



**SHELTER ISLAND**  
Comprehensive Plan Update



# Town of Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update



July 2024



*Sunset photo courtesy of Ed Hydeman*

*Cover photos courtesy of Jim Colligan and BFJ Planning*

# Town of Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

## Suffolk County, NY

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*Prepared for:*

**Shelter Island Town Board**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update is a collaborative effort of Town elected officials, staff, organizations, volunteers and individual citizens. The Town Board wishes to acknowledge the important contributions of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force (CPTF), the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), department heads, Town staff, board and committee members, Island organizations and institutions, and the members of the public that participated in the preparation of this document. The following individuals and organizations have contributed to the development of the Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update.

### ***Comprehensive Plan Task Force (CPTF)***

#### *2023 Members*

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- BJ Ianfolla, Councilwoman
- Julia Weisenberg, Planning Board
- Coco Lee Thuman, Clerk

#### *Former Members (2020-2021)*

- Michael Bebon
- Albert Dickson
- Edward Hindin
- Reed Karen

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- Sean Clark
- John Kerr
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#### ***Dodson & Flinker, Inc.***

***Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.***

Consultant Team (2020-2021)

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### **Public Workshop Participants**

The Town of Shelter Island extends gratitude to all participants in the planning process for sharing their invaluable thoughts, visions, and ideas. Your feedback has significantly enriched this comprehensive plan, helping it to reflect the aspirations and needs of our community. Special thanks to the following members of the public who attended at least one of the public workshops:

Abbie Newman	Brian Hunkece	Drew Colocotronis
Abby Clough	Bridg Hunt	Duff Wilson
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## **Public Workshop Participants (continued)**

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Lois Cohen	Peter Waldman	Wendy Turgeon
Lori Beard Raymond	Petra Schmidt	William Derrough
Lorraine Walker	Phil DiOrio	
Lucille Buergers	Rebecca Mundy	



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### ***Appendices***

Several recently completed planning documents have been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as appendices. These documents can be found on the Town’s website.

- Appendix A: Community Housing Plan (2023),
- Appendix B: Ground and Surface Water Management Plan (2020),
- Appendix C: Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020),
- Appendix D: Watershed Management Plan (2014).



*Photo of Dering Harbor in Winter provided by Jim Colligan*

# 1

# INTRODUCTION AND VISION

The Town of Shelter Island has embarked on a process to update its comprehensive plan which was adopted in 1994. While New York State does not have a mandate for how often a plan should be developed, it is considered to be good practice to update the document every 10 years to reflect current community-established principles for the orderly and balanced future economic, social, physical, environmental, and fiscal development. In essence, the document serves as a roadmap to help Shelter Island strive to become a more sustainable, equitable, and livable community.

Adopting a comprehensive plan is important for several reasons:

## **Provides a clear vision:**

This new plan outlines Shelter Island's vision for the future and provides a framework for decision-making, ensuring that the community's needs and aspirations are reflected in all policies and actions taken by the local government. In pursuit of a fair and effective plan, stakeholders should recognize that this process is inherently political, meaning that many differing views, values, and interests must be considered and that the results will affect people differently. The planning process provided many opportunities for engagement and input from the community in an effort to help build consensus among stakeholders with different perspectives and interests.

## **Promotes coordinated development:**

A comprehensive plan helps to avoid haphazard development that may lead to sprawl, congestion, and other problems, by guiding the location, design, and intensity of land uses and infrastructure. It also helps to establish the rationale for zoning decisions which help to ensure that future development is consistent with the community's overall goals and vision.

## **Facilitates decision-making:**

A comprehensive plan provides a basis for informed decision-making by the local government, enabling officials to evaluate proposed developments and initiatives against the municipality's overall goals and priorities. It can also help the municipality to secure funding for infrastructure and other projects.

This Comprehensive Plan represents much time and effort, and is the continuation of a process that involves assessing existing conditions, and changing regulations and procedures where needed. Some of these changes will require further, more detailed studies and plans. Sustained public involvement is necessary to bring the items in this plan to fruition.

The document is divided into 11 topics and two appendices containing an Implementation Matrix and important supporting documents, some of which are part and parcel of the Plan. There is some duplication between chapters, done for clarity, but there should not be conflict between them. The Implementation Matrix is in effect, a “To Do” list of specific tasks, each with a responsible party and a rating system to outline complexity and expected expense. This roadmap enables the Town to review and report on the progress of this Plan’s action items.

## Regional and Local Context

As shown in Figure 1, Shelter Island is situated between the North Fork and South Fork of Long Island and is separated from them by Shelter Island Sound, Gardiners Bay, and other water bodies. Shelter Island is the smallest of the 5 towns on the East End of Suffolk County.

Numerous distinct neighborhoods, including many with homeowners associations, comprise Shelter Island. The Island also includes Dering Harbor, one of the smallest incorporated villages in New York State with 50 residents (2020 Census). The relationship between the village of Dering Harbor and the rest of Shelter Island is that of a municipality within a larger administrative unit. Dering Harbor has its own local governance and is responsible for local matters like zoning, regulations, and other village-specific affairs. However, broader island-wide matters might fall under the jurisdiction of the Shelter Island Town government.



## PRIOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

In 1994, the Town adopted its first Comprehensive Plan. That plan projected housing growth from 2,200 units in 1990 to 3,000 housing units by 2010 (vs. actual 2010 units of about 2,600). Even though growth rates moderated somewhat, many of the issues discussed in the 1994 plan, such as economic development, housing, Town services, taxes, environmental protection, and water supply are still relevant.

In 2008, the Town Board formed a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to review progress on implementing the 1994 plan and draw up a fresh list of actions to achieve its goals. The Committee developed a detailed Vision Statement focused on protecting the Island’s unique character and quiet sense of place, and highlighted the threats posed by social, environmental, and economic trends. The 2008-2009 plan update recommended a list of 39 “new or renewed” initiatives, ranging from protection of marine waters and aquifers to strategies for economic development, transportation, community facilities, and zoning. While the plan update was not adopted, it continued to inform the work of Town departments and committees in the following decade. Both the 1994 Comprehensive Plan and the 2008 update were reviewed in the production of this update.



FIGURE 1: REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

## PLANNING PROCESS

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This Comprehensive Plan was formed through a community-led effort which began in 2020 right before COVID lock-downs began. The planning process involved a series of virtual and in-person community workshops, forums, and studies, all of which contributed to the drafting of this document. The process was managed by a Comprehensive Plan Task Force (CPTF), comprised of two Town Board members and a Planning Board representative who worked regularly with the Town's planning consultants to plan for meetings, provide background information, and review reports as needed. The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) met regularly to review drafts, provide feedback, and contribute ideas to ensure that the plan reflects the values and aspirations of the community. This plan was developed in three distinct stages, which are described below.

### Stage 1: 2020-2021

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In this stage, the Town began the planning process which introduced the CPTF, the CPAC, and the consultant team – Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates LLC.. In the first year of the process, Dodson and Flinker completed a public survey, 2 public workshops, a SWOTCHI (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Challenges, Imperatives) Analysis, an existing condition report (Shelter Island 2020), and conducted numerous meetings of the CPTF, CPAC, and with Town staff and other community stakeholders. In the middle of 2021, 2 of 3 CPTF members resigned, and the project stalled until the Town Board could re-establish the Task Force. The Town released the original consultants from their contract because the future of the plan was unsure. A synopsis of work completed in 2021 is below.

#### **Public Survey**

A public survey was conducted in early 2021 to help identify key issues to address, to gather information and ideas about the Island's defining strengths and weaknesses, and to get a general sense of what is important to Shelter Islanders. The survey was not meant to be a vote or referendum on issues, but rather to clearly identify the range of issues that people care about so that nothing was overlooked in the planning process. The survey was heavily publicized through the town website,

local social media, print media, email distribution using a variety of email lists maintained by local organizations, and a direct mailing to every mailbox in the Town of Shelter Island. The 1,013 responses included self reporting of age, income and education levels, housing tenures (rent, live with family or friends, own), short- and long-term residents, and various connections to the Island (visitors, people who live here a few months of the year, people who live here most of the year).

Overall, the survey provides a rich tapestry of information about the opinions of respondents, what they value about the Island, what their concerns are, and which topics may be worthwhile focus areas for the Comprehensive Plan. A summary report of survey results can be found on the Town's website.

#### **Public Workshops (2021)**

The original consulting team conducted two community-wide workshops. The first was held on March 18th, 2021 to introduce the project and discuss the Plan's draft vision. A second workshop was held on April 22nd to present results of the public survey to conduct a SWOTCI assessment.

#### **SWOTCI Synthesis Report**

Dodson and Flinker incorporated feedback from the community and stakeholders into a SWOTCI report. The purpose of a SWOTCI is to create a coherent framework to analyze issues and opportunities. This allows for an objective analysis of each factor, including positive elements that the Town can build on, and negative factors that need to be addressed. It also intentionally separates those internal factors over which the Town has direct control from those external factors it cannot control but to which it must react.

The *SWOTCI Synthesis Report*, which can be found on the Town's website, includes a look back at SWOTCI analysis in previous Comprehensive Plans, and presents a synthesis of the 2020-2021 results from the first survey, the first public workshop, stakeholder interviews conducted thus far, feedback on the Shelter Island 2020 report, and input from the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) and Comprehensive Plan Task Force (CPTF).

### **Shelter Island 2020**

*Shelter Island 2020* is a profile of existing conditions. It was developed as an interim document to present a summary of existing conditions, issues, and opportunities. This report compiles existing data about the Island from numerous sources, including publicly available data such as the US Census; data maintained by the Town, including Police reports and the Assessor's database; and previous plans prepared by the Town or Suffolk County. First-hand information was gathered from interviews, conversations, and meetings with Town staff, community members, and representatives of Shelter Island organizations. This 2020 profile of the Island establishes a common set of facts that the community as whole can use as the basis of discussions and decision making in the upcoming phases of the Comprehensive Plan Update. It tries to answer the question "where are we now?"

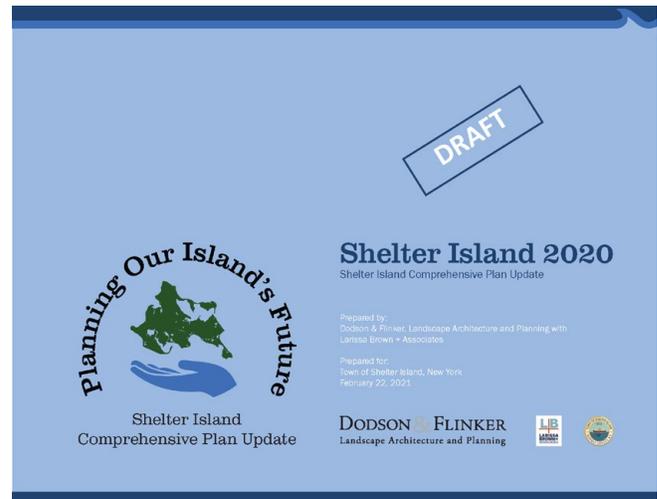
### **Stage 2: 2022**

In this stage, members of the CPTF compiled previously completed work by Dodson and Flinker into 12 draft chapters, which were posted to the Town's website in late 2022. This planning process include numerous meetings with stakeholders and the CPAC to confirm goals and objectives. The monthly CPAC meetings were open to the public either in person or on Zoom and recordings were posted online. Several public meetings were held to discuss various topics covered in the plan:

- Public Workshop on July 18, 2022
- Pop-up meeting at the Green Expo on August 22, 2022
- Public Workshop on September 26, 2022
- Small group discussions on October 24, 2022
- Public Workshop on November 28, 2022

### **Stage 3: 2023**

BFJ Planning was hired by the Town to edit the document and complete the planning process. During the period, the CPAC continued to assess the CPTF's drafts and report back with comments. About 250 written comments were received from the CPAC and other members of the community through October 2023. BFJ Planning and CPTF members attended CPAC meetings to discuss content to be incorporated into the document. BFJ and



*Shelter Island 2020 (Draft)*

the CPTF also met with various community stakeholders to discuss issues and opportunities. A virtual public meeting was held on August 24th to present draft recommendations to the community. 88 people were in attendance. A summary of this meeting can be found on the project website. Community input was also solicited at the Green Expo on August 26th.

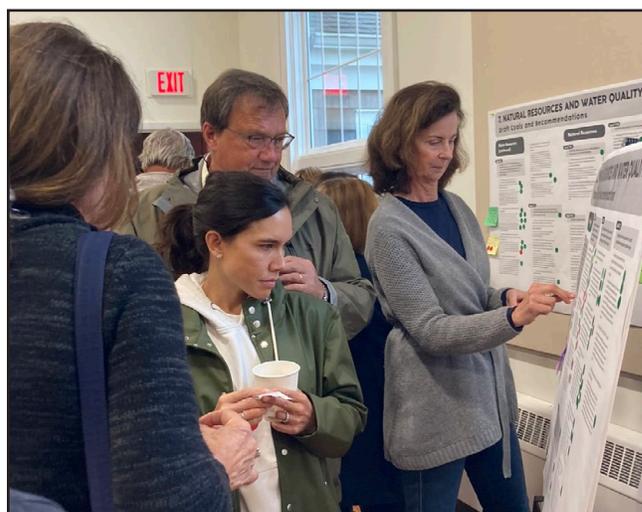
In September, draft chapters were posted to the project website. A public meeting was held on September 23 to give the public another opportunity to comment on priorities for the plan.

**Public Workshops (2023)**

Two public workshops were held in 2023 to continue the process of evaluating the vision, goals, and recommendations. Approximately 90 people joined for the first workshop, which over Zoom on August 24th. After a presentation, participants were split into breakout group discussions to discuss priorities with their peers. Discussions were moderated and there was a “report back” session for everyone to hear a synopsis of what was discussed.

Approximately 150 people joined for the second public workshop which was held on September 23 at the American Legion Community Center. After a brief presentation, participants were invited to visit workstations to comment on draft goals and recommendations. The consultant team and the CPTF members were stationed around the room to answer questions and engage in conversation.

Meeting summaries and recordings of the presentations can be found on the Town’s website.



Public Workshop #2 (2023)



## VISION

This Vision Statement sets forth the kind of community the Town of Shelter Island would like to be in ten to twenty-five years. First and foremost, Shelter Island is defined by its unique character with only water connections to the North and South Forks of Long Island. In addition to its geography, the Island's natural and cultural resources are critical as is its population (an interdependent mix of year-round and part-time residents, working persons and retirees, second homeowners, renters and summer visitors) in defining the identity of the Island. Shelter Island still affords a sense of community that is relatively rare on Long Island's East End.

The people of Shelter Island have traditionally valued smallness of place and exhibited a cooperative spirit blended with an element of independence. Many Islanders value the long history and cultural resources of the Island and show a high level of volunteerism. Islanders support transparent and responsive government, the school, library, fire protection and emergency services. While

residents value individualism, the rights of the general public are vital to maintaining a healthy community. It is understood that we 'individuals cannot live as an island within an island - a collaborative effort is needed to address issues the Town faces now and into the future.

As members of the global community as well as Islanders, there is a need to include 'sustainability' thinking in our everyday policies and practices, as climate change and uncontrolled growth threaten to undermine the very qualities that make Shelter Island special. A planning challenge is to assure that the growth which results from being attractive does not destroy that which makes the Island desirable or exceed its sustainable capacity.

As we move forward, we will utilize the following guiding principles to help us define goals, recommendations, action items and implementation plans.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles are inherent in and overlap across multiple chapters and should guide the specific goals and objectives that follow in those chapters.

Exercise **responsible stewardship** for the natural and cultural resources which give the Island its distinctive character and significance. These cultural and natural resources that are enjoyed by all – fresh and salt waters, vistas, parks, and cultural institutions - shall be considered when establishing goals and objectives. Of critical importance is our fragile aquifer.



Increase the **resiliency of the Island to climate change and sea level rise** by implementing appropriate adaptation measures. By acknowledging that we are only accessible by water and at its mercy, we recognize the need to mitigate the negative effects of sea level rise through infrastructure improvements and conscientious changes made by homeowners living in sensitive coastal areas. These changes will require community-wide commitment and support.



Maintain a **vibrant island community** that meets residents' economic and social needs. We recognize that growth and economic opportunities are necessary to sustain a year-round island community, but this should not come at the expense of our natural and cultural resources. This goal is only achievable by giving due consideration to year-round employment and attainable housing opportunities, high quality community services and a strong public school system while maintaining low housing density in ecologically sensitive areas.



**Motivate and enable upcoming generations** to be part of Shelter Island's future (including its town governance) through education, economic development, housing efforts, and by encouraging early involvement in municipal operations, and the volunteer work of local boards, committees, and services. Shelter island's history and sense of community is strengthened by providing a future on the Island to the children who have grown up, summered, or who have family roots here.



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# 2

# GROWTH, CHANGE, AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Examining demographics and socioeconomics helps tell the story of where the Island has been, who lives and works here today, and where trends point to for the future. The data used in this analysis comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and represents the most current and reliable data available. To supplement the analysis, this chapter uses the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), which consists of 5-year estimates. This was the most up-to-date reporting period as this plan was written.

While the main function of the decennial census is to provide counts of people for the purpose of congressional apportionment, the primary purpose of the ACS is to measure the changing social and economic characteristics of the U.S. population such as age, education, housing, etc. The ACS surveys a sample of the population each year, while the decennial censuses are counts that represent a “snapshot” of the demographics at that time. While the ACS can produce reliable estimates for larger areas or aggregated groups, its sample sizes may not be sufficient for drawing accurate conclusions about smaller communities such as Shelter Island. For this reason, the 2020 decennial census was used when ACS data was determined to have a high margin of error.

It’s important to note that the seasonal population can fluctuate and may not be accurately reflected in official census data, which typically captures the year-round population. Other data sources (i.e. from Suffolk County, utility companies, and the local government) can be used to better understand seasonal population trends and issues.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

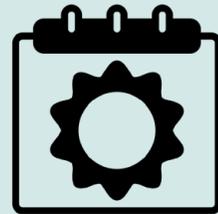
### Shelter Island's year-round population has grown.

Shelter Island's full-time population was 3,253 in 2020. The population has grown 46% since 2000. The population saw a While the rate has consistently outpaced growth in the County as a whole, it has been consistent with other East End seasonal communities such as Southampton and East Hampton. The significant increase is partially due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered an influx of people looking to get out of more populated areas.



### Shelter Island experiences a significant population boom during the summer months.

Due to its popularity as a holiday destination, many of its residences are second homes or vacation rentals. Hard data with precise figures of the non-permanent population is not readily available. However, Suffolk County has estimated the summer population to be 12,111, 68% of which is seasonal.



### Shelter Island is a seasonal community, but remote and hybrid work environments may create long-term shifts in residency.

Prior to 2017, seasonal residents swelled the Town's population by threefold or more, but since that time, Shelter Island has seen growth in its year-round population and a corresponding decreasing share of seasonal residents. This trend likely reflects an influx of residents during the pandemic and should be closely monitored to determine whether it continues with the greater ability for people to work remotely at least part of the time.



### The Town's population is getting older, and Shelter Island appears to be attracting more singles and empty nesters.

Both Shelter Island and Suffolk County have experienced a steady, gradual decline in the percentage of family households, family households with married couples, and households with children



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

under 18 years of age. The number of residents living alone has increased. As Baby Boomers in the full-time population continue to live on the Island, aging into more fragile age groups, and new residents are also older, the demand for senior-friendly community systems and senior services and supports will increase.

### Shelter Island has become more diverse.

While the population today is 85% white, non-Hispanic, the percentage of Hispanic residents has grown substantially — from 4.9% in 2010 to 8.9% in 2020. This trend is shown in school enrollment, suggesting that much of the increasing diversity is occurring among the Town’s year-round families.



### Household income has grown, but poverty has increased significantly.

Shelter Island’s income levels have steadily risen, even as the county and state saw median household income decline during the Great Recession. Although Islanders have become wealthier on average, there was a dramatic increase in the poverty rate between 2010 (1.7%) and 2021 (12.4%) (Census 2020). This trend is evident in the school district, which has experienced a substantial increase in economically disadvantaged students since 2010, suggesting income disparities in the year-round family population. Another data point is that of the 200 individuals who receive food from the CAST mobile food pantry every 2 weeks, 57 of them are children, 105 are adults between the ages of 18-49, 23 are adults between the ages of 50-62 and 15 are seniors.



### School enrollment continues to fall.

Despite a brief uptick during the pandemic, the long-term trend of a shrinking school-age population appears to be continuing. This will likely have impacts on the level and type of community facilities and services required.



## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Shelter Island’s population dynamics are complex, reflecting the seasonality of some residents and the impact of recent regional shifts in employment due to the pandemic. As has been the case historically, the Island is a popular vacation destination, and many homes are second homes or vacation rentals. Year-round residents can include working-age people with families, who may have generational roots on the Island and may work on- or off-island. Other year-round residents are retirees who either worked and retired locally or visited for years before settling on the Island full time, or people who can work remotely. Some part-time resident owners spend a month or more on the Island during the summer, others may spend many months and weekends throughout the year, and “snowbirds” live in warm regions during the winters, but summer on the Island. Many “summer people” are families with multi-generational ownership, and it is not uncommon for summer residents to become year-round residents later in life.

The population also includes renters by the year, month, or season and shorter-term visitors who stay in hotels, inns, B & B’s, and short-term rentals. This non-resident, seasonal, and visitor population is typically much larger than the year-round population.

In 2020, the complexity of this demographic picture increased because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with more people spending the winter on Shelter Island, while pandemic restrictions temporarily reduced the number of visitors during the summer. The timing of these factors relative to the 2020 Census makes a complete picture of ongoing demographic trends on the Island difficult. This chapter uses data from the 2020 Census as

well as the most current (2021) data available from the American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates, supplemented by additional seasonal population data from Suffolk County, in order to form as accurate depiction as possible. In addition, given that Shelter Island’s small year-round population may reduce the reliability of the ACS estimates, other data sources (e.g. school enrollments, voter registration, and Assessor’s data) are used where appropriate to increase accuracy.

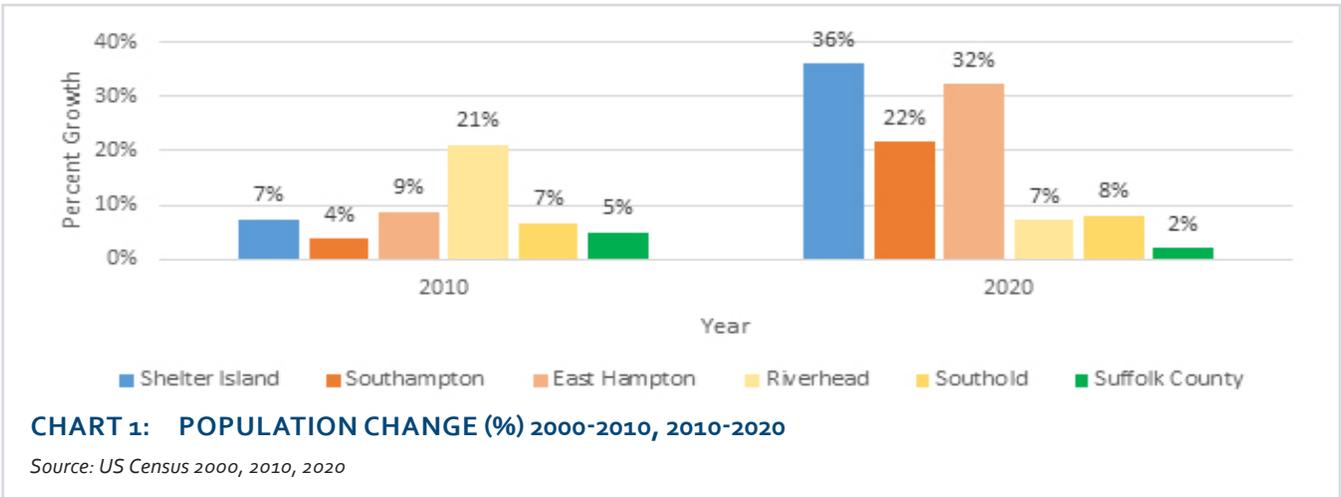
### FULL TIME POPULATION

According to the 2020 census, Shelter Island’s full-time population is 3,253 people, up 46% since 2000, with most of that growth coming since 2010. As shown below, population growth in Shelter Island has consistently outpaced growth in the County overall but has generally been on par with peer seasonal communities such as Southampton and East Hampton. The significant percentage increases seen in these places likely reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as either seasonal Shelter Island residents or residents of New York City relocated to the Island on a more permanent basis with the ability to work from home. It is difficult to know how long-term this trend is, but early indications are that remote work will continue in some fashion for the foreseeable future – likely in a hybrid environment – which may continue to swell Shelter Island’s year-round population for years to come but perhaps not at the same high levels.

Year	Shelter Island	Southampton	East Hampton	Riverhead	Southold	Suffolk County
2000	2,228	54,712	19,719	27,680	20,599	1,419,369
2010	2,392 7.4%	56,791 4%	21,457 9%	33,506 21%	21,968 7%	1,493,350 5.2%
2020	3,253 36%	69,036 22%	28,385 32%	35,902 7%	23,732 8%	1,525,920 2.22%

TABLE 1: POPULATION CHANGE OVER TIME

Source: US Census 2000, 2010, 2020



### PART-TIME POPULATION

Shelter Island experiences a significant population boom during the summer months due to its popularity as a vacation destination; many residences are second homes or rentals. The influx of people leads to a bustling atmosphere and an increase in tourism-related business, such as restaurants, hotels, and recreational services.

This non-resident, seasonal, and visitor population is typically much larger than the year-round population. While it can be challenging to determine precise figures of the non-permanent population, the Suffolk County

Department of Economic Development and Planning has compiled data that sheds light on recent changes in the Town’s seasonal population. Since 2010, Shelter Island’s seasonal population has increased by about 4%, but is down from a high of nearly 9,000 additional residents during the 2013-2017 period, as the number of seasonal homes decreased by over 10%. This may reflect the conversion of seasonal homes to permanent residents during the pandemic. In addition, the number of lodging rooms has declined since 2010, reducing that short-population.

	2010-14	2013-17	2017-2021
Seasonal Homes	1,699	1,927	1,724
Estimated Population in Seasonal Homes	6,796	7,708	6,896
Estimated Seasonal Guests of Year-Round Residents	532	598	892
Lodging Rooms	207	174	174
Estimated Population in Lodging	770	662	662
Total Seasonal Population	8,098	8,968	8,450
Year-Round Population	2,669	2,643	3,661
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>10,767</b>	<b>11,611</b>	<b>12,111</b>
Percent Seasonal	75%	77%	68%

TABLE 2: ESTIMATED CHANGE IN SHELTER ISLAND SEASONAL POPULATION, 2010-2021

Source: Suffolk County Department of Economic Development & Planning, 2023, based on ACS Five-Year Estimates

## HOUSEHOLDS

The census bureau divides households into “family households” and “non-family households,” depending on the relationship between residents living under the same roof.

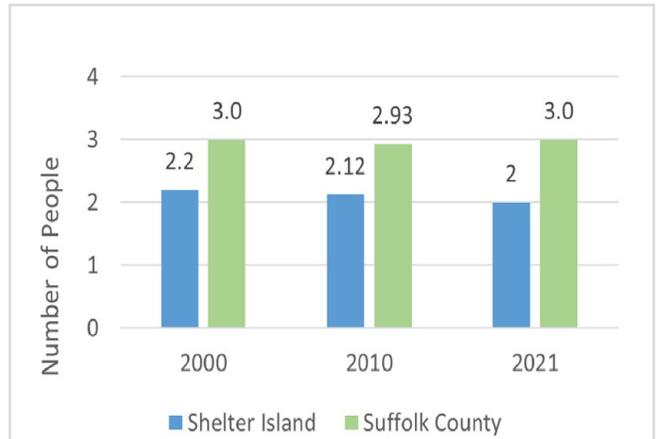
- Family household: A family is defined as group of two people or more (one of whom is the “householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. A family household is therefore a household maintained by a householder who is in a family and can include any unrelated people who may be residing there. The number of family households is equal to the number of families in a given geography.
- Non-family household: A householder living alone (a one-person household) or household where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related.

Since 2000, both Shelter Island and Suffolk County have experienced a steady, gradual decline in the percentage of family households, family households with married couples, and households with children under 18 years of age, with a corresponding increase in non-family households, households living alone, and households with people 65 and older.

	2000	2010	2021
Total Households	996	1,128	1,783

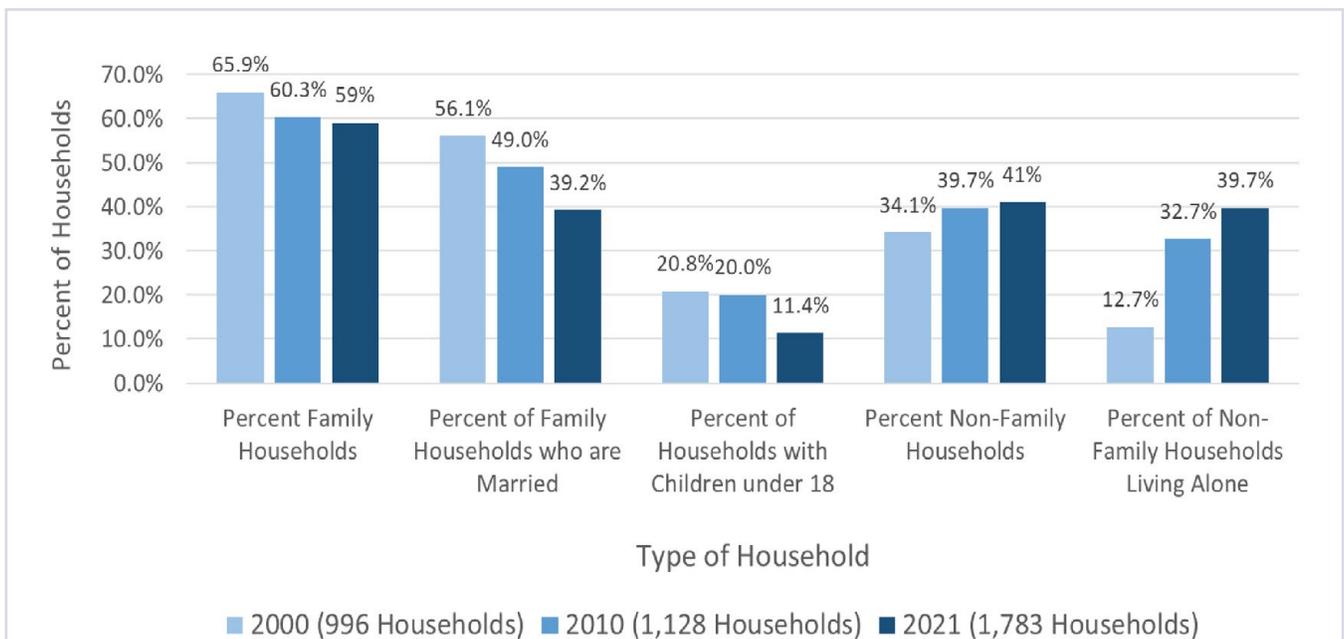
**TABLE 3: SHELTER ISLAND HOUSEHOLDS**

Source: US Census (2000, 2010), ACS 5Y Estimates (2010, 2021)



**CHART 3: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

Source: US Census (2000, 2010)\*, ACS 5Y Estimates (2010, 2021)



**CHART 2: CHANGE IN HOUSEHOLD TYPE OVER TIME**

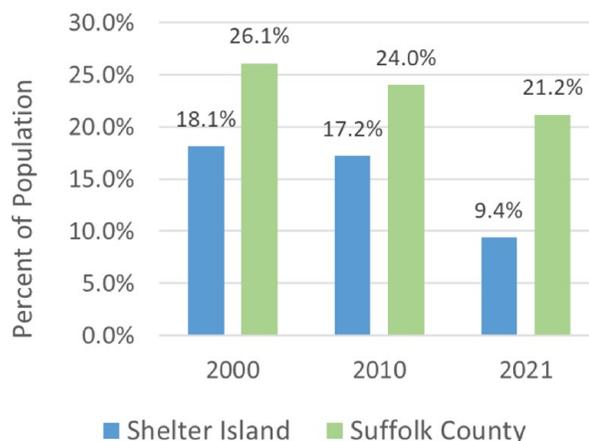
Source: US Census (2000, 2010), ACS 5Y Estimates (2010, 2021)

However, Shelter Island appears to be experiencing these trends at a significantly greater rate. The Town in particular has seen significant growth in the number of non-family households living alone—with more than twice the share of people living alone in 2021 than lived alone in 2000. In addition, the number of households with children under 18 years of age dropped by nearly 10% between 2010 and 2021, falling from 20% of households to about 11% of households, a trend that is also reflected in declining school enrollment, which is also discussed in Chapter 9. At the same time, the number of households with residents 65 and older increased from 28% of the population in 2010 to 36 percent of the population in 2020. These factors have led to a continued decrease in the average household size on Shelter Island, from 2.2 in 2000 to 2.12 in 2010 and 2.0 in 2021, which is much lower than the County’s averages. The County’s average household size has also remained stable at around 3.

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

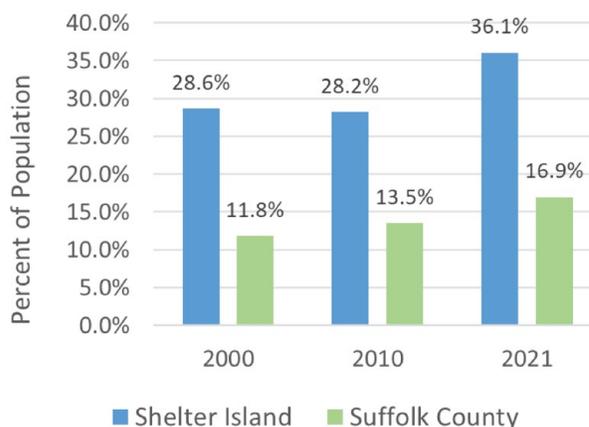
Shelter Island has a predominantly white, non-Hispanic population, with 84.4% of residents identifying as white in the 2020 Census. While non-white racial and ethnic groups have historically and continue to represent a small percentage of the population, Shelter Island has seen a significant increase in the number of residents who identify as two or more races and/or Hispanic in the last 10-20 years.

Since 2000, the Hispanic population grew from 2% of the population (53 people) in 2000 to 8.9% of the population (289 people) in 2020. This change in the population is consistent with trends in Suffolk County as a whole, which may be attributed to factors such as immigration, higher birth rates, and internal migration. However, Suffolk County saw a more significant rise in the Hispanic population, which increased from 10.5% to 21.8% of the population between 2000 and 2020.



**CHART 4: POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE**

Source: US Census (2000, 2010)\*, ACS 5Y Estimates (2010, 2021)



**CHART 5: POPULATION OVER 65 YEARS OF AGE**

Source: US Census (2000, 2010)\*, ACS 5Y Estimates (2010, 2021)

Racial and Ethnic Status	2000 (Population: 2,228)	2010 (Population: 2,392)	2020 (Population: 3,253)
Hispanic	2.8%	4.9%	8.9%
White	94.9%	91.9%	84.4%
African American or Black	0.0%	1.1%	0.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Asian	0.2%	0.4%	1.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%
Two or More Races	1.9%	1.4%	3.5%

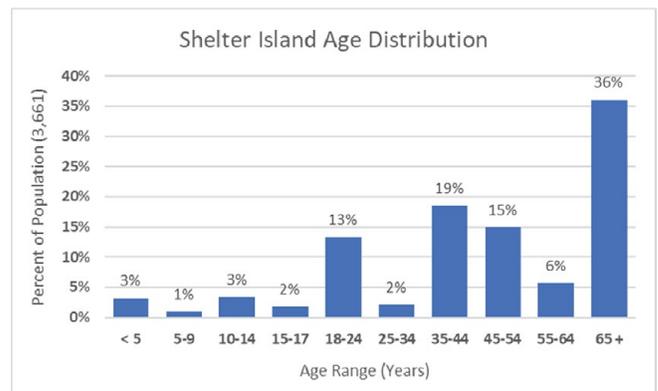
**TABLE 4: RACIAL COMPOSITION – PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION (2000, 2010, 2020)**

Source: US Census (2000, 2010, 2020)

### AGE COMPOSITION

As of 2021, the median age in Shelter Island is 51.3 years of age, much higher than the Suffolk County median of 41.7 years, as well as that for New York State (39.2) and for the United States overall (38.4).

