23. It is a large and important station for the LIRR. With only a 35 minute ride to Manhattan, about one-fourth of residents take the train to work each day. The station also attracts residents from nearby communities on the Oyster Bay branch, which is a slower, less reliable, and more expensive branch. In this sense, the popularity of the station is actually a disservice to the town, as outside residents will park their cars in the hamlet during the day but never patronize the local businesses. The downtown's vibrancy is hampered by congestion and high demand for limited parking. All seven of the hamlet's municipal lots are filled with commuters by 6am each day, which poses a problem for local residents and merchants. Demand is so high that some commuters have resorted to paying local homeowners to park in their driveways. Another limitation that must be considered is the community's desire to limit dense development to maintain the perceived "rural" character.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

With a major commuter station in the center of downtown, Port Washington faces some challenges - particularly in terms of parking and congestion. By taking steps to accommodate parking and ensure greater circulation while slowly embracing density, Port Washington could be a destination downtown that achieves its great potential.

## Density

The town would like to accommodate more uses around the train station. In order to achieve this, they will have to consider the realities of parking limitations, congestion, and the community's reluctance to add density. The resource team suggested taking small steps to build up the shops on Main Street to 2-3 stories with housing above. By building densely around the train station and enhancing walkability, more commuters using the train will become less reliant on cars. Small increases in density in the downtown will also provide an economic boost to local retailers.

## Parking Management

To help mitigate parking challenges, the town should follow through on its plans to construct a multi-tiered parking garage on the current surface lot adjacent to the station. The possibility exists to work with the MTA to construct tiered parking on its lot on the other side of the tracks. The resource team even suggested that the two structures could be linked by developing the space between them, over the tracks. To minimize site impacts and to create an extension of the retail center downtown, any tiered structure should be wrapped with mixed-uses, and could be topped with a green roof.

In the long term, it was suggested that the town find locations outside of the downtown to accommodate parking in less congested places. The town should seek opportunities to implement a parking gradient, charging higher fees in the center of town and lower ones at outlying lots (And discounted rates for residents at all lots). Such an opportunity already exists at the 3,000-spot surface lot at the Town Beach 1.5 miles to the east. The lot - which is primarily used on summer weekends - sits empty most other times. Commuters could park here for a low fee, then take a shuttle or trolley to the station. Shared parking will be another important component in this solution. The more businesses can coordinate to maximize parking efficiency, the fewer spaces the community as a whole will need, and the ideals of TOD can be achieved.

## Alternative modes of transport

Port Washington should also consider alternative, integrated transit options to reduce congestion and automobile use within the downtown. Specifically, this could include a creating a transit district to reduce car use, a loop bus/shuttle service or Main Street trolley, on-demand taxi service, time-limited parking, changes to zoning to reduce parking requirements, and a car sharing program for short period rentals. Revenue raised through parking and transit programs could be put into a fund to improve streetscape. The loop bus/shuttle could also be used to connect the downtown to both of its adjacent, but underused waterfront civic spaces.

