



SOUTHOLD TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

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Southold Town Comprehensive Plan Update

Introduction & Demographics

Draft

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Introduction & Demographics

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Background

A comprehensive plan is the official public document used to guide the development of a community. In New York State, the comprehensive plan provides the rationale for the zoning and other land use regulations found in the Town Code. This update to the comprehensive plan for Southold Town will result in the examination and possible updating of the Southold Town Code.

This is the second comprehensive plan update since planning first began in Southold. A review of the history of comprehensive planning in Southold reveals that, much like this effort, previous plans have been a multi-year process. The first plan was comprised of a series of studies and plans begun in the mid 1960's and completed in the late 1970's. The first update to that plan, begun in 1982, took about seven years to complete and culminated in an entirely new zoning map adopted in 1989.

Since that time there have been many other plans and studies, and the Town Board has implemented many of their recommendations. Completing an overhaul of the subdivision regulations that made open space mandatory and formalized the conservation subdivision and designating State Route 25 and County Road 48 as scenic corridors are just two examples of many. The Town Board has also amended the zoning code many times to follow through on the recommendations from those plans. Examples of this include changing the code to ensure “big box” stores were designed to fit in the community, restricting fast food restaurants to shopping centers, and making accessory apartments legal and easier to create. One goal present in just about every plan and study is to preserve land from development, and the Town has continued to make farmland and open space preservation a priority.

Some of the more comprehensive planning efforts include the Southold Town Stewardship Task Force Final Report in 1994, the Blue Ribbon Commission for a Rural Southold of 2002, the Comprehensive Implementation Strategy of 2003, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program completed in 2004, and the Hamlet Stakeholder work from 2005 to 2009.

These plans were all worthwhile efforts and provided important focus for certain issues, however none was broad enough in scope to be considered a comprehensive plan update on its own. Nevertheless, those plans, studies and reports, completed over the past 20 years or more, have echoed similar visions and goals time and again, and have guided the Town in its decisions on land use.

These past plans, studies and reports collectively generate a vision and goals that are carried forward into this document. Many goals from previous plans remain, including ensuring farming continues as a major aspect of the Town, and retaining the rural character that residents and visitors value. The benefit of this document as a single comprehensive plan will be that it will

consolidate the Town's goals into one place, making it easier to find those goals. This document also seeks to provide more detailed objectives to accomplish those goals and assigns responsibility for those objectives to help ensure they are carried out. This plan also carries more weight in that once adopted as the Town's comprehensive plan, all future zoning actions will need to be consistent with its goals and vision.

The Hamlet Study, and the Hamlet Stakeholder work were the catalysts for this newest comprehensive plan update. The Hamlet Study was completed in 2005, with a new emphasis on community participation, and in 2007, the Hamlet Stakeholders were reconvened and reformulated to include everyone that volunteered to participate. The 2007 Hamlet Stakeholders' mission was to use community participation to transform the 2005 Hamlet Study document into action items for the Town to implement. This was accomplished, and in 2008, the Town formed a Hamlet Implementation Panel of town staff to take action on the recommendations, which were classified as either short-term goals or long-term goals.

Many short-term goals were successfully implemented by early 2009, however the long-term goals were broader in scope and many required amendments to the zoning code to accomplish. Important as these long-term goals from the Hamlet Stakeholders were, they focused mostly on the hamlet centers, with many other areas and topics not addressed. Those areas outside the hamlet centers, as well as topics like affordable housing and agriculture also needed to be addressed. It became clear that an even more inclusive and comprehensive public process would be needed to implement the long-term goals of the Hamlet Stakeholder work, and add to it the broader goals of the entire town. This was best accomplished through a new comprehensive plan.

The significant difference between this and the previous comprehensive planning efforts is that previous comprehensive plans were written by consultants, whereas this one was written by Town officials and staff in collaboration with residents and other stakeholders. Experience has shown that plans produced by outside consultants, while professional, do not seem to provide exactly what the Town wants in a plan. Neither of the previous two comprehensive plans, both completed by outside consultants, were formally adopted by the Town Board.