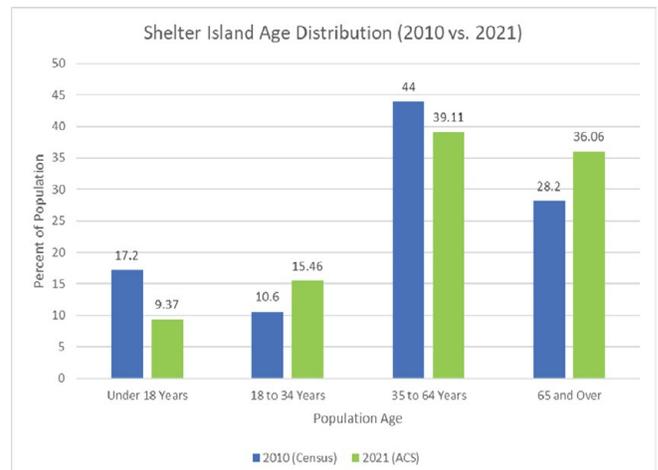
Shelter Island’s year-round population shows trends in age characteristics that are consistent with other affluent communities: a relatively high median age; fewer people in the younger adult cohorts who are establishing careers and families (Aged 18-34 =15%); and a high percentage of the population over age 55 (42%).



### INCOME

In 2021, Shelter Island’s median household income (in 2021 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$100,094 – exceeding the state (\$74,314) and national (\$69,021) averages, but lower than the Suffolk County median household income of \$113,683.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the other jurisdictions – which experienced slight declines in median household income from 2000-2010 before turning to modest growth through 2021 – Shelter Island saw growth throughout the period, with the latter half median increasing by over 10%.

Chart 8 shows the number of households in a spectrum of income tiers. Between 2011 and 2021, there was a significant increase in households in the highest income tiers. There was also an increase in the number and share of households earning less than median income.



**CHART 6: SHELTER ISLAND AGE DISTRIBUTION**

Source: 2021 ACS 5Y Estimate, 2010 Census

1 Source: 2021 ACS 5Y Estimate

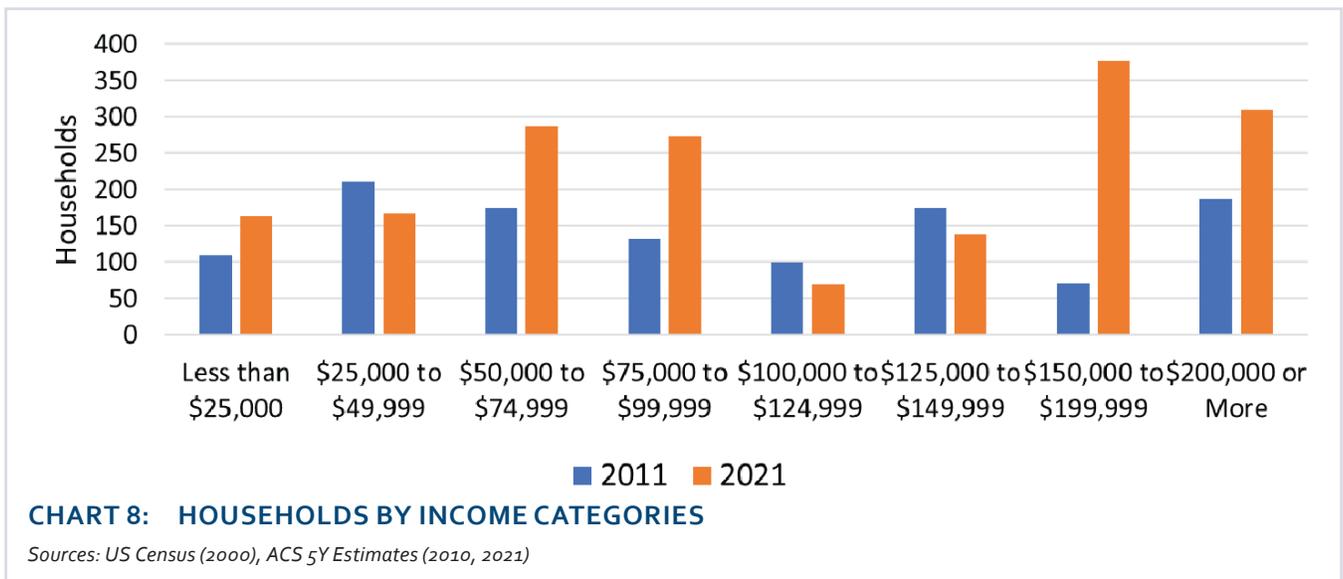
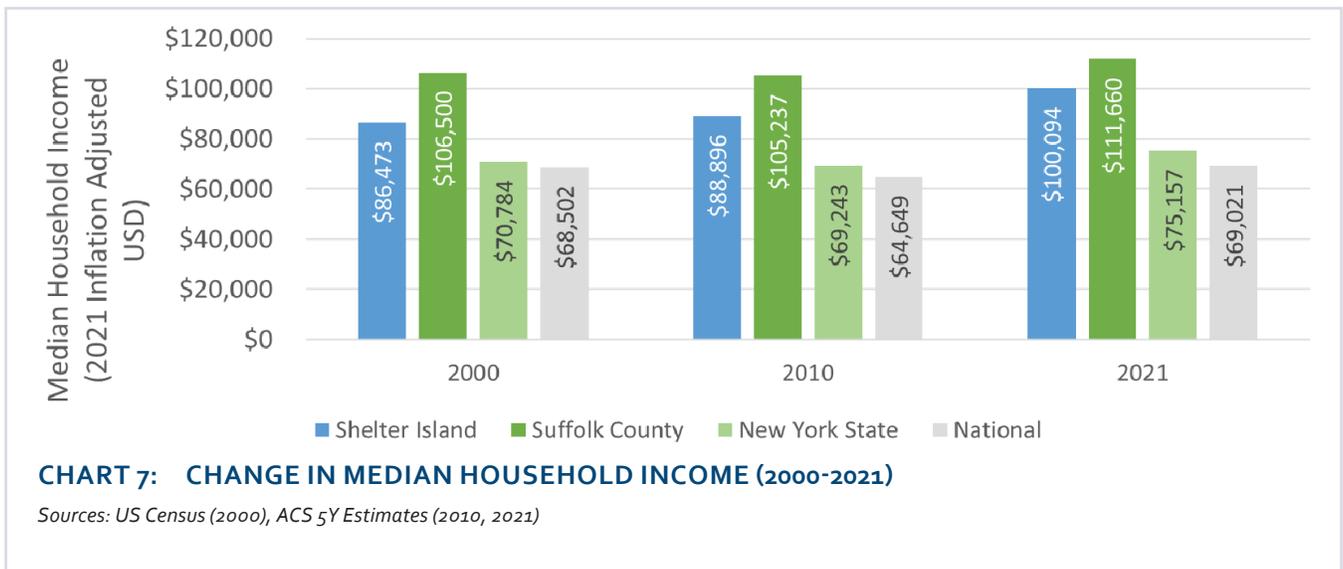
While median household income has gradually risen over time, Shelter Island’s poverty rate – measured by calculating the ratio of income to poverty level – has risen significantly between 2010 and 2021.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, the Town’s poverty rate surpassed the county’s level, approaching the state and national averages.

Another data point is that of the 200 individuals who receive food from the CAST mobile food pantry every 2 weeks, 57 of them are children, 105 are adults between the ages of 18-49, 23 are adults between the ages of 50-62 and 15 are seniors.

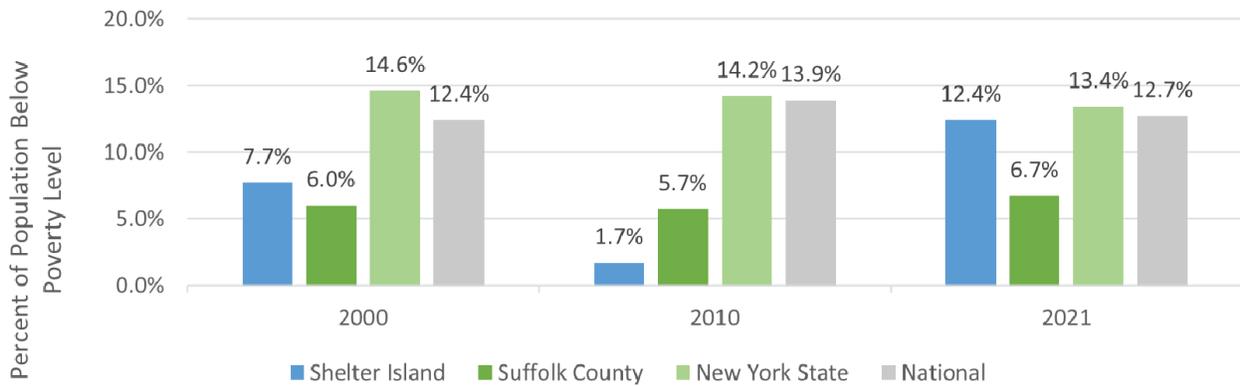
As shown in the following section, the increased proportion of residents experiencing poverty in Shelter Island is also reflected in New York State public school enrollment data, which, as discussed below, shows a steady climb in the number of pre-K-12 students at an economic disadvantage in Shelter Island since 2011.

It should also be noted that the Census Bureau measures poverty by income level, and this income level does not vary geographically; the federal poverty threshold for a family of four is \$26,200, regardless of location. In high-cost locations like the greater New York region, many households may not fall below the federal poverty

2 Source: 2021 ACS 5Y Estimate, 2010 Census

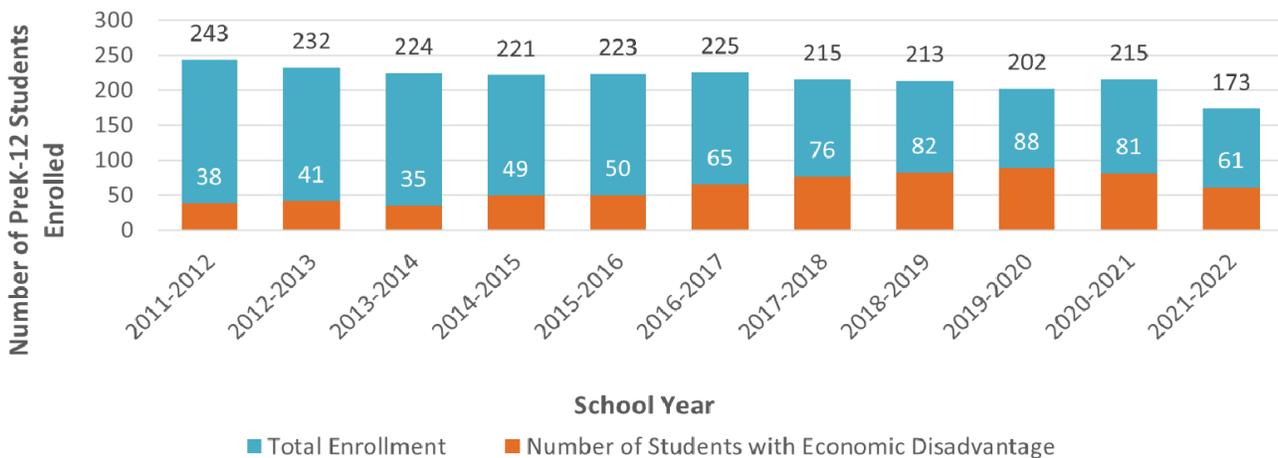


level but nonetheless experience significant income constraints. In December 2022, the Suffolk County Legislature’s Welfare to Work Commission released a report noting that, due to the high cost of living and recent high inflation rates, the true definition of poverty on Long Island should be \$55,000 for a family of four.



**CHART 9: POVERTY RATE (2000, 2010, 2021)**

Sources: US Census (2000), ACS 5Y Estimates (2010, 2021)



**CHART 10: SHARE OF SHELTER ISLAND STUDENTS WITH ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE**

Source: NYS Department of Education School Enrollment Data (2011-2022)

Note - the NYSEDS enrollment data may differ slightly from data reported by the school district, which can be due to the exact timing of when enrollment is reported.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

### Pre-K-12 Education

Consistent with its broader population trends of fewer households with children, more householders living alone, and aging residents, Shelter Island has seen a steady decline in its school enrollment in the past 10 years. The exception was the 2020-2021 school year, which saw a slight increase in enrollment, possibly reflecting families who relocated to Shelter Island during the COVID-19 pandemic.

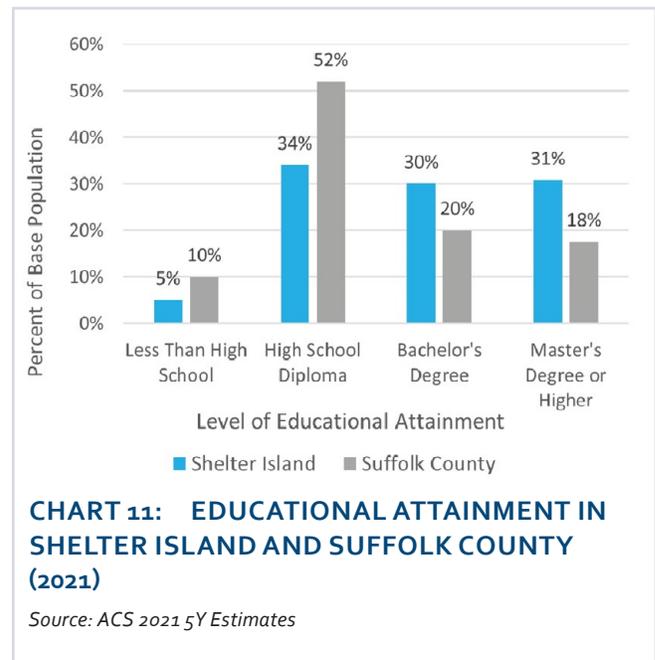
Similar to broader population trends in the region, Shelter Island's school population is becoming more diverse. In 2021-22 (the most recent year for which data are available), 24% of K-12 students identified as Hispanic, compared with 12% in 2013-14. During the same time period, the percentage of students identified as English-language learners increased from 3% to 8%.

Within the past decade, the percentage of economically disadvantaged K-12 students in the Shelter Island school district has grown, from 16% in the 2013-14 school year to as high as 40% in 2020-21, declining to 35% in the 2021-22 school year.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Shelter Island has long been a highly educated community. More than half of its residents over 25 years old are estimated to have completed college (having earned Bachelor's degrees)—with half of those who have graduated from college having gone on to complete a Master's degree or higher (e.g. professional school degree, doctorate degree). The number of residents who have earned Bachelor's or Master's degrees increased from 44% to 61% of the population between 2010 and 2020. The portion of the adult population (25 years and over) who have not completed high school decreased slightly over the same period.

Shelter Island's high levels of educational attainment are particularly noteworthy in comparison to the Suffolk County data, pictured below.





Menantic Yacht Club Races  
Source: Jim Colligan

# 3

## EXISTING BUILT ENVIRONMENT: LAND USE, AND ZONING

Known for its natural beauty and small-town charm, Shelter Island has a unique land use development pattern that reflects its commitment to preserving its rural character and protecting its natural resources. Historical development on the Island spans several centuries and its history is intertwined with the broader history of Long Island and New York State.

This chapter provides an overview of development and conservation in Shelter Island and a summary of existing land uses and zoning districts. Zoning powers are the primary control for development of land, by regulating what types of land uses are permitted where, and the density, scale, and design of buildings. This chapter also identifies anticipated development trends, including a calculation of “build-out” of existing parcels based on current zoning and environmental constraints. This analysis helps to identify the implications of current zoning regulations on future development. It provides insights into the potential growth patterns, land use changes, and infrastructure needs that may arise as the community develops over time.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Zoning has controlled overall growth and promoted a rural land use pattern.

For much of its history, Shelter Island remained a quiet, rural town built around agriculture, fishing, and other natural resources. Faced with significant growth in the mid-20th century, the Town adopted a zoning ordinance in 1957, which put an upper limit on growth and established large residential lots (1- & 2-acre zoning).



### Most developed areas are used for single-family residential homes.

The Island is primarily composed of residential areas, ranging from single-family homes to larger estates. The residential neighborhoods are characterized by a mix of architectural styles, including traditional New England-style cottages and contemporary designs. The Island's residents value privacy and enjoy the tranquil surroundings.



### Commercial areas are limited.

Shelter Island has limited commercial development, and the town has been careful to maintain a small-scale, locally oriented business environment. The primary commercial areas are concentrated in the Town center, Bridge Street, and Shelter Island Heights. Business (B) zoning is mainly along Route 114, where you can find a range of shops, restaurants, and services catering to residents and visitors, but there are 4 small pockets of B zone scattered around the Island.



### Land conservation has been highly effective at protecting more than a third of the Island, but it comes with its own challenges.

Preservation of wetlands, woodlands, and other natural resources has always been an emphasis for the Town and other community partners. Conservation of Mashomack Preserve, Sylvester Manor, and dozens of smaller properties has protected a significant portion of the Island. However, rising land values may limit the impact of available conservation funding. At the same time, protecting open



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

space and limiting growth can further drive-up prices and restrict access to the Island to all but the wealthy. The Town should continue to be selective in its open space preservation efforts by focusing on locations of special importance because of their natural resource value, visual or historic significance.

### Development pressure will continue.

About 15% of Shelter Island consists of vacant and unprotected parcels, with about 1,000 to 1,100 acres of developable land. Additional growth is possible, and likely to accelerate over the next decade, as oversized developed parcels are subdivided, and smaller homes are replaced by larger ones. The use of on-site wells and sanitary systems requires continued one acre minimum zoning, lessening more compact growth patterns, that are typical in other areas.



### Land use regulations have traditionally balanced public interest while maintaining property rights.

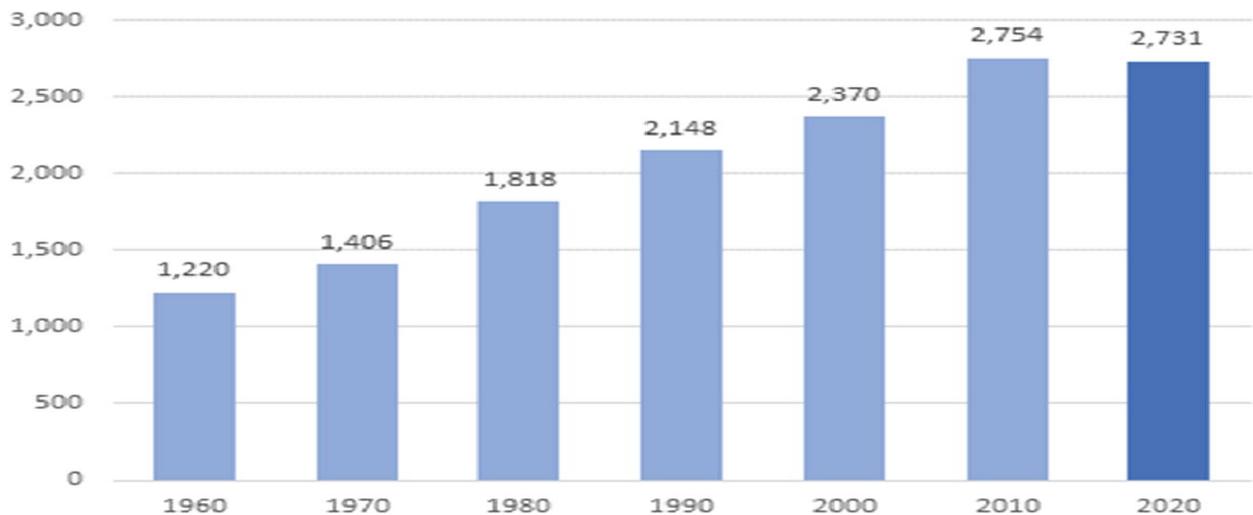
Shelter Island is a unique community; the Island's tranquil and isolated environment has historically attracted residents who have a general spirit of individualism. The concept of property rights is important as residents often express a strong interest in exercising personal autonomy and maintaining the integrity of their properties. However, it is important that zoning and other regulations are appropriately designed to protect the most valued qualities of the Island, such as its historic and rural characteristics, the environment and natural resources, and other aspects that affect quality of life.



## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

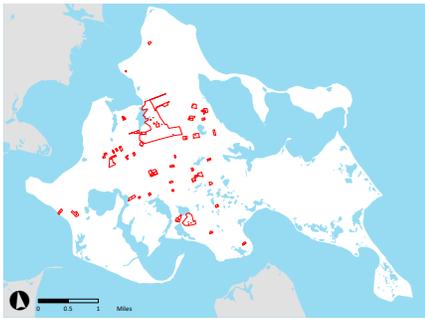
The historical development pattern of Shelter Island can be grouped generally into the main periods described below:

- Early Settlement:** Shelter Island was originally inhabited by Algonquin people of the Manhasset clan. The indigenous people called it “Island sheltered by islands” and it became known by settlers as “Shelter Island.” On April 22, 1636, Charles I of England, gave the island to William Alexander, 1st Earl of Stirling. The first European settler Natanal Sylvester, arrived with his family, indentured servants and slaves in 1652.
- Agriculture and Fishing:** In the early years of settlement, agriculture, especially farming and fishing, were the primary economic activities on the Island. Additionally, Shelter Island, like many coastal communities in the region provided captains and crew for whaling ships but was not a port and provided no services to the industry. Structures were isolated to large farms and estates, or clustered within a few centers.
- Tourism, Summer, and Religious Retreats:** In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Shelter Island’s natural beauty and proximity to New York City led to the development of tourism and summer retreats. Wealthy families from New York City built grand summer homes on the Island, taking advantage of its picturesque landscapes and waterfront views.
- Residential Development:** Over time, Shelter Island saw residential development expand beyond the summer retreats. The Island’s popularity as a vacation destination, coupled with its rural charm, attracted year-round residents, leading to the establishment of more permanent homes and neighborhoods.
- Conservation and Preservation:** Shelter Island residents and local authorities have made efforts to preserve the Island’s natural environment and historical sites. Conservation easements (like the one protecting Cackle Hill), zoning regulations, and historic preservation efforts have been implemented to protect the Island’s unique character and prevent over development.
- Modern Development:** In more recent years, Shelter Island has experienced increased development pressure in the residential market. The issue of balancing market demands and preserving the unique charm that attracts people to the Island remains.

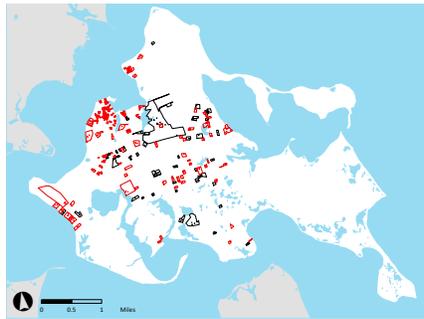


**CHART 12: NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS ON SHELTER ISLAND**

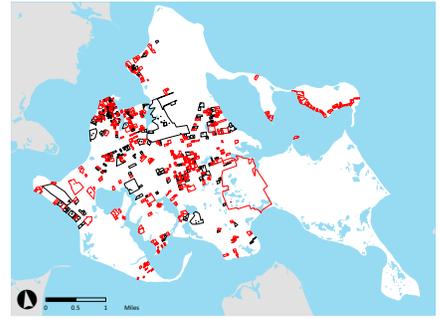
Source: US Census 1960-2020



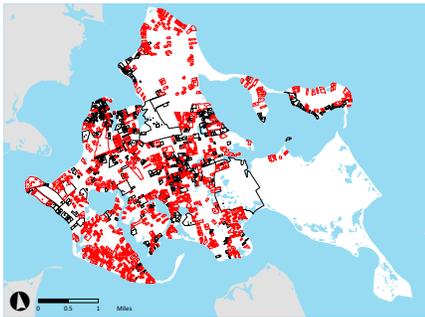
Early History (1700s to 1860)



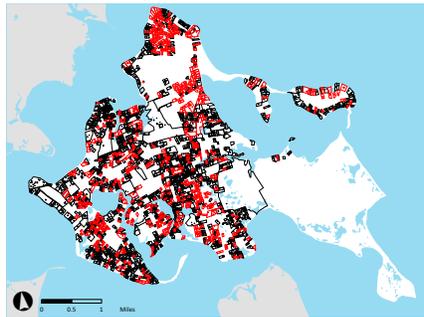
Post-Civil War Boom (1860 to 1899)



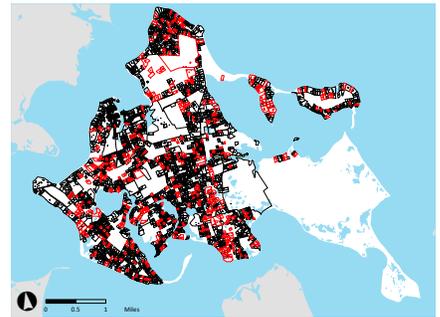
Hotel Heyday (1900 to 1939)



Postwar Suburban Growth (1940 to 1979)



Maturing Suburbs (1980 to 1999)



21st Century (2000 to 2020)

As shown above, the growth of Shelter Island increased significantly following the boom in home construction after World War II. In 1957, Shelter Island was among the first towns on the East End to adopt zoning, which established a new pattern of one- and two-acre house lots across most of the Island. While this reduced the overall density of development, growth continued. Chart 12 shows the number of housing units on the Island according to the decennial census.

The map above shows the age of remaining structures in the Town based on Assessor’s data. The data doesn’t show historic develop patterns, it just shows homes present when the data was collected. However, the map does give some indication of general settlement patterns. Existing older pre-war homes tend to be clustered in the central portions of Town, along Bridge Street, Shelter Island Heights, and Nostrand Parkway in northwestern portions of the Island. Portions of the Island with high concentrations of post-war homes can be found in the northern portion of Hay Beach & Dering Harbor, Ram Island, and along the southern coastline and Silver Beach.

## EXISTING LAND USE

Land use refers to the distribution of various activities across public and private lands, typically ranging from commercial, industrial, and residential uses to conservation, recreation, and “vacant” land (i.e. land that is not currently being put to any particular use). Land use is different than zoning. While land use describes the current use of the land, the town’s zoning ordinance regulates land use changes that can occur, both now and in the future. In each of Shelter Island’s zoning districts, the zoning ordinance sets specific standards for uses, densities, and dimensions that must be followed. Current uses may generally continue, but any change in use has to go through a permitting and approval process and be consistent with the ordinance or obtain a variance.

Current land use was obtained using data from CoreLogic, which is a leading provider of real estate data in the United States. The data was then reviewed by Town staff to ensure that the data reflected up-to-date use of land. As seen in Table 5, of the Island’s 6,920 acres of total land area, about 44% is in recreation and open space use and 42% is in residential. These uses, totaling about 86% of the Island’s landscape, are unlikely to change significantly. The next largest category is vacant at about 9%. “vacant” land uses refer to lands that are undeveloped, unprotected, in private ownership and zoned for residential or commercial development.

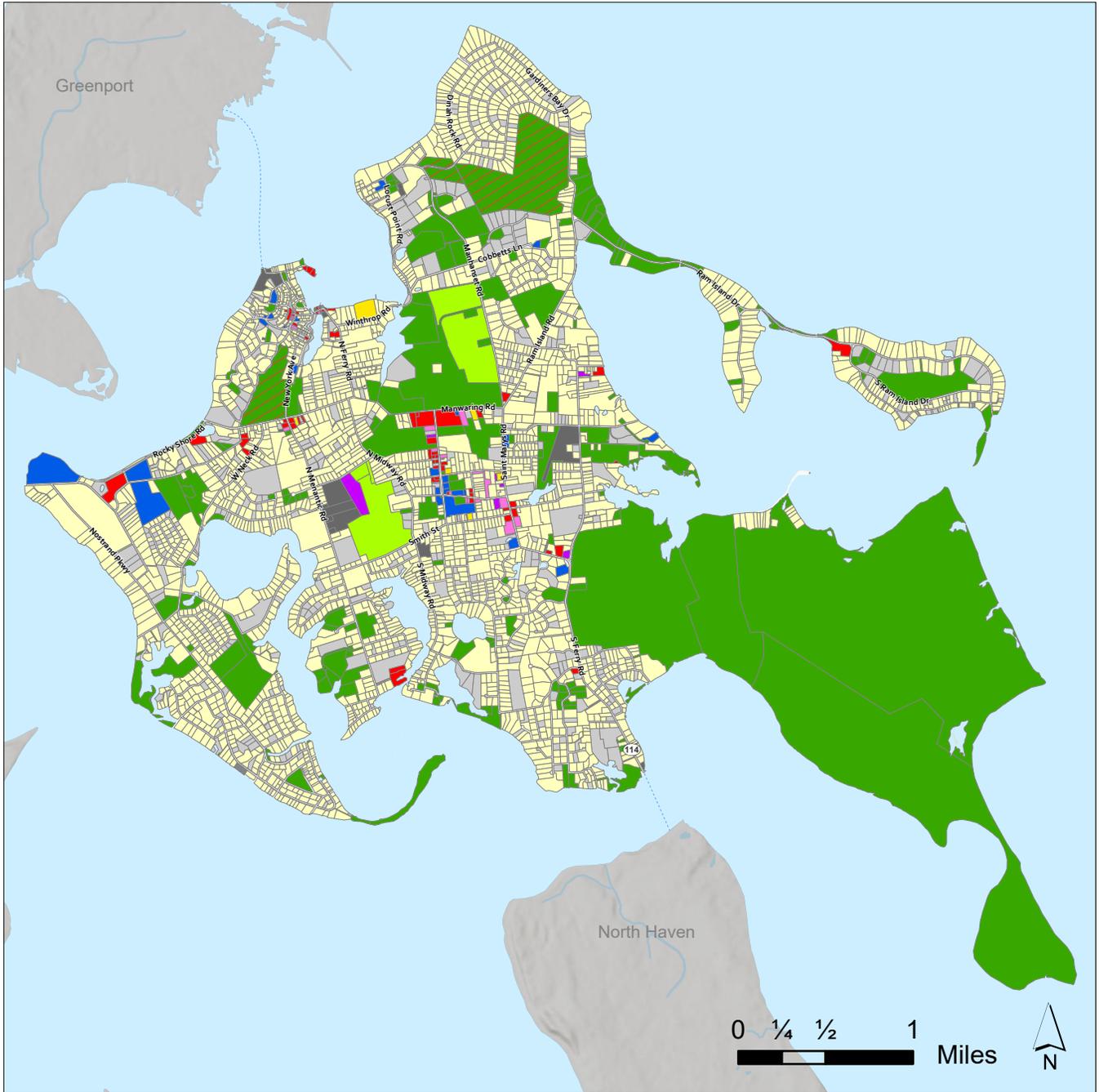
The Recreation and Open Space category includes properties that are both officially and unofficially used as open space. In some cases, these properties may not be permanently deeded as open space, but their current and future land use is not expected to change. Additional details about preserved lands can be found in Chapter 8.

Land Use	Acres	Percentage
Low Density Single Family	2,881	42%
Medium Density Residential	13	0%
Mixed Use	15	0%
Commercial	56	1%
Industrial	16	0%
Agriculture	153	2%
Recreation and Open Space*	3,036	44%
Institutional	82	1%
Transportation and Utilities	58	1%
Vacant	611	9%
	6,920	100%

\* - includes Commercial Recreation category

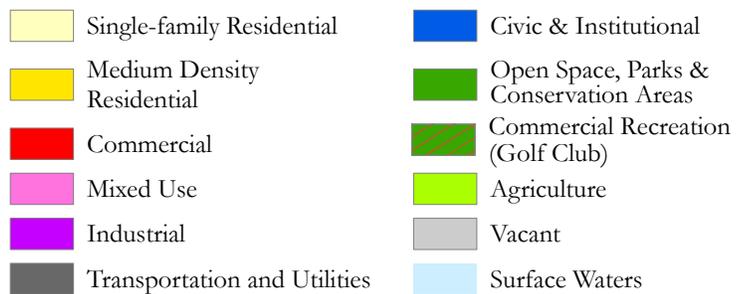
**TABLE 5: EXISTING LAND USE**

Source: Assessors data, with parcel-by-parcel spot check updates BFJ and Shelter Island Staff



**FIGURE 2: EXISTING LAND USE**

Source: Assessors data, with parcel-by-parcel spot check updates BFI and Shelter Island Staff



## ZONING REGULATIONS

Shelter Island was a pioneer on Eastern Long Island in adopting zoning (1957), and the first in the region to adopt two-acre zoning, to regulate irrigation, to control coastal barrier beaches, and to enter into a DEC “lead agency” agreement. Shelter Island has an unusually large share of its land in protected ownership, whether public, The Nature Conservancy, or other non-profit organizations.

Section 133 of the Town Code establishes six zoning districts, with three residential districts ranging from 40,000- to 80,000-square-foot minimum lot size, and two business districts with 40,000-square-foot minimum required lots. The sixth district is the Causeway District, established in 2011 to protect the causeways to the Ram Islands. The purpose of each of these districts is listed below:

- **AA (Residential):** to provide for low-density residential development in coastal environments.
- **A (Residential):** to provide for moderate-density residential development where similar development already exists.
- **C Residential:** to provide for medium-density residential development together with a moderate amount of carefully controlled nonresidential uses.
- **B Business:** to provide areas for mixed business uses, including residential; business, retail and other services for island residents and visitors.
- **B1 Restricted Business:** The restricted business zone was established to maintain the historic, park-like, government-center appearance of the Town center. Commercial enterprises are restricted to the types of uses that would have the least impact on the appearance, traffic patterns, character, and parking facilities of the existing neighborhood. Special permits are required for all buildings and uses (except governmental buildings and uses) in the district, to ensure that the special criteria established for this zone are considered in the initial planning process, whether it be for new buildings and uses or for the renovation or replacement of existing buildings or uses.

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size	Maximum Impervious Lot Coverage	Lot Frontage	Front/Side/Rear Setbacks (in feet)	Maximum Building Height
AA Residential (Low density residential)	80,000 sf	25%/40%	160 feet	40/25/25	2 stories/35 feet
A Residential - (Moderate-density residential)	40,000 sf	25% buildings, 40% overall	140 feet	40/25/25	2 stories/35 feet
C Residential (Medium density residential with controlled nonresidential use)	40,000 sf	30%/40%	100 feet	30/10/10	2 st./35'
B Business (Mixed business uses)	40,000 sf	70%/75%	100 feet	30/10/10	2 st./35'
B1 Restricted Business (Municipal and restricted commercial use)	40,000 sf	50%/75%	100 feet	30/10/10	35 feet
Causeway District (Addresses areas with environmental complexity)	80,000 sf-200,000 sf	Varies	160'	50/30/30	25 feet

**TABLE 6: ZONING DISTRICTS AND BASIC DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Source: Shelter Island Town Zoning Code

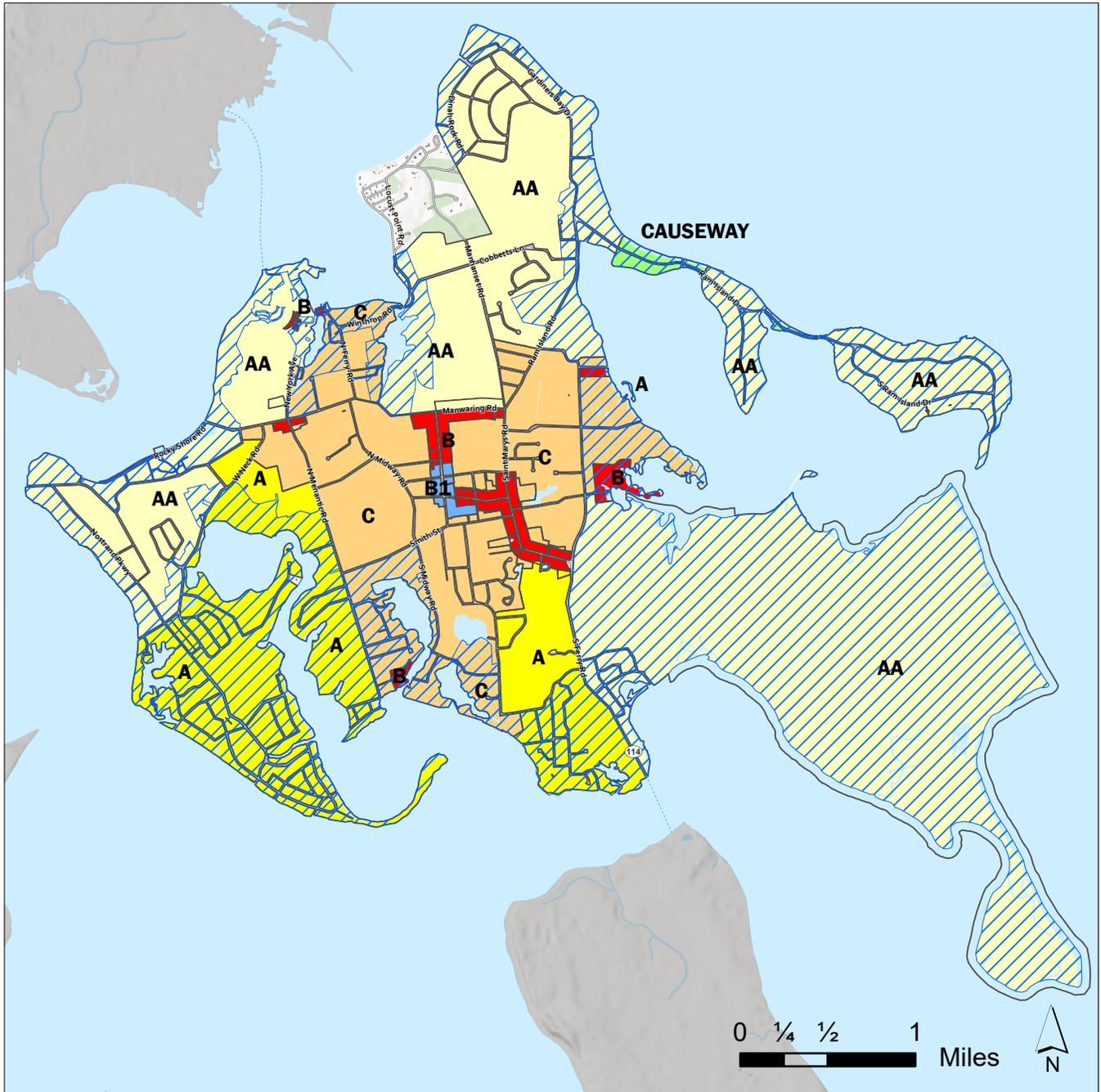


FIGURE 3: ZONING DISTRICTS

**LEGEND**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> A       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> C   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightyellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> AA | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black;"></span> CAUSEWAY  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, blue 2px, blue 4px); border: 1px solid black;"></span> Near Shore Overlay District |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B1        |  |

- **Causeway District:** causeway areas are unique in their characteristics so as to justify special district classification and development regulation for the following reasons:
  1. They are contiguous tracts of land with water on both sides;
  2. They are low-lying and prone to flooding from opposite directions;
  3. They have extremely small depth to ground water, with little traditional upland to be devoted to development and septic with the need to bring in fill;
  4. They are in or adjacent to both the federal FEMA line and the NYS Coastal Erosion Hazard Area line; and
  5. They provide scenic benefits along a public roadway.