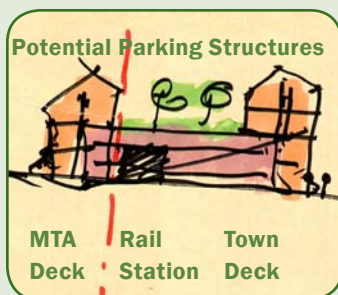
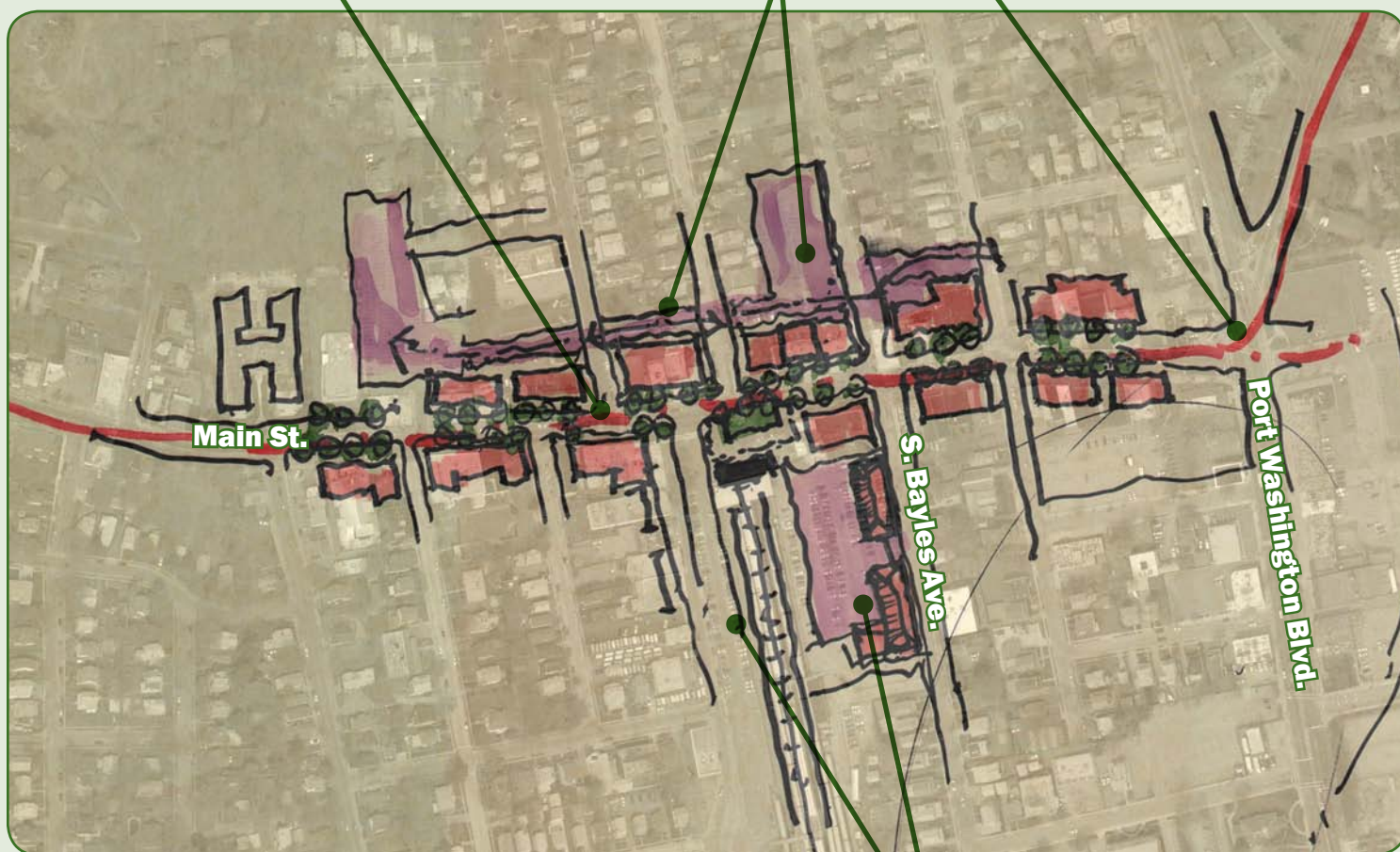


## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Slowly build up density along Main St. with 2-3 stories of mixed uses.

Explore options for shared parking throughout the town.

Connect the train station to outlying parking lots - and the downtown to the waterfront - via trolley, shuttle bus or on-demand taxi service.



Build structured parking adjacent to the train station at Town lot. Consider building and connecting to structured parking at MTA lot. Wrap the garage with mixed uses to extend the downtown businesses district (detail at left).



# Riverhead: Downtown Riverhead

Supervisor Phil Cardinale  
Suffolk County

**Square Miles** 15.09  
**Population** 10,681



## KEY ISSUES

Determine best use of development sites around the rail station

Foster connections between the newly emerging transit center and the existing downtown and river waterfront

Ensure adequate parking for the large workforce of the Court complex

Revitalize the businesses along Main Street

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Redevelopment opportunities currently underway in the heart of the downtown will usher in a revitalized center for Riverhead. At the same time, available development sites around the Town's rail station offers the prospect of creating a mixed-use, transit-centered addition to the downtown. Any development should take into account connections to the downtown and waterfront while ensuring smooth circulation through the area. Parking demand is very high in this area and creative solutions may have to be employed to fulfill them.

