

CHAPTER 1

VISION STATEMENT

The Town of Southold is a community of extraordinary history and beauty. Residents and visitors benefit from its diverse hamlets surrounded by pastoral landscapes and expansive natural resources. Our citizens cherish Southold's small-town quality of life and wish to preserve what we currently value while planning for a productive and viable future.

Future planning shall be compatible with existing community character while supporting and addressing the challenges of continued land preservation, maintaining a vibrant local economy, creating efficient transportation, promoting a diverse housing stock, expanding recreational opportunities and protecting natural resources.



HOW THIS DOCUMENT IS ORGANIZED

The plan is divided into chapters that handle the various topics that influence policy decisions about land use and zoning within Southold Town. Chapter 2, “Demographics,” introduces the Town’s inhabitants and provides perspectives and statistics about their characteristics including profession, age, housing, and income. Chapter 3, “Land Use & Zoning,”

provides an overview of land use and zoning in Southold Town, and presents broad goals for future land use and zoning to achieve the vision in this plan. Subsequent chapters narrow the focus to specific land use topics, including transportation and infrastructure, community character, water and land resources, economic development, housing, agriculture, land preservation, human services, natural hazards, and parks and recreation.





1 | INTRODUCTION

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. Southold Town's Comprehensive Plan has recently undergone an update, the second in its history. The newly revised Comprehensive Plan will help shape policy decisions regarding the appropriate use of the Town's resources and may result in the examination and possible updating of the Southold Town Code.

Essential to any comprehensive analysis is its vision statement, which guides the entire process. The Vision Statement, the collective product of Town stakeholders, underpins Southold Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Previous Plans

Comprehensive planning projects in Southold have been a multi-year process. The first plan, comprising a series of studies and plans begun in the mid-1960's, was 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. These include an overhaul of the subdivision regulations that made open space mandatory and formalized the conservation subdivision and the designation of New York State Route 25 and Suffolk County Route 48 as New York State Scenic Byways. 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 contained 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 (LWRP) completed in 2004, and the work undertaken to produce the 2007–08 Hamlet Stakeholder Initiatives.

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

The vision and goals of these past plans, studies, and reports are carried forward into this document. Such goals include retaining the rural character that residents and visitors value and ensuring that farming continues as a major aspect of the Town. One benefit of this document as a single comprehensive plan is that it will consolidate the Town's goals into one place, making them easier to find. This document also provides detailed objectives for accomplishing the goals and assigns responsibility for the objectives to ensure they can be implemented. Once this plan is adopted as the Town's comprehensive plan, all future zoning actions will need to be consistent with its goals and vision.

The catalysts for this most recent comprehensive plan update were the Hamlet Study (2005) and the 2007–08 Hamlet Stakeholder Initiatives, two planning initiatives that relied heavily on public participation. The Hamlet Stakeholders Initiatives work built on the 2005 Hamlet Study and used community participation to transform the Hamlet Study into actionable recommendations for the Town. 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 or long-term goals. Many of the short-term goals were successfully implemented by early 2009; the long-term goals, however, were broader in scope with many requiring amendments to the zoning code to accomplish. These long-term goals, although important, were focused mostly on the hamlet centers, with many other areas and topics not addressed. It became clear that an even more inclusive and comprehensive public process would be needed to identify the broader goals of the entire Town and continue implementation of the long-term goals of the Hamlet Stakeholder Initiatives. This was best accomplished through a new comprehensive plan.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan

The Town of Southold LWRP, adopted by the Town Board in 2004, is incorporated into the Southold Town Comprehensive Plan by reference. The Southold Town Comprehensive Plan has no effect or impact and is not intended to repeal or otherwise diminish the applicability of the LWRP. The Comprehensive Plan, although separate from the LWRP, may address some overlapping areas. In cases where there is a conflict between the LWRP and the Comprehensive Plan in terms of policies, the Southold Town Planning Board, with recommendations from the Southold Town LWRP Coordinator, will determine the outcome. The resolution of conflicts shall not be interpreted in a way that renders the LWRP ineffective or invalid.

The Updated 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, often do not provide exactly what the Town wants in a plan. Neither of the previous two comprehensive plans, both completed by outside consultants, was 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. Beginning in 2010 with a public input meeting about the Vision Statement, there have since been over 64

meetings, where hundreds of people have provided their thoughts on early drafts of each chapter in the plan, both in person and online via email.



Public input meeting, Peconic Landing

Each comment was recorded and responded to publicly (i.e., posted on the website) and included such feedback as whether it was used to inform the plan, and if not, why not. By September 2018, all of the chapters had been drafted and vetted by the public in a series of public input meetings, with public input incorporated into each chapter. Each completed draft chapter was presented to the Town Board and posted online. By the end of February 2019, all of the chapters were given a final review to identify where statistics could be updated.



Public input meeting, Mattituck

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. Zoning was a relatively new concept for the Town back when the first zoning ordinance was adopted in Southold in 1957. Now that zoning has been in place for over 60 years and the current zoning map in effect for 30, it is clear that any future changes to zoning need to happen in a collaborative way, working with the communities that are affected. This updated Comprehensive Plan 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 are identified.

Two additional reasons for waiting on making any zoning changes until after the plan is adopted are time and funding. The collaborative process that would be needed for any meaningful and feasible zoning changes would involve 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 needed to make informed decisions. This essential work would require time and funding beyond the internal resources of the Town. One way to proceed with such an effort would be to consider applying for funding grants to help with future major zoning initiatives 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 such as 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 that can prompt discussion and decision-making.

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 many of the goals 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

From time to time within 5 to 10 years after the plan is adopted, the Town Board or their designee will review the plan and determine whether any chapters require updating to remain relevant. In cases where a single chapter is updated, the rest of the plan will be reviewed to determine whether edits are required to any other chapters at the same time to avoid inconsistencies. This document is a living document in that updates will be done as needed to individual chapters, making 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 three 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 approximately 210 linear miles of coastline. Town-adjacent waterbodies include the Long Island Sound, Fishers Island Sound, Block Island Sound, and Gardiner’s and Peconic Bays. Three adjacent municipalities include Greenport Village in the southeast, Riverhead Town at the far southwest end, and Shelter Island Town to the southeast (separated by the Peconic River).

Southold Town is composed of 10 hamlets, 9 of which are located on the mainland (the exception is Fishers Island). The hamlets are Cutchogue, East Marion, Fishers Island, Greenport West, Laurel, Mattituck, New Suffolk, Orient, Peconic, and Southold (see **Figure 1.1**). Each has its own individual identity and varies greatly in size, population and character. The hamlets are described in more detail in Chapter 3, “Land Use & Zoning.”

Southold Town includes numerous islands, many of which are inhabited, within its jurisdiction. The largest of these are Fishers Island (2,586 acres), Plum Island (816 acres), and Robins Island (435 acres).

Additional details of the physical aspect and historical context of the Town are not included in this plan update but can be found in many of the previous plans, including the LWRP Volume I, Section II (2004) which contains a thorough description. This plan can be found online through the Town’s website at www.southoldtownny.gov.

Figure 1.1 Southold Town Map with Hamlets