In addition to the base zoning districts, Section 133-12 of the Zoning Code establishes a Near Shore and Peninsular Overlay District, designed to “protect selected areas of unique importance to the water and other natural resources of the town.” The overlay covers Mashomack Preserve, all of Ram Island, Silver Beach and the Menantic peninsula and wraps around the periphery of the Island. This overlay provides a 75-foot shoreline vegetative buffer with restricted uses; requires dwellings and other structures, including wastewater systems, to be at least 100 feet from tidal or freshwater wetlands; mandates permeable pavement for driveways; and establishes standards for on-site stormwater recharge.

Since the Town adopted zoning, the base density of one- and two-acre lots has limited the overall amount of growth, but the resulting pattern of that growth has more to do with the rest of suburban Long Island than it does with the traditional development context on Shelter Island. The Island was once marked by compact developed centers surrounded by open countryside, farms, and estates. These formerly open areas were later built out following the one- and two-acre residential lots required by zoning. This suburban pattern contributed to the fragmentation of important natural and cultural landscapes while spreading out populations that could best support walkable centers.

The Town of Shelter Island does not control the zoning for lands in the Village of Dering Harbor. Dering Harbor has two classes of single family districts. The A and B Districts have minimum lot sizes of 3 acres and 1.5 acres respectively.

## DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND ISSUES

### DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The potential for future growth can be estimated by identifying all of the land available for additional development and calculating the potential “build-out” on those parcels based on current zoning. Assuming current trends continue, in theory, every developable parcel could eventually be developed according to the restrictions of zoning, building codes and environmental regulations. The build-out is simply the calculation of the resulting number of new homes and area of commercial buildings that could be built and can be expressed either as an end-state number or projected over various time periods.

The first step in calculating the build-out is creation of a “Build-out Status Map” that identifies privately owned, vacant land without significant constraints to development. This is a subtractive process, first eliminating parcels that are either fully developed or fully protected, then taking out roads, utility corridors, public facilities and other land unlikely to be developed because of use or ownership, and finally subtracting lands that are protected by environmental regulations or which are simply too steep or wet to be developable.

The Build-out Status map identifies:

- Developed land, shown in light gray, including parcels which are developed and are unlikely to be subdivided. It also includes land unsuitable for development such as cemeteries and utility properties.

- Vacant, developable land, shown in pink on this map, represents parcels that are subject to further development.
- Subdividable Land, shown in yellow indicates large properties with built single family homes, but have the theoretical potential for subdivision because they are large enough for more than one lot.
- Other Properties that could be developed: This analysis also identifies several unique and large properties that are privately owned. While they are technically subdividable, they are considered to be less likely candidates for development, given their existing use is expected to continue. This includes unprotected areas of Sylvester Manor, Gardiner’s Bay Country Club, and the Quinipet Camp and Retreat Center. Note that while the Mashomack Preserve could fall into this category, it is extremely unlikely for that to happen. Mashomack Preserve has been incorporated into the Shelter Island Nature Preserve System (April 9, 1999). The preserve is run by the Nature Conservancy who purchased the property in 1979 to preserve the land.

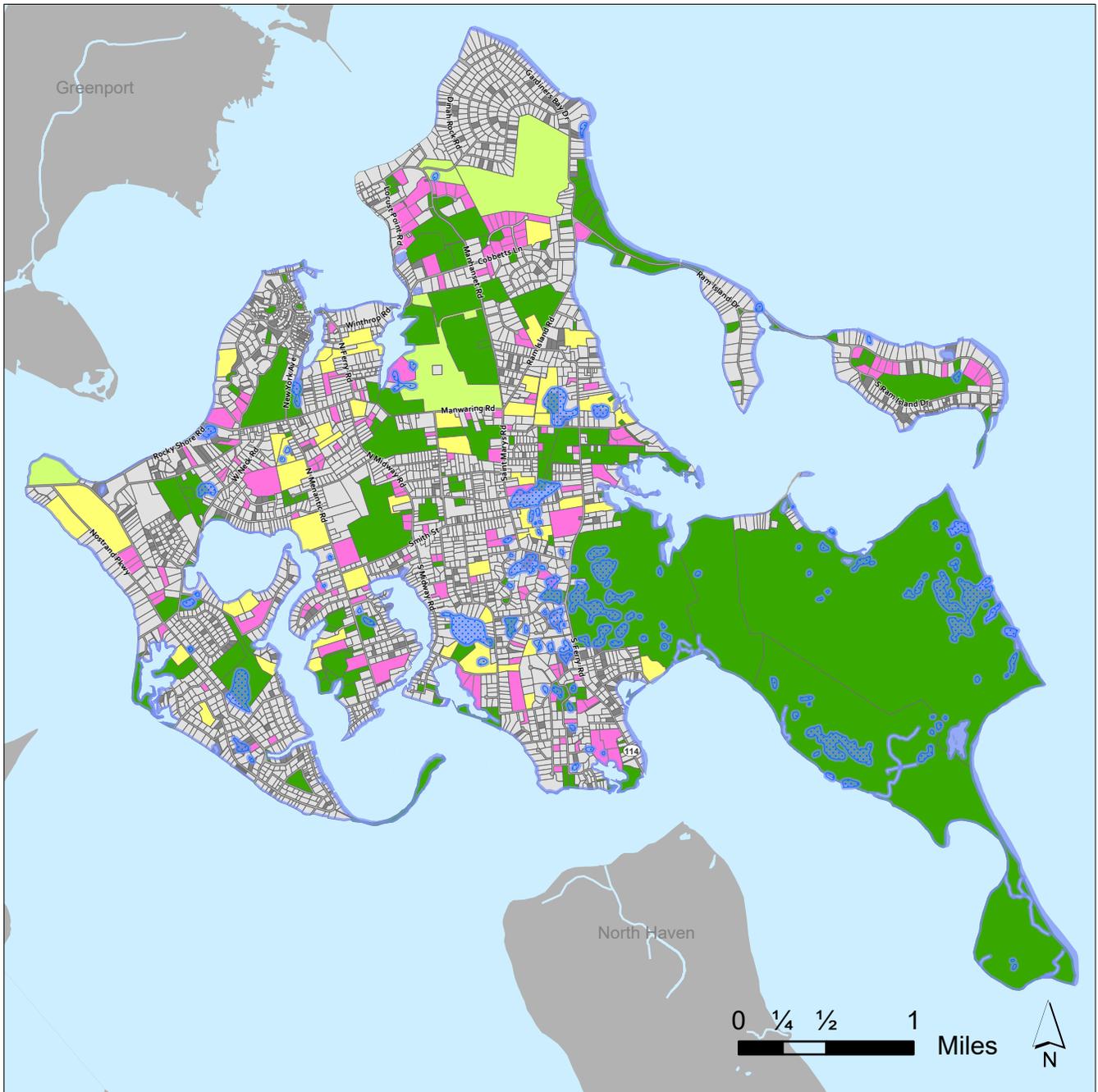
The Build-out Status map illustrates that there is development potential on 146 vacant lots scattered throughout the Town, amounting to more than 1,000 acres. It is estimated that 22 of those parcels are candidates for subdivision, leading to a maximum development of 153 single family homes on vacant properties. This assumes that all of the properties could accommodate a private water supply well and wastewater system. There

Zoning District	Total Parcels	Parcels that are Subdividable	Total Build-out with Subdivided Lots
Vacant Lots with Development Potential	146	22*	153
Single-Family Subdividable Lots	-	48*	244**
Other Subdividable Lots	-	3*	133
Total			530

**TABLE 7: BUILD-OUT SUMMARY**

\* - Subdividable parcels includes parcels greater than 120,000 SF in districts with 40,000 SF min lot size and parcels greater than 200,000 SF in districts with 80,000 SF min lot size (AA Districts)

\*\* - this is the net potential for new units compared to existing development.



**FIGURE 4: DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL ANALYSIS**

Source: Assessors data, with parcel-by-parcel spot check updates BFI and Shelter Island Staff

**Legend**

- Vacant with Development Potential
- Single-Family with Subdivision Potential
- Other with Subdivision Potential
- Developed or Otherwise Unsuitable for Development
- Vacant, Undersized Lot
- Shoreline, Wetland and Vegetated Buffer
- Wetlands
- Surface Waters
- Open Space, Parks & Conservation Areas

are also 19 vacant properties located within the Village of Dering Harbor, however, some of them are too small to be development opportunities.

As shown in table 7, large residential parcels also have the latent potential to be subdivided. It is estimated that 48 single family lots could be subdivided into 2 parcels or more, with a maximum of additional lots if all of the candidates were developed. However, these properties are less likely to be subdivided compared to vacant properties. Also, many parcels in Shelter Island have deed restrictions or conservation easements limiting future development. This information is not always recorded in the Assessor's database and is sometimes only available on the property deed itself.

Upon a preliminary analysis of the "Other Subdividable Land" category, it is estimated that a total of 133 parcels could be achieved if all of the properties were subdivided. This is a gross estimate and does not take into consideration site-specific constraints (i.e. wetlands and steep slopes), which would reduce the total development yield. For a list of all potential subdividable parcels please see the Community Preservation Funds (CPF) Acquisition Plan.

## ZONING ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One objective for this Comprehensive Plan was to provide a clear and effective roadmap for guiding sustainable growth and preservation of the Island. Fundamental to this process is the establishment of appropriate zoning recommendations that address existing or anticipated issues and align with the Plan's overarching vision.

While zoning is a pivotal component of the Plan, it is important to note that discussions of zoning issues and recommendations are not confined to this chapter, which provides an overview of existing zoning and land use. Instead, recommendations are distributed throughout the various topic-oriented chapters. In this organization, the zoning recommendations are integrated with the specific challenges and opportunities presented by each topic area.

A brief synopsis of zoning issues addressed in other chapters is below:

### ***Housing (Ch. 4)***

Shelter Island has seen a steady increase in construction of new single-family housing, many of which are significantly larger than the surrounding neighborhood context. Zoning changes may be needed to better control the size of new homes. Zoning changes are also needed to address issues pertaining to the illegal conversion of basement or attic areas.

The existing zoning districts primarily provide for single-family homes on one-acre or larger lots. Attainable housing has long been recognized as a problem, but progress in addressing it is slow. The housing chapter addresses zoning changes that would help to provide for a broader range of year-round housing options across income, household size, and age groups. This could include permitting apartments on upper stories in limited commercial areas.

Additional protections may be needed to address development in sensitive areas. Chapter 4 identifies zoning changes to ensure development is appropriately sized in shoreline areas (NSOD).

### ***Economy (Ch. 5)***

Shelter Island's businesses are concentrated in a few key areas, and the existing zoning does not always support their long-term health and viability. Flexibility in the zoning may be needed to help fill some vacant commercial spaces in the Town Center (zoned B-1).

There is the need for additional guidance within the zoning code to ensure that new development is contextual and will help to enhance existing commercial areas. The standards would help to ensure that any new development is attractive, well designed, and incorporates appropriate landscaping and drainage facilities.

Other small zoning changes may be needed to help make the Island more attractive for businesses and workers. This includes revisions to standards for home-based business in residential areas. Other code changes may help to support legacy businesses related to agriculture and aquaculture.

### ***Natural Resources & Water Quality (Ch. 7)***

The plan identifies several topics in the zoning code, where revisions could help to safeguard drinking water quality. This includes the establishment of wellhead protection areas for each of the public water systems. The Town should also revisit the I/A code to incorporate best management practices.

The zoning code may not do enough to protect existing trees from being cut down by property owners (i.e. during demolition). New regulations and guidance may be needed to better balance development and environmental conservation needs.

### ***Parks, Open Space, and Waterways (Ch. 8)***

There are several large properties that have the potential for subdivision. Regulations could be strengthened to ensure that any development is properly planned and that the provision of open space is maximized.

**Quality of Life (Ch. 9)**

The zoning code could be strengthened to better preserve archaeological and cultural resources. One strategy would be to activate and staff the historical advisory commission. The Town may also consider establishing a historic district zone to preserve and protect important historic assets.

Preservation easements, also known as conservation easements, are another tool which is used to preserve property. This tool is not widely used and there are a variety of strategies the Town can take to encourage property owners to declare a preservation easement.

**Utilities, Sustainability, and Resilience (Ch. 10)**

This chapter discusses a variety of strategies to promote sustainable patterns of development. One strategy related to zoning is the incorporation of sustainable construction and design standards.

**ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS**

The table below serves as a guide to navigating the Comprehensive Plan to locate the specific zoning recommendations related to each topic area. We emphasize the need for the Town Board, government agencies, community members, and other stakeholders to explore the plan in its entirety to gain a holistic perspective on our vision for the future.

Chapter and #	Recommendation
4.1.C.	<i>Strengthen limits on density in residentially zoned areas, while allowing for potential increased density in business zones</i>
4.1.D.	<i>Monitor the effectiveness of the short-term rental law and make necessary code adjustments to increase enforcement ability and renter safety.</i>
4.2.A.	<i>Consider allowing second floor apartments above retail in business zones (B and B-1 zones).</i>
4.4.A.	<i>Ensure development is appropriately sized in sensitive shoreline areas (Near Shore Overlay District).</i>
4.4.B.	<i>Adopt a Tree Preservation Local Law.</i>
4.5.A.	<i>Strengthen subdivision ordinance to require land for open space.</i>
5.1.A.	<i>Consider adding additional uses to the B and B-1 business zones.</i>
5.1.B.	<i>Heights and Bridge Street – Need for Design Guidelines.</i>
5.2.C.	<i>Establish standards for home-based businesses in residential areas.</i>
5.4.A.	<i>Protect legacy businesses related to agriculture and aquaculture.</i>
7.4.D.	<i>Develop wellhead protection zoning for the area of recharge for the wells of each of the public water systems.</i>
7.5.A.	<i>Implement source water protection programs that identify vulnerable areas around wells and other groundwater sources.</i>
7.5.B.	<i>Revisit the Town’s I/A OWTS code.</i>
7.6.B.	<i>Evaluate policies which address use of irrigation.</i>
7.6.C.	<i>Revise the irrigation law to promote cistern use and discourage trucked in water for irrigation.</i>
7.9.B.	<i>Adopt a Tree Preservation Local Law for the purposes of protecting woodlands and individual historic, significant, and scenic trees important to the community.</i>
8.2.E.	<i>Limit seaplane activity.</i>
8.2.G.	<i>Review policy for establishment of new docks.</i>
8.2.H.	<i>Review policies on boatlifts and boat paint.</i>
8.2.I.	<i>Review policies on bulkheads.</i>
9.1.B.	<i>Create a Historic District Zone.</i>
9.2.A.	<i>Develop a program to encourage preservation easements.</i>
9.2.B.	<i>Review the approach to controlling noise disturbances.</i>
9.2.C.	<i>Control excessive night sky lighting.</i>
10.3.A.	<i>Promote sustainable construction and design standards.</i>



*Bridge Street, Volunteer Park*

Source: Jim Colligan

# 4 HOUSING

This Chapter assesses Shelter Island's current housing stock, identifies key issues and opportunities, and offers recommendations to protect the quality of existing homes, neighborhoods, and the natural environment, while expanding the range of housing opportunities for a wide cross-section of residents.

As noted in the Built Environment chapter, some 40% of Shelter Island's developed land area is in residential use, while another 16% is vacant and subject to development, most of which is in residentially zoned areas. Housing is thus an important aspect of the Town's character, and the accessibility and affordability of housing is critical to support the "human foundation" of its year-round population, including public employees, first responders, the local workforce, and people in various crafts or trades.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **The vast majority of housing on Shelter Island is single-family, owner-occupied, and seasonally utilized.**

This uniformity of housing stock constrains the supply of rental units that could serve year-round residents and downsizing seniors. The seasonal use of much of the housing stock further emphasizes the need to support year round residential rentals on shelter island.



### **Shelter Island has seen a steady increase in construction of new single-family housing, and these homes appear to be growing larger, have more amenities, and are becoming more expensive.**

The Island is averaging about 10 new houses per year, and while home sizes remain fairly modest, they appear to be growing, especially for taxpayers whose primary mailing address is off island. Both housing and vacant residential land are expensive and becoming more so. In 2022, the average sale price for non-waterfront houses was \$1.4 million. The pandemic appears to have exacerbated these trends, as has the lucrative short-term rental (STR) market, which has reduced the availability of year-round housing stock.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **Attainable housing has long been recognized as a problem, but progress in addressing it is slow.**

Despite concerns about the lack of affordable housing since the 1990s, only one project of six ownership houses has been completed since 1996. Because this project did not include a deed restriction, there are no longer any designated affordable units on the Island. The current housing market conditions on Shelter Island make it unlikely that for-profit developers will be interested in owning and managing attainable housing, without incentives or subsidies.



### **Recent attainable housing planning has identified actionable steps to increase the supply of attainable housing.**

The Town adopted a Community Housing Plan in 2023 which sought to address affordability issues by focusing on rental properties, development on Town-owned property, and leveraging the potential for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). This plan offers a framework for both short- and longer-term actions that the Town should pursue.



## EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

### HOUSING SUPPLY AND TYPE

Because of Shelter Island’s seasonal nature, small population, and wide variety of known and potential housing types, it is difficult to confirm an accurate number of total housing units. Five-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) are not considered reliable due to the high margin of error with Shelter Island’s small sample size. The 2020 Census indicated a total of 3,401 housing units. Meanwhile, the Town’s 2022 Assessment Roll data suggest a total of 2,607 housing units, based on property classes, as shown in the following table:

In addition, the Town Assessor notes that there are 212 “dependent residences,” some of which are rented year-round, seasonally, or as short-term rentals, with others used for guests and family. Adding these to the total in the table above results in a total of 2,819 housing units. Exploring the assessment rolls, further it is notable that many properties have additional structures that may be used as housing: there are 28 cabins (CC1); 44 standard pool houses (LR2); 27 deluxe pool houses (LR3); and 200 garages with apartments (RG7). These add another

299 potential housing units for a potential total of 3,118 housing units. This number is comparable to the January 2021 listed number by PSE&G, the Island’s electricity utility, of 3,111 total residential accounts (including Dering Harbor, of which 259 were inactive and 41 vacant). Thus, it is reasonable to assume a total housing unit count of approximately 3,100 units. This is still below the Census number of 3,401. Although the Census data are provided in subsequent sections dealing with specific aspects of housing (as the Census remains the best source for such data), the discrepancy in total housing units should be kept in mind.

### HOUSING TENURE AND OCCUPANCY

Most homes on the Island are owner-occupied. According to the 2020 Census, about 80% of occupied housing units were owner-occupied, which represents a slight increase from the owner occupancy rate in 2010. This may reflect pandemic-related impacts, as owners may have opted to reside in their homes rather than rent them out during that period.

# of Roll Units	Property Class	Property Class Description	Housing Units	Notes
2,428	210	Single Family	2,428	
7	220	2 Family	12	
27	260	Seasonal	27	Not conditioned for year-round use
7	270	Mobile Home	7	
6	411	Apartment Buildings	19	19 apartments in 6 apartment buildings
3	417	Cottage Communities	22	
38	418-570	Mixed Use	38	Includes B&Bs with an owner’s apartment to mixed use buildings – Estimate
54	581-680	Churches, Camps, Co-ops	54	Church housing, housing at the camps & Pridwin, Dering Harbor Cooperative Apartments – Estimate
2,570			2,607	

**TABLE 8: TOWN OF SHELTER ISLAND HOUSING UNITS FROM 2022 ASSESSMENT ROLL**

Source: Town of Shelter Island 2022-23 Assessment Roll

# of Roll Units	2010		2020	
Owner-Occupied Units	884	78%	1,192	80%
Renter-Occupied	244	22%	289	20%
Total	1,128		1,481	

**TABLE 9: HOUSING TENURE, 2010 AND 2020\***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2010 and 2020  
 \* - Note that 2020 is a COVID year

# of Roll Units	2010		2020	
Occupied Units	1,128	41%	1,481	54%
Vacant Units	1,626	59%	1,250	46%
Total	2,754		2,731	

**TABLE 10: HOUSING OCCUPANCY, 2010 AND 2020\***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2010 and 2020  
 \* - Note that 2020 is a COVID year

Another factor to take into consideration when analyzing the housing stock and usage on the Island is the relationship of vacant homes to occupied homes. In 2010, about 59% of homes were occupied, reflecting the highly seasonal nature of Shelter Island (as discussed below, the Census Bureau classifies vacant homes as homes that are only used seasonally). By 2020, the percentage of vacant homes had fallen to 46%. This likely reflects the impact of the pandemic, when normally seasonal homes may have been occupied on a more permanent basis by their owners.

### SEASONAL UNITS AND SHORT-TERM RENTALS

There are many ways to characterize residents who do not live in Shelter Island year-round. Some are domiciled elsewhere but come to the Island regularly throughout the year. Others spend one or more months on the Island in the summer and many are visitors for shorter stays. To estimate seasonal or part-time units, this Plan uses Census count data from 2020 as well as the location of property-owners' tax bill addresses as a proxy for year-round or seasonal housing units.

As noted above, the Shelter Island Assessor codes a small number of houses as "seasonal," a code that the State Department of Taxation and Finance describes as "dwelling units generally used for seasonal occupancy; not constructed for year-round occupancy (inadequate insulation, heating, etc.)." The Census Bureau categorizes seasonal units differently: noting that they are "vacant units used or intended to be used only in certain seasons or for weekends or other occasional use throughout the year."

In 2020, the Census classified 1,033 units as seasonal, representing about 83% of vacant units and 38% of all units. This compares with 1,459 seasonal units in 2010, which accounted for 90% of vacant units and 53% of all units. Again, the reduction is likely due to the pandemic and the transition of normally seasonal homes to more permanent (at least in the short-term) occupancy.

An analysis of tax bill addresses in the 2022 Assessor's parcel data suggests that approximately 44% of residential properties in Shelter Island are owned by full-time residents or owners who spend enough time locally to receive important mail, while approximately 56% are domiciled off the Island. Note that the number of residential parcels does not include additional dependent units; the distribution of dependent units

	Built Residential		Vacant Residential	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
On-island Primary Mailing Address	1079	44%	202	36%
Off-island Primary Mailing Address	1390	56%	361	64%
Total	2469		563	

**TABLE 11: RESIDENTIAL PARCELS BY TAXPAYER ON-ISLAND OR OFF-ISLAND ADDRESS**

Source: 2022 Assessment Roll

between year-round and seasonal residences has not been compiled. Owners with off-Island tax addresses also own the majority of vacant residential land. The best estimate for seasonally used (not year-round) housing units is 1,390 units with off-Island addresses. Because dependent units and illegal units are not included, this number may slightly undercount seasonal housing units.

The lucrative nature of the summer rental market on Shelter Island, where the rental price for a house rented from Memorial Day to Labor Day can be \$70,000, or more, depending on size and location, and the emergence of services such as AirBnB, VRBO, and others, have encouraged the growth of short-term rentals (STR) on the Island. These rentals are predominantly for single-family housing units rather than apartment-style dependent residences. They typically host seven people for short periods, though houses with many bedrooms can host many more. The Island is also beginning to see the presence of online platforms that provide management services to owners that range from marketing, optimizing pricing and managing payments, to property maintenance. These companies will tend to professionalize the STR market within Shelter Island’s tourist industry.

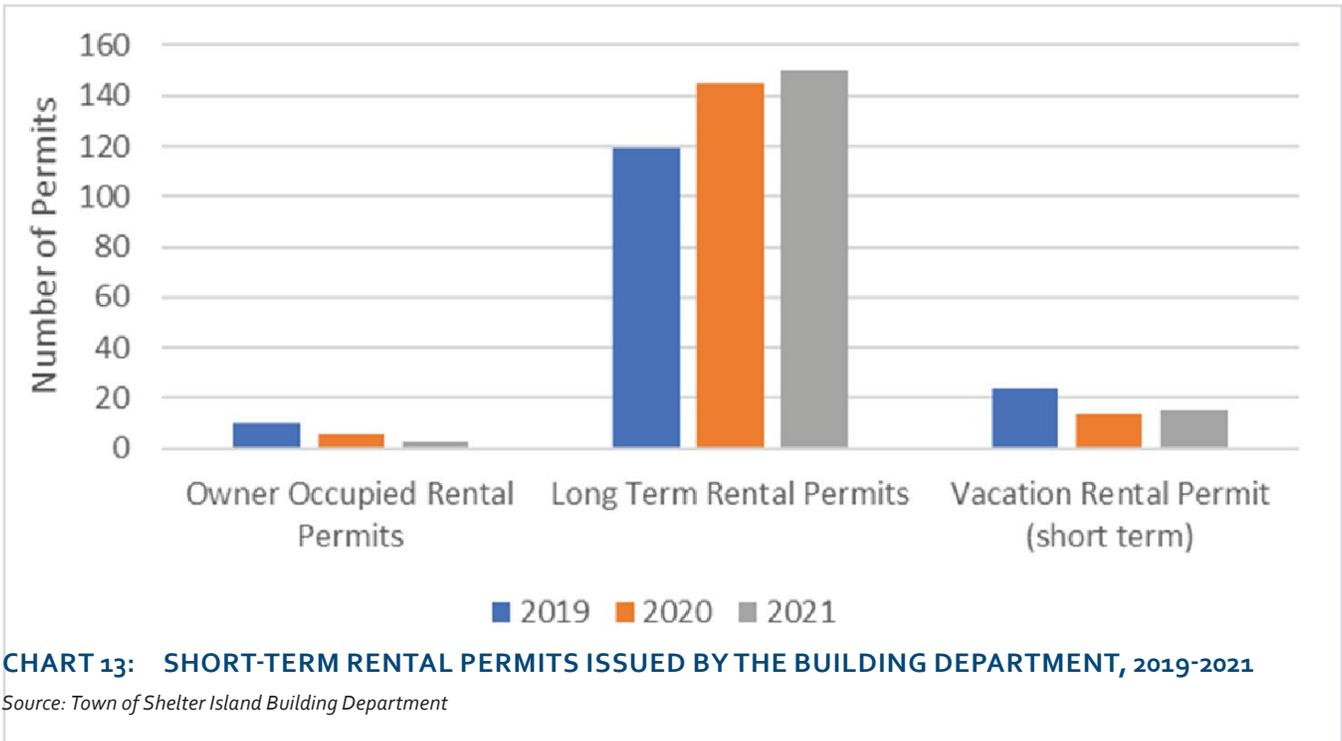
The adverse impacts of many STR houses with large groups of vacationers for short periods has been seen in neighborhoods in many well-known resort towns and cities. In addition to the impacts on residents’ quality-of-life, the STR phenomenon in Shelter Island may also contribute to a reduction in year-round rentals because the revenue from STR can be much more than year-round rental revenue.

As did many municipalities worldwide, the Town of Shelter Island enacted a short-term rental law to impose licensing and advertising requirements for certain

vacation rentals; prohibit certain vacation rentals from being rented more than once in any 14-day period; provide civil penalties for violations; and empower the Town Board to implement the law. The new legislation was very controversial and subsequently challenged in court, resulting in a May 2019 amendment to the law to include many exemptions and eliminate penalties for violations.

In 2019, the Town Building Department began issuing rental permits, in accordance with the new STR legislation. This legislation was subsequently amended in 2023. This amendment compels reversion back to the requirement in the zoning code that accessory apartments, or accessory dwelling units, be solely used for year-round occupancy in order to provide more year-round housing opportunities. Although this change did not eliminate vacation rentals entirely, it restricted short-term rentals to an owner’s primary residence. In addition, there are limited Commercial Vacation Rental licenses available. The code allows owners to rent **licensed** premises one time in any 14-day period, which shall commence on the first day of the term of the initial rental and continue for the 13 following days provided that a Vacation Rental License has been obtained. This allowance is for a primary residence only. An owner cannot have multiple Vacation Rental Licenses. A Long-Term Rental License states that the rental must be for 15 days or longer.

As shown in the chart below, long-term rentals have been the most common permit, by far, issued by the Building Department in the past three years, likely due to pandemic-related impacts of people temporarily relocating to the Island.

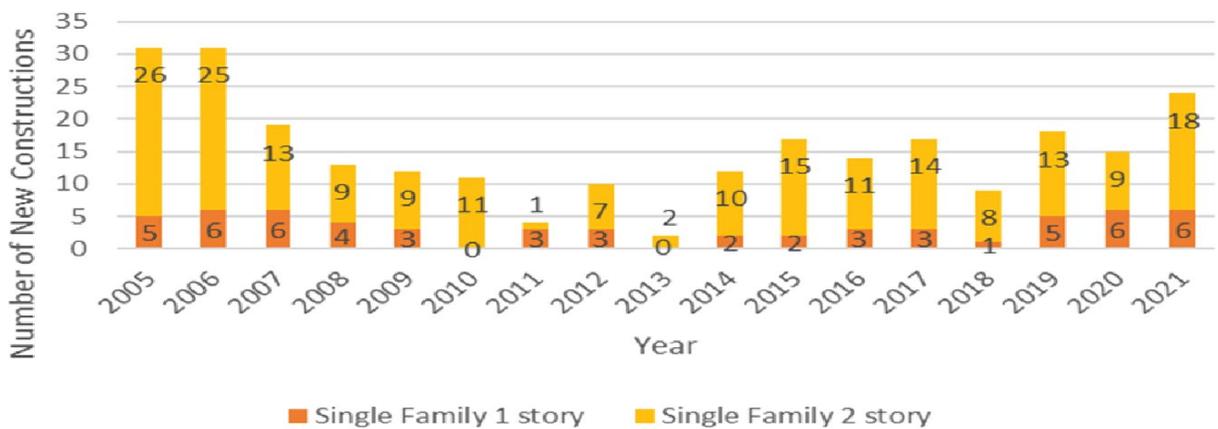


Prior to 2023, the Town engaged a firm, Host Compliance, for information services to facilitate enforcement of the STR law. The firm provides real-time monitoring of the STR market, access to information by Town officials, and monthly status reports. Data indicates anywhere from 170 to 294 STR listings, but the market is very fluid; listings are frequently removed and reposted, and new listings created. The turnover and change in listings may reflect the opportunistic nature of the market, as owners decide on when they and their family and friends will be vacationing in the house, if they are looking for income or not, if they are experimenting with using these platforms rather than older ways of getting summer tenants, and so on. The data also show that many of the listings are not in compliance with the Town’s STR law. The status of STR listings should continue to be closely monitored to determine whether the trends of the past three years will shift as the pandemic impacts wane, and to identify ways to improve enforcement of the STR law.

## HOUSING PRICES AND AFFORDABILITY

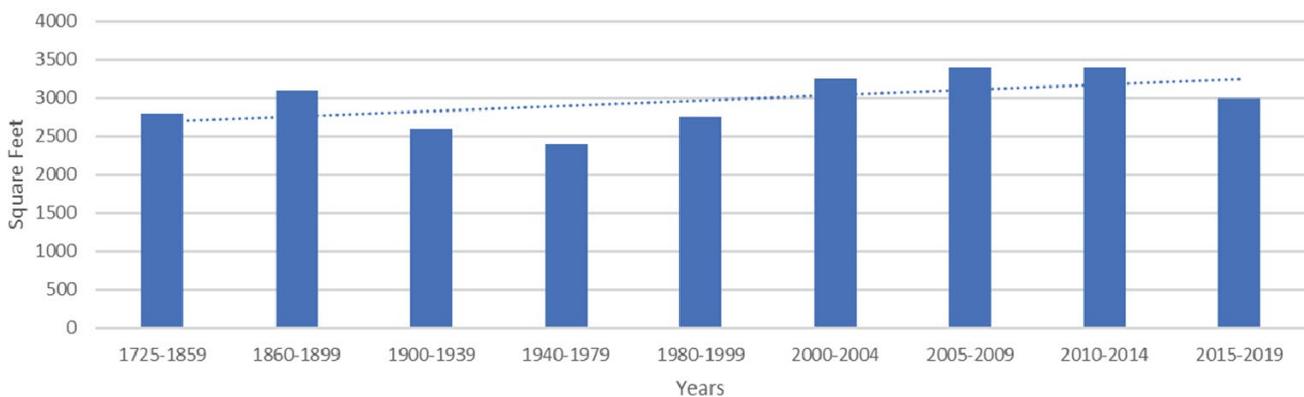
Building permit data show a building boom in 2005 and 2006, followed by a dip in construction after the Great Recession, and a relatively consistent but modestly increasing level of construction since 2014. The 259 newly constructed single-family houses from 2005 to 2021 represent a small percentage of the overall housing stock. For example, 15 new houses would represent 0.6% of the 2,458 single family housing units in the Assessor’s database for 2020. Over the course of these 15 years, there were 106 demolitions, resulting in a net increase of 156 single family homes, which constitute 6.2% of the 2,458 single family properties in the Assessor’s database.

There are a few very large houses on Shelter Island; Assessor’s data show that the median single-family house has 2,007 square feet. Taxpayers whose primary mailing address is on-island have slightly smaller houses, with a median of 1,900 square feet. Taxpayers with an off-island primary mailing address have a median size of 2,090 square feet. The Town requires a special permit for new houses over 6,000 square feet, which may temper interest in building bigger homes. An analysis of data from the Assessor’s Department shows that the average size of homes has generally increased over time, particularly for those built since 2000.



**CHART 15: NEW CONSTRUCTION BASED ON BUILDING DEPARTMENT DATA**

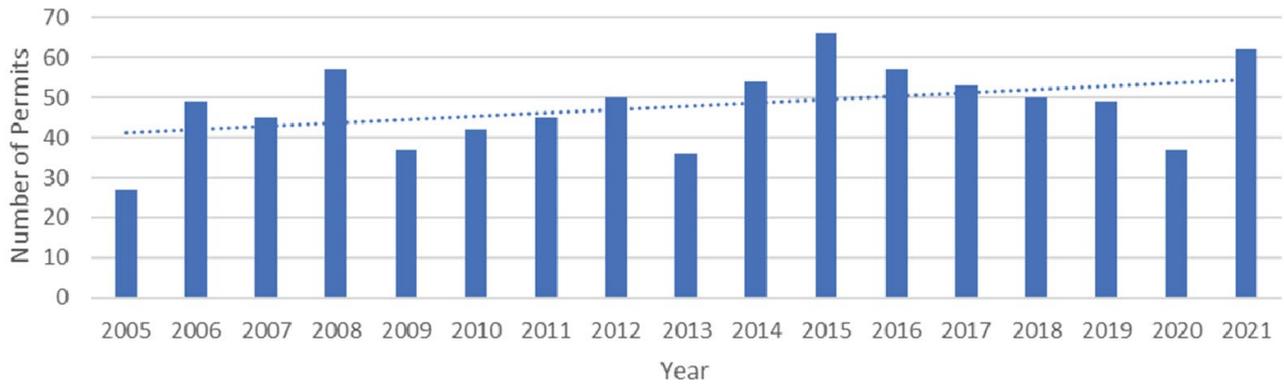
Source: Town of Shelter Island Building Department



**CHART 14: AVERAGE SQUARE FEET PER SINGLE FAMILY HOME BY YEAR BUILT**

Source: Town of Shelter Island Tax Assessor (2022)

\*Note: the graph shows the current size of houses, including all additions, not just the size of a house when it was first built.