## BACKGROUND

As an early farming community, Riverhead became known for its mills and courthouse. Today, Riverhead acts as the County Seat for Suffolk County. With 19 court buildings and more to be built soon, the Town serves a unique and important function on Long Island.

Most travelers know "Riverhead" only by name as the eastern terminus of the Long Island Expressway. The Town is home to several important tourist attractions and cultural centers, including a water park, aquarium, outlet mall and regional shopping center, arts facility and the Suffolk County Culinary Arts Center.

Riverhead rail station lies along the Greenport Branch of the LIRR. Due to the long travel time and perceived lack of demand, service to Riverhead is extremely limited. Suffolk County Transit operates five popular bus routes within Riverhead, all of which stop at the station. A popular, alternative transit option is the Hampton Jitney. With nearly hourly service, this motor coach service transports commuters from the Hamptons to Manhattan, with a stop at the Riverhead rail station.

The station itself is surrounded by a number of large surface lots - many of which serve the court complex and are largely empty unless court is in session. One lot, that serves the rail station, was recently renovated but is also being considered for a large, mixed-use project that would bring new uses to this area. Any development that proceeds must ensure adequate parking for the current and new court buildings. While downtown Riverhead is uniquely situated on an attractive waterfront and has a relatively dense Main Street, the high vacancy rate of its shops diminishes its vibrancy. Adding to Main Street's troubles is the nearby Route 58 bypass road. Its big-box stores have pulled shoppers away from Main Street.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

As the gateway to both the Hamptons and Long Island's North Fork wine country, Riverhead is a downtown with tremendous potential to revive its Main Street and establish a new transit-centered, mixed-use neighborhood.

### Strengthening the downtown transit hub

With a number of transportation routes - including bus and rail - passing through, the Riverhead rail station is

already a center of transit and an asset to the community. But limited LIRR service - or limited demand - prevents this station from reaching its true potential. While it is difficult to increase service without immediate demand, gas prices and the MTA's East Side Access project could soon increase demand. It was recommended that Riverhead develop its downtown under the assumption that more trains will come. Development around the rail station will only support the popular County and private bus services while laying the groundwork for increased rail service that could create a multi-modal transit hub. The Town should seek opportunities to convert some of the large surface lots surrounding the station into tiered parking to serve the County Court Complex as well as any transit hub that emerges while freeing up space for residential or mixed-use development.

### Infill development around the rail station

The Resource Team identified a number infill development opportunity within 1/2 mile of the rail station. One of the most important sites - the 4 acres encompassing the rail station's parking lot - is currently slated for redevelopment as "Vintage Square." The resource team recommended changes to Vintage Square's proposed plans for a 5-story, 630-square foot mixed-use development to adopt more TOD principles. Many of the 850 parking spaces planned for this site should be eliminated while a greater emphasis should be placed on higher density, workforce housing and retail and other mixed-uses appropriate to the scale of the community. Furthermore, it was suggested that the developer's plans to remove a street that passes through the site - Cedar Street - would only exacerbate the hamlet's traffic circulation problems while limiting accessibility to the site and decreasing walkability.

### Connectivity through pedestrianization

As a new center of residential and retail activity emerges around the rail station and redevelopment opportunities are realized along Main Street and at the waterfront, the Town should focus on the connectivity of these sectors. A pedestrian loop that passes through the downtown's major amenities should be developed. The path could pass through green spaces throughout the town and along the riverfront, past main street's retail shops and tourist attractions, through the library and Court Complex and end at the new transit district at the rail station. It could be made apparent - and encourage walkability - with wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-friendly street crossings and bike lanes, drawing users along the route.