More important, this plan was written in collaboration with the residents and other stakeholders through an unprecedented number of public input meetings. Begun in 2010 with a public input meeting about the vision statement, there have since been over 40 meetings, where hundreds of people provided their thoughts on the early drafts of each chapter in the plan, both in person and online via email. Each comment was recorded, and then answered publicly (posted on the website) as to how the comment was used, and if not, why not. By September, 2018, all the chapters had been drafted, vetted by the public in a series of public input meetings, and public input incorporated into each chapter. Each completed draft chapter was presented to the Town Board, and posted online.

In 2018 all the chapters were given a final review to identify where statistics could be updated and any revisions made where situations might have changed over time. For example, one goal in the Economic Chapter was to form an Economic Development Committee. The Town Board formed the committee in 2012, so the goal was revised to acknowledge this change. In early 2019, the statistics were updated where new data were available.

Another difference between this plan and previous comprehensive plans is that this plan does not contain a new zoning map, or sweeping changes to the zones, uses or bulk schedule. The reasons behind this are several. One is that zoning is no longer a new idea for Southold. The first zoning ordinance was adopted in Southold in 1957, and the first comprehensive plan was written in 1967, only ten years later. The second comprehensive planning effort began only 15 years later. Zoning was still relatively new and so it makes sense that comprehensive changes were recommended as everyone learned more about how zoning works and affects development patterns. Now that zoning has been in place for over 60 years, and the current zoning map for 30 years, we have the experience to see that any changes to zoning districts need to happen in a collaborative way, working with the communities that are affected. This comprehensive plan update points the Town in a direction for considering potential zone changes, leaving the details to the implementation phase. Any changes to zoning that might result from this plan would happen later, after the plan is adopted and priorities for implementation of the plan have been identified.

Two other reasons behind waiting for specific zone changes until after the plan is adopted are time and funding. Experience has shown that any major change to the zoning map is best done in a collaborative process with residents and stakeholders. This collaborative process involves numerous public input meetings, all of which require preparation, promotion, and follow-up. Also required are the detailed analyses that provide the backdrop of information everyone needs to make informed decisions. To accomplish this necessary work would require time and funding beyond the internal resources of the Town. Funding from grants to hire help with future major zoning initiatives will be needed during the implementation phase.

The implementation phase of the plan occurs after the plan is adopted. The advantage to waiting until this phase to work on the details of specific zoning changes is that it gives residents and their elected officials plenty of time to discuss and consider the proposals found in the plan, one by one. It also provides more time to conduct the information-gathering and analyses necessary to provide the information from which discussion can ensue and decisions made. Finally, because the reality of a comprehensive plan update is that it takes years to accomplish, it leaves the possibilities for exactly how any zone changes might be done open to adapt to changing times.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan

The Town Board is responsible for implementing the goals and ensuring they are accomplished. The Town Board will direct the priorities for which goals are to be pursued, and will decide whether to provide funding or staff to help accomplish any one goal. To organize the implementation of the plan, the goals must be prioritized. The Town Board will decide the method by which it will prioritize the goals and pursue implementation.

To keep this document alive, there is a “Responsible Party” identified for each goal and some individual objectives. The role of the Responsible Party is to bring the goal or objective to the attention of the Town Board, promote awareness that it exists, and gauge the interest of the Town Board in pursuing it. This could involve working with the Town Board on prioritizing the goals as time goes by and circumstances change. Where the Responsible Party is a Town committee, the goals can serve as guidance for the activities of the committee. The Town Board may re-assign Responsible Parties during the implementation phase.

Updating the Future Comprehensive Plan

This document is a living document in that updates will be done as needed to individual chapters or individual goals. Continuous updating of smaller portions at any one time will ensure the document stays relevant over time, and make it unnecessary to attempt an update of the entire plan all at once.

Description of Southold Town

Southold Town is located in the southeast of New York State, on the eastern end of the area known as the North Fork of Long Island. Southold’s mainland is a long and narrow peninsula, averaging 3 miles in width in the western portion of the town, and narrowing considerably on the eastern end. The entire Town, including its five islands, is 54 square miles in size, with 163 linear miles of coastline. Adjacent waterbodies include the Long Island Sound, Fishers Island Sound, Block Island Sound, and Gardiner’s and Peconic Bays.

There are three adjacent municipalities, Greenport Village in the southeast, Riverhead Town at the far southwest end, and Shelter Island Town to the southeast separated by the bay.