**CHART 16: TOTAL LUXURY ITEM BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED**

Source: Town of Shelter Island Building Department

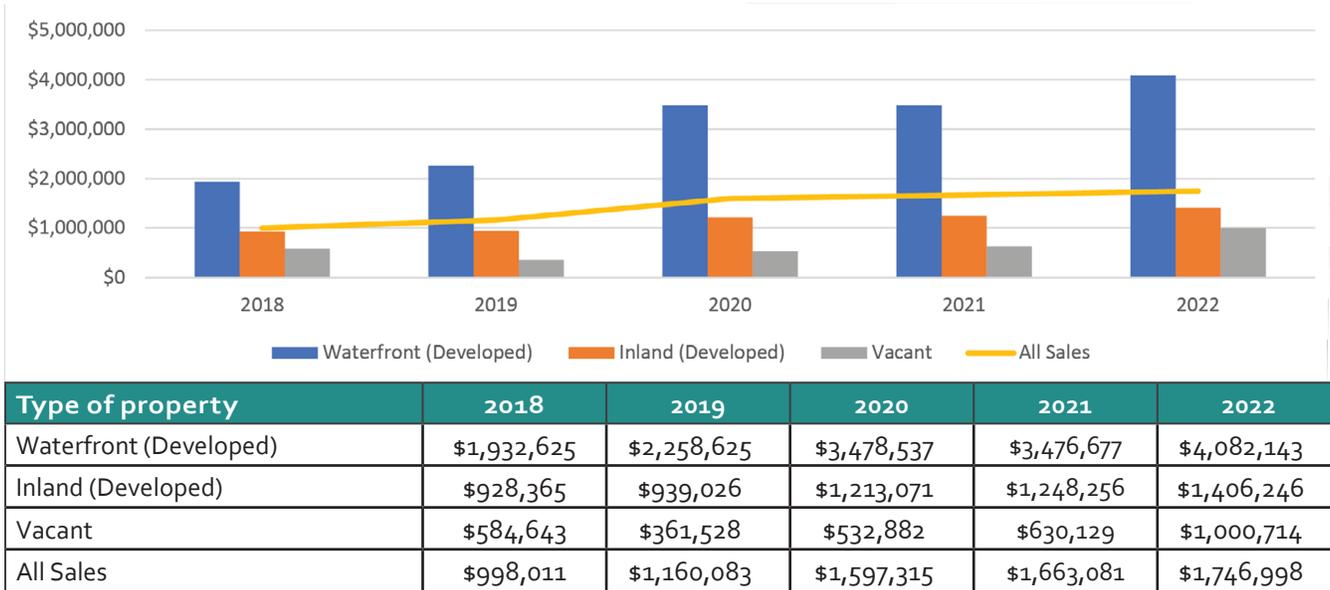
Note: For the purpose of this graph, the following were considered luxury items: tennis, pickle ball and basketball courts; pool houses; pools (new and renovated); and hot tubs.

Both the cost of construction and the level of amenities in new or renovated homes also appear to be on the rise, as shown in data from the Town’s Building Department. In the years where there were lower estimated construction costs there were an increase in permits for renovations and additions as opposed to new construction. This is most likely a reflection on the economy at the time.

The increasing trend in estimated cost of construction, the number of building permits being issued, the average square feet of homes and the number of luxury items speaks to a trend toward larger more expensive homes with more amenities.

In terms of sales, data from the Shelter Island Assessor’s Department suggest that many properties on the Island are transferred within family or other personal networks, perhaps as part of the generational transition as the large Baby Boomer cohort grows older. The Assessor’s Department assisted with the identification of sales of single-family properties that appear to be at market rate versus other transfers that appear to be at significantly reduced prices, for example, transfers for \$1, which could indicate inter-family sales. Between 2000 and 2019, market-rate sales ranged from 34 homes in the recession year of 2009 to 81 homes in the boom year of 2005. The years affected by the Great Recession show lower sales,

as does 2018, which was affected by tax law changes. The graph shows that there were usually fewer market-rate sales of single-family properties than other transfers.



**CHART 17: AVERAGE PROPERTY SALE PRICE**

Source: Tax Assessor Data

### SALES PRICE TRENDS

Housing and land costs are significantly influenced by the fact that Shelter Island is a vacation destination near an affluent metropolitan area. The real estate market is impacted by a combination of factors related to supply and demand, location, amenities, and market dynamics. The Assessor data compiles average sales price data, which is shown in the table on the following page. Sales are coded as Waterfront, Inland (includes inland and waterview properties), and Vacant.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, as the chart above shows, waterfront property typically costs substantially more than inland property, but prices depend on many different characteristics of the property. In addition, as is usual on Shelter Island, the small sample sizes leave the data vulnerable to being skewed by one or two sales at the market extremes. Nonetheless, the data clearly shows significant growth in price across all property types.

### HOUSING COSTS

Housing costs as well as the general cost of living have long been significant issues identified in various planning documents. It was a topic of concern addressed in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan and was most recently studied in the Community Housing Plan. As is the case in many comparable seasonal and vacation destinations, the demand for housing from both permanent residents and tourists drives up prices, making it harder for workers to find affordable options.<sup>2</sup> The robust summer rental market has also contributed to a shortage of affordable year-round rentals as the rental income from the three summer months typically exceeds the revenue from an annual rental.<sup>3</sup>

In the past, people seeking year-round rentals could find September to May housing but sometimes had to find other options during the high summer season of June through August, doubling up with family or even living in campers or boats. The effect of the short-term rental market has also resulted in few options for Town and

1 The "Inland" category includes properties coded by Assessor as either Inland or Waterview. The "Vacant" category includes properties coded as vacant inland and vacant waterfront. The data disqualifies sales at artificially reduced prices and don't reflect the overall marketplace (such as sales to a family members, bank sales, neighbors in a private sale, divorce)

2 Examples for reference: <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/4-reasons-airbnbs-are-partly-to-blame-for-the-housing-crisis>

3 The Effect of Home-Sharing on House Prices and Rents: Evidence from Airbnb. Barron, King, and Proserpio. Accessed at: <https://marketing.wharton.upenn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/09.05.2019-Proserpio-Davide-Paper.pdf>

school employees, other workers, and seniors wishing to downsize or sell their homes to raise funds to supplement their retirement by moving to an affordable rental apartment. Full-time Town employees are required to live on the Island, unless given an exemption by the Town Board.

Younger working families who wish to buy a single-family home find few options below \$800,000. For example, the starting salary for a full-time police officer, who is required to live on the Island, was \$64,824 in 2020. To buy an \$800,000 house with a 10% down-payment of \$80,000 (which may not be available), would require a monthly principal and interest payment of about \$3,865 on a 5%, 30-year mortgage. Although Shelter Island's property tax rates are among the lowest on Long Island and in the state, taxes and insurance would still add about another \$700 per month. This translates to an annual required income of nearly \$185,000, assuming that 30% of income goes toward housing costs. Young families thus need two primary incomes and/or multiple (combination of full- and part-time) jobs to approach purchasing a single-family home on Shelter Island.

There is a very limited supply of rental apartments, and landlords report that when they have a rental opportunity, they quickly receive multiple calls about the property. Renters seeking year-round housing typically find out about it by word of mouth. There are an unknown number of room rentals that accommodate lower-income individuals, while a few businesses with seasonal employees provide housing for their workers. Some property owners rent apartments that are not legal under the zoning code.

As noted earlier (Table 7, page 36), 2020 Census data show that only 289 units, or about 20% of all non-seasonally occupied housing units, are renter-occupied. The monthly rental for a one-bedroom year-round apartment is reported to be approximately \$2,000 and 2-bedroom rents for \$3,000+. Using the rule of thumb that housing costs should not be more than 30% of income, Shelter Island households with incomes at or below \$40,000 would find it difficult to pay \$1,000 in rent if they are lucky enough to find a rental. In practice, they are likely paying more than 30% of income in housing costs.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANNING

The 1994 Comprehensive Plan reported that only 6% of Shelter Island year-round households could afford to buy a house costing \$200,000 or more, less than the median value of an owner-occupied home in 1990. That plan included a goal to create and maintain affordable housing opportunities, citing young working households, first-time home buyers, and seniors as groups that could benefit. It also suggested creation of an on-Island organization to facilitate affordable housing. The only affordable housing initiative implemented since the 1994 Comprehensive Plan was in 1996, when six affordable houses were sold via lottery to local residents including Town employees and volunteer firemen. It appears that there was no deed restriction for time-limited or permanent affordability, so those houses are now at market value.

In 2005, a proposal to the Town Board was not pursued, in which the Town would buy a property of 5 to 7 acres and allow 5-10 homes to be built and sold with a long-term land lease. In this model, the housing is more affordable because the buyer does not own the land. A nonprofit organization, Shelter Island Housing Options (SIHOP) was created in 2000 to raise money for affordable projects. After a period of reduced activity, SIHOP has recently been revived; however, SIHOP does not envision ownership and management of rental housing.

The Town Board passed a Community Housing Law in June 2008 to facilitate housing for workers, which has subsequently been amended. There are three primary features of the legislation: creation of a Housing Registry for people to express interest in attainable housing; a Special Community Housing License (SCHL) process; and a Community Housing Floating Zone. The Community Housing Board is charged with implementing the law. The 2009 Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Report (not adopted) identified continuing challenges to creating attainable housing, rated progress on achieving attainable housing objectives as mediocre, and supported the goal of attainable housing from the 1994 plan.

Recently, in response to new State legislation, Islanders voted to endorse a 0.5 percent transfer tax to support a Community Housing Fund through 2050. The Town Board established the Community Housing Fund Advisory Board to develop, with the aid of consultants, a

Community Housing Plan for the Town of Shelter Island. That Plan, adopted in January 2023, identified short-term objectives (within the first five years of implementation) including the construction of year-round rental housing on three Town-owned properties, which would yield a total of up to 10 new rental units. Other priorities for the short-term include increasing year-round accessory dwelling units (ADUs) through grants and low-interest loans, code amendments, and enforcement. A comprehensive review of the Town Code is needed to ensure it is consistent with the goal of increasing year-round community housing opportunities, while taking zoning into account. The existing registry list should also be updated to get a sense of the demand for ADUs. Ongoing or longer-term priorities include developing and implementing design standards for community housing, considering the potential for apartments over stores and offices, and supporting the establishment of a Community Land Trust. This Comprehensive Plan supports and carries forward the recommendations of the Community Housing Plan, as detailed below.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

*This section highlights many housing goals and recommendations. It is important to note that the Town's Community Housing Plan, which is an appendix to this document, covers many of these issues in detail. The Comprehensive Plan supports recommendations made in the Community Housing Plan, even if they are not specifically cited within this document.*

### **Goal 4-1: Preserve the quality and character of existing single-family residential zones and other residential neighborhoods.**

#### **Establish a graduated limit on the size of a new house (both knock downs and new construction)**

The building of new homes (both knock downs and new development on vacant property) can raise several concerns, including:

- Loss of architectural heritage: Demolishing older homes can erase valuable elements of Shelter Island's cultural and architectural history.
- Neighborhood character and aesthetics: Out of scale homes can affect the overall character and aesthetics of a neighborhood. If new construction is significantly larger or visually incompatible with the surrounding older and more modest homes, it can disrupt the established architectural styles and create a sense of visual imbalance or discord.
- Displacement and affordability: Overbuilt homes can contribute to gentrification and housing affordability issues. In some cases, older homes targeted for demolition may have been more affordable options for residents. Replacing them with larger, more expensive homes can drive up property values and potentially displace lower-income residents from the area.
- Impacts from construction: The demolition process of knock-down homes can generate a significant amount of waste, including construction debris, hazardous materials, and other pollutants. Noise, dust, increased traffic, and construction-related activities may also impair the quality-of-life for those living nearby, especially if the construction process is prolonged.

To address these concerns, Shelter Island should implement regulations and design guidelines to mitigate the negative impacts discussed above. One approach would be to have a sliding scale where the size of the permitted home could be tied to lot size, capped at a maximum amount. This approach can help balance growth and density while maintaining the overall character and capacity of the residential area. One tool the Town could use is a graduated Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limit that restricts the total building floor area in relation to the size of the lot. As the parcel size increases, the increased allowable FAR decreases, limiting excessive construction. Wetland and other non-buildable areas should not be included in floor area calculations. Details of the sliding scale would have to be studied, to see what scale of development is appropriate for different lot sizes.

#### **Address issue of illegal conversions**

In the building code, as written, unfinished areas in homes such as unfinished basements or attic areas do not count toward permitted gross square footage. It is understood that, on occasion, individuals proceed to finish unfinished areas after their applications are approved. This practice is commonly known as "illegal conversions" or "unpermitted renovations," and it has been a means to bypass certain building regulations, zoning laws, or safety standards that are in place to ensure the habitability and safety of residential properties. To address this issue, the Town should evaluate zoning requirements and permitting processes to reduce the incentive or ability for property owners to gain approval for a dwelling that does not meet the necessary standards. One method would be to count a portion of basement or attic areas as

part of the allowable square footage for a given parcel, regardless of whether they are finished or not. Another could be to levy fines on such conversions.

**Strengthen limits on density in residentially zoned areas while allowing for potential increased density in business zones.**

Existing zoning regulations regulate housing density, which, depending on the district, is either 1 acre per residence (1-acre zoning) or 2 acres per residence (2-acre zoning). It is widely understood that building sanitary sewers will help to improve water quality by managing and treating wastewater. While public sewers or water may ultimately be necessary in some areas and would help to address water quality, some residents have expressed a serious concern that such infrastructure would eventually lead to additional density. It is important to affirmatively state that if public sewers or water supplies are built, the residential density of existing residentially zoned areas shall be maintained. This would not include rebuilding homes in-kind on existing small lots, and it does not preclude the use of cluster subdivisions where houses or buildings are grouped together, leaving larger portions of the land undeveloped as open space. While cluster subdivisions may have smaller individual lots, the overall density of the development is not significantly increased.

If infrastructure is in place (i.e., cluster systems, wastewater treatment facilities, or public water), it may be reasonable to consider limited locations in business

zones where additional housing types and densities may be appropriate. A limited amount of housing in business areas would help to support existing businesses and provide more housing opportunities on the Island. Engaging in open dialogue, providing accurate information about the benefits and potential impacts, and incorporating community feedback into planning and decision-making processes can help alleviate concerns and ensure that any changes in residential density in business areas with the addition of public sewer or water systems are implemented in a manner that benefits the community as a whole.

**Monitor the effectiveness of the short-term rental law and make necessary code adjustments to increase enforcement ability and renter safety**

The short-term rental (STR) law was adopted to address various concerns and challenges associated with the growth and management of STRs. This includes concerns about impacts to neighborhood character (such as noise disturbances), turnover of occupants, safety and building standards, code enforcement, and taxation. STRs can also have an impact on the housing market by reducing the amount of affordable year-round housing options. The Town should monitor regulations and enforcement carefully to ensure that STRs contribute positively to the community's well-being while minimizing potential negative impacts.

**Goal 4-2: Provide for a broader range of year-round housing options across income, household size, and age groups.**

**Consider allowing second floor apartments above retail in business zones (B and B-1 zones)**

Allowing for apartments in the Town's business zones can offer several benefits and contribute to the vitality and livability of the community. Allowing apartments, potentially on the second floor of commercial spaces, allows for a wider range of housing options, including affordable units. Utilizing upper floors is also an effective

way to focus development around existing infrastructure such as roads and to create additional housing units without significantly altering the Town's character or landscape. Allowing for apartments can also help to promote the revitalization of underutilized or vacant buildings and can provide long-term financial stability with a year-round income. The Town may consider tax incentives to make such apartments affordable. It is critical to put provisions in place that ensure that any

residential units would be used for year-round housing and not for short-term rentals, which would exacerbate housing issues.

In addition, if infrastructure allows, the Town may want to consider allowing increased density in the business zone if those units are affordable housing. However, it is important to consider potential challenges and mitigate any negative impacts. Adequate infrastructure (septic and water), access management, parking provisions, and appropriate zoning regulations should be in place to ensure a high quality of design and compatibility with the surrounding area. This would include limitations on signs and lighting.

### **Develop educational materials and resources to assist and educate homeowners in the process of developing ADUs on their property**

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Educational materials play a crucial role in helping homeowners develop ADUs by providing them with the necessary information, guidance, and resources. These materials would provide, at a minimum, a summary of the approval process, including relevant zoning regulations, building codes, permitting processes, size restrictions, parking requirements, and any other relevant guidelines. Clear and accessible educational materials help homeowners navigate the regulatory landscape, ensure compliance with legal and safety standards, and help to create well-designed and functional ADUs that meet their specific needs. In addition, educational materials can provide guidance on the following:

- Design and construction: Design ideas, architectural guidelines, and construction best practices for ADUs.
- Financing and cost considerations: Information on financial options, available grants or incentives, and cost estimation guidelines.
- Management and rental considerations: Guidance on tenant selection, lease agreements, property management, and local rental regulations.

### **Establish funding sources such as grants and low-interest loans to encourage homeowners to develop year-round Accessory Dwelling Units**

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The Town should work with other partners to establish funding sources to help homeowners overcome financial barriers of creating additional housing options - provided they can meet the requirements of Town zoning and Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS). Some options include government grants and subsidies, low interest loans – in partnership with financial institutions – tax incentives, and housing trust funds. The Town could work with the four other east end towns to amend the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Fund to allow Water Quality Improvement funds to provide grants that support the installation of IA septic systems to meet current wastewater standards for accessory dwelling units. One grant recently established is New York’s Plus One ADU Program, which Shelter Island has been awarded. The program pairs the Community Housing Board with the Community Development Corporation of Long Island (CDCLI) to issue grants up to \$125,000 (for a total of \$2 million). Eligible local homeowners can use the funds to build a new ADU on their property or improve an existing ADU to make it code compliant.

### **Update Community Housing Plan every five years**

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This Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations from the Community Housing Plan released in 2023, which provides an overall roadmap for community housing on Shelter Island. The Comprehensive Plan supports recommendations made in the Community Housing Plan, even if they are not specifically cited within this document. As the Community Housing Plan is implemented and updated over time, its objectives should also be revisited and revised as appropriate to reflect the most recent conditions and housing/demographic trends. It is recommended that the plan be revisited every five years, with the following updates:

- Update Housing Needs Assessment,
- Conduct public outreach to understand current public opinion and priorities for community housing initiatives, and

- Evaluate progress in creating community housing, fund availability, and potential refinements to program administration and priority expenditures.

**Goal 4-3: Create and maintain attainable and workforce housing opportunities to support the diversity of age and income groups that make up Shelter Island’s year-round population.**

**Support creation of a Shelter Island Land Trust, to assist with the acquisition and management of land for community housing.**

Land trusts offer a sustainable and community-driven approach to managing open space and community housing. By preserving land, promoting conservation, and ensuring long-term affordability, land trusts contribute to the environmental, social, and economic well-being of communities, both in the present and for future generations. While the land trust would be an independent non-profit agency, it would collaborate with the municipality, county, other non-profits, and community organizations to leverage resources, secure funding, and implement joint conservation and housing initiatives. This collaboration fosters a sense of shared responsibility and builds a collective commitment to the long-term success of open space and community housing projects. Other benefits of a land trust are listed below:

- **Affordable Housing:** Land trusts can acquire land and hold it in perpetuity, while partnering with affordable housing organizations to develop and manage affordable housing units. This approach helps ensure long-term affordability for low- and moderate-income individuals or families, promoting socioeconomic diversity and addressing housing affordability challenges.
- **Resident Control and Community Engagement:** Land trusts often involve residents in decision-making processes, allowing them to have a say in the management and governance of the community housing. This resident control empowers the community and fosters a sense of ownership and stability.

- **Permanence and Stewardship:** Land trusts ensure that community housing remains permanently affordable by holding the land and enforcing resale or lease restrictions. They monitor compliance with affordability requirements and provide ongoing support to residents, including maintenance and property management services.

**Proactively identify sites and build community housing in appropriate locations.**

The Town should continue to identify suitable locations for year-round rental housing, considering factors such as water constraints, proximity to amenities, transportation, and services. Two sites identified in the Community Housing Plan include the potential for 2 residences at 69 North Ferry Road and 6 apartments at 12 South Ferry Road. In the short-term, the Town should develop a plan for each site which conforms to SCDHS standards but is designed in a way that could be expanded if the necessary infrastructure becomes available in the future. Additional guidance on this can be found in the Community Housing Plan.

**Establish a low-interest loan program for first-time home buyers.**

This program would be an effective way for the Town to support attainable housing and promote homeownership. In order to set up such a program, the Town should consider the following:

- Program parameters such as eligibility criteria, income limits, and other requirements.

- Sources of funding, which could include local government budgets, transfer tax revenues, grants, partnerships with financial institutions, or leveraging other housing-related programs and resources.
- Program guidelines that outline the application process, requirements, loan terms, etc.
- Collaboration with a local financial institution or non-profits such as CDCLI to administer the program
- Promotion of the program to create awareness
- Monitoring to evaluate the program’s performance and impact.

**Goal 4-4: Ensure that new housing construction or conversions of existing housing are sensitive to the natural environment, are of high design and build quality, and are consistent with the general scale of Shelter Island’s existing housing and traditional development pattern.**

**Ensure development is appropriately sized in sensitive shoreline areas (Near Shore Overlay District).**

Shoreline areas are often ecologically diverse and provide important habitats for various plant and animal species. They are also highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as erosion and flooding. The near-shore overlay district (NSOD) has protected Shelter Island’s near-shore environment for over 20 years and the rationale for this legislation (Zoning Code c. 133-12) is even stronger today due to the increasing impact of climate change and development pressure. NSOD Code regulations and boundaries should be maintained. Furthermore, it may be appropriate to adjust zoning standards to limit the size, height, or density of structures to limit the risk of erosion and flooding, and to preserve the recreational and aesthetic value of coastal regions for future generations.

One way the NSOD could be strengthened would be by incorporating a small-lot ordinance which addresses pre-existing nonconforming lots. There are many lots in the NSOD that have sub-standard lot sizes (i.e. less than 1 acre in A districts and less than 2 acres in AA districts). Given the increasing environmental risk in the NSOD, expansion of nonconforming uses and buildings should be strongly discouraged. A small lot ordinance would address how nonconforming lots can be used or developed while taking their nonconforming status into account. The ordinance might include limits on the maximum size and revised setback to control the size of

buildings in relation to the lot size, thereby preventing excessive development. Ways to regulate this may include the following:

- Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standards for small lots or a graduated approach based on lot size as discussed in Goal 4-1
- Pyramid regulations to control height, mass, and setbacks of buildings to limit the overall visual impact of buildings.
- Ensuring regulations discourage illegal conversions of non-habitable space (see Goal 4-1)

Variations from these standards should be avoided, and the land use boards (Zoning Board of Appeals or Planning Board), must develop strict criteria for evaluating exceptions to established standards where strict compliance is not possible due to unique circumstances. In such cases, the land use boards should only grant the minimum relief necessary.

**Adopt a Tree Preservation Local Law.**

The overall goal of a tree preservation local law is to strike a balance between development needs and environmental conservation, ensuring that community can evolve while safeguarding its natural resources and maintaining its unique character. The specific provisions would need to be determined by the Town. It could include the requirement for property owners to assess existing trees before any major development can occur.

This would include provisions for what trees can be removed and guidance for replanting or replacement of

trees that are removed. To ensure compliance, the code may define penalties for violations, such as illegal tree removal, topping, or failure to obtain required permits.

**Goal 4-5: Identify ways to leverage development and forge public-private partnerships to achieve other community goals such as open space preservation.**

**Strengthen subdivision ordinance to require land for open space**

Utilizing subdivisions to require land for open space or affordable housing is a strategy employed by many communities to address the need for preserving natural areas. This approach involves incorporating specific requirements or incentives within the subdivision development process to allocate land for open space. When drafting regulations, the Town must carefully assess and balance requirements to ensure they are reasonable, economically viable, and compatible with the overall development objectives. Strategies to consider are listed below:

- **Mandatory Set-Asides:** Subdivision regulations currently require developers to set aside 10% of land within the subdivision for open space. This land can be used for parks, greenways, trails, or other recreational purposes. The Town code should be strengthened so that the Town Board has more authority in the approval process to select open space land or to refuse inappropriate land offered to satisfy open space requirements. For example, the proposed open space dedication should meet criteria for high priority lands using the priority system used in Community Preservation Fund (CPF) dedication. In other cases, the Town should require developers to pay a fee in lieu of dedication. The Town should also consider increasing the percentage of land set aside from 10% to 30% which is what Southold did. This should be applied to both major and minor subdivisions.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Subdivisions can be designed to incorporate green infrastructure elements, such as stormwater management systems, wetlands,

or natural buffers. These features not only serve environmental purposes but also provide open space for residents to enjoy.

- **Right of first refusal:** The Town should require a right of first refusal on key lands in, non-profit, public or semi-public ownership, to permanently assure that the public interest is protected in the event of change in ownership

# 5 ECONOMY

This chapter delves into the economic and social fabric of Shelter Island, recognizing that nurturing prosperity goes hand in hand with preserving the Island's unique identity. The discussion includes an overview of existing economic conditions, such as employment trends and labor resources, as well as growth trends from a local and regional context.

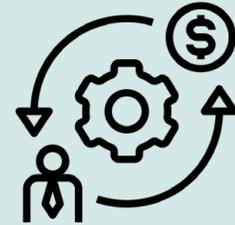
This chapter addresses key objectives such as diversifying the economy, providing a broader mix of housing options, improving education and workforce development, and enhancing community resilience and social support. It aims to create a balanced and thriving community where economic opportunities are diverse, housing affordability is addressed, cultural vibrancy is celebrated, education is a priority, and residents have the support they need to navigate challenges.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Employment on Shelter Island centers around services that support not only year-round and part-time residents but also a significant number of seasonal visitors.

Many employees of Island businesses – especially seasonal businesses – live off-Island and must commute via ferry. Employers of seasonal workers must often provide additional pay and benefits, such as transportation vouchers and housing, to attract staff.



### The number of self-employed and remote workers appears to be rising, especially in the wake of the pandemic, which could have long-term implications on the number and types of businesses located on Shelter Island.

As previously seasonal residents opt to reside on the Island on a more regular basis, they could support additional businesses such as retail and restaurants, and a broader array of services geared toward full-time residents rather than seasonal visitors.



### Shelter Island's businesses are concentrated in a few key areas, and the existing zoning is sometimes at odds with current land usage.

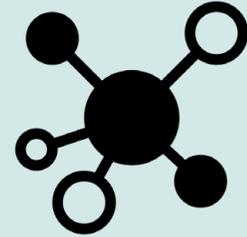
The B-1 zoning provisions limit non-residential uses to civic-related and professional (office) uses, which constrains the types of tenants that can occupy existing buildings; providing more flexibility in permitted uses may help to fill some of the vacant commercial spaces in the Town Center. The Heights and Bridge Street area is a unique business node that requires tailored design provisions to maintain its scale and character and to ensure the continued success of this area.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

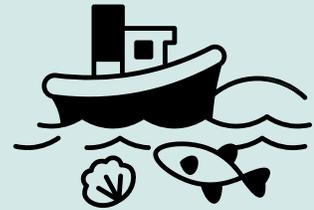
**The Town lacks a cohesive and comprehensive business community network, and the relationship between Town government and the business community could be strengthened.**

Support for the Chamber of Commerce and other potential business advocacy organizations, as well as investments in technology infrastructure, could strengthen existing businesses and facilitate the movement of new businesses to Shelter Island.



**Legacy industries such as boating, fishing, shell-fishing and farming, remain a vital, if no longer major, part of Shelter Island employment. They are characteristic of the Island's heritage and still have the potential to provide local jobs and stimulate economic activity.**

There are many strategies the Town could employ to support and even expand agriculture and aquaculture, while also achieving complementary environmental goals.





## INTRODUCTION

Shelter Island has been a seasonal vacation community for almost 150 years, with legacy sectors in farm and fishing economies. While agriculture and water-related enterprises are no longer significant drivers of the economy, they contribute to the Island’s sense of identity.

As noted in Chapter 2, prior to 2020 Shelter Island’s full-time population fluctuated within a range of 2,200 and 2,400 but there was a significant increase to about 3,300 people for the 2020 census. However, this 2020 Census corresponded with the COVID-19 pandemic, when many previously part-time residents chose to reside on the Island full-time. Suffolk County estimates the seasonal population to be 8,450 (in 2021). The combined year-round and seasonal population is around 12,000 people. See chapter 2 for more information on the seasonal population.

Shelter Island’s population is complex. In addition to the homeowner population of year-round residents which includes retirees and remote workers, part-time residents use their homes in various ways, including a new “investor class” of owner—the Airbnb/VRBO proprietor – who rents their property on a regular basis. In addition, the population includes people who rent monthly, seasonally, or year-round as well as visitors who stay in hotels, B&B’s and short-term rentals.

Because the ferry trip to either the North or South Forks is short, many Island businesses have employees who live off-Island, and many Island residents work on Long Island. Similarly, Island residents can access a wide range of retail and other business options with a relatively short trip to nearby communities. In addition, some businesses with a Shelter Island location are headquartered off-Island.

The same conditions that make it difficult to obtain precise demographic numbers in Shelter Island also affect economic issues: seasonal changes in population and a small year-round population.

### **Data Sources**

ESRI Business Analyst is the major source for this discussion. In addition to demographic data, this platform uses a variety of data sources including Infogroup and SafeGraph. Infogroup data is based on a comprehensive list of more than 13 million U.S. businesses and includes information such as the total number of businesses, sales, and employees for a trade area using NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes for industry and business sectors. SafeGraph provides information on 5 million U.S. locations where consumers can spend money or time, including places like restaurants, grocery stores, parks, and cultural venues.

In addition, the Census Bureau also provides economic data, including the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. This analysis uses data from the Census OnTheMap tool which uses ACS data to show where workers are employed and where they live. However, as noted previously, ACS estimates are problematic due to the small population size of Shelter Island, which results in a high margin of error. It is therefore more important to focus on clear trends rather than specific data points. When possible, the Comprehensive Plan uses results from the decennial Census, which represents actual counts rather than estimates.

Finally, information gathered through interviews provides additional information and context about the Shelter Island economy.

## EMPLOYMENT BASE

The employment base of a community refers to the industries or economic sectors that bring wealth into the local economy. In non-tourism-based economies, the service industries support the basic industries. The employment base of Shelter Island is, however, largely composed of tourism-related industries that service the seasonal and year-round resident as well as the casual tourist. Real estate and construction are also important sectors that generate significant economic activity.

According to U.S. Census OnTheMap data, the employment base (or the number of jobs on the Island) of Shelter Island has risen 4.2% between 2010 and 2020. Like other data based on Census surveys, this data should be viewed with caution, but the general upward trend is likely correct. For comparison, Suffolk County saw 1.7% decline in jobs over the same time period.<sup>1</sup>

According to data from ESRI, approximately one-third of both businesses and jobs on the Island are in accommodations, food services, or retail trade.<sup>2</sup> Many of these jobs are seasonal, although “the season” is longer than it traditionally has been, now typically encompassing almost six months and sometimes longer depending on the weather. Data that breaks down employment information into full-time vs. seasonal jobs is not available. Jobs related to real estate and construction contribute another 12% of jobs and public administration jobs account for another 12% of the total. It is important to note that data for businesses and employees consider the address where the business is located. Many businesses that operate on the Island such as landscapers and other services are located off-island and therefore are not represented in the data.

## LEGACY ECONOMIC SECTORS

While the agriculture and water-related enterprises are no longer significant drivers of the economy, they have a presence.

The assessment roll classifies only two agricultural properties, Sylvester Manor and a horse farm at 60 Smith Street. Both properties are included in the Suffolk County Agriculture District, making it part of a statewide network of agriculture and farming and as such, deserving of attention and support. There are other small farming enterprises on Shelter Island, which provide both produce and flowers as well as consulting and garden development services.

There are many farm stands on Shelter Island, ranging from large to small. There are stands that serve the larger farms like Sylvester Manor, Island Time Farm and Kilbs Farmstand to smaller stands that subsidize small homeowner gardens and sell extra eggs from family chickens. These farm stands are a source of jobs and income for farms and homeowners alike and provide a service that should be supported.

There are several marine-related businesses in Shelter Island, including dock building, marinas, boat repair/maintenance, boat building, boat storage, and aquaculture. There are also mooring installation and servicing and oyster farming conducted in Town waters. There are six private owners of underwater property (in addition to the Town, County, and State). About 10 to 15 people depend on commercial fishing or shell fishing for all or most of their livelihoods. Commercial shell fishing is highly regulated and fluctuates from season to season. There are many more part-time and recreational participants in fishing and shellfishing than full-time. Lobstering disappeared 20 years ago and scallops, once abundant, have been devastated by parasites, making earning a living on the water all the more challenging. However, there are efforts being made to protect and rehabilitate the Island waters to safeguard these legacy enterprises which contributed significantly to the Islands historical development and identity.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Census OnTheMap 2020 and 2010. Accessed at <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Esri, 2023 Data Axle, Inc. Note: Public Administration includes: Police, Judges, Accountants, Auditors, Computer Services, General Office & Administrative Support among other job titles

## JOBS AND THE LABOR FORCE

With the year-round population of Shelter Island slowly trending up (including an unnatural jump in 2020, due to the pandemic), the labor force living on the Island also grew between 2010 and 2020 by 2%, according to ACS-estimated data. The estimated unemployment rate among Shelter Island residents has consistently remained lower than in the surrounding North Fork area and Suffolk County, partially due to the high percentage of retired persons living on the Island.

### Inflow/Outflow of Workers

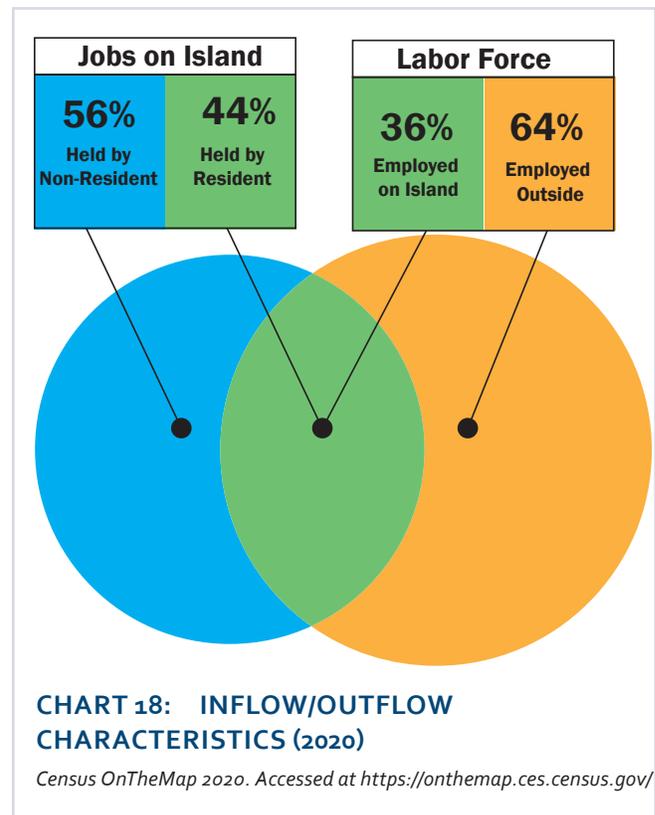
The OnTheMap tool also provides an estimation of the inflow and outflow of workers. According to the data, 56% of people that work on the Island live elsewhere. In addition, 64% of workers that live on the Island are employed elsewhere.

A comparison of the estimated employment base and labor force data provided by the Census suggests certain industries that are likely to be staffed by non-residents. The Transportation and Warehousing, Public Administration, Construction, Administration, and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation industries all show more jobs on the Island than the labor force in those respective fields. Similarly, many Shelter Island residents work off-Island in sectors such as Health Care, Finance and Insurance, Professional Services, and Retail Trade.