### Restoring vibrancy

The Resource Team had a number of recommendations for revitalizing Riverhead's struggling stores downtown. The Town should increase the density of the buildings along Main Street - preserving the historic integrity of the buildings where possible - and should utilize the cur-





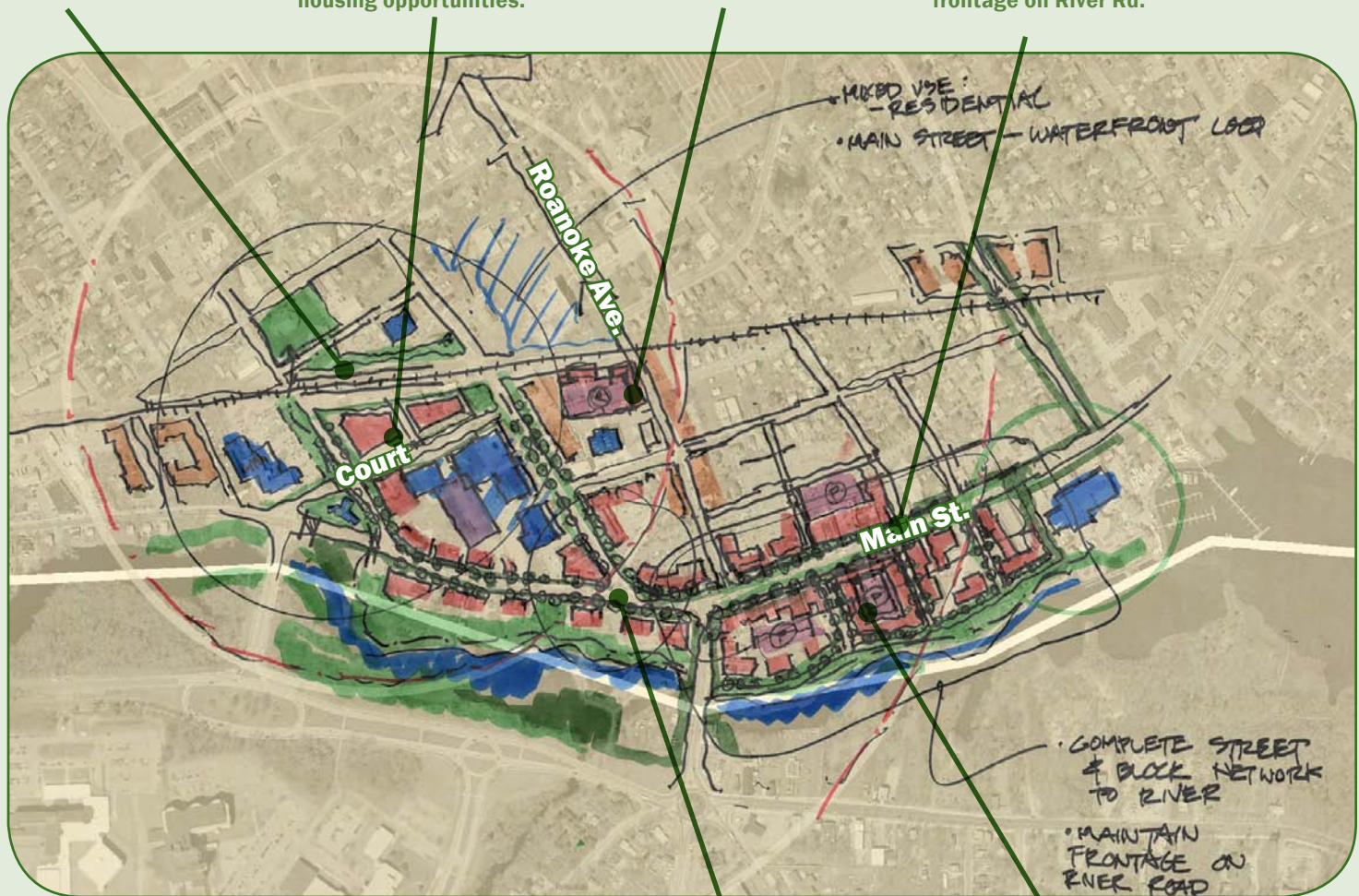
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a multi-modal transit hub centered at the rail station

Transit-centered development with appropriate mixed uses and affordable housing opportunities.