Southold Town is comprised of ten hamlets, all located on the mainland except for Fishers Island. They are Cutchogue, East Marion, Fishers Island, Greenport West, Laurel, Mattituck, New Suffolk, Orient, Peconic, and Southold. These hamlets all have individual identities, and

vary greatly in size, population and character. The ten hamlets are described in more detail in the Land Use Chapter.

There are three large islands within the jurisdiction of Southold Town include Fishers Island, at 3,200 acres, Plum Island at 816 acres, and Robins Island at 435 acres, as well as a number of much smaller islands near Plum and Fishers Islands.

Details of the physical aspects and historical context of the Town can be found in many previous plans, including the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Volume I, Section II (2004) which contains a thorough description.

Figure__ (to be created in GIS or by Graphic Designer):

Basic map of Southold Town

- Hamlets
- Major Roads

Demographics

Please Note:

This demographics analysis section is currently being updated to 2017 using American Communities Survey information. The Tables in the Appendices have been updated already.

Introduction

The demographic inventory, originally produced by planning consultant Nelson, Pope & Voorhis, and supplemented by Southold Planning with updated census data, outlines the past, present and projected (where available) demography throughout the Town of Southold (including each of the ten hamlets, but excluding the Village of Greenport¹). This inventory has revealed critical trends and information pertaining to the residents, housing stock, transportation patterns and business climate within Southold. The demographic inventory will allow Southold to take steps in planning for the future, through the changing demographic makeup of its residents, visitors and businesses, the skills of the labor force, the type of development or opportunities that Southold may demand to adapt to future change, the nature of the market that would support the local economy and those that will utilize the Town's resources. Ultimately, the demographic inventory will lay the framework for developing appropriate goals, objectives and strategies to best promote and plan for the future conditions and needs of residents and businesses located throughout Southold.

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. CURRENT POPULATION AND GROWTH TRENDS

As seen in Table 1 in Appendix A, the Town's population has grown tremendously since the first official census that took place in 1790. The population of just over 3,200 residents in 1790 doubled by 1870, and doubled again by 1960. In 2000, the population was 20,599 and by 2010 the population reached 21,968.

¹ It is important to note that the Village of Greenport is included in all datasets that illustrate Townwide demographic statistics. Moreover, some datasets – such as school district performance – include the Village of Greenport since coverage extends into the jurisdiction boundary.

The Town of Southold is comprised of ten individual hamlets – Cutchogue, East Marion, Fishers Island, Greenport West, Laurel, Mattituck, New Suffolk, Orient, Peconic and Southold. The Village of Greenport is a separate incorporated village surrounded by unincorporated parts of the Town. Along with the Village, these hamlets serve as the population and activity centers within the Town. It is important to note that while the Town is officially and currently comprised of ten individual hamlets, this was not always the case. A hamlet may have been locally designated in one decennial year, and officially designated by the U.S. Census Bureau during the next. In addition, boundaries have changed over time, both within the Town and through the U.S. Census Bureau’s designations.

2. EXISTING HOUSEHOLDS AND GROWTH TRENDS

Reflective of the population trends, the majority of the Town’s hamlets have experienced significant growth in terms of the number of households, as seen in Table 3 in Appendix A. The decrease in population and number of households shown by the U.S. Census Bureau data in some hamlets is attributed to the growth of the seasonal population in Southold Town. This can be detected by examining the number of housing units, which has steadily grown over the past fifty years. The number of housing units has not decreased, nor has the vacancy rate increased enough to account for the amount of population loss. Homes have been converted to seasonal use as second homes. Seasonal residents are not counted in the Census because they have been counted already in their primary residence elsewhere. The 2010 Census identified 36% of houses in Southold Town as seasonal. A more detailed discussion regarding seasonal population is provided in the Land Use chapter of this plan.

3. AGE OF POPULATION

4. AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

1. TYPE OF HOUSING

2. AGE OF HOUSING

3. OCCUPANCY

4. HOUSING AND RENTAL VALUES

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- 1. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**
- 2. LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME**

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

- 1. INCOME**
- 2. PLACE OF WORK AMONG TOWN RESIDENTS**
- 3. UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS**
- 4. COMMUTING PATTERNS**
- 5. EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY**
- 6. DAY LABORER EMPLOYMENT**
- 7. POVERTY**