Discussions with many employers indicate that recruitment of seasonal staff is complicated by transportation and housing issues. Employees may require additional pay and benefits such as transportation vouchers and housing. Some of the seasonal housing rentals on the market do provide housing for a limited

number of seasonal staff. It is noted that participation in the local workforce by Island residents aged 25-54 is less, particularly given the increase in jobs on the Island, which could be due to a mismatch of skills and jobs and does suggest economic possibility.

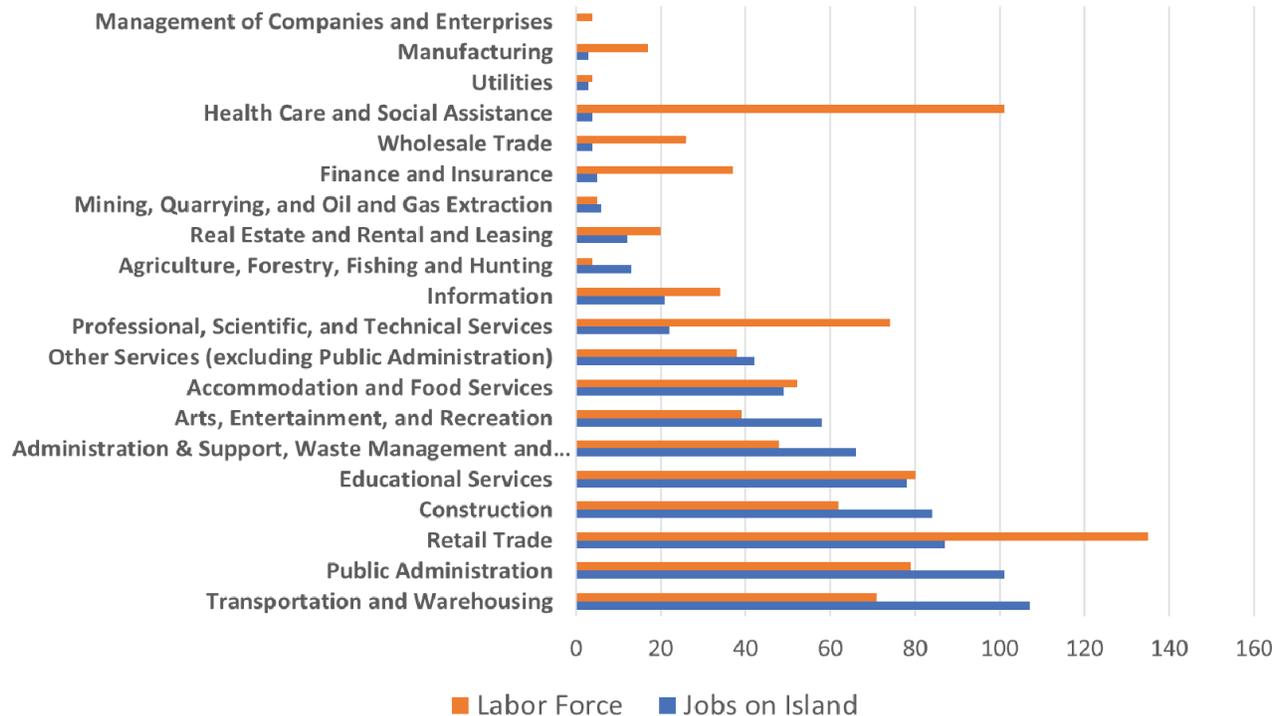
While there are data on many types of jobs and industries via the Census and ESRI, what is more difficult to determine is the economy surrounding seasonal and short-term rentals. Some businesses operating in the accommodations and food services sector and in



	2010	2015	2010-2015 % Change	2010	2020	2010-2020 % Change
Shelter Island	1,245	1,332	6.9%	1,245	1271	2.0%
Southold	10,964	11,063	0.9%	10,964	11,175	1.9%
Suffolk County	773,746	786,156	1.6%	773,746	789,438	2.0%

**TABLE 12: SHELTER ISLAND LABOR FORCE**

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010-2020



**CHART 19: LABOR FORCE AND JOBS ON THE ISLAND**

Source: Census OnTheMap 2020. Accessed at <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

recreation hire summer employees from abroad. Host Compliance, LLC estimated that there were 169 short term rentals, both registered and not, operating on the Island as of September 1, 2022. If most of these properties engage cleaning, landscaping, and management services, they would be meaningfully contributing to the economic base of the Island. While seasonal and short-term rentals do contribute to the Island economy, they also have removed housing stock from long-term rentals available for year-round residents.

Another sector for which data is unavailable is home health care, which has grown due to the increased retirement and aging population. Data on sole proprietorships or remote work is also difficult to obtain, making the full employment picture on the Island incomplete.

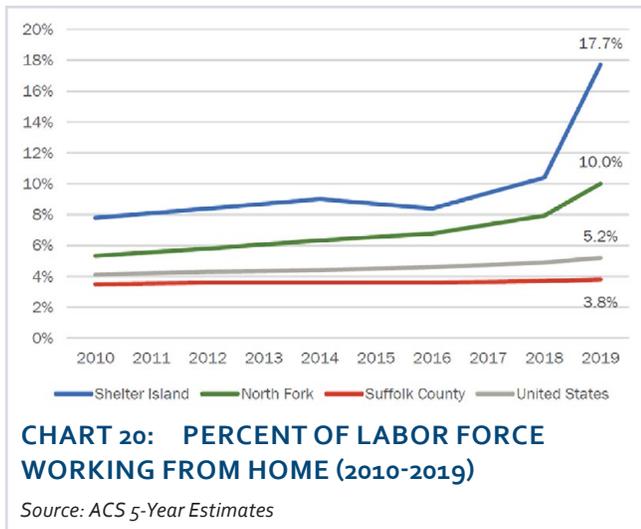
### Self-Employment and Working from Home

Many of the businesses on Shelter Island are sole proprietorships operated by self-employed Islanders, while some businesses are owned by retirement-aged

residents. In addition, there are multi-generational family businesses on the Island. Changes in the macro economy combined with pandemic protections have resulted in the growth of self-employment and the proportion of people working from home. These trends have also affected Shelter Island.

The only data available for self-employment and working from home comes from ACS estimates, which should be viewed with caution. The 2019 data showed a significant jump from 10.4% to 17.7% of Shelter Islanders working from home, while in 2020 the percentage dropped to 12.4% but then rose in 2021 to 19.1% according the ACS 5-Year Estimates. There is reason to believe that this may be a new way of working on the Island that should be considered and monitored to see how it impacts year-round population and businesses.

Recent observations at the library indicate a noticeable surge in the demand for remote workspaces, in particular for people looking for private space for virtual meetings. This trend underscores the growing prevalence of remote work arrangements within the island community. Such a



pattern seems to affirm the hypothesis suggesting an increasing number of individuals opting for remote work setups, reflecting a broader shift towards flexible employment models and the integration of digital communication platforms into daily professional routines.

## BUSINESSES ON SHELTER ISLAND

Shelter Island has three areas where businesses cluster (not including marinas). One area, in the Heights around Grand Avenue/Chase Avenue and nearby but outside the Heights, Bridge Street, includes hardware stores, a post office, pharmacy, bookstore, cafés, restaurants, marinas, gas station, barber shop, real estate and design offices, exercise studios, a hair salon and clothing stores, among other businesses.

The second business area is in the Town Center and includes a supermarket; nursery; restaurants; two banks; and several professional offices along with the Town Hall, Library, School, and the Fire and Police departments. Some parts of this area are potentially walkable. In an effort to avoid sprawl, the zoning for some of this area (B-1) was written to limit uses to civic and professional land uses, which may have kept it from attracting more retail businesses.

It is noteworthy that there are a number of long-term vacant commercial buildings along Route 114 that represent an obstacle to economic development. Results of Comprehensive Planning workshops indicate that many residents would like to see the Town Center



*Stores in the Heights*

revitalized and repurposed in a pedestrian-friendly, multi-use fashion that would include businesses and housing, while addressing water quality concerns.

The last business area is located on West Neck Road between Sylvan Road and Shore Road, centered around the four-way intersection. This area is home to numerous businesses, including various eateries, a funeral home, garden center, salon, dog groomers, and retail.

In 2021, A list of about 190 businesses was compiled by Comprehensive Plan Task Force and Advisory Group members from sources such as the phone book. Since some enterprises were counted twice because they offer more than one good or service at a location, and others may have been left out, this number is not exhaustive and subject to change. Common business types include artists, building contractors, hotels/B&Bs, real estate offices, recreational services, restaurants and delis, and shops.

The Shelter Island Chamber of Commerce has 112 members, including 15-20 nonprofits that are important enterprises for the Island economy, and a few businesses that are based off-island. An estimated 40-50 businesses are not members of the Chamber. A chamber representative estimates a total of 150-175 businesses on-Island, which is similar to an ESRI Infogroup estimate of 160 businesses and 1,050 employees on Shelter Island.

Post-COVID, commercial activity has rebounded on the Island, and there have been changes of ownership in many long-standing, notable island businesses, including The Pridwin Hotel Cottages, The Chequit Inn,



**Stores on Bridge Street**

The Rams Head Inn, Jack’s Marine, Shelter Island Heights Pharmacy, and the Capital One Bank building, as well as new tenants in a few storefronts. With these changes, only one business had a change of use: the bank was converted into a restaurant. The historic hotels and Inns have been renovated and updated while maintaining the traditional character of their façade.

Quite noteworthy is the fact that most of these businesses are no longer owned by residents with long ties to Shelter Island. Whether or not this will be significant for the Island community will be determined in the coming years.

The Chamber estimates that approximately 75% of businesses are open year-round or with a few weeks of closure. This reflects substantial change from the 1990s, when only a handful of businesses were open in the off-season. Although many businesses may be open for most of the year, they make the majority of their income in the summer months. The “season” has also become longer in recent years, now extending from May through late October or even to the year-end depending on the weather. There are also a number of home-based businesses on the Island, but little reliable data on how many.

## **BUSINESS ADVOCACY GROUPS**

Shelter Island Town government does not have any formal relationship with the business community; for example, there is no liaison with the business community, nor is

there a committee with an economic or business focus. There is no Town government entity with a business development or advocacy mission.

About one-half to two-thirds of Island businesses are members of the Chamber of Commerce. However, according to a Chamber representative, there is not a strong sense of common interest or identity among businesses on the Island. In addition, the market/service area for on-island businesses is generally limited to Shelter Island with a few exceptions. This is particularly problematic for retail because of the low population numbers outside of the summer season.

The Chamber of Commerce has four goals: build the local economy; enhance local business visibility; expand business networking; and advocate for business. Its website provides visitor information, a directory of local businesses, and a listing of events. The Chamber effectively collaborated with the Town about COVID-19 protections but otherwise does not have any formal relationship with the Town government. The impacts of the pandemic have sparked a desire to review the purpose and goals of the Chamber so that it can enhance its effectiveness for the business community and the Island economy.

Shelter Island does not have a SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) Chapter. This organization of retirees, in partnership with the Small Business Association, can advise and mentor small business owners. In addition, there are no incubator facilities or “maker spaces” available on the Island, although the need for a “maker space” has been identified in the Shelter Island Library Strategic Plan.

Most residents support businesses insofar as they provide goods and services that residents need and do not want to have to go off-Island to obtain. There is more ambivalence about supporting what might be called “economic development.” There are many residents who oppose promoting the Island as a tourist destination since they feel it detracts from the Island’s quiet rural character.

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Goal 5-1: Improve the function, appearance, and quality of commercial areas, and ensure that the mix of uses meets the needs of local residents and visitors.**

### Consider adding additional uses to the B-1 business zone

Shelter Island’s two business zones, B and B-1, have minimal differences. The primary difference is that the B-1 district was designed to limit occupancy to civic and professional land uses. While this differentiation was intended to limit the sprawl of retail businesses into the core civic district, it has become an obstacle to attracting more retail businesses. The market for office space is not strong as evidenced by chronic vacancies in the office building at 50 N Ferry Road and many residents indicated that they would like to see the Town Center revitalized with businesses and housing, presuming water quality concerns are addressed.

Considerations for potential zoning changes are described below:

- **Building Coverage:** Area and bulk standards for the two business districts are shown in the table below. These districts are very similar, with some minor differences. Allowable coverage is 50% in B-1 and 70% in B. It is reasonable to make coverage 50% across the board, which would provide for 15% devoted to green space, and 35% of the site for parking. It is unlikely that a building could ever achieve 70% coverage given the existing parking, yard and green space requirements. Exceptions to this are in the Bridge Street area which is discussed later in this chapter.
- **Allowable Height:** Allowable height between the two districts is similar. A 35-foot building is allowed in B-1 for all buildings, but 35 feet’ is only allowed for a pitched roof in B. It seems reasonable to make these the same.
- **Retail Uses and Oversight:** The B-1 Restricted Business district requires a special permit from the Town Board for all non-governmental uses. It is

	B (Business)	B-1 (Restricted Business)
Minimum Lot Area	40,000 SF	
Minimum Lot Frontage	100 feet	
Maximum Building Coverage	70%	50%
Maximum Impervious Coverage	75%	
Front setback	30 feet	
Side and rear setback	10 feet	
Building height	2 stories, 25 feet for flat roof and 35 feet for pitched roof	35 feet
Parking	5 spaces per 1000 SF commercial	

TABLE 13: BULK AND COVERAGE REGULATIONS FOR B AND B-1 ZONING DISTRICTS

understood that including some retail uses would help to make this area more vibrant and will help to fill vacant spaces. The town may consider removing the special permit provision which adds an extra level of review and burden for new businesses.

- **Design Guidelines:** See recommendation below

### Provide design guidance for Route 114 corridor

- In many ways, Route 114 is the face of the community, as it is the primary road by which people get around and through the Island. The Town should develop standards to ensure that any new development is attractive, well designed, and incorporates appropriate landscaping and drainage facilities. Strong site design and aesthetics also establish a sense of place. These ensure that any development is aesthetically pleasing, and friendly to both pedestrians and drivers. The B-1 district does have some specific design guidance to ensure that architectural features are compatible with the architectural styles of the existing Town government structures in the area. These guidelines could be strengthened with additional standards on appropriate materials, site design, landscaping, etc. Design guidance for the entire route 114, B zone corridor should include the following:
  - Guidance for street trees and landscaping in setback areas
  - Low-impact design guidelines;
  - Standards for signage to make them more consistent and aesthetically pleasing;
  - Appropriate planning principles including location of open spaces, parking areas, sidewalks, signs, lighting, landscaping, and utilities; and
  - Access management principles to reduce traffic impacts on roads and parking that is well landscaped and oriented towards the side or rear of buildings rather than in the front.
  - Mechanisms (such as taxes or fines) to discourage property owners from keeping properties derelict after a certain period of time and degree of disrepair.



Town Center - Post Office



Business on Route 114



Example of Design Guidance

Source: Kent Associates

- **Parking:** The existing off-street parking requirements are 1 space per 200 square feet of commercial (or 5 spaces per thousand square feet). This ratio is high and could be reduced to 1 space per 250 square feet of commercial use. Parking requirements could also be established by the type of use instead of a uniform number for all commercial development.

### **Heights and Bridge Street – Need for Design Guidance to maintain the unique character of the area**

The commercial buildings in the Heights and Bridge Street area have the look and feel of a historic hamlet, with buildings that are built close to the street and shingle style facades. The core commercial area can be found along Route 114 at the Piccozzi's Marina and along Grand Avenue between Waverly Place and New York Ave. The pedestrian-scale is enhanced by sidewalks and commercial storefronts that are one to two stories.

The orientation and setback of buildings create a street wall and enhance the village-like feel, walkability and accessibility for pedestrians.

While these 2 areas are historic hamlet centers, if properties were to be redeveloped, the zoning doesn't provide guidance to ensure new buildings are complementary to the existing urban fabric. It is recommended that design guidelines be developed and incorporated into the existing zoning to ensure that any new development or redevelopment in this area is designed in such a way that is compatible to the existing scale and incorporates the traditional Shelter Island hamlet center building style. The guidelines would not be a substitute for zoning regulations, rather it would provide the framework for building form, streetscape, and landscape character as part of site plan review by the Planning Board. They can specify architectural styles, materials, and design elements that are in keeping with the existing character. Developers and property owners benefit from clear design guidelines because they know what is expected of them when planning new projects.

## **Goal 5-2: Support improvements that make the Island more attractive for businesses and workers.**

### **Identify opportunities to improve and expand high-speed internet infrastructure while ensuring that services are reasonably priced.**

Broadband and digital access is becoming a more critical issue for the public because of increased work-from-home models, greater reliance on the internet for information, and online schooling during extreme weather or other events (e.g., COVID-19). The Town should continue to monitor such services on a regular basis and meet with internet service providers (ISPs) annually, with the goal of encouraging competition which will help to lower prices and improve service. It is recognized that Shelter Island's geographical location, being an island, presents unique infrastructure challenges. Laying down cables or implementing wireless towers may be more difficult and expensive compared to mainland areas. This can hinder the expansion of broadband networks and limit access

to high-speed internet. The increasing ability of cellular and satellite companies to deliver internet should be monitored for any opportunities for alternative service.

### **Establish standards for home-based businesses in residential areas**

Some residents expressed the need to broaden opportunities for home-based businesses. Allowing for home-based businesses can provide individuals with a means to generate income and pursue entrepreneurship without the startup costs of establishing a business locale. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals who have limitations on mobility or those who prefer a flexible work environment. This is an appealing option for residents on an island community. Home-based businesses contribute to the local economy by creating job opportunities and increasing overall economic

activity. They can also help create a vibrant and diverse community by fostering a sense of local entrepreneurship and providing unique goods and services.

Regulating home-based businesses is currently done on an ad-hoc basis. The Town should revisit regulations and guidelines to ensure that home-based businesses operate in a manner that is compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood. The Town should review and update the list of qualifying businesses and residential zones focusing on the potential and real impacts of noise, smell, visual traffic and inappropriate use for residential zones.

The Town may consider having certain uses be allowed by special permit. One use would be the sale of goods on premises or in an accessory building (including temporary structures and vehicles). The special permit would help to identify and address issues such as noise, signage, parking, and customer visitations to maintain harmony and minimize any potential negative impacts on the community. This special permit may be most appropriate for the Planning Board, as they typically address these types of impacts in the site plan approval process.

### **Goal 5-3: Explore an apprenticeship program between the Town, school and local businesses**

#### **Explore an apprenticeship program between the Town, school, and local businesses.**

Establishing an apprenticeship program between the Town, school and local businesses is a valuable way to provide practical vocational training and enhance workforce development. The first step would be for the Town or Chamber of Commerce to reach out to local businesses and non-profit groups to gauge their interest in participating in such a program. The apprenticeship could also be within a Town department. The jobs could be flexible depending on the school schedule and season and provide job support and job training. It's important to emphasize the benefits to businesses, such as accessing

a pipeline of skilled workers, and developing a loyal and talented workforce. It is important to engage the school district in this project to identify candidates and consider integrating apprenticeship opportunities into the curriculum. The Town should encourage employers to assign mentors to apprentices to provide guidance, support, and professional development opportunities. The Town should also celebrate the program by showcasing the achievements of apprentices and the positive impact on businesses and the community.

Another opportunity is to establish a SCORE.org chapter or equivalent to take advantage of high levels of business experience with the retired and part-time resident population. This will provide valuable mentoring at no-cost to existing and potential local business.

### **Goal 5-4: Continue to support the agriculture and aquaculture industries**

#### **Protect legacy businesses related to agriculture and aquaculture**

Improving agriculture and aquaculture in Shelter Island through habitat restoration and other means can enhance ecological sustainability, productivity, and the overall health of the local environment partially or

completely funded by utilizing grants and Water Quality Improvement funds derived from the Community Preservation Fund Transfer Tax. Here are some ways to achieve these goals:

- **Habitat Restoration:** Protect and restore wetlands, which provide essential habitat for numerous species and contribute to water quality improvement. This could include reestablishing native vegetation, controlling invasive species, and managing water flow to support healthy wetland ecosystems. It could also include planting vegetation along waterways to reduce erosion, filter pollutants, and provide habitat for wildlife.
- **Oyster Reef Restoration:** Support oyster reef restoration projects, as oysters are excellent filter feeders that improve water quality. Encourage partnerships between aquaculture businesses and conservation organizations to restore and expand oyster reefs in suitable areas.
- **Aquaculture Innovations:** Encourage the adoption of current best practices for aquaculture to improve environmental quality and promote a more sustainable industry. For example, IMTA (Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture) is a practice that combines the cultivation of multiple species in a mutually beneficial manner. For example, integrating seaweed cultivation with shellfish farming can enhance water quality by absorbing excess nutrients and provide additional revenue streams for aquaculture businesses. It is also important to implement regular monitoring programs to assess water quality, disease prevalence, and the ecological impacts of aquaculture operations. Monitoring helps identify potential issues and allows for proactive management to minimize negative impacts.
- **Education and Collaboration:** Organize workshops, training sessions, and educational programs for farmers, aquaculture operators, and the local community. These will help to foster collaboration between local farmers, aquaculture businesses, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies.
- **Policy and Incentives:** Develop and implement policies that support sustainable agriculture and aquaculture practices. This may include incentives, grants, or tax credits for farmers and aquaculture businesses adopting environmentally friendly practices.
- **Support farming initiatives:** Both small residential gardens/farms and larger institutional farms and their farm stands provide food for the community. Consider organizing community gardens for people who don't have space to have their own garden.

### Consider leasing municipally owned underwater properties for aquaculture

This can be a beneficial way to contribute to the growth of the aquaculture industry while ensuring environmental protection and community benefits. The underwater lands could be publicly owned (Town, County, or State), or could be in partnership with a private owner. Some steps to consider when leasing such properties include:

- Identifying suitable sites for aquaculture operations, considering water quality, depth, tidal flow, proximity to shore, and compatibility with the targeted aquaculture species.
- Considering and updating regulatory framework including permits, licenses, or environmental assessments necessary to comply with local, state, and federal regulations.
- Develop Leasing Guidelines and Policies specifically tailored for aquaculture activities.
- Publicize opportunities and solicit proposals
- Lease Negotiation and Execution
- Monitoring and Compliance

# 6

# TRANSPORTATION

The goal for transportation is simply to provide for moving people and goods to and around the Island, with reasonable convenience and cost, and to do so safely, and without conflict with other objectives, including concerns for environmental, visual, and aural quality of the Island. Recreational uses of the Town's roads must be acknowledged and kept safe for residents and visitors alike.

This chapter outlines specific and measurable goals and objectives for the transportation system. These goals may include improving road conditions, enhancing public transit options, increasing accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing traffic congestion during peak periods, and promoting sustainable transportation alternatives.

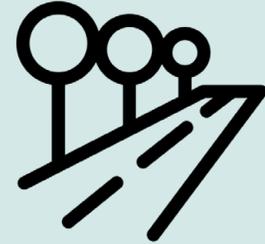
By addressing these topics, Shelter Island can chart a course towards a more efficient, safe, and sustainable transportation system that caters to the unique needs of its residents and changing mobility trends. It is important to ensure that transportation infrastructure can adapt to evolving needs while maintaining the Island's identity and sustainability.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Roadways are controlled by multiple jurisdictions.

The Town is responsible for the vast majority of the road miles, but there are also state and county roads as well as village and private roads. Overall, the Town-controlled roads are adequately maintained and have generally improved in the last five years due to a renewed effort to repair roads. Maintenance efforts are still needed to address the remaining deteriorated roads as well as ongoing needs. The Town must lobby the state and county to address the maintenance and improvements of the roads in their jurisdiction.



### Ferries are an essential component of daily life.

The North Ferry and South Ferry are Shelter Island's only connections to the mainland. Without ferry service, residents, visitors, and businesses on the Island would face significant challenges. The ferry companies have been responsive to Island needs in connecting to off island transit options and are dependable in their operation. They have grown their capacities with the increased demand over the past 40 years and have already planned for and continue to institute responses to the sea level rise.



### Vehicular traffic has grown, and more transportation options are needed, especially to make it easier for people to work on the Island.

Vehicular traffic has increased approximately 20% per decade over the past 40 years. This may not be sustainable given the congestion that already exists in the Heights. While traffic volumes tend to be lower than surrounding areas, congestion can be high during peak seasonal periods, in particular when the ferries disembark and bring a wave of traffic. As noted below, the lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, public transportation, and on-island affordable housing adds to vehicular traffic in as much as commuting distances are increased. Further, workers without transportation walk from the ferries along road shoulders, an undesirable condition from a safety standpoint.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Roadway safety remains a priority, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Town has a small, but significant, number of motor vehicle crashes that result in injury and, rarely, fatality; annually, there have been more pedestrian/bicycle accidents since 2016 than there were before. This is a significant issue that needs to be addressed. Meanwhile, motor vehicle accidents have not increased, drunk driving arrests are trending down over the last decade, and parking tickets have remained steady. However, there is a perception among some residents that speeding is a problem and that speed limits should be lowered.



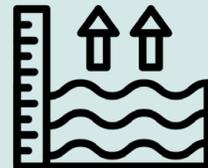
### Bicycling and walking are popular, but the lack of adequate infrastructure is a concern.

Although its small size and relatively flat terrain makes Shelter Island highly suitable for bicycle transportation, roads are often narrow and lack dedicated bicycle infrastructure. This can lead to accidents and conflicts between bicyclists and motor vehicles. Meanwhile, because roads lack sidewalks and sometimes have narrow shoulders, some residents are not able to safely walk from their homes to destinations or for recreation or exercise.



### The Island's transportation network is vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding

Numerous roads on Shelter Island are subject to flooding. This is likely to increase with climate change. Additionally, work is needed on an ongoing basis (i.e., reconfiguring of land areas and ramps) to ensure that rising sea levels do not impact ferry service.

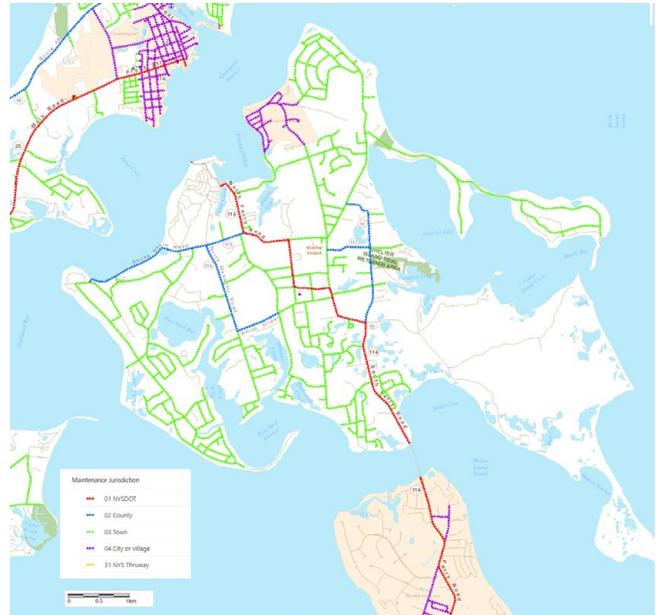


# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## ROADWAY NETWORK

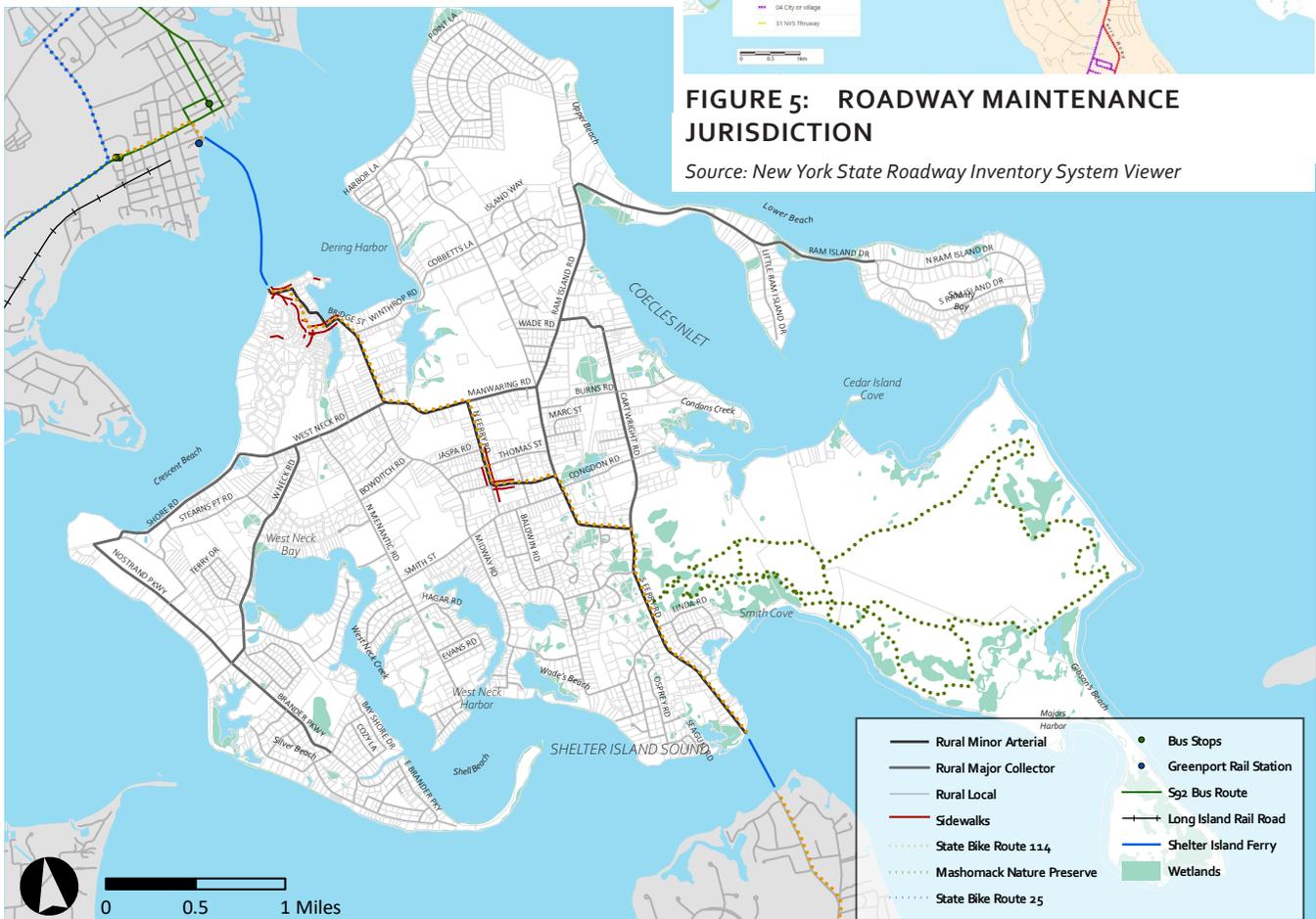
The figure below illustrates the Town’s roadway network. The 59.3 miles of road are owned and maintained as follows: 49.5 miles are Town- or privately owned, 5 miles are County, and 4.8 miles are NY State-owned roads. The Village of Dering Harbor owns and maintains approximately 3 miles of village roadway.

Shelter Island’s one State Road, Route 114, is also designated as New York State Bicycle Route 114. It runs from the North Ferry to the South Ferry and includes the ferry routes themselves. A portion of Route 114 is owned by the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation with an easement from the State. The Island has five designated Suffolk County Roads.



**FIGURE 5: ROADWAY MAINTENANCE JURISDICTION**

Source: New York State Roadway Inventory System Viewer



**FIGURE 6: ROADWAY NETWORK**

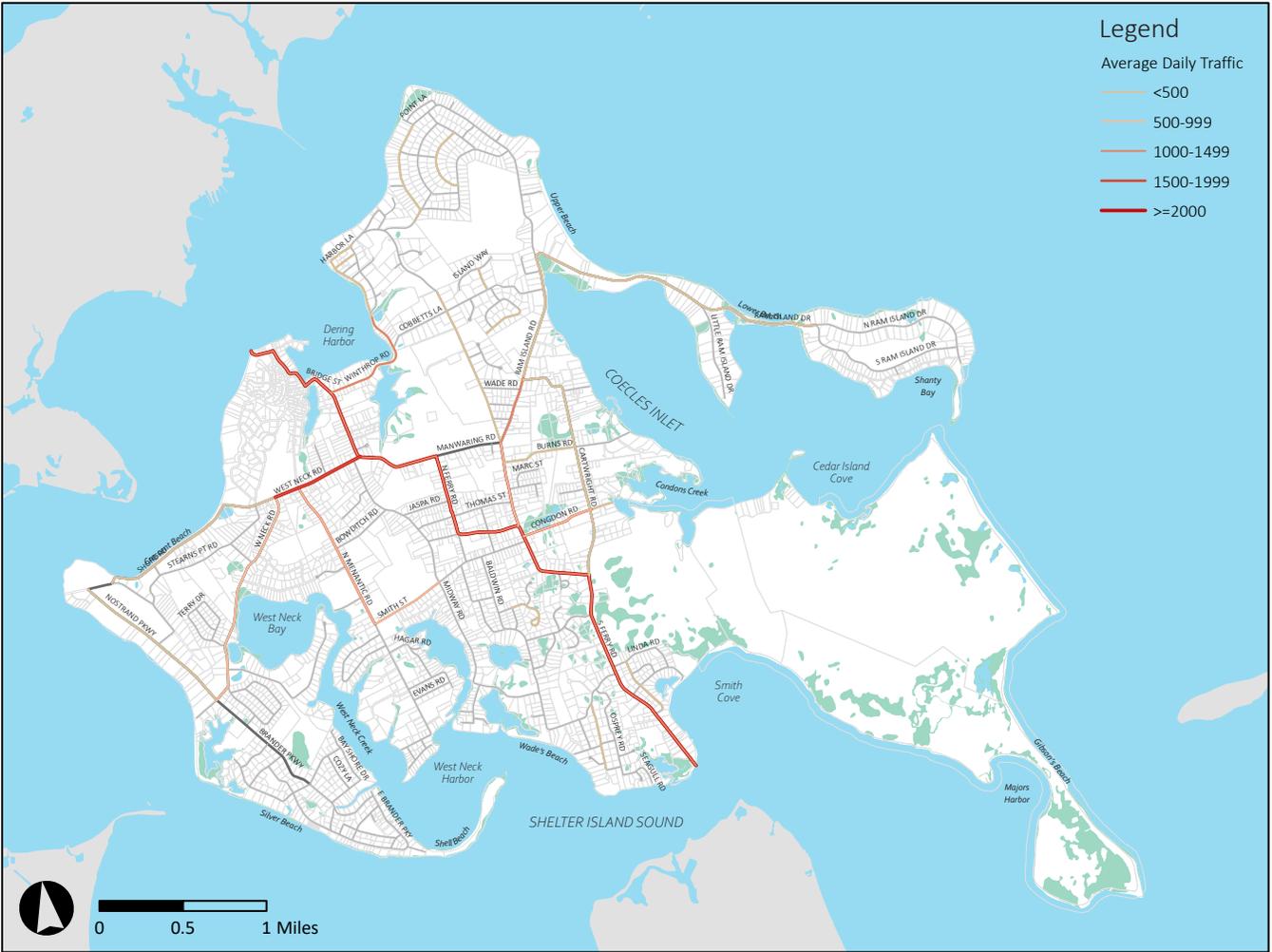
Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

**Traffic**

The map below shows the average annual daily traffic as of 2021 according to the NY State DOT (i.e., Route 114). The data is only collected for roads controlled by the state. The data’s utility is limited but can provide a general understanding of how many roads are used and how traffic patterns change over time.

Ferry data provides a clearer picture of how traffic has increased in the past 40 years. As shown in table 14, vehicular traffic on ferries has grown approximately 20% per decade, which has necessitated multi-million-dollar investments by both ferry companies in vessels and infrastructure to meet the demand. For instance, in 1982 South Ferry had only about 25 employees and operated two 9-car and one 12-car vessels. The average age of the

vessels was 46 years. Currently, the company employs more than 50 people and operates four 15-car boats and one 12-car boat. The oldest of the 15-car boats was built in 1998 for \$1.2 million, and the newest in 2020 at a cost of \$3.5 million. Payroll, infrastructure, inflation, and countless related higher costs have followed the traffic increases. North Ferry has experienced the same.