Build structured parking to accommodate Court Complex users

Establish a complete street and block network to the riverfront, maintaining the frontage on River Rd.



rent parking lots along the river's edge to accommodate residential and mixed uses. Facing the river, these buildings could help boost real estate values. Attracting specialty retail to Main Street could create a niche market that would not directly compete with the Route 58 big-box stores. The downtown district would benefit by establishing a complete street-and-block network that extends to the waterfront - increasing pedestrian access and breaking up the large block that currently exists there. Finally, the resource team agreed that in the future, as demand grows, the Town should build up to 5 or 6 stories -developing green buildings in a "U" shape that wrap around tiered parking.

Create a walkable, pedestrian loop that passes through the train station and court complex, along Main Street and connects to the tourist attractions and green amenities along the waterfront.

Increase density along Main Street, infilling existing parking lots and building up to 5 or 6 stories with residential and mixed uses.

# Rockville Centre

Mayor Mary W. Bossart  
Nassau County

**Square Miles** 3.28  
**Population** 24,573



## KEY ISSUES

Devise innovative parking solutions

Find ways to incorporate new residential development into the community

Identify opportunities to incorporate pedestrian-friendly elements that serve to connect the large and spread out downtown

Develop connections between the downtown and its natural resources

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Already a transit-centered, “cool” downtown, the Village of Rockville Centre seeks to accommodate shoppers, commuters, residents and employees with adequate parking to support its many amenities. As new development occurs in the downtown, finding ways to improve circulation while creating an even more walkable, interconnected community with access to natural resources is a priority for Village officials.

## BACKGROUND

Rockville Centre is an incorporated Village in the Town of Hempstead with a vibrant, dense network of retail shops and businesses. It is family-oriented and was recently identified by Nassau County as one of Long Island’s “cool downtowns.” The Rockville Centre LIRR station arrived in 1867, and has been essential to development in the village. Trains run about every 30 minutes with about a 45 minute ride to Penn Station. There are also connections to four Long Island bus lines.

Even with these strong characteristics, Rockville Centre envisions opportunities for a number of improvements. Physically, the downtown is segmented by two major roadways - Sunrise Highway and Merrick Road - as well as by the rail tracks, which serve as barriers to connectivity. The success of downtown retail is hampered by the lack of walkability and by a shortage of available parking. With a popular rail station and a well-known shopping district, commuters, shoppers, employees and residents alike compete for valuable parking spaces, even with 30 Village parking fields. One field, located just over 1/2 mile from the rail station along Sunrise Highway, accommodates approximately 300 spaces, yet sits mostly vacant, due to in part to its perceived distance from the station.

The Village is fortunate to have within its borders natural resources - both known and relatively unknown. South of Merrick Road the Mill River serves as the setting for two parks, Lister Park and Bligh Field. Directly to the north, and within 1/2 mile of the rail station and retail center, the picturesque Smith Pond sits virtually undiscovered. Once again, the roadways and rail tracks sever any potential connection between these resources. Directly to the east of Smith Pond, an abandoned industrial site awaits a planned 349-unit, multi-story luxury apartment complex that will overlook this little-known pond. Access to and from this future development site needs to be thought through, as it is limited by the Nassau County Bus depot to its south.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Already a transit-centered community, Rockville Centre can take advantage of a number of opportunities to create pedestrian-friendly connections and balance parking demand, while encouraging appropriate use of its natural resources.

## Walkability

One of the greatest opportunities the Resource Team identified was for increased walkability throughout the Village. With retail uses spread across a relatively large area, the segmentation created by roadways and the limited treatments in the pedestrian realm encourages auto use and places a higher demand on parking. Steps should be taken to create a walking experience for pedestrians as they utilize the downtown. Wider sidewalks, pedestrian plazas, more street trees and safe intersections are just a few ways to increase foot traffic. These treatments should be laid out along the streets that pass through retail areas and parking fields and should lead to the rail station. More pedestrian traffic leads to increased business at retail shops and heightens an awareness of pedestrians by drivers, resulting in greater safety. The Resource Team also suggested that higher densities and tiered parking in the downtown - if embraced by the community - could further enhance walkability.