**FIGURE 7: AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC**

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., New York State Department of Transportation  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

	1982	1992	2021
North Ferry	380,000	464,000	878,000
South Ferry	282,000	466,000	818,998

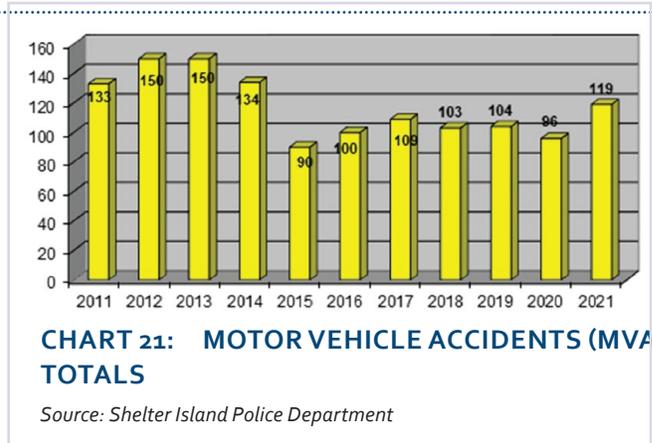
**TABLE 14: CAR TRIPS PER YEAR**

Source: 1994 Comprehensive Plan and Ferry Companies (2021)

### Motor Vehicle Crashes

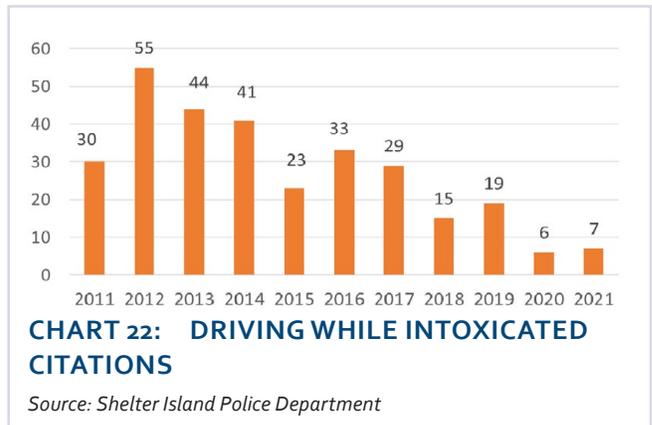
Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) data compiled by the Shelter Island Police Department shows an average of 117 crashes per year between 2011 and 2021. In addition, there has been an average of just under 30 deer-related crashes per year, representing a quarter of the total crashes. The chart indicates that, while crashes are down from their highest levels of 2012-2013, the number has been on a general upward trend since 2015.

Drunk driving incidents have steadily decreased in the last 10 years. Nationally, drunk driving, as measured by fatalities, has been steady since 2011 with an uptick in 2021. Shelter Island has been doing better than the nation in this area of traffic safety.<sup>1</sup>



### Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes

Although the numbers are low overall, the Shelter Island Police Department data for bicycle and pedestrian accidents involving injury show that there have been more accidents, on average, since 2016.



<sup>1</sup> Data collected from crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov

## Road Maintenance

The Shelter Island Highway Department is responsible for day-to-day road maintenance of most streets, including patching potholes; street sweeping and clearing of roadsides, catch basins, and sumps; repairing curbs and sidewalks; and winter snow plowing, sanding, and de-icing. The Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation and the Village of Dering Harbor are responsible for the maintenance of their own roads.

In 2019, the Town Engineer initiated a program to assess Town-owned roads with help from summer engineering interns and the Cornell Local Roads Program (CLRP). CLRP provides training, technical assistance and information to municipal agencies responsible for the maintenance, construction and management of local highways and bridges in New York State. The resulting study evaluated the condition of all Town-owned roads on a scale of 0 to 100. Overall, the Island's roads were rated at 74, compared with a rating of 63 made in 2015. This improvement was credited to a steady pace of repair over the prior five years, including a 2020 repair budget of \$307,000. However, the study found that 23 Town-owned roads, amounting to 7.2 miles, have deteriorated to the point that they will need to be completely reconstructed.

The Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation also relies on the CLRP to help prioritize annual repaving work on its 6-mile network of private roads, undertaken by private contractors.

The Town has access to the NYS Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), established by the NYS Legislature in 1981. The funding is based on lane miles and is collected as part of the gasoline tax. As much as 68 cents per gallon is collected and redistributed. The funding allowance for Shelter Island in 2022 was \$174,000.

Given the inconsistent funding stream for paving projects and the perceived lack of public support for increasing the \$132,000 budget line for paving which has been held steady at least since the 2020 budget, it has been difficult to fix a plan for road re-surfacing. In addition, the argument for prioritizing road resurfacing has rested on the fact that if roads are left too long, they require a rebuild from the substrate up, which is a significantly larger and more costly project. Historically, the Town has chosen to repave rather than rebuild, even when the condition of the road may have required rebuilding.



**FIGURE 8: FEDERAL AID ELIGIBLE ROADS**

Source: New York State Roadway Inventory System Viewer

In discussions with the Highway Superintendent and the Town Engineer, it was noted that the funding stream for road re-paving is inconsistent. It is recommended that the Town develop and adopt a 5-year plan that recognizes the need for flexibility depending on funding and conditions. This plan should be extended and updated at least every other year.

Several roads, as shown on the map above, are “federal-aid eligible roads.” Federal-aid highway funding is planned and distributed based on a multi-year plan, the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which is created by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC).

## Roads & Flooding

According to the 2020 Suffolk County Hazard Mitigation Plan, numerous roads on Shelter Island are vulnerable to flooding (see table 15). Identifying these vulnerable areas is key as climate change is likely to increase the frequency and severity of flooding, both from sea level rise and increased intensity of precipitation events. Increased precipitation becomes a problem when development regrades and reduces the availability of natural drainage areas. The impact of extreme tides and long-term sea level rise was identified in the town's Emergency Management Plan and is an ongoing project of the Town and the ferry companies. Bulkheads were raised 12 inches at South Ferry, and plans have been

Coastal Flooding Exposure	Rainfall Flooding Exposure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Ferry Terminal</li> <li>• South Ferry Terminal</li> <li>• Bridge Street</li> <li>• West Neck Road @ Terry Drive &amp; Westmoreland Drive</li> <li>• Ram Island Road @ Sheep Pasture &amp; Gardiners Bay Drive</li> <li>• 1st Causeway</li> <li>• 2nd Causeway</li> <li>• 3rd Causeway</li> <li>• End of Congdon Road</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clark Place (area)</li> <li>• Valley Road</li> <li>• Linda Road</li> <li>• Osprey Road</li> <li>• Smith Street from Midway to Rte 114</li> <li>• Midway Road @ North Jaspa</li> <li>• Midway Road (south)</li> <li>• West Neck Road before 1st Hilo entrance</li> <li>• All of Silver Beach (high water table)</li> <li>• Emerson Lane @ the dead end</li> <li>• Hay Beach (area)</li> <li>• Big Ram (area)</li> <li>• North 114 meets South 114 near the medical center</li> <li>• Menantic Road from Smith Street to Bowditch Road</li> <li>• Crescent Beach (by bath houses)</li> <li>• Congdon Road between Rte 114 and North Cartwright Road has been closed twice due to flooding since 2000</li> </ul>

**TABLE 15: ROADS WITH FLOOD EXPOSURE**

*Source: Suffolk County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (2020)*

made to increase the length of platforms from 24 feet to 30 feet to improve vehicular access to and from the ferries. Improvements are under way at the North Ferry and include extending and raising ramps.

Flooding and even ordinary stormwater can harm the waters in and around Shelter Island from a water quality perspective. EPA and DEC initiatives designed to curtail runoff into surface waters include the following: Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4), Storm Water Management Program (SWMP), and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP). These efforts are crucial if pollutants are to be reduced and the aquifer recharged. The Town must complete in the near future the upgrading of storm sewers to prevent runoff from reaching surface waters. This issue is discussed further in Chapters 7 and 10.

## SHELTER ISLAND FERRIES

Shelter Island is served by two independent ferry companies. North Ferry Company is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation, while the South Ferry is a family-owned company. An ad hoc Town committee, the Ferry Study Group, assists in reviewing ferry services. In 2019, this committee was involved in establishing 5 a.m. service on the North Ferry to enable better connections to train and bus service in Greenport.

North Ferry operates boats between Shelter Island and Greenport continuously between 5 a.m. and midnight, 365 days per year. In addition, the ferry provides an average of 22 after-hour emergency trips per year.



**Shelter Island Ferry**

Source: Jim Colligan

Volume statistics for 2021, as reported by North Ferry, were:

- 1,294,500 passengers (down from 1,451,000 in pre-pandemic 2019)
- 823,869 cars (driver and passengers included above in passengers)
- 53,719 trucks (driver and passengers included above in passengers)

The trip is just under 1 nautical mile and takes about 15 minutes. Boats generally arrive for unloading and loading 15-20 minutes apart, depending on the time of day and demand, at two active docking areas on the Shelter Island side and two on the Greenport side. The company operates four relatively new ferry boats, with capacity for 25 cars each.

Greenport vehicles and passengers board at the Greenport multi-modal transportation hub, which is on land leased from the Long Island Railroad. The Ferry is accessed by roadways owned by the Village of Greenport and New York State. Ferry access from Shelter Island is on roads owned by the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation.

The ferries are capable of operating during high winds, including hurricanes. However, extreme high and low tides may interrupt ferry service when the tide exceeds the vertical range of the ramps. Due to sea level rise, minor flooding has become more frequent, and North Ferry has raised one of the landing areas in Greenport,

as well as extended the length of the ramp. This redesign will be replicated on three more slips at both ports in the coming years.

North Ferry is one of the largest employers on Shelter Island, with approximately 50 employees, including 32 regular captains that not only operate the vessels but also rotate deckhand duties, five staff in the office, and three engineers. North Ferry also has several pursers who do not operate vessels as well as seasonal and casual (fill in) staff.

South Ferry operates boats between Shelter Island and North Haven Village in the Town of Southampton. A single crossing takes approximately 8 minutes, with boats departing every 10 - 15 minutes. The first boat from Shelter Island departs daily at 5:40 a.m. The last boat departs North Haven at 11:50 p.m., year-round. The last boat service is extended to 1:50 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays from Labor Day until the third weekend in June and is offered daily from the third Friday in June through the Sunday of Labor Day weekend.

Ownership of the South Ferry by the Clark family dates to the early 1700s, when a rowboat was used to transport people and cargo to and from Shelter Island. Unlike North Ferry, South Ferry owns the landings on both sides of the channel. The west slips at both terminals are on South Ferry land, while the east slips are in the Route 114 right-of-way.

Due to rising tides, the Company has begun building replacement bulkheads and docks at least a foot higher than previously and plans to extend the existing ramps 6 feet in anticipation of continued tide increases.

South Ferry regularly operates four boats during the summer season with a fifth on standby. Since 1997, the Company has built four 101-foot steel vessels that carry up to 15 cars and can accommodate any size truck that is legal on the roads. Prior to 1997, the last boat the Clarks built was a 65 foot-wooden vessel in 1926 capable of just six cars and no large trucks. From 1960 until 2002, the Company used old, refurbished, high-maintenance smaller boats until revenues allowed the construction of the state-of-the-art new vessels.

The current fleet has improved carrying capacity and is capable of operating in extremely high winds, as demonstrated during Hurricane Sandy in 2012. With the winds at a steady 93 miles per hour South Ferry,

in coordination with Shelter Island and Sag Harbor Emergency Services, transported a woman experiencing a life-threatening event across the channel to a waiting ambulance. There have been interruptions and delays due to storms and ice, but in more than 70 years there has not been a day when South Ferry failed to operate.

## SIDEWALKS AND WALKING PATHS

### Sidewalks

Most areas of Shelter Island are rural in character, with no sidewalks in residential areas. Roads often have small shoulders, with approximately 10 feet of Town-owned right-of-way extending on either side of the roadway. This shoulder is typically grassy and maintained by the Town Highway Department. In some cases, vegetation extends almost to the roadway edge, obstructing passage by pedestrians and, at times, a safe line-of-sight for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Sidewalks are present in and around the Town Center area and Shelter Island Heights.

### Walking Paths

There are a number of walking paths and trails in the Mashomack Preserve, ranging from 1.5 miles to 11 miles, which are very popular. There is also a one-mile wheelchair accessible trail at Mashomack. Sylvester Manor is open from April through October for walking on three trails: the Woodland Walk, the Creekside Loop and the Farm Walk. Five of the Town preserves have walking trails: Bunker Hill County Park, Mildred Flower Hird Nature Preserve, Old Lima Bean Fields, Sachem's Woods, and Turkem's Rest Preserve. In addition, people walk on sidewalks in Shelter Island Heights and the Center, or along road shoulders. A more detailed discussion of walking paths can be found in Chapter 8: Parks, Open Space, and Waterways.

## BICYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to residents and workers who use bicycles as a means of transportation, Shelter Island is a popular destination for recreational cycling, with many day-trippers visiting from the South and North Forks to bicycle around the Island. While bicycling is common, infrastructure tends to be inadequate. There are no dedicated bicycle lanes or shared-use trails anywhere

on the Island, which results in the need for bicyclists and motor vehicles to "share the road." Bicycles are not permitted on the trails in Town preserves, Sylvester Manor Trails, or on the Mashomack trails.

New York Route 114 is a designated bike Route, running north to south on and off the Island and connecting Greenport to East Hampton, for a total distance of 15.35 miles. However, while this is a posted route, there is no dedicated bike lane or shoulders to make it comfortable and safe for bikers to share the road with motorists.

## OTHER TRANSPORTATION MODES

### Public Transportation

While there is no public or private-sector bus transportation on the Island, the Town's Senior Services Department operates a handicapped accessible bus to transport seniors to various locations on the Island as well as shopping trips and cultural excursions off Island. Volunteer drivers also transport seniors to and from medical facilities and doctor's offices on- and off-Island.

Off-island, the North Ferry connects to a multi-modal station in Greenport with access to the Long Island Railroad station, Hampton Jitney motor coach, and Suffolk County S92 Bus Line. At the South Ferry, the North Haven terminus is a stop on the Suffolk County Bus 10A route.

### Taxi and Ride Sharing Services

There is one company providing taxi service on Shelter Island as of June 2023. Off-Island limousine services also provide options for Islanders for off-Island transportation needs. In addition, there are residents who offer taxi-like service locally and to the airports or Riverhead. Volunteers provide seniors rides to medical appointments on and off island through the senior center.

### Truck Access/Delivery Services

All goods and many services must be transported by way of the North or South ferries. Both ferry companies operate multiple boats capable of accommodating the size and payload of the largest over-the-road trucks. As trucks exit the North Ferry boats onto Route 114, they encounter narrow residential streets and a difficult left turn from Grand Avenue as 114 makes a 90-degree bend

onto Chase Avenue. New York Avenue has also been identified as problematic for truck access and, as such, is prohibited for use by vehicles with a registered gross vehicle weight over 24,000 lbs. The access from South Ferry is more direct. Route 114 is less congested in the southern part of the Island.

### **Recreational/Commercial Waterways Traffic**

Shelter Island waterways are frequented by recreational boaters/sailors, commercial and recreational fishermen, water taxis, launches, charter boats, and paddlers of all stripes. Each of these users are an integral part of Shelter Island’s economy and identity. These activities are discussed further in Chapter 8.

### **Air and Seaplane Access**

Though not heavily used, the Island accommodates small aircraft at the Town-owned Klenawicus Airfield, a 1,700-foot grass landing strip. The field was acquired by the Town in 2010 and is maintained by the Shelter Island Pilots’ Association.

Multiple commercial aviation companies provide seaplane service to Shelter Island from New York City. Thus far, seaplanes have arrived at and departed from Crescent Beach. Restrictions on seaplane access by the Town of East Hampton in 2021 have reportedly resulted in increased arrivals of seaplanes on Shelter Island, with passengers calling a taxi to complete their journey across the South Ferry to the Hamptons Recommendations having to do with seaplanes are provided in Chapter 8: Parks, Open Space, and Waterways.



**Dering Harbor**

*Source: Jim Colligan*



**Shelter Island Ferry**

*Source: Jim Colligan*

## GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

### **Goal 6-1: Design “Complete Streets” that are safe for all modes, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.**

#### **Adopt a Complete Streets Policy to encourage roadways that are designed for all users.**

A Complete Street Policy would require the Town to consider the convenience and mobility of all users when developing transportation projects on local roads. The Complete Streets Act ([Chapter 398, Laws of New York](#)) also requires state, county and local agencies to consider these improvements for transportation projects that receive state and federal funding.

Complete Streets balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, emergency responders, and goods movement based on local context. Complete Street improvements make streets safer, more comfortable and livable for all users. A complete street may include sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions/bump outs, narrower travel lanes, and roundabouts or other traffic calming designs.

#### **Consider an Island-wide speed limit of 30 mph to ensure the safety of all street users.**

The Town should study whether it would be feasible to lower traffic speeds without impacting capacity. This could be studied in specific locations or Island-wide on local roads. It is recognized that Suffolk County and NYSDOT have jurisdiction over their own roads. The speed limit should also be codified in the municipal code to help with clarity and enforcement.

#### **Conduct a sidewalk study to determine where improved safety will enhance walking.**

A sidewalk improvement study would help to identify priority areas for sidewalks. One potential opportunity is creating a network of sidewalks throughout the center of Town and down to the IGA and from North Ferry to the four-way stop at New York Avenue & West Neck Road and then down to Crescent Beach. Priority areas should be near points of interest that generate pedestrian traffic such as parks, community centers, commercial areas, and schools. This study could identify priorities in the short-, medium-, and long-term, with anticipated costs. It could also identify opportunities for funding sources, potential partnerships, agreements, or easements needed for private property, and other short- and long-term maintenance needs.

#### **Pursue grant funding to develop a dedicated bicycle lane on Route 114.**

While this roadway is a NYS designated bicycle route, the roadway width is insufficient for an on-street bike lane. Many portions of Route 114 have inadequate or no road shoulders, which create hazardous conditions for all who share the roadway. Nevertheless, the road is frequently used by bicyclists as it is the main corridor to access destinations throughout the Town as well as to travel to and from the North and South Forks. Dedicated bike lanes can be found on Route 114 in North Haven/Sag Harbor.

In April 2023, the Police Department requested that NYS DOT evaluate different options for bike lanes, which could include a bike lane or shared lane depending on available width. NYSDOT responded that the project is beyond their current capital program given the scope of the project which would require right of way acquisition, relocation of utilities, removal of vegetation, and reconstruction of driveways. However, the Town

can still pursue this project under a NYSDOT Highway Work Permit as a local project, and it may be eligible

for Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant funding. The Town should pursue this funding to assess the feasibility and costs of this potential project.

**Goal 6-2: Continue to maintain and invest in roadways**

**Incorporate wider paved shoulders along roadways where feasible**

The Town should study roads where it may be possible to restore and/or establish the right-of-way/shoulder along its roadways. By widening the paved shoulder of the road it will create much-needed space for pedestrians and bicyclists while also allowing for vehicular emergency access and snow storage.

**Address maintenance of vegetation along roadways**

Many intersections have been losing sight lines due to vegetative encroachment. In 2023, the Town adopted legislation which expressly prohibits obstructions such as hedges and other vegetation in the right-of-way. Most rights-of-way around the Island are about 10' wide. Proper plant placement would be ½ the width at maturity plus 10 feet from the edge of the paved road. In theory, a mature tree or shrub would only reach the property line.

**Goal 6-3: Identify ways to facilitate traffic flow and improve the efficiency of the roadway network**

**Study impact of ferry traffic on local roads.**

The vehicular traffic on Shelter Island's ferries can vary depending on the time of year, day of the week, and specific events or holidays. During the peak tourist summer season, weekends, and major holidays, traffic on the ferries can be heavy and comes in waves as ferries arrive. The Town should conduct a study of the ferry traffic to ascertain the percentage of traffic that is residents, tourists, day trippers, and bridge travelers (people traveling between the South and North Forks). This could be done with Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs) which can help to determine origin and destination or possibly with in-person surveys done on the ferry. This would allow an evaluation of the "bridge" traffic from ferries that increase the number of vehicles on the roads. The perception is that these vehicles often divert from the primary roads (cut through) and frequently speed. Many of the local roadways lack the design / capacity to handle the additional traffic.

The Town may consider design solutions to slow down traffic and spread it out so that intersections do not become overwhelmed each time a ferry comes in. For example, roundabouts, when designed and implemented correctly, can help distribute traffic more efficiently compared with traditional intersections with traffic signals or stop signs. However, it's important to note that roundabouts work differently from traditional intersections, and their primary goal is to improve traffic flow, safety, and reduce congestion rather than aiming for equal distribution of traffic in all directions.

Another consideration is limiting on-street parking at Island choke points. This is most problematic in the Heights. The Town should study this area and other choke points to relieve intermittent congestion.

### **Improve roadway maintenance and develop a capital plan**

The Town needs to develop a 5-year capital improvement plan for maintaining/resurfacing roadways. This document will help to prioritize roadways and ensure

that ongoing maintenance needs and infrastructure investments are accounted for in the budget to keep road networks safe, functional, and in good condition. This plan should be re-evaluated and updated at least every other year.

### **Goal 6-4: Continue to monitor helicopter, airplane, and seaplane traffic to ensure their presence doesn't impair quality-of-life on the Island.**

#### **Monitor air traffic and address regulations as needed**

The Town should continue to monitor helicopter, airplane, and seaplane traffic considering possible changes to East Hampton Airport and limit/eliminate sea plane activities in all inland waters and restricting take offs/landings to outside waters. This recommendation is further discussed in Chapter 8

#### **Develop and adopt a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)**

The LWRP is a planning tool sponsored by New York State which allows municipalities to guide and control development, land use, and other activities along their waterfront areas. The LWRP establishes local policies which are then supported by the state when adopted. Adopting a plan would help to gain better control of water traffic in the waters surrounding Shelter Island and would thus play an important role in regulating and controlling seaplane activities. This recommendation is discussed further in Chapter 8.

### **Goal 6-5: Improve on-Island transportation options**

#### **Explore the possibility of providing "around-the-island jitney" service**

A jitney or shuttle service could serve as an essential transportation option to meet the unique needs of tourists, visitors, and residents. The Island experiences seasonal population influxes, creating challenges of traffic congestion, parking shortages, and environmental impacts. The shuttle service would also provide alternative transportation options to older residents or others who choose not to use a car. A well-designed jitney or shuttle service could theoretically drive from ferry to ferry, stopping at destinations along the route.

## **Goal 6-6: Improve the resilience of the transportation network**

### **Reduce stormwater runoff along roadways**

Reducing stormwater runoff along roads is essential to prevent pollution from entering surface waters and managing potential flooding. Stormwater runoff carries pollutants such as oil, sediment, litter, and chemicals from roads and adjacent areas into water bodies, impacting water quality. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. It is recommended that the Town adopt a policy to collect runoff waters in roadside catch basins before these waters can reach the shoreline as part of the MS4 effort increasing aquifer recharge especially in vulnerable areas. Some strategies to consider include the following:

- **Green Infrastructure**, including rain gardens, bioswales, and vegetated swales: These features help capture, slow down, and naturally filter stormwater, allowing it to be absorbed by the soil or evaporate.
- **Roadside Vegetation**: Plant native trees, shrubs, and grasses alongside roads to create vegetative buffers, which absorb and filter stormwater runoff while also preventing soil erosion.
- **Permeable Pavement**: This allows rainwater to infiltrate through the surface, reducing runoff. It can be particularly useful for parking lots and sidewalks.
- **Rainwater Harvesting**: Rain barrels or cisterns can be used to collect and store rainwater for later use (i.e. irrigation).
- **Redirecting Runoff**: Constructing curb extensions, diversion berms, or other structures can help redirect runoff into vegetated areas, where it can be absorbed by the soil.
- **Detention and Retention Basins**: These facilities temporarily store excess stormwater during heavy rain events, reducing the intensity of runoff into water bodies.

### **Address the Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan and search for funding**

One of the recommendations in Chapter 10: Utilities, Sustainability, and Resilience, is to continue to implement the Town's hazard mitigation plan. This plan includes measures to reduce risks to roadways, in particular, those roads that serve as evacuation routes. It is necessary to have functional roadways during an emergency event to allow emergency responders, medical personnel, and essential service providers to reach affected areas quickly. Implementing risk reduction measures on vulnerable roadways can help prevent or minimize damage, thereby significantly lowering the cost of repairs and the recovery process. This plan also identifies potential impacts of sea level rise on the ferry terminals and ramp heights to ensure safe, emergency ferry travel during all-weather conditions. Terminals at times are prone to flooding restricting access.

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# 7

# NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY

Shelter Island's irreplaceable natural resources include lush forests, beautiful bays, shorelines, and wetland areas. These resources are not just assets; they are interconnected ecosystems which define the Island's character, shaping its past, present, and future. Maintaining these assets will require an enduring commitment to stewardship and sustainability.

This chapter discusses the various natural elements such as the woodlands that shelter wildlife to the intricate wetlands that filter rainwater. Each component plays a role in preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological harmony. The waters that cradle the Island are also vital for sustenance, recreation, and the Island's identity.

Addressing water quality and quantity is a critical component of any comprehensive plan, but especially for areas like Shelter Island where natural resources, ecosystems, and community well-being are intimately tied to the health of water systems. Water availability is a key factor when considering current and future development needs. Balancing development with available water resources is crucial to avoiding contamination, over-extraction and depletion of water sources.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **The quality of water is highly vulnerable to contamination, and significant actions are needed to preserve it.**

Historical precipitation patterns have allowed for regular recharge to Shelter Island's aquifer and provided sufficient water supply for residents needs. Changes in weather patterns, prolonged drought, combined with significant increases in consumption could challenge water supply quantity, especially in low lying areas.

Depending on location, the Island's water quality is threatened by contamination from septic systems (Nitrates, PFOA/PFOS, Pharmaceuticals, etc), saltwater intrusion, and other pollutants (Herbicide, Pesticide, MTBE etc.). The decentralized nature of both the Island's water supply and wastewater treatment make comprehensive solutions challenging, but the Town and County have identified a range of strategies that should be pursued through collaboration with various governmental, nonprofit, and private partners. Protecting the town's water supply will require continual, diligent action at all levels.



### **The Island has an array of ecological resources of statewide significance, especially in the Mashomack Preserve and nearby areas, and the habitats of designated species must be protected.**

Land development and sea level rise have substantially reduced and degraded the habitats of many of these species. While many natural areas of Shelter Island are also attractive for recreational purposes, these demands need to be balanced with protection of sensitive ecological assets.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **Shelter Island is vulnerable to invasive species including plants and insects which can have significant ecological, public health, and economic impacts.**

One of the most significant issues is the proliferation of ticks and various tick-borne illnesses, which pose serious health risks to all residing on and visiting the Island. The proliferation of deer also poses a hazard to visitors and vehicles. Managing this issue will require continued efforts by the entire community. It is also anticipated that climate change will exacerbate the issue of invasive species as changes in temperature and precipitation patterns may create more favorable conditions for certain species to expand their range, possibly crowding out natives.



### **Most areas of Shelter Island are not vulnerable to flooding, but sea level rise is accelerating and will bring major impacts.**

Climate change will see rising temperatures and more frequent droughts, and an increase in the number and severity of storms and flooding. Although near-term flooding impacts are largely limited to low-lying areas, over time, additional waterfront facilities, roads, and natural areas along the coast will become increasingly affected. This includes impacts to the ecological function and visual character of coastal marshes and mudflats, which will exacerbate saltwater intrusion into the aquifer in low-lying coastal areas.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS: NATURAL RESOURCES

### Geology and Geography of Shelter Island

According to the Group for the East End, Shelter Island is composed of bedrock overlaid with a sedimentary sand formation deposited at the end of the last ice age. Geologists have identified six geological units, as shown in the graphic below. The soils that formed on top of this geological layer cake are composed entirely of the Montauk-Haven-Riverhead Association soils, which are characterized as deep, well-drained to moderately well-drained soils with a moderate texture. These soils supported agriculture on the Island long before the first European settlement in the 17th Century.

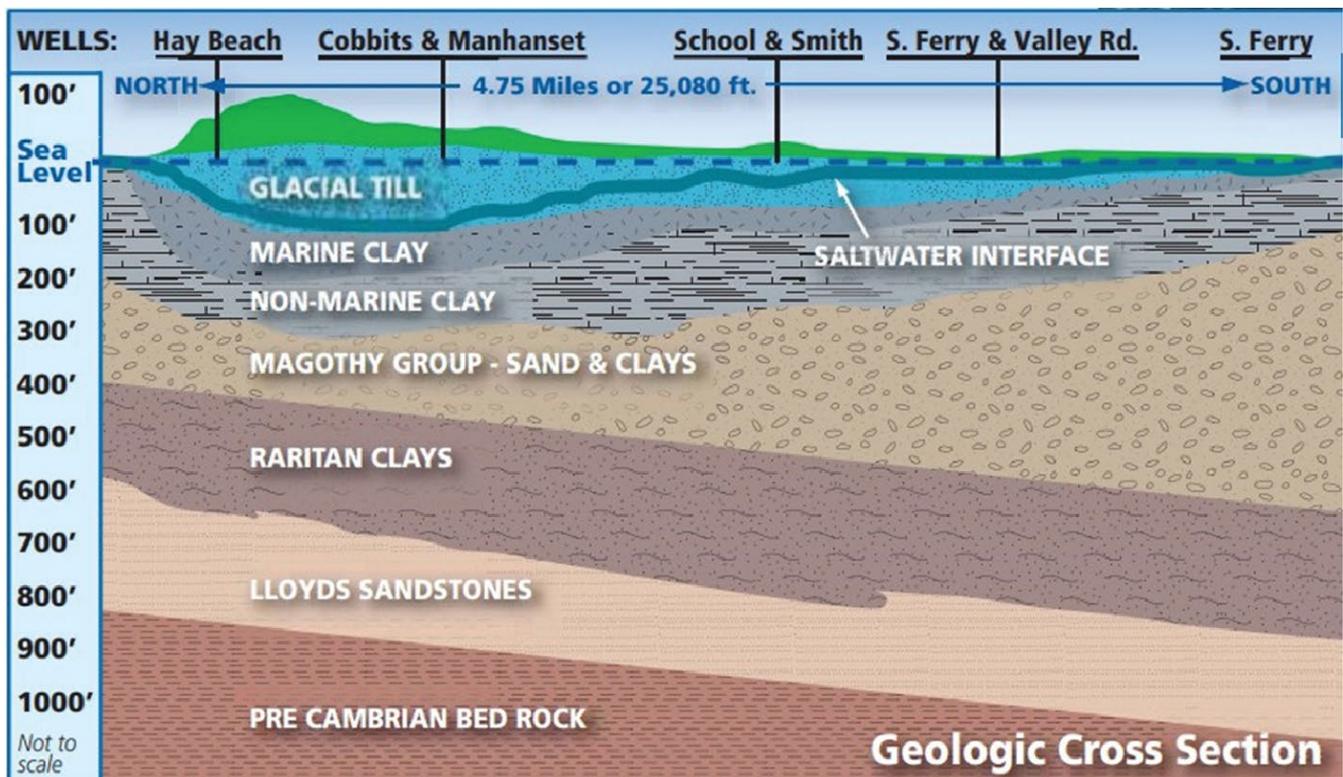
### Topography, Drainage and Hydrology

The hilly landscape shaped by the glaciers ranges from 180 feet above sea level on the bluffs in the northwestern part of the Island to as much as 40 feet below sea level in isolated depressions found across Shelter Island. Water

drains quickly into the gravelly soil. The 2014 Watershed Management Plan identified 64 distinct sub watersheds on the Island, ranging from less than 3 acres to over 240 acres in size.

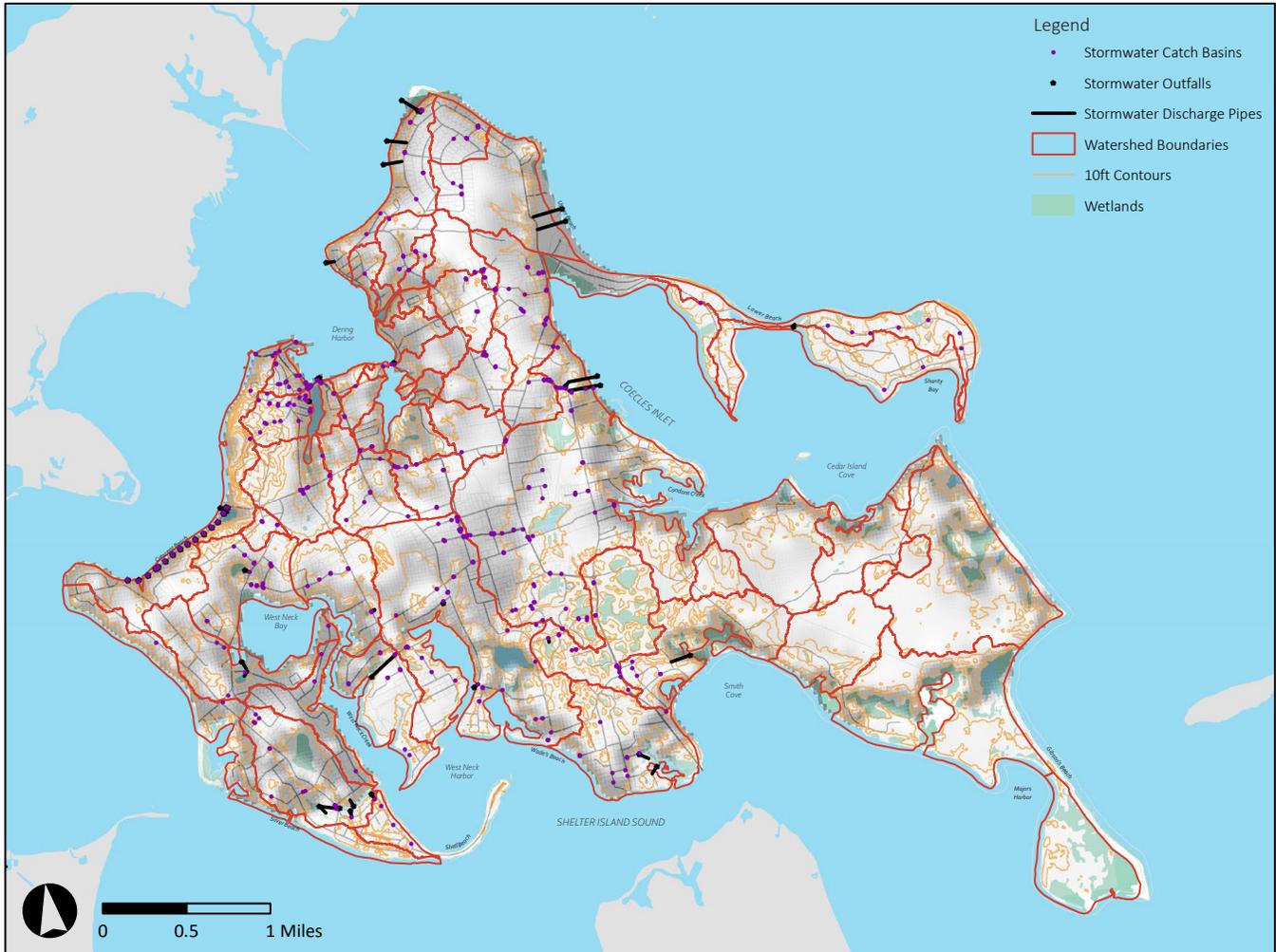
The interior glaciation left a number of small kettle hole ponds. Water draining to these and other low areas on the interior of the Island creates wetlands, including both open water and vegetated marsh and swamp, that are protected by state and federal law. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has identified 70 freshwater wetlands totaling some 105 acres. There are likely other smaller seasonal wetland areas, and whether or not wetlands have been mapped previously, landowners must survey and protect wetlands on their property as part of most site improvements or construction projects.

Shelter Island is surrounded by marine surface waters: harbors, coves, sounds and bays, and there are several tidal creeks and estuarine marshes along the coastline.



A N-S cross section through the Island showing its underlying geology and the saltwater interface

Source: Group for the East End



**FIGURE 9: STORMWATER AND SURFACE HYDROLOGY**

Source: Data source: NYS Department of Transportation, Main Street GIS, and Microsoft  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

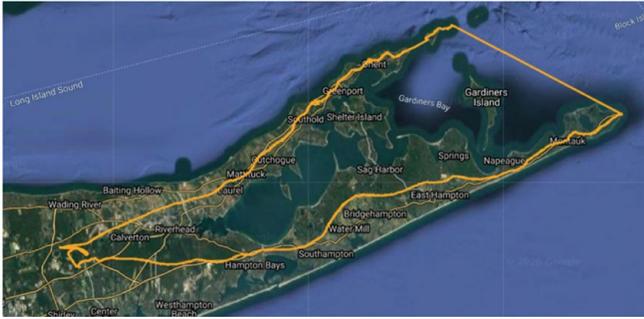
The Island’s complex and dynamic coastline has a diverse collection of marine environments, ranging from wave-racked rocky beaches at the base of bluffs to quiet inlets rich with plant and animal life. Continually shaped by tides, storms, and the movement of marine sediments, the beaches, mud flats, and marshes shift and change over time.

### Shelter Island & the Peconic Estuary

The Peconic Estuary is comprised of more than 158,000 acres of water formed into more than 100 distinct bays, harbors, coves, marshes, and tributaries. Draining into this rich marine environment is a watershed of some

125,000 acres of land, with a year-round population of 100,000 people; at the heart of all these lies Shelter Island.

The Peconic Estuary was named an Estuary of National Significance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992. This inaugurated the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP), a coalition of local, state and federal agencies; governments; nonprofit environmental groups; institutions and private citizens; supported by funding under the Federal Clean Water Act. Now known as the Peconic Estuary Partnership, the initiative prepared a new Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) in 2020 and works to maintain and improve the health of the estuary (<https://www.peconicestuary.org/>).



**Peconic Estuary Partnership Watershed Boundary**

Source: Peconic Estuary Partnership

The PEP has identified threats to the ecosystem from the direct impacts of human activities such as dredging of navigational channels; hardening of shorelines with bulkheads and other erosion-control structures; and clearing of upland forests to build new roads, homes, and businesses. Specifically, ongoing changes in the environment that threaten the habitats of the estuary include:

- Development and land management activities that reduce, fragment, and degrade natural areas.
- Damming streams flowing into the estuary that prevent the movement of diadromous fish from salt to freshwater.
- Invasive species of plants and animals, that out-compete native species and change the ecology of the estuary.
- The combination of rising seas and lack of sediment, which threaten to drown tidal wetlands and mudflats, especially if they cannot migrate inland because of topography or man-made barriers.
- Nitrogen pollution, increased water temperature, and human disturbance contribute to the loss of eelgrass beds and decline of scallops and other shellfish.

The health and productivity of Shelter Island's shoreline and marine waters cannot be separated from that of the surrounding Peconic Bay. A series of harmful algae blooms in the 1980s and 1990s were part of the reason for creating the Peconic Estuary Partnership, and ongoing challenges to Shelter Island waters have already played out elsewhere. Perhaps most significant is the decline of eelgrass beds and tidal wetlands. Of more than 8,700 acres of eelgrass beds that thrived in 1930, fewer than 1,000 acres remain - much of it along the East side of

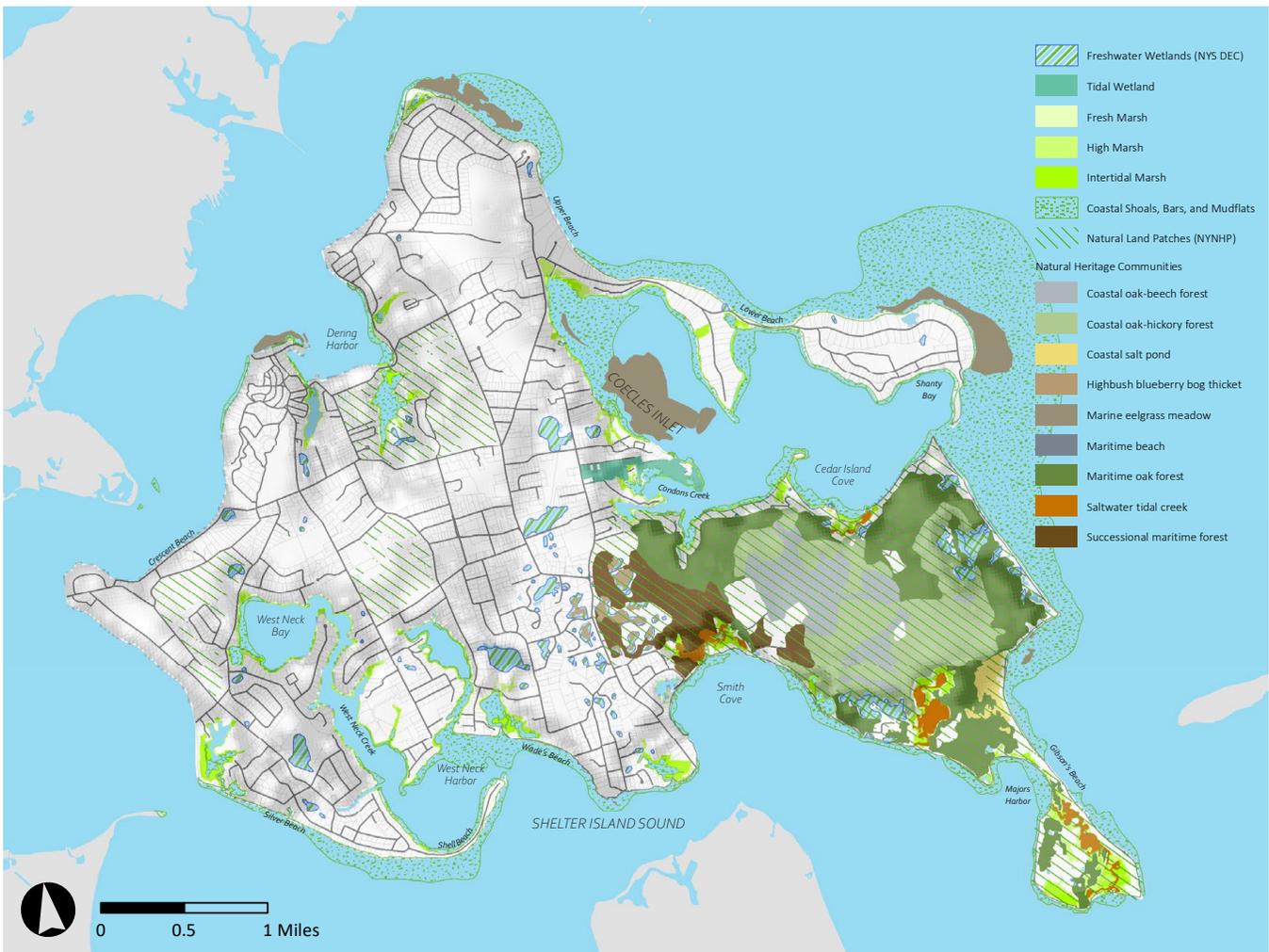
Shelter Island. In addition to the algae blooms, nutrient enrichment, and physical disturbance by boating and fishing practices, the major culprit may be warming water due to climate change.

Tidal wetlands have also declined in the estuary, losing about 10% of their extent between 1974 and 2005 - with the greatest losses in East Hampton and Shelter Island, according to the 2020 CCMP. This includes the drowning of some 25% of high marsh habitat during the same period. There are likely several forces at work, including sea level rise that seems to be outstripping the annual accumulation of sediments and organic matter, as well as the inability of many marshes to migrate inland due to shoreline hardening. What this means for Shelter Island is the loss of the extraordinary productivity of these ecosystems and the benefits they provide, including sediment retention, recycling of organic matter, and buffering of storm surge as well as irreplaceable feeding, breeding, and nursery habitats for invertebrates, fish, and birds. Lost along with these ecosystems are the traditions of fishing and scalloping that long supported Shelter Island's baymen and enhanced the lives of all Islanders.

## Plants and Wildlife

The Island's diverse landscape supports a rich cross section of plant and animal communities, which are particularly vibrant in undisturbed areas such as the Mashomack Preserve, owned by the Nature Conservancy. The New York Natural Heritage Program has identified numerous rare species within four habitat types, as listed in figure 10. The New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) has also designated three Significant Coastal Fish & Wildlife Habitats on the Island:

- Shell Beach, which has nesting sites for Least Tern and Piping Plover.
- Shelter Island Eastern Shallows, which has eelgrass beds of state importance and supports bay scallops as well as populations of Atlantic Ridley and Loggerhead turtles.
- Mashomack Preserve, an undeveloped marine coastal ecosystem that is rare in New York State.



**FIGURE 10: ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and NY Natural Heritage Program  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

Finally, the NY Natural Heritage Program has identified nine Significant Natural Communities, all associated with the Mashomack Preserve and nearby areas and each of which is significant due to its quality, age, or rarity within New York State:

- Coastal Oak-Beech and Oak-Hickory Forest, covering 665 acres on a moraine landscape on the interior of the peninsula, unique for its size.
- Coastal Salt Ponds, including Cedar Cove Pond and Plum Pond, surrounded by undisturbed forest.
- Highbush Blueberry Bog, formed in old kettle hole ponds and other lowland areas within the Preserve.
- Marine Eelgrass Meadow, a critically important habitat type and shrinking resource within the Peconic Estuary.
- Maritime Beach, including 11.4 miles of gravel and sand formed between mean high water and eroding dunes and bluffs.
- Maritime Post Oak Forest, creating special habitat along the edge of creeks and marshes.
- Saltwater Tidal Creeks, including Fan Creek, Miss Annie’s Creek, and Bass Creek, including low and high marsh habitats lined with oak forest.
- Successional Maritime Forest, encompassing areas around Smith Cover.

The Mashomack preserve is particularly important because these habitats are found together in one large area of undisturbed open space, but other large, forested areas elsewhere on the Island have been identified as potentially important by the State. These “Natural Land Patches” include Sylvester Manor and adjacent forested areas along Gardiner’s Creek, undeveloped land between North Menantic and Midway Road, and a large patch of forest on West Neck. In addition, the State has identified several rare or threatened species and one endangered species (white milkweed) on the Island.

In addition to Mashomack and other areas with statewide ecological significance, Shelter Island has hundreds of acres of undeveloped land that support a more ordinary population of plants and animals. Ranging from household lawns and gardens to small patches of forest surrounded by house lots, to golf courses and farmland, these everyday landscapes support a community of plants and animals that have adapted to human disturbance and thrive in the diverse suburban landscape. In addition to the ubiquitous deer, there are rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, raccoons, opossums, woodchucks, and predators such as foxes. Also benefiting from the diverse “edge landscape” common on the Island are the typical backyard and edge-dwelling birds and a large number of turkeys. Some other once-common species, such as bobwhite quail, spadefoot/fowlers toads, muskrat, otters, and mink have declined with the reduction of grasslands and marshes that support them.



**Mouth of Bass Creek**

Source: Jim Colligan

Centuries of land use change have permanently altered Shelter Island’s ecology, capped by the suburban-style development that has transformed much of the Island since the 1950s. With relatively few predators and a decline in hunting, the common animal species that have prospered on the Island have become pests in some circumstances (at least from the affected homeowner’s perspective). Deer are probably the most problematic - damaging gardens, darting out in front of cars, and of course, serving as a vector for deer ticks and tick-borne diseases such as Lyme. As described in the Cultural Resources and Community Character chapter, the Town’s Deer & Tick Committee has implemented a range of strategies since its creation in 2005 to control the deer population. The most successful of these is hunting, which is overseen by the Shelter Island Police Department on Town-managed properties. Through three hunting seasons (recreational archery, recreational shotgun, and culling), the hunting programs resulted in the deer herd being culled by about 550 animals in both 2018 and 2019. In 2023, 316 deer were reported from Oct. 1st to March 31st. 324 were reported over the same period in 2022.

### Exotic and Invasive Plant Species

In addition to changing island fauna, land use change has brought with it a host of exotic and invasive plant species. A long list of perennials, grasses, and water plants threaten gardens, forest, and wetland habitats. Some of these were imported for use in landscaping or erosion control, while others have arrived by hurricane or accident. Collectively, they out-compete and sometimes literally choke out native species and the insects and birds that rely on them.

Volunteers have for many years worked to clear invasives on Town-owned properties and Mashomack Preserve, and Sylvester Manor staff pursue invasives control on their properties. The Town’s Conservation Advisory Committee (CAC) maintains a list of recommended and prohibited plant species. While the CAC has no direct authority, they provide advice and technical support to the Town Board and meet regularly to review site planning and development proposals that involve changes to the Islands fresh and salt-water wetlands, aquifers, woodlands, and other open lands.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS: WATER QUALITY

### DRINKING WATER

The information in this section is a summary from the 2020 *Ground and Surface Water Management Plan* prepared by the Town of Shelter Island Water Advisory Committee (which can be found in its entirety as an appendix to this Comprehensive Plan), as well as the *Suffolk County Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan* (2015) and *Suffolk County Sub-watersheds Wastewater Management Plan* (SWP)(2020), the guiding documents for water resource management in Suffolk County. This document also includes recommendations from the *Shelter Island Watershed Management Plan*, which was developed in 2014.

The Island's groundwater resource consists of a single aquifer, isolated from groundwater aquifers on the mainland of Long Island's north and south forks. Unlike the hydrogeology of central and eastern Long Island where there are typically three relatively distinct aquifers – Upper Glacial, Magothy, and Lloyd - on Shelter Island only the Upper Glacial aquifer is potable. All of Shelter Island's potable water supply is sourced from wells that draw from the Upper Glacial aquifer; there is no use of surface water for water supply. The Magothy aquifer, often used as a source off-Island, is too saline for use on Shelter Island while the Lloyd aquifer that underlies the Magothy on Shelter Island is also saline. There is no potable water supplied to the Island through pipelines from either the north or south fork, though some water is trucked in to fill cisterns in compliance with Town laws.

The Upper Glacial aquifer water quality is challenged in certain areas of the Island, specifically by nitrate levels in the central portion and saltwater intrusion on the south shore peninsulas and parts of the Ram Islands. The overall water balance for Shelter Island suggests an ample quantity of groundwater in most areas of the Island, with an annual withdrawal of 260 million gallons vs. an estimated recharge of 4 billion gallons. However, ongoing development and land use change have the potential to reduce recharge through, loss of natural kettle holes and other depressions that promote recharge, planting of plant varieties that require a lot of water, and use of well-drawn irrigation systems. In addition, a crucial issue is the contamination of the aquifer with nitrates, PFOA/PFOS, Pharmaceuticals and other pollutants, largely

due to recharging from individual wastewater systems, including antiquated cesspools. There are also areas that are impacted with MTBE and other man-made and natural elements in concentrations that render the aquifer in the affected areas unusable without treatment.

The Town's engineering department has been working to better understand the aquifer, identify pollution sources, and leverage Suffolk County, NY State, and federal programs that can aid in the effort. The Town has mapped onto GIS the Island's wells and septic systems. The department has applied for participation in the NYSDEC's Drinking Water Source Protection Program and continues to participate with the County in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Solute Transport Modeling. In 2022, the USGS embarked on a pilot project for real-time data collection from the Shelter Island aquifer. The potential for the new USGS data to inform understanding of the aquifer is tremendous.

### Public Water Supply

Four water supply systems on Shelter Island provide approximately 10% of the estimated total water demand. In 2022, the Town signed a 40-year lease with the Suffolk County Water Authority (SCWA) to operate the West Neck Water Systems, which had been operated by a volunteer board of homeowners and maintained by a sole provider. The SCWA will not only operate the system but will also upgrade the infrastructure to comply with regulations and reduce water waste/leaking. There are also three sites where multiple residences share one well; these sites pre-date zoning.

### Private Wells

There are approximately 2,300 private wells on Shelter Island, estimated to meet the remaining 90% of the total water demand. These small-capacity well pumps are typically located on private property and draw supplies from the Upper Glacial aquifer. An increasing inability to source potable water on private property in some locations has led the Town, in special cases, to permit a homeowner to move his/her well onto adjacent Town property. Many residents have found the need to install water treatment systems to attain acceptable water quality.

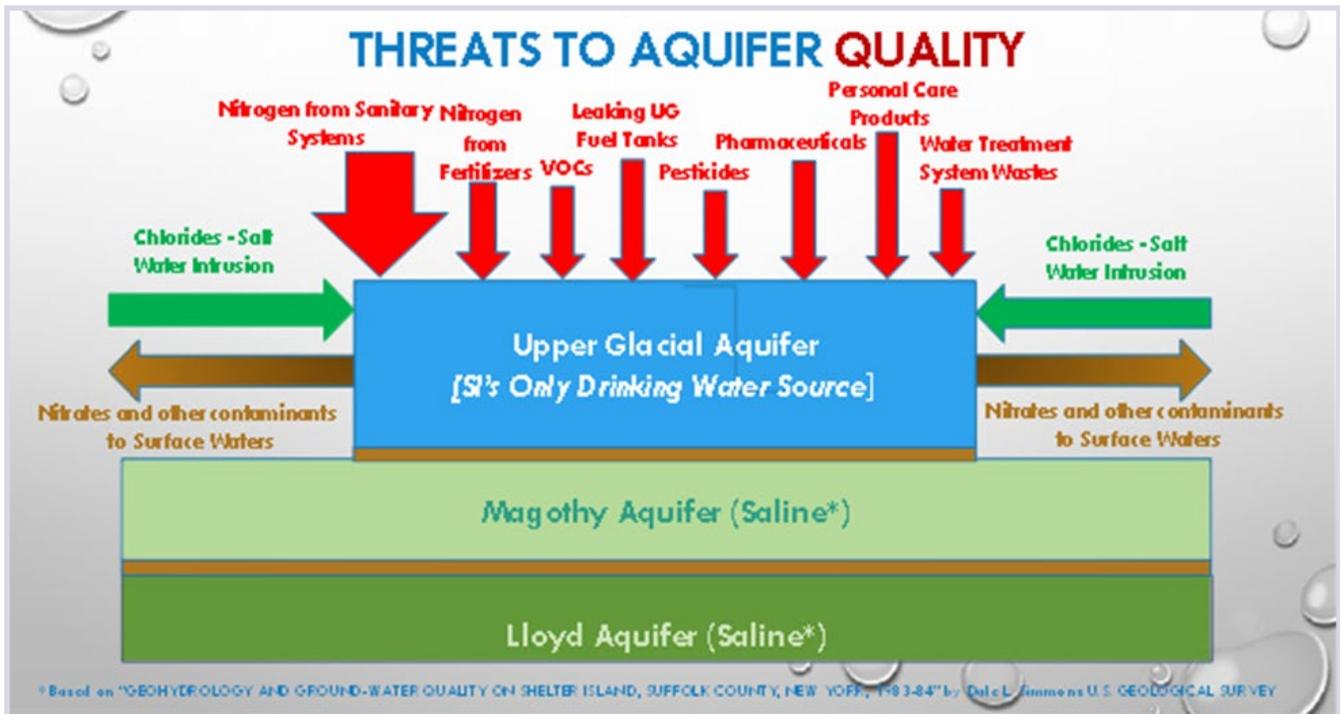
All of the wells on the Island together draw an estimated 260 million gallons each year, of which 95% is returned to the aquifer via on-site septic systems. Recharge through rain and snowfall is estimated to provide an additional 4.4 billion gallons to the aquifer; water not absorbed into the aquifer flows into surface water bodies or into surrounding salt-water bodies. While this suggests an abundance of fresh water, it is not distributed evenly to all areas of the Island. There are thinner aquifers in the peninsular areas like Montclair Colony, Silver Beach and the Ram Islands. In addition, there is a seasonal pattern of aquifer drawdown during the summer months, accompanied by 90% of the recharge happening between October and March.

### WATER QUALITY

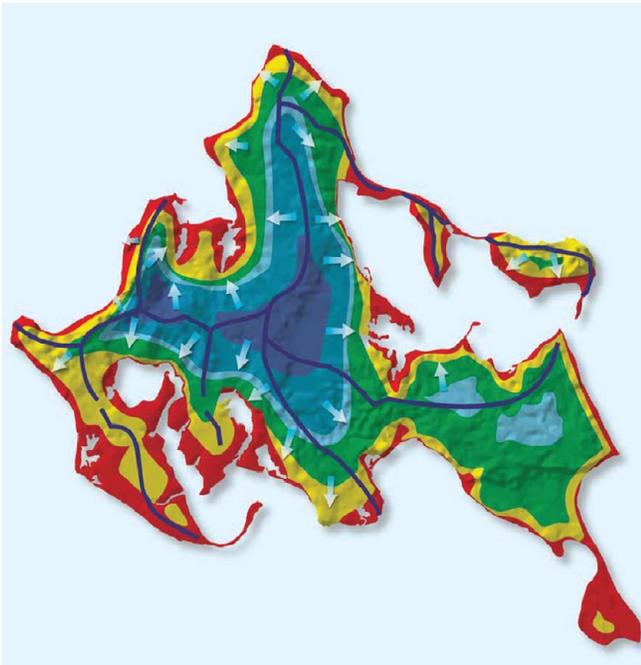
Of equal concern to the quantity of water is the quality of water drawn from the aquifer. Testing has shown that water quality has deteriorated as a result of wastewater discharge from residential treatment systems, fertilizer, herbicide, fungicide and pesticide applications, and other contaminants from various sources. Nitrate levels have been slowly but steadily increasing in the Island’s ground and surface waters and in some areas are exceeding the state and federal Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10 mg/L. Recent studies suggest that drinking water

below 10 mg/L may not be as safe as widely perceived. The 10mg/L standard set by the EPA was originally designed to protect infants from methemoglobinemia, or “Blue Baby Syndrome”, a condition that is caused by the conversion of hemoglobin to methemoglobin (which cannot carry oxygen) by consumption of nitrates in drinking water. The MCL was set to protect against this infant condition; however other health effects including cancer and adverse reproductive outcomes were not considered. While many studies have linked nitrates in drinking water above the MCL to cancer in humans, and others have been inconclusive, several studies have found a link between prolonged exposure to nitrates in drinking water below the MCL and cancer in adults. A 2010 study found a 260% increase in the risk of thyroid cancer in post-menopausal women consuming water with nitrates above 5mg/L vs under 5mg/L. This same study identified a 160% increase in the risk of bladder cancer when consuming water above 5mg/L for four years. A link to colorectal cancer was reported in a 2018 study. More on these studies and their references can be found in the Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.

According to the SWP, nearly all of the precipitation that recharges Shelter Island will discharge to a coastal water body within 50 years, with most of the groundwater



Source: Ground and Surface Water Management Plan



**Generalization of Aquifer Thickness**

Source: Group for the East End

baseflow discharging in less than 25 years. This indicates that a reduction in the nitrogen introduced in this area will result in reduced nitrogen loading to Shelter Island surface waters relatively quickly, compared with areas in western Suffolk County where it may take decades to realize the benefit. Thus, Shelter Island has the potential to stop and reverse the trend of increasing nitrogen in its aquifer relatively quickly if it makes a concerted effort to upgrade antiquated septic systems.

Recent groundwater monitoring has also detected volatile organic compounds (VOCs), PFAS, PFOS, pesticides, and pharmaceuticals in the Island's groundwater. Finally, saltwater intrusion is a significant threat, particularly in the peninsular areas on the south side of the Island. This will likely worsen with rising sea levels.

### Water Quality Planning

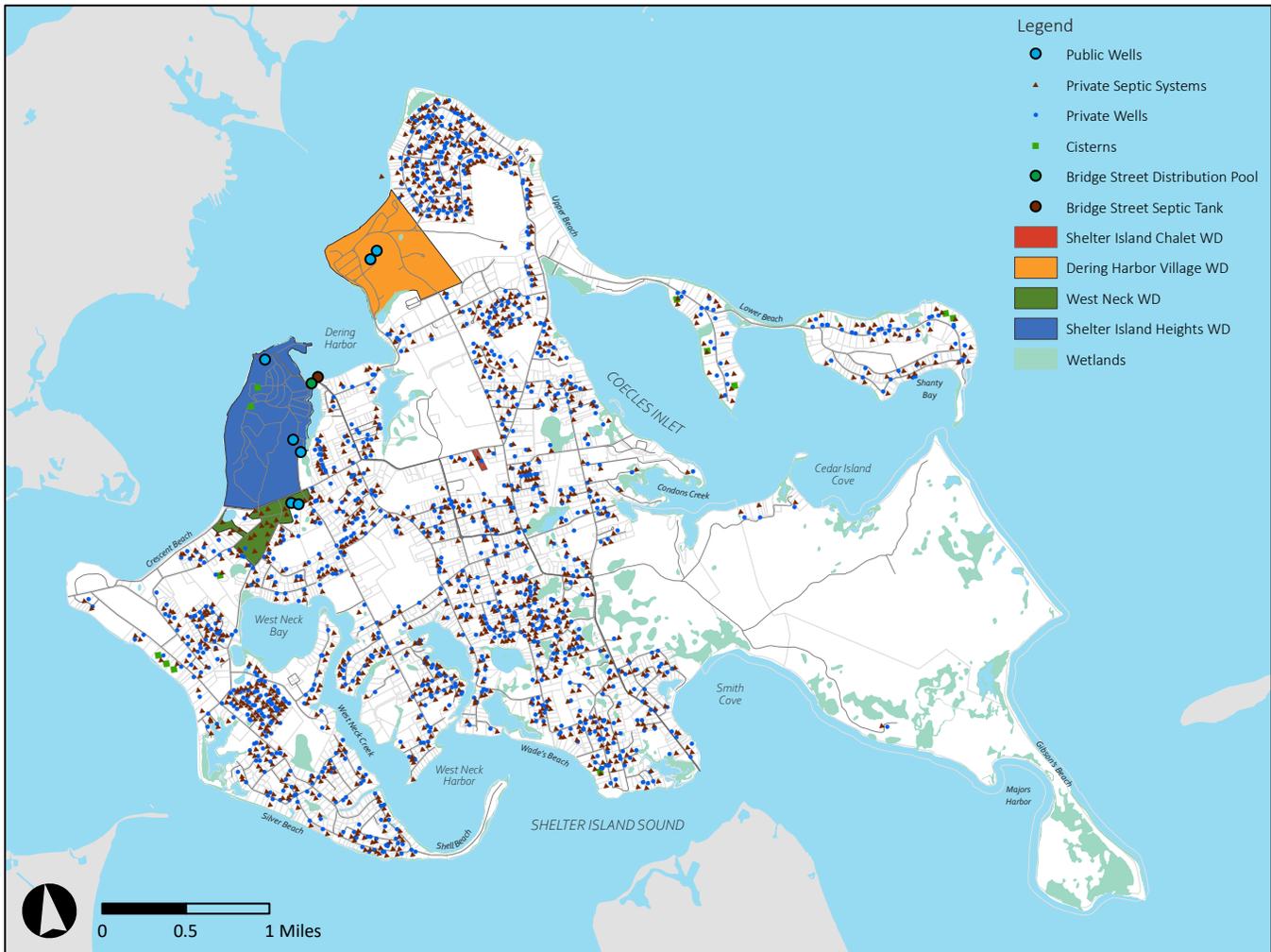
Protecting the Island's water supply and ensuring continued clean water for every home and business has been a focus of planning on Shelter Island going back to the 1994 comprehensive plan, which recommended better management to reduce or eliminate contamination

sources and to avoid downzoning in sensitive areas. In 2005, the Town commissioned a Water Supply Alternative Study, which took a comprehensive look at existing conditions, explored future growth scenarios, and estimated the costs and benefits of establishing an Island-wide water system. The study estimated a total cost of between \$25 million and \$38 million, and a capital cost per household of somewhere between \$8,500 and \$16,000 depending on the number of homes connected to the system.

In 2015, Suffolk County completed its Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan, a 1,040-page document analyzing the water quality, quantity, availability, and challenges faced by all of the County. The Water Resources Management Plan set goals in four significant categories: groundwater resource management, drinking water supply, surface water resource management, and wastewater management. This Comprehensive Plan supports and carries forward these goals as they relate to Shelter Island.<sup>1</sup>

The Suffolk County Sub-watersheds Wastewater Plan (SWP) (July 2020) was developed in response to the Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan as part of the Reclaim Our Water initiative. Wastewater management options and recommendations explored in the SWP include connection of parcels to community sewers by expanding existing sewer districts or creating new sewer districts where possible, upgrading cesspools or conventional on-site sewage disposal systems to Innovative and Alternative On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (I/A OWTS), and requiring nitrogen reducing technology on all new construction countywide. For Shelter Island, the SWP noted that the minimal agriculture present suggests that groundwater nitrogen issues are due to on-site wastewater systems. Converting old septic systems to I/A OWTS was determined to be the most viable alternative for water quality improvement to groundwater and private wells on Shelter Island. The SWP also concluded that, because Shelter Island lacked significant water infrastructure already, the majority of the Island, most likely, will remain on private wells. The County concluded that the success or failure of implementing many of these action items will be contingent upon securing necessary funding and cooperation from key stakeholders, and that holds true for the Town of Shelter Island as well. Any success in

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Health-Services/Environmental-Quality/Water-Resources/Comprehensive-Water-Resources-Management-Plan>



**FIGURE 11: DRINKING WATER AND WASTE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft

Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

achieving cleaner drinking and surface waters will be the result of a cooperative effort of the Town, County, State and most importantly its local citizens and communities.

The 2020 One Island-One Water, Ground and Surface Water Management Plan took a fresh look at the subject and offered four goals or “key outcomes” to guide continued planning and implementation actions:

- All Shelter Island residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local, state, and federal standards.

- All wastewater effluent on Shelter Island discharged into the aquifer will be at a maximum of 19 mg/L in accordance with the new nitrogen-reducing septic system (I/A OWTS) standards set forth by Suffolk County.
- As Shelter Island’s sole groundwater aquifer, the Upper Glacial Aquifers quality and quantity will continue to support the drinking water needs of residents without the need for “off-island” water.
- Surface waters surrounding Shelter Island will not be negatively impacted by human activity on Shelter Island.

## SANITARY WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

The level of nitrates in the environment has become a focus for planning and legislation in Suffolk County because excess nitrates in drinking water have been linked to health issues and the excess in the surface waters surrounding Long Island is believed to have caused numerous fish and shellfish die-off's. Human sewage is the primary source of nitrogen pollution, and the disposal of untreated waste to the groundwater (which eventually flows into the surrounding surface waters) has been a focus of several studies and has led to County legislation and programs to reduce nitrate levels in the environment.

In October 2020, Suffolk County passed legislation that, as of July 2021, requires all new construction and some expansion/renovation projects to install Innovative/Alternative On-site Wastewater Treatment System, or I/A OWTS. In 2017, the County launched a septic improvement program that created grants for property owners to replace aging sanitary systems with I/A systems. New York State also provided funds for this program and the Town has developed a rebate program using Water Quality Improvement Funds to incentivize homeowners to upgrade. Approximately 200 I/A OWTS have been installed on Shelter Island between 2018-2023.

As is the case on much of Long Island, the majority of residential and commercial sanitary wastewater disposal is through the use of privately owned, on-site septic systems. There are approximately 2,400 on-site septic systems on Shelter Island, including cesspools, septic systems (septic tank with leaching pools), and I/A OWTS. There are also a handful of composting systems on the Island. While cesspool-only systems were banned in Suffolk County in 1973, many homes built before then likely still have cesspools since the Suffolk County Department of Health Services did not require septic systems prior to that time. Given the age of the Shelter Island housing stock, there are likely many cesspool-only systems on the Island. The Town created a local I/A OWTS grant program that will provide local funding to supplement the County and State grants. In many cases, the combination of these grants will cover 100% of the cost of installing the new I/A OWTS.

## EXISTING AND POTENTIAL SEWER DISTRICTS

Shelter Island Heights is the only area of the Island that has a sewer system and sewage treatment plant. The plant uses a sequencing batch reactor system, originally installed in 1987 and upgraded in 2005 and 2015. It has a permitted flow rate of approximately 53,000 gallons per day of treated sanitary effluent. Upgrades to the treatment plant, which discharges its effluent in to Shelter Island Sound between Shelter Island and Greenport, are being studied.

The Town's engineering department, using grant funding, has studied the possibility of consolidating wastewater treatment for municipal buildings in the Center. This led to a proposal in 2022 for a new wastewater treatment plant to be sited on Manwaring Road. The proposed plan included all of the town owned properties in the center along with the fire department, library and school. However, the school pulled out of the project and installed a nitrogen reducing septic system. Without the school, the flow rates no longer made sense and the Town shelved the project.

Three of the marinas on the Island use pump out systems to collect the black tank contents from resident and transient boaters and dispose of it on-site.

## IRRIGATION

Because of the limited water supply on Shelter Island, the Town adopted a local law in 2015 that regulates irrigation systems (Town Code Chapter 82). All irrigation systems require an annual permit; pre-existing non-conforming irrigation systems can continue to withdraw from the aquifer, as can hand watering systems or one sprinkler. Most new irrigation systems require a cistern and may have additional requirements depending on location and type. The system permits need to be renewed each year along with proof of water delivery. As of 2023, there is not an effective enforcement program in effect.

## WATER RESOURCES: GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Goal 7-1: Ensure that all Shelter Island residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local, state and federal standards. All groundwater shall follow the stricter of New York State Ambient Groundwater standards and guidance values or Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) to the greatest extent feasible and practicable. Water quality that is better than the existing standards should be preserved, to the greatest extent feasible and practicable.**

### **Continue to revise and implement the currently relevant aspects of the Shelter Island Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.**

The Ground and Surface Water Management Plan (2020) is intended to be the Island’s strategic plan for ground and surface water management, and it is the primary resource for such issues. In addition, the 2014 Watershed Management Plan is officially part of the Comprehensive Plan and has been incorporated as an appendix to the main document.

The Ground and Surface Water Management Plan presents the current status of the Island’s aquifer, the short- and long-term threats to it as a drinking water source for the Island, and its impacts on surface waters within and adjacent to the Island. A vision for the future is embodied in four strategic, “Key Outcomes” that describe desired future states, with a series of recommended implementation actions to be taken over a period of 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11 years and beyond. While several of the recommendations can and should be acted on immediately, others need to be further developed through a robust stakeholder engagement process.

An ongoing planning process is envisioned, including an annual review of this Plan and the Key Outcomes and recommendations by the Water Advisory Committee, and the creation of an Annual Plan describing specific actions needed in the given year to move toward the Key Outcomes. There are many external entities

working on groundwater and surface water challenges and opportunities, and their work should be integrated into future revisions of this Plan. The Annual Plan will assist the Town Board in the prioritizing, budgeting, and implementation processes. The Town should also continue to closely monitor the Suffolk County Sub-Watersheds Wastewater Plan implementation, particularly to help identify reliable funding source(s) for implementation of projects on the Island.

**Goal 7-2: Develop plans for wastewater and water supply management to safeguard public health, protect the environment, and promote sustainable development.**

**Continue investigating methods to treat effluents from municipal buildings in Town Center.**

The Town is planning on studying methods to improve wastewater treatment for several municipal buildings in the Town Center, all of which rely on antiquated septic systems that contribute to high nitrate levels in drinking water. Possibilities could include the following: aggregate I/A systems on 2 or more municipal properties, a small treatment plant for most or all of the buildings located in the center, or the creation of a sewage treatment district to treat more than the municipal buildings. Water quality data should drive these explorations.

**Explore partnering with the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation to upgrade the existing sewer plant in the Heights, provide service to other areas, and explore alternative methods of disposing of the treated effluent.**

There is one sewage treatment plant on the Island, which serves the Heights. The effluent from the Heights plant meets its State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit levels and is being discharged to Shelter

Island Sound. The Heights Property Owners Corporation could consider working with the Town to upgrade the existing sewage treatment plant, which would make it eligible for municipal grant funding.

There may be other opportunities for the Town to partner with the Heights plant to enable expansion of services to other residences and structures. One opportunity may be to connect Bridge Street businesses to the Heights WWTP. This would eliminate several current non-conforming septic systems, all of which contribute to surface water contamination of Chase Creek and Dering Harbor. This partnership would be beneficial because 1) it would eliminate the surface water contamination from old septic systems currently leaching into Chase Creek and Dering Harbor; 2) may allow for the installation of apartments in existing second and third stories; 3) would require an upgrade to the Heights wastewater treatment plant that would bring it up to a tertiary level of treatment and possibly include recharge, thus eliminating the need to pump the treated wastewater effluent into the Peconic Bay; and 4) would create eligibility for grants and other funds that are not accessible to the existing Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation. Alternatively, collaborative efforts can focus on other options to address the Bridge street water and wastewater challenges.

**Goal 7-3: Develop a water supply plan to ensure residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local, state, and federal standards.**

**Create a phased Master Plan for public water utility service to challenged areas of Shelter Island.**

As saltwater intrusion and rising nitrate and other contaminate levels become more of a significant and consistent problem, more residents are reaching out

to the Town to request a solution and to be provided with potable water. Developing a Master Plan for public water utility service involves a comprehensive and systematic approach to ensure that all aspects of water supply are considered and integrated into a long-term strategy. The process would include an assessment of the current water supply, community engagement,

water demand projections, risk assessment, financial planning, and phasing. It would also catalog potential land for acquisition that satisfies the municipal sanitary radius and other water quality and yield requirements for municipal wells.