## From Highway to Boulevard

Greater walkability can also be developed through changes to the street itself. With two major roads passing through (and partly comprising) the retail district of the downtown area, the Resource Team recommended turning the high-speed Sunrise Highway into a boulevard as it passes through downtown. A concrete median already exists that could be planted with vegetation, and bike lanes could be added to the road. Even roundabouts could be considered at key points. Slowing traffic on this road - and Merrick Road - would increase safety at intersections and help invite autos passing through to stop and support the Village’s retail businesses. Because Sunrise Highway and Merrick Road run through a number of downtowns - from Lynbrook to Freeport - opportunities exist for collaborations between the municipalities to work with NYS DOT and the County to make the boulevard a reality.

## Parking solutions

The Resource Team had a number of recommendations to address the Village’s high parking demand. With an underutilized, 300-space parking field within walking distance of the rail station, the Team focused on ways to remove the psychological barriers that keep commuters from parking in this field. The distance to the station is walkable, but the commercial strip that serves as the route adds to the perception that the field is far away. Landscaping the route between the field and the station would facilitate walking as would encouraging appropriate retail - like delis and coffee shops - to locate along the route. The “green” of the nearby little league field could be extended and serve as an oasis along the route. Other parking solutions could include differentiated parking prices with free or inexpensive outer lots and more expensive interior lots. Focusing commuter parking to the edge of downtown opens up greater opportunities for shoppers and employees in the heart of downtown.





## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage walkability throughout downtown by widening sidewalks, planting more street trees and creating thru-links.

Open up access to the underutilized Smith Pond.

Connect the community's green spaces with pedestrian links to create a Village Greenway.



### Utilizing downtown's natural resources

The Village has an excellent opportunity to open up appropriate access to Smith Pond. The natural resource is within 1/2 mile of the heart of downtown and developing environmentally-sensitive trails around the pond could create a true community asset. Further, pedestrian links across the road and rail network south of the Pond - to the existing parks - would create a connected Village Greenway. Any action taken to open access to the pond should be taken before development of the nearby luxury apartment buildings. This will ensure public access and possibly create a gateway entrance.

Create a pedestrian-friendly Boulevard along Sunrise Highway with planted median and bike lanes.

Facilitate walkability between underutilized parking field by designing a green route with supporting retail.



# Southampton: Speonk

Supervisor Linda A. Kabot  
Suffolk County

**Square Miles** 5.94  
**Population** 2,675



## KEY ISSUES

Determine best uses for developable land in the community while balancing open space preservation

Identify ways to increase industrial use while maintaining balance with residential uses

Create an identity that draws on the importance of the train station and makes Speonk more of a destination

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

As one of the East End's central commuter rail stations, Speonk serves the working members of its community. With an atypical mix of uses - including residential, industrial and agricultural - as well as tracts of developable land around the station, Southampton town needs to take a wise approach that balances these uses with any new mixed uses to create a new community around the station.

## BACKGROUND

While the town of Southampton has about 57,000 full-year residents, the population nearly triples every summer with an influx of tourists and summer vacationers. Despite the Town's popularity as a Hampton getaway, the hamlet of Speonk has remained remarkably true to its tight-knit, community roots.

With a railroad station that serves as the eastern terminus of many LIRR train runs, Speonk is a popular commuting community. Its single-platform station is surrounded by a variety of uses that illustrate the diversity of the hamlet. Directly adjacent to the station is one of the largest railroad freight yards on eastern Long Island, used for shipping by a nearby lumber yard. Next to that is an active wrecking yard, and just to the north is a 15-acre piece of forested land that the owner would like to see developed into a light industrial park. However, there is some controversy over this plan because the space is very close to single family homes as well as a working farm.

Other development proposals being considered within 1/4 mile of the train station include a mixed-use development with affordable housing on the "Old Speonk Hospital" site to the south and a 60-unit senior housing project on the site of a former feather factory to the north. These proposals follow on the heels of single family homes built directly southwest of the station, a rezoned Hamlet Commercial/Office area directly south of the station and multi-family condominiums just southeast of the station. Further, Speonk has a number of preserved open space areas within walking distance of the station.

## RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

With a number of redevelopment prospects around a popular rail station, the Town of Southampton has a great opportunity to bring about an evolution in the image and function of Speonk. Striking a balance with agricultural, industrial and residential uses, Speonk could become a new east-end town center that retains its hard-working, residential roots.

### Creating a mixed-use main street

The Resource Team saw a great opportunity to develop a mixed-use, Main Street Corridor on N. Phillips Ave. This corridor would serve to connect the Hamlet green

and Hamlet Office/Commercial area in the south to the residential area north of the rail station. They recommended that the Town follow through on its plans to convert the "Old Speonk Hospital" site into affordable housing and storefronts, but with greater density. This site, along with the nearby rail station café, would serve as a catalyst to transition N. Phillips Avenue into a mixed-use main street. The street and sidewalks should be made more pedestrian friendly to encourage walking and use. The Team also recommended that the 15-acre site of the former feather factory - currently proposed as senior housing - should be reconsidered for use as workforce housing or a mixture of the two. Its location within 1/4 mile of the rail station would best serve commuters looking to live near rail.

### Tying industry to downtown

While industrial uses are typically replaced in transit - centered development, the Town sees great opportunity in expanding these uses around the rail tracks and has a willing property owner to work with. Given this preference, the Resource Team recommended using the owner's 15 acres to create a light industrial park. Such a space would provide space for businesses like Tate's Cookies - currently being relocated - while providing the Town with tax ratables. The industrial uses should be considerate of surrounding land uses. For example, "heavier industries" should be located closer to the tracks and should have an adequate forested buffer, while lighter industries can be placed closer to the residential areas. The team recommended shifting the use of the current wrecking yard to a similar, but greener, recycling facility. Greenhouses could be built at the north end of the property to support the adjacent farm or even a small wind farm. These greener uses will help to ensure long term-prosperity as the economy shifts in this direction. To further buffer the existing residential area and serve as a transition between the two uses, live/work units could be built on the eastern edge of the property to provide housing and work space for local artisans, craftsmen and farm workers.

### Making the most of a local farm

The Hamlet's working farm, within 1/2 mile of the rail station, presents a number of unique opportunities. Rising gas costs are helping to fuel a local food movement that the Town could use the working farm to tap into. The Team recommended live/work homes in and around the industrial area to provide housing opportunities for farm workers, while expanding operations of the farm. The nearby industrial area and the farm's close proximity to the rail system could help to facilitate a local, agribusiness hub that exports local goods throughout the east end (One recommendation was for "Hamptons Chips" grown from potatoes on the farm). Areas like the Hamlet green or community gardens could be the site of a major, regional farmers' market for vacationers and locals, and the farm could be used as an educational tool.