The Master Plan should establish manageable phases based on priority, funding availability, and urgency. In the short term, the plan would focus on areas that are currently or anticipated to be challenged – meaning that they are unable to reliably source potable water from residential wells. The process should begin with discussions with public water suppliers to understand the engineering and financial aspects of this undertaking. It should also include a study of the aquifer quality (Nitrates, Chlorides, PFOA/PFOS) in areas requesting

water service to identify and prioritize the need for remediation of contaminants and to determine where water infrastructure should be prioritized Island-wide.

The plan would also develop a financial model and identify funding sources for drinking water supply improvements. This could include the establishment of a Water Quality District or an Island-Wide Water Management District to maintain home rule over our water resources. An island wide water management district would only include areas of the island not already in a water district. In the long term, the Master Plan could consider integrating the Heights, Bridge Street Water Company, West Neck Water, and Dering Harbor water systems, as appropriate, to create redundancy and provide back up water to the preexisting districts.

### **Goal 7-4: Educate and Assist Property Owners on how to prevent contamination of private water wells and safeguard their drinking water quality.**

#### **Educate the public on water quality in their area and encourage testing of private wells and the installation of Nitrogen reducing septic systems.**

There are many things the Town can do to raise public awareness about water quality and the importance of well water testing.

- Create brochures, flyers, and posters that provide information about well water quality, potential contaminants, and the benefits of regular testing. The materials can be distributed at local stores, Town offices, community meetings, and via social media.
- Organize community workshops or town hall meetings to discuss water quality issues and the importance of testing private wells. Invite local experts, health officials, and environmental specialists to present information and answer questions.
- Provide on-site testing or sample collection and offer information about how to interpret test results.

- Develop a dedicated website or web page that serves as a central hub for water quality information. Include resources, links to testing laboratories, and guidelines for interpreting test results.

It is important to note that addressing drinking water problems without addressing septic problems is an incomplete solution that will not protect our bays or aquifer

#### **Develop an incentive program for residents to test their well water and share the data with the Town for the purpose of establishing groundwater quality mapping.**

Develop a program to encourage more people to participate in well water testing. The Town could offer a rebate if homeowners share water quality data with the Town or on an online platform. Results could be shared with the public through regular updates, reports, and interactive maps to increase transparency.

#### **Continue the grant program for I/A**

### **System installation.**

Suffolk County has assertively pushed for private property owners to transition to the use of Innovative and Alternative On-site Wastewater Treatment Systems (I/A OWTS or I/A). To make these systems more affordable, the county together with the state has provided both a grant program (up to \$30,000) and a low-interest financing program as part of the Reclaim Our Water initiative. The Town's currently established grant can add up to an additional \$21,000.

Shelter Island's septic grant process is through the Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board to support the voluntary installation of I/A systems. These grants are funded through the Community Preservation Fund Transfer Tax. The expansion of the use of these funds to include water quality initiatives was approved by voters in 2016.

### **Develop wellhead protection zoning for the area of recharge for the wells of each of the public water systems.**

The Suffolk County Department of Health (SCDOH) requires public supply wells to have a 200 foot sanitary radius of property owned by the water supplier. Due to the high density of housing in the areas with public supply wells (Dering Harbor, West Neck Water and SI Heights), it has become increasingly more difficult to

maintain that minimum sanitary radius. Properties that have the ability to maintain the minimum sanitary radius should be cataloged and, if not, given priority for grant funding to upgrade their sanitary system to a nitrogen reducing system or given priority status for purchase if undeveloped. In addition, an inventory of existing well sites and pumping capacity should be maintained (also on GIS) to determine the adequacy of current supply and forecast future needs.

### **Pursue grant and other funding opportunities for water quality improvement projects.**

In order support the best practice of stopping pollution at its source, in order to render remediation more effective, the Town must continue to maximally encumber 20% of the 2% Community Preservation Fund and roll that fund over year to year via resolution, exclusively for the use of water quality improvement projects, wastewater treatment improvement projects, aquatic habitat restoration, pollution prevention, storm water collecting systems and vessel pump out stations and/or boats, as defined in the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Funds Town Chapter 62, article 4. The Town should also continue to identify and pursue grant opportunities from County, State and Federal water quality improvement and habitat restoration initiatives.

## **Goal 7-5: Strengthen Town regulations to protect groundwater and prevent contamination.**

### **Implement source water protection programs that identify vulnerable areas around wells and other groundwater sources.**

This should include the designation of "Water Protection Zones" (WPZs) where estimated effluent travel to surface water (fresh or salt) is less than 2 years (Based on 1 ft/day movement) and areas that are currently experiencing groundwater at or above 7mg/L of nitrates. The WPZs would include standards to minimize contamination risks in these areas, including land use restrictions,

buffer zones, and pollutant reduction measures. More information on WPZs can be found in the Watershed Management Plan.

### **Revisit the Town's I/A OWTS code.**

More clarification is needed for the conditions where installation of an I/A system is required. The Town should consider a regulation that requires upgrading cesspool-only waste systems to add an I/A system upon property transfer or failure (unless determined not to be feasible by a Professional Engineer). The Town could consider a long-term plan to upgrade all sanitary systems over

the next 10 years. Priority areas would include those in WPZs, which could have a shorter “Voluntary Compliance Period” such as 3 years (depending on the permitting and grant application process duration). This is discussed further in Appendix C of the Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.

### **Address issues and risks of underground fuel oil storage**

The primary concern for underground oil tanks is the potential for leaks or spills, which can lead to environmental contamination, health hazards, and costly cleanup and remediation efforts. This issue is more common in aging or improperly maintained tanks. In some cases, residential properties may have

underground fuel oil storage tanks that were abandoned or forgotten over time. These tanks may deteriorate and leak without anyone being aware of the issue, exacerbating the potential for contamination.

It is recommended that the Town develop a program which encourages the replacement of underground tanks with above-ground systems, which are easier to inspect and maintain. The Town already requires abandonment prior to the issuance of a re-construction permit; additional requirement to abandon on property transfer should be instituted. Further, a program to encourage voluntary compliance should be considered such as, a rebate program and low/no-interest financing options for the replacement of underground fuel oil storage tanks.

**Goal 7-6: Continue to monitor water table levels and implement water use restrictions as indicated to support the drinking water needs of the Island residents without the need for “off island” water.**

### **Implement water use restrictions as indicated in the drought monitoring criteria established by the Water Advisory Committee (WAC).**

The Drought Indicator Criteria consists of three components, and/or requirements resulting from a New York State proclamation of Drought Emergency or Disaster.

- Criteria #1. Us Seasonal Drought Outlook
- Criteria #2. Drought Severity Monitor Report
- Criteria #3. Shelter Island Well Height Levels For Criteria 3, ‘Normal’ drought measurements rate the current water quantity versus the total capacity of a system. For example, the total capacity of a reservoir versus the amount measured within it. For Shelter Island groundwater quantity, because of the uncertain and varying saltwater diffusion zone, the “capacity” of potable water in the aquifer is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine. For this reason, the monthly readings for monitored

wells are compared to the seasonal historic well levels to provide a relative guidance on available water.

- Consideration should be given to declaring the months of June July and August “critical” regardless of drought condition due to the dramatic increase in summertime well usage.

### **Promote water conservation policies.**

Over-extraction of well water for irrigation can lead to a decline in the water table, affecting the well’s long-term sustainability. In coastal areas it can lead to saltwater intrusion rendering wells unpotable. It can also lead to aquifer depletion, reducing the overall water supply and potentially impacting nearby wells and surface water sources. Water conservation during droughts can have a positive impact on the availability of water in compromised near shore areas. Some potential policies to address include the following:

- Revise the irrigation law to prohibit well drawn irrigation, especially in the near shore overlay, including grandfathered system,
- Discourage homeowners from topping off their pool with well water and restrict de-watering only to essential applications while requiring that the water be recharged on the same property.
- Develop policy or code to determine the appropriate regulations for irrigated tennis courts
- Figure out enforcement- for example 1-year temporary permits for new construction should require proof/ inspection when removed at the expiration of the permit

### Develop a groundwater model

Groundwater models help in understanding the complex behavior of aquifers, such as how water flows, interactions with surface water bodies, and responses to changes in pumping rates. A model can provide insight into the availability and distribution of groundwater resources. This aids in planning for future water demands and potential conflicts. This information is valuable for optimizing well usage, predicting sustainable yield, and avoiding over-extraction. With a groundwater model, it becomes possible to estimate the long-term sustainable yield of a well or a group of wells without depleting the aquifer beyond its capacity. This data can also be used to help identify high-volume water users as discussed below.

The Water Advisory Committee monitors 12 USGS wells which are slowly being converted to provide real time well level data. When this project is fully operational, a groundwater model will be feasible. The WAC should continue this monitoring as well as the South Ferry Monitoring Station and other active water quality monitoring efforts. Expand this as necessary to build the sophistication of our data so that our picture of the entire Shelter Island water resource cycle is better understood

### Identify high-volume water users to target future education, funding, and support.

Monitoring water usage in private wells requires a combination of manual observations, data logging, and periodic measurements. Since private wells are not typically connected to a centralized monitoring

system like public water supplies, homeowners must take an active role in tracking their water usage. When technological advancement allows, the Town should strongly recommend that homeowners monitor their wells and share the data with the Town engineer.

### Improve education about water conservation and landscaping best practices.

Improving education about landscaping best practices to limit water and fertilizer use is crucial for promoting water conservation, reducing pollution, and creating more sustainable landscapes. Printed and online materials help to educate the public about drought tolerant and native plants. These materials could be provided on the Town's website and in hard copy at Town Hall and the Building Department.

Another opportunity for a pilot project would be to convert one of the Town-owned properties to an environmental education center, showing best environmental practices for landscaping, yard care and a section promoting plantings for pollinators. This project could be done in coordination with Community Preservation Funds and local landscape and lawn care businesses.

## **Goal 7-7: Protect surface waters surrounding Shelter Island from being harmed by human activity and stormwater runoff.**

### **Reduce the discharge of volatile organic compounds and other contaminants to groundwater through education and Town Code modification.**

Town regulations play a crucial role in addressing stormwater runoff and implementing effective stormwater management practices. Stormwater runoff occurs when rainwater flows over impervious surfaces like roads, parking lots, and rooftops, picking up pollutants and carrying them to nearby water bodies, leading to water quality degradation and flooding. Town codes can be designed or amended to mitigate these impacts and promote more sustainable stormwater management. Here are some provisions to consider addressing:

- Include Suffolk County Local Law No. 41-2007 "A Local Law to reduce Nitrogen pollution by Reducing Use of Fertilizer in Suffolk County" in the Town Code.
- Explore the fertilizer regulations of other coastal and island communities and adopt the most appropriate policy and practice for Shelter Island.
- Provide Town oversight/enforcement of the County ban on the application of fertilizer between November 1st and April 1st
- Require businesses selling fertilizer to post fertilizer areas with the notice required by the County.
- Explore the fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide, and fungicide regulations of other coastal and island communities, see how they handle the issue, and adopt the most appropriate policy and practice for Shelter Island.
- Educate on and encourage the proper use and disposal of lawn and other household chemicals.
- Revisit the requirement of permeable surface driveways in the nearshore overlay because people are more likely to use pesticide and weed killer on them. Consider allowing hard surface driveways with mandatory water capture and recharge

via trench drains and drywells, redirection into rain gardens and swales, or other forms of water collection and recharge.

- Evaluate and recommend Best Management Practices for proactive reduction of VOCs capable of entering groundwater and surface waters. The most effective method for preventing VOC contamination is to prevent their use or disposal in locations where they have the ability to enter groundwater or surface waters. The reduction in use of such products is voluntary, albeit necessary, to reduce the introduction of these compounds in groundwater. In surface waters, the reduction could result in a change of practices at marinas and other waterfront homeowner uses.
- Evaluate and recommend Best Management Practices for the proactive reduction of pharmaceuticals and personal care products in groundwater and surface waters.

### **Provide upland storm water catchment detention and recharge infrastructure to better control stormwater runoff and to reduce contamination of ground and surface waters.**

Stormwater catchment with roadside rain gardens is a sustainable stormwater management practice that involves the use of rain gardens or bioswales along roadsides to capture and treat stormwater runoff. These features are designed to mimic natural processes, allowing rainwater to infiltrate the soil, be taken up by plants, and undergo biological and physical filtration. This approach helps reduce the volume and pollutant load of stormwater runoff, thereby minimizing the negative impacts on water bodies and mitigating flooding and erosion.

The Town can also encourage coastal residents to create vegetative buffer zones on their properties to lessen runoff into the bays. This could include educational outreach, technical assistance, creating buffer planting kits and zoning regulations such as "buffer zones"

with minimum planting requirements. In addition to residential storm water management practices the Town should focus its efforts on maximizing recharge in areas surrounding public water services.

### **Continue to monitor the health of surface waters.**

The Town should develop/continue monitoring programs (or participate in existing programs) for surface waters contained within and surrounding Shelter Island in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy, the Peconic Estuary Partnership, Peconic Baykeeper/Blue Water Task Force and Cornell Cooperative Extension. With the purpose of developing a database of local surface water quality information that can be used to trend pollutant levels, assist in groundwater modeling and management efforts, and aid in shellfish management and aquaculture activities. The monitoring programs should include data from the commercial baymen about the quality and quantity of their catch to help monitor health of our waterways, shellfish, and marine life.



*Shelter Island wildlife (Herring Gull)*

*Source: Jim Colligan*



*Male Wood Duck at Mashomack Reserve*

*Source: Jim Colligan*

## NATURAL RESOURCES: GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Goal 7-8: Identify, protect and enhance the quality of freshwater and marine habitats.**

#### **Restore tidal and freshwater wetlands habitats to foster their continued existence as natural systems.**

Restoring tidal and freshwater habitats is a collaborative effort that requires patience, dedication, and a long-term commitment to preserving the natural environment for future generations. Some general strategies include the following:

- Conduct a Habitat Assessment: Begin by assessing the current state of the tidal and freshwater habitats on the Island. Identify areas that have been degraded or lost due to human activities, erosion, or other factors. Understand the ecological needs of the native flora and fauna that once thrived in these habitats.
- Develop a Restoration Plan: Work with environmental experts, conservation organizations, and community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive restoration plan. This plan should include specific goals, target habitats, strategies for restoration, and a timeline for implementation.
- Remove Invasive Species: Prioritize the removal of invasive species to create space for native plant regeneration.
- Reforestation and Revegetation: Planting native tree species along wetlands can stabilize the soil, improve water quality, and create essential habitats for wildlife.
- Wetland Restoration: Reestablishing or enhancing wetlands can help improve water quality, provide breeding grounds for aquatic species, and mitigate the impacts of flooding.
- Protecting Coastal Areas: Coastal habitats are vital for protecting the shoreline from erosion and storm surges.

- Educate and Engage the Community: Raising awareness about the importance of these habitats and involving the local community in restoration efforts can lead to better long-term success.

#### **Protect and restore Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats and NYSDEC Critical Environmental Areas.**

Protecting fish and wildlife habitats is essential for maintaining biodiversity, ecosystem health, and the overall balance of nature. It is essential that Shelter Island promote sustainable use of these marine habitats and resources to ensure they are here for future generations. Some strategies to consider include:

- Sustainable Fishing and Hunting Practices: Promote sustainable fishing and hunting practices that prioritize conservation and ecosystem health.
- Marine Conservation: Protect marine habitats by combating pollution, controlling coastal development, and establishing marine protected areas. Encourage responsible fishing practices and reduce bycatch to safeguard marine ecosystems.
- Address Pollution: Take measures to reduce pollution, including runoff from agricultural and urban areas, industrial waste, and plastic debris in waterways.

#### **Review, clarify and strengthen the wetlands code chapter 129 to enhance protections on the wetlands.**

The current wetlands code contains vagueness, contradictions and confusion that require clarification.

## Goal 7-9: Protect Upland Habitats and Trees

### Promote habitat preservation and restoration so that Islanders and visitors can enjoy a healthy ecosystem

This includes various strategies to retain and add indigenous plants to maintain and restore values of upland ecological communities. Indigenous plants are a vital component of local ecosystems and contribute to biodiversity. Preserving these plants helps maintain ecological balance and supports the survival of diverse flora and fauna. They play a crucial role in maintaining healthy ecosystems by preventing erosion, filtering water, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

- Consider incorporating wildlife corridors by setting fencing regulations to include a minimum setback from the property line.

### Adopt a Tree Preservation Local Law for the purposes of protecting woodlands and individual historic, significant, and scenic trees important to the community.

The overall goal of a tree preservation local law is to strike a balance between development needs and environmental conservation, ensuring that community can evolve while safeguarding its natural resources and maintaining its unique character. The specific provisions would need to be determined based on an assessment of community priorities and environmental considerations; however, it could include the following topics:

- **Tree Identification and Protection:** The law may specify which species and sizes of trees are protected. This could include mature trees, rare or endangered species, and trees with cultural or historical significance.
- **Tree Removal Permit:** Would require property owners or developers to obtain a permit before removing designated trees, and trees exceeding a certain size, ensuring that proper assessment and consideration of alternatives are undertaken.

- **Tree Replacement:** In some cases, the law may require replanting or replacement of trees that are removed. This helps maintain the overall tree canopy and ecosystem functions within the community.
- **Buffer Zones:** Tree preservation laws may establish buffer zones around ecologically sensitive areas, water bodies, or habitats, where tree removal is restricted to protect the natural environment.
- **Tree Care and Maintenance:** The law may outline guidelines for proper tree care and maintenance to ensure the health and longevity of protected trees.
- **Penalties and Enforcement:** To ensure compliance, the law may define penalties for violations, such as illegal tree removal or failure to obtain required permits.

### Engage NY DEC and local resources to explore establishing a controlled burning program.

Controlled burning is used as a tool for ecological management and restoration of habitats, particularly in certain areas with fire-adapted habitats. These controlled burns are carefully planned and conducted under specific conditions to mimic the natural role of fire in maintaining certain ecosystems. Controlled burning programs often involve collaboration between state agencies, land management organizations, and local fire departments to ensure effective planning and execution. The public is informed about the controlled burning programs in advance to ensure public safety and to raise awareness about the ecological importance of controlled burns.

Unfortunately, there are many hurdles to overcome when pursuing controlled burning programs. There are stringent requirements set by NYSDEC, and current methods have been costly and largely ineffective to date.

## **Goal 7-10: Monitor and Control Nuisance Species**

### **Manage Whitetail Deer populations and work with wildlife management agencies to educate the public on the impact of deer populations.**

Managing conditions for rodent populations and deer management are critical to managing the tick population. Like many locations in the US, Shelter Island has an overabundant deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) population that causes ecological damage from over grazing, public health and safety impacts, and other negative impacts. The Shelter Island Deer and Tick Committee has pursued a three-pronged strategy to control tick borne disease: deer management, reduction of ticks through application of chemical acaricide at “4-Poster” deer feeding stations (program currently suspended pending state regulatory changes), and public education.

The Town’s deer hunting program is managed by the Police Department and extends from October 1 through March 31. In addition, the Nature Conservancy and Sylvester Manor have deer management plans and coordinate with the town programs.

### **Work with organizations and property owners to help assess and control ticks and prevent tick-borne diseases.**

Diseases caused by tick-borne pathogens are widespread on Shelter Island and nearby communities and they pose a major health concern. Conducting tick-borne disease monitoring is essential to protect public health, promote early detection and treatment, implement targeted prevention strategies, understand environmental factors, raise community awareness, and support research efforts.

The Town shall continue to work with the Deer and Tick Committee to implement identified strategies, which include methods for monitoring, targeted prevention strategies, and improving community awareness and education. The Town should also continue to evaluate environmental and ecological considerations and

collaborate with other researchers who are studying disease patterns, effectiveness of interventions, and emerging tick-borne diseases or strains.

### **Develop an education program prohibiting the introduction, throwing, dumping, depositing, or placing invasive species on/in Town land and waters.**

- Encourage Landscaping Best Management Practices to eliminate the use of invasive species.
- Continue to educate the public about the benefits of using native species in landscaping.
- Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County and NYSDEC to provide information on how to control invasive species including Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
- Support the Cleaner Greener New York Fighting Invasive Species initiative.
- Educate the public and tree service companies about preventing the spread of diseases that affect native trees.
- Target the removal of invasive species from Town-owned lands to facilitate the reestablishment of indigenous community types when a known population of endangered, threatened, species of special concern, locally rare or unique native species, or ecological community is directly jeopardized. This is critical because some of the more widespread invasives serve as ideal tick habitats.

# 8

# PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND WATERWAYS

Shelter Island's parks, open spaces, and waterways are not just physical entities; they embody the Island's essence, providing residents and visitors alike with places for reflection, exploration, and rejuvenation. These spaces are not just a luxury but an essential component of the Island's identity, contributing to the well-being of its inhabitants and the sustainability of its ecosystems.

This chapter discusses existing parks and open space resources and presents strategies to safeguard and enhance them for generations to come. It addresses the need to foster active lifestyles and community engagement by optimizing parks, sports facilities, and recreational spaces for all ages. It also recognizes the significance of how waterways are used and managed. The chapter outlines measures to ensure the continued use of waterways is done in a responsible way, which respects the environment and the safety and enjoyment for all users.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Planning is needed to ensure that parks and open space are appropriately maintained and that they are effectively utilized.

The Community Preservation Fund has been used to preserve lands, some of which are public recreation areas. Those funds are also used to maintain the properties. The CPF Advisory Board works with the Superintendent of Public Works in setting out a maintenance plan each year. What is missing is a link to the Recreation Department and its programming for passive recreational use of these properties.



### More than a third of the Island is preserved open space

Mashomack Preserve, along with the conservation of other large parcels, has somewhat balanced Shelter Island's residential growth and preserved more than a third of the Island.



### The waterways appear to be busier each year

This includes increasing numbers of day charter boats, for-hire water sports, jet ski traffic, and larger vessels with larger wakes. Planning is needed to accommodate and manage this increased activity. In order to ensure the safety of people and the health of the waterways, the Town should address the following:

- There has been an increased usage of anchorages. The Town may need to address this issue in order to maintain safe navigation and keep open water for recreational use.
- Boat landings need attention and maintenance according to the 2022 Shoreline Access Task Force Report.
- Other Town access points to the water need to be maintained.
- Mooring permits are limited to town residents and commercial marinas and some areas have waiting lists. Strategic planning is needed to delineate the capacity of existing mooring fields so that Shelter Island waters do not become overwhelmed with boats.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### Seaplane traffic is a growing concern.

Restrictions on seaplane access in the Town of East Hampton in 2021 have reportedly resulted in increased arrivals of seaplanes on Shelter Island, with passengers calling a taxi to complete their journey across the South Ferry to the Hamptons. Residents have expressed concern about the safety and environmental impacts of seaplane operation.



## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Mid-century growth and change on Shelter Island inspired a conservation movement that continues to this day. Close to 2,600 acres of land and over 25 individual properties have been permanently protected or otherwise placed into an open space use that is unlikely to change. Figure 12 shows protected and publicly owned park and recreation areas in dark green. In beige are publicly owned properties classified by the Assessor as “vacant land.” Privately owned open space parcels that are unprotected shown in light green; this includes recreational land such as Gardiner’s Bay Country Club and a portion of the lands owned by the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm. It also includes the Mashomack Preserve, which is considered privately owned and protected as a matter of policy and is incorporated into the Town’s park system. The Preserve was created when the land was acquired by the Nature Conservancy in 1980, following the largest fundraising campaign in its history to that point, with over 1,700 contributors. Similarly, 105 acres of the 240-acre Sylvester Manor property has been permanently protected through a combination of donations from the family (owners since 1652), purchase of development rights by the Town and County, and funding from the Federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program. The entire Sylvester Manor property is now owned by the nonprofit Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and managed for conservation, historic preservation, agriculture, and education.

Conservation of many properties, including part of Sylvester Manor, has been supported by local funds raised through the Peconic Bay Region Community Preservation Fund (CPF). Established through a referendum in 1998, the CPF receives the revenue from a 2% transfer tax on real estate transactions occurring in East Hampton, Riverhead, Southold, Southampton, and Shelter Island, with each town receiving the tax from any transactions within its borders. The first \$400,000 of the purchase price is exempt from the tax. The funds raised may be used to protect open space, farmland, and historic structures. In 2016, another referendum was approved in all five towns that extends the CPF until 2050 and gives towns the option of investing up to 20% of CPF revenues in water quality projects such as septic system upgrades, while in 2022, another referendum was passed that adds 0.5% to the CPF transfer tax for housing initiatives. Shelter Island’s CPF revenue totaled \$1.13



**Wades Beach**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Annual Whitebread Sailing Race**

Source: Jim Colligan

million in 2018, and increased to \$1.55 million in 2019, and \$3.08 million in 2020, peaking at \$5.08 million in 2021 before dropping to \$2.86 million for the 2022 year.

Protection of the Mashomack Preserve, along with conservation of other parcels such as the Community Preservation Fund purchases, has helped to counter-balance Shelter Island’s residential growth and preserved more than a third of the Island. The relatively low density required by the Island’s zoning, together with the complex shoreline of coves and inlets, has helped retain something of its historic rural character. But for much of the Island, the traditional rural landscape of farmsteads

and hamlets surrounded by open space has evolved into more of a suburban landscape of roads lined by house lots and small open spaces surrounded by subdivisions.

Most of Shelter Island’s open space is preserved for passive recreational use, with a focus on trails and resources either on the water or with scenic water views. There are a number of walking paths and trails in the Mashomack Preserve, ranging from 1.5 miles to 11 miles, which are very popular. There is also a one-mile wheelchair accessible trail at Mashomack. Sylvester Manor is open from April through October for walking on three trails: the Woodland Walk, the Creekside Loop and the Farm Walk. Five of the Town preserves have walking trails: Bunker Hill County Park, Mildred Flower Hird Nature Preserve, Old Lima Bean Fields, Sachem’s Woods, and Turkem’s Rest Preserve.

Trails are built and maintained with the cooperation between the Town Highway Department, the Shelter Island Trail Club, and the Community Preservation Fund which holds regular trail clean ups and was involved in the preparation of the 2020-2021 Open Space & Preserved Lands Map. In addition, in 2019 they held trail cleanups on seven dates from April to June.

Active recreation is generally centered at the Community Center at the corner of School Street and Bateman Road. Fiske Field is located behind the center, offering baseball fields and basketball courts. In addition, the Shelter Island School has a baseball field and tennis/pickle ball courts. Using these courts often involves longish wait times. The Town’s Recreation Department offers a wide range of programming throughout the year including sports and exercise classes, special events, and concerts for all ages. In addition, the department operates Project Fit, a membership gym, behind the school and it has been noted that the presence of a public gym attached to the school poses logistical problems for school safety.

The library has offered some recreational programming as well over the years such as Tai Chi classes as well as occasional meditation classes and hobby clubs for knitters or Mah Jong enthusiasts.



**Bridge Street Volunteer Park**

Source: Jim Colligan



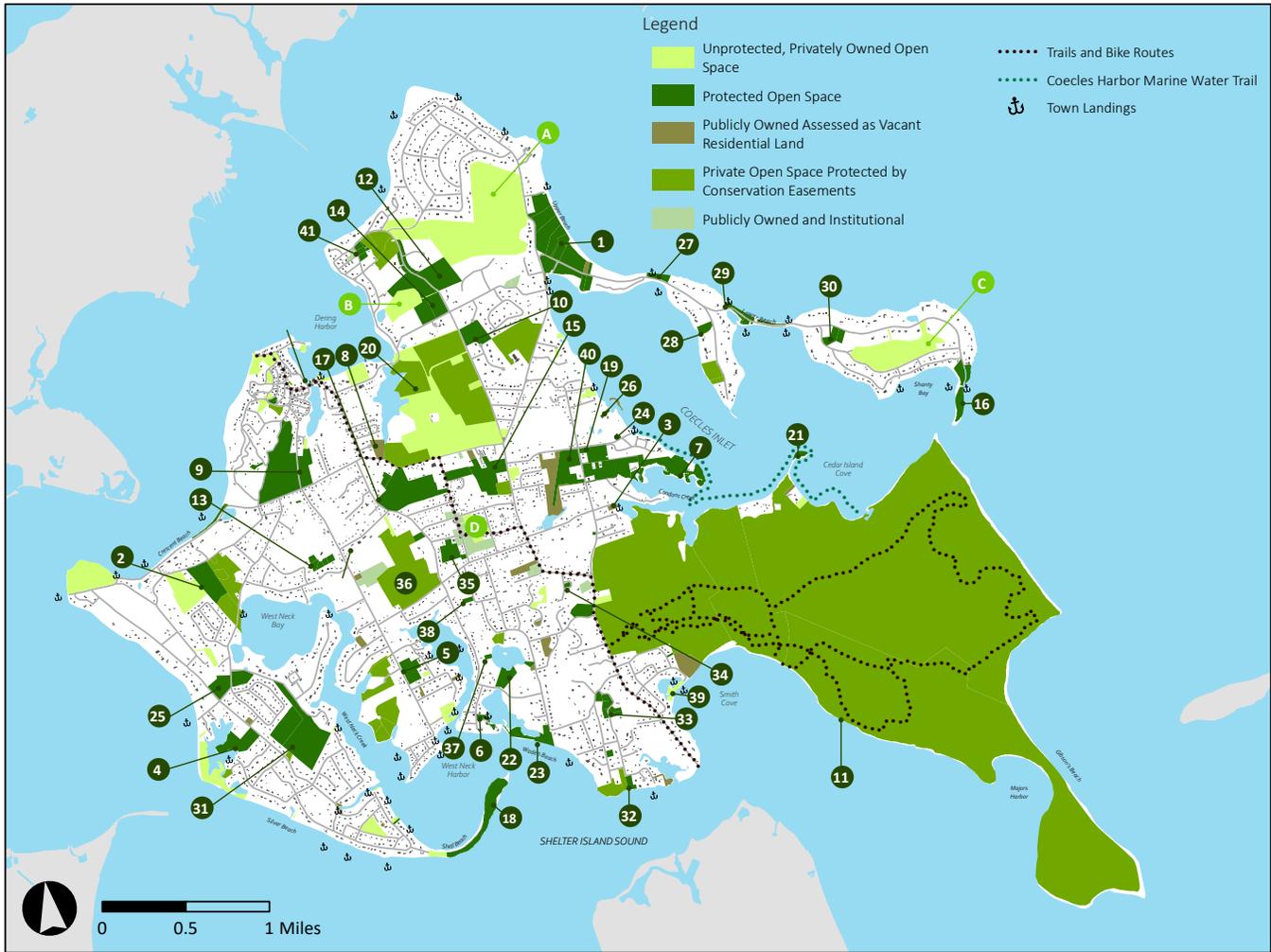
**Gardner’s Bay Country Club**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony**

Source: Jim Colligan



#	Name		Name (or owner/manager)	#	Name (or owner/manager)
1	Bunker Hill County Park	16	Reel Point	31	Westmoreland Farms(Town/County)
2	Cackle Hill Preserve	17	Sachem's Woods	32	Shorewood (PLT/Shorewood Civic Association)
3	Congdon Creek Shorefront Preserve	18	Shell Beach	33	Osprey Rd (Town)
4	Crab Creek Preserve	19	St. Gabriel's Meadow	34	Willow Pond Park(Town)
5	Dickerson Pond Park	20	Sylvester Manor Educational Farm	35	Union Free School Playfields (PLT/UFS)
6	Dickerson Creek Overlook	21	Taylor's Island	36	RyanHorse Farm (PLT)
7	Foxen Point Tidal Wetlands	22	Turkem's Rest Preserve	37	Dickerson(PLT)
8	Gardiner's Creek Preserve	23	Wades Beach	38	Sunshine Road Park (PLT/Town)
9	Ice Pond Park	24	Wayside Park	39	Smith Cove-Underwater Land (NYS)
10	Locust Woods Preserve	25	West Neck Preserve	40	Klenawicus Airfield (Town CPF)
11	Mashomack Preserve	26	Cedar Island Overlook	41	Dering Harbor Village Lands
12	Mildred Flower Hird Nature Preserve	27	PLT/County Conservation Land	A	Gardiner's Bay Country Club
13	North Menantic Preserve	28	PLT/Nature Conservancy	B	Catholic Church Cemetery
14	Old Lima Bean Fields	29	Lower Beach (PLT/County/Town)	C	Ram Island County Park(Osprey Acres)
15	Old Nursery Woodlands Preserve	30	PLT/Town	D	Shelter Island Cemetery

**FIGURE 12: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, 2020-2021 Shelter Island Open Space and Preserved Land Map, and Microsoft  
 PLT= Peconic Land Trust

Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

## WATERWAYS

Shelter Island's waterways are frequented by recreational boaters/sailors, commercial and recreational fisherman, water taxis, launches, charter boats, and paddlers of all stripes. Each of these users are an integral part of Shelter Island's economy and identity. Shelter Island also has a variety of groups which help to manage the waterways and ensure that activities are conducted in a safe and environmentally friendly manner:

- Harbor Masters: Patrol local waters to enforce federal, state, and local ordinances, preserve the peace, protect life and perform other related work as members of the Shelter Island Police Department.
- Conservation Advisory Council (CAC): Established to advise in the development, management and protection of the Town's natural resources. The CAC provides advice and technical support on such matters as proposals affecting change to: salt and fresh water wetlands, the Island's aquifer and woodlands, use of major parcels of open space and management of Town lands. The CAC also has responsibility for recommending properties for inclusion in the Shelter Island Nature Preserve and developing land management plans for parcels included in the system.
- Waterways Management Advisory Council (WMAC): The WMAC was established to advise the town board on issues relating to the following:
  1. Town services and facilities, such as town landings, town docks, bathing facilities, navigation aids and signs, fire department waterway concerns, dredging, police and Harbor Master reports.
  2. Waterways usage such as private and commercial mooring regulations, commercial and private dock regulations, mooring, dock, bulkhead, and groin applications, area usage such as mooring fields, anchorages, and preserved spaces.
  3. Water quality in the waterways, environmental emergency procedures, upland source pollution, beach erosion, environmental



**Menantic Yacht Club Races in West Neck Harbor**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Fire Department Rescue Boat**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Shell Beach on a busy weekend**

Source: Jim Colligan

education, Peconic Estuary Program, and overboard discharge and pump out facility matters.

- Water Advisory Committee (WAC): WAC mission is to ensure adequate drinking water for the Shelter Island Community. This is accomplished by advising the Town Board on appropriate actions/regulations, utilizing the best available science to evaluate quality and quantity of available drinking water, educate the community about water conservation and identifying and utilizing best practices to help manage drinking water.
- Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB): Was created to oversee the distribution of Community Preservation Funds collected for the purpose of water quality improvements. Their mission is to review applications for water quality improvement projects and make recommendations for funding to the Town Board. Some of their projects include the Septic Improvement Grant program, funding for Fresh Pond remediation project, and funding water testing initiatives in the center of town.

The Harbor Masters, responsible for keeping the waterways safe, reported an average of 173 calls per year from 2011-2021. According to the Police Chief, the Harbor Masters provide many other services that frequently go undocumented during daily operations.

In the Fall of 2021, the Harbor Masters reported to the Waterways Management Advisory Committee (WMAC), the following identified trends that have potential to affect long-term quality-of-life on the water:

- Increasing numbers of day charter boats hailing from Sag Harbor and elsewhere making day trips to Coecles Harbor, West Neck, and Crescent Beach
- An increase in for-hire water sports in Smith's Cove and off Crescent Beach adding to waterways congestion.
- Increased usage of the Coecles Harbor and West Neck anchorages
- Larger vessels with greater horsepower using inside waters, which can mean higher speeds and larger wakes.
- Increased jet ski traffic, which has water safety and noise impacts.

## Air and Seaplane Access

Though not heavily used, the Island accommodates small aircraft at the town-owned Klenawicus Airfield, a 1700-foot grass landing strip. The field was acquired by the Town in 2010 and is maintained by the Shelter Island Pilots' Association.

Two or three companies provide seaplane service to Shelter Island from New York City. Thus far, seaplanes have arrived at and departed from Crescent Beach. In 2021, the Town of East Hampton prohibited seaplanes from landing, taxiing, mooring, taking on or discharging passengers at town beaches and waterways as well as trustee waters, beaches, and docks. Southampton prohibits takeoffs and landings within 1000 feet of the shore, while Southold prevents taxiing, landing, and takeoffs in all town waters. These neighboring towns restrictions have reportedly resulted in increased arrivals of seaplanes on Shelter Island, with passengers calling a taxi to complete their journey across the South Ferry to the Hamptons.

## BOAT LANDINGS AND SHORELINE ACCESS POINTS