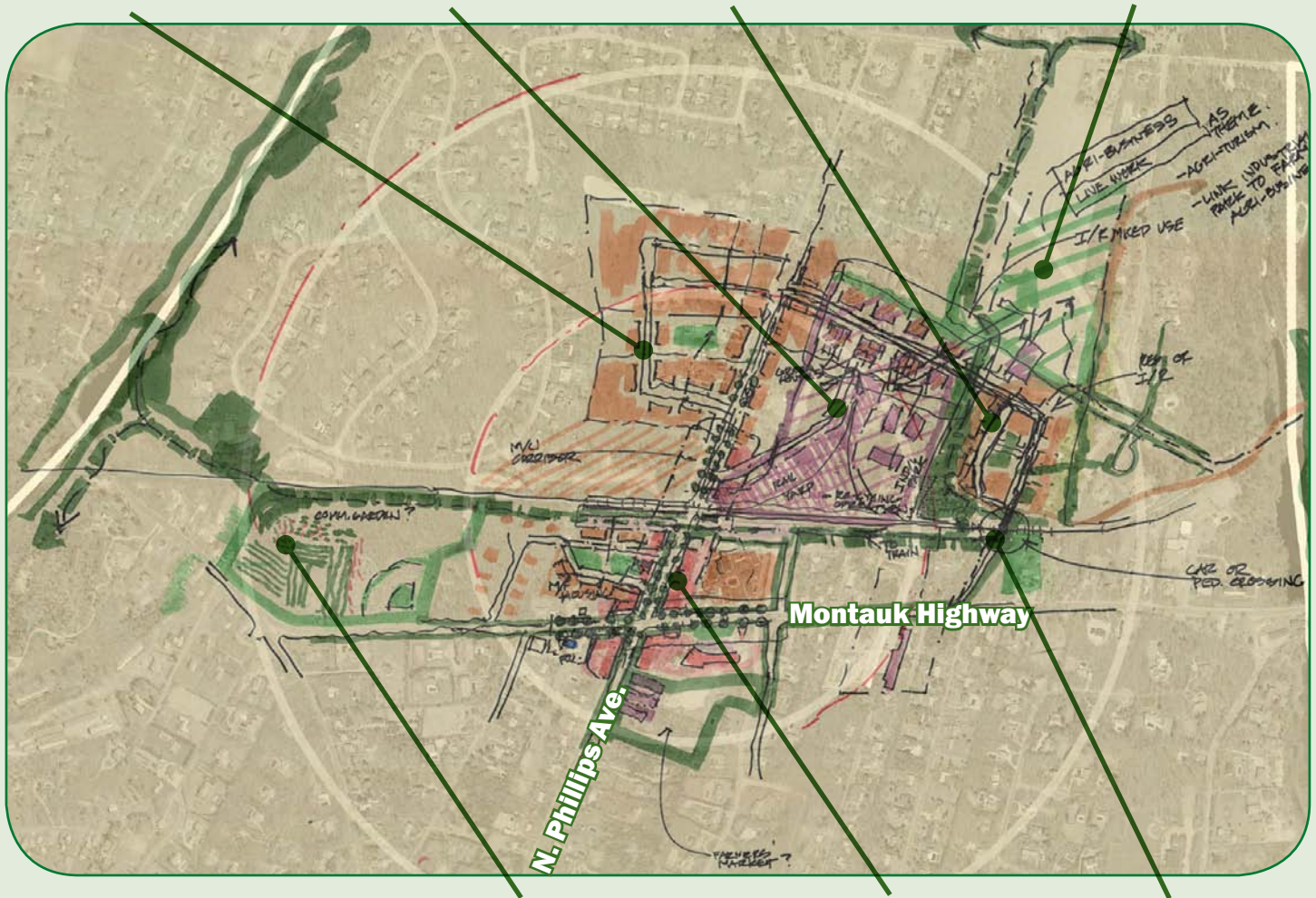
## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider more work-force housing for commuters at the former feather factory.

Expand industrial park to facilitate green, specialty, industrial uses that serve the region.

Develop a forested buffer and live-work housing for craftsmen and farm workers.

Expand use of the working farm to create a local, agri-business hub with regional exports.



### Connections through town

With a number of open spaces, forested buffers and farm land, the Resource Team envisions Speonk as a regional destination for hikers, bikers and horseback riders. The area's green spaces could be connected through a network of streets and open space trails. Street trees, wide sidewalks, bike lanes and amenities like water fountains can help to green the streets while trails can be created in the open spaces. The Town should work with the LIRR to convert the Hamlet's unsignalized rail crossing to a pedestrian crossing. An additional crossing over the tracks near the proposed community garden would open up access the coastal resources west of the Hamlet.

Create community gardens and facilitate hiking access through the open space and over the tracks to the coastal resource.

Develop a mixed-use, Main Street corridor along N. Phillips Ave. lined with street trees, wide sidewalks and mixed commercial and residential uses.

Green connections throughout including access across the rail tracks, through the forested buffer and up to the farm.



# Regional <sup>CT NJ NY</sup>Plan Association

4 Irving Place, 7th floor  
New York, NY 10003  
212.253.2727  
fax 212. 253.5666

Two Landmark Square, Suite 108  
Stamford, CT 06901  
203.356.0390  
fax 203.356.0392

179 Nassau Street, 2nd Floor  
Princeton, NJ 08542  
609.228.7080  
fax 609.228.7079

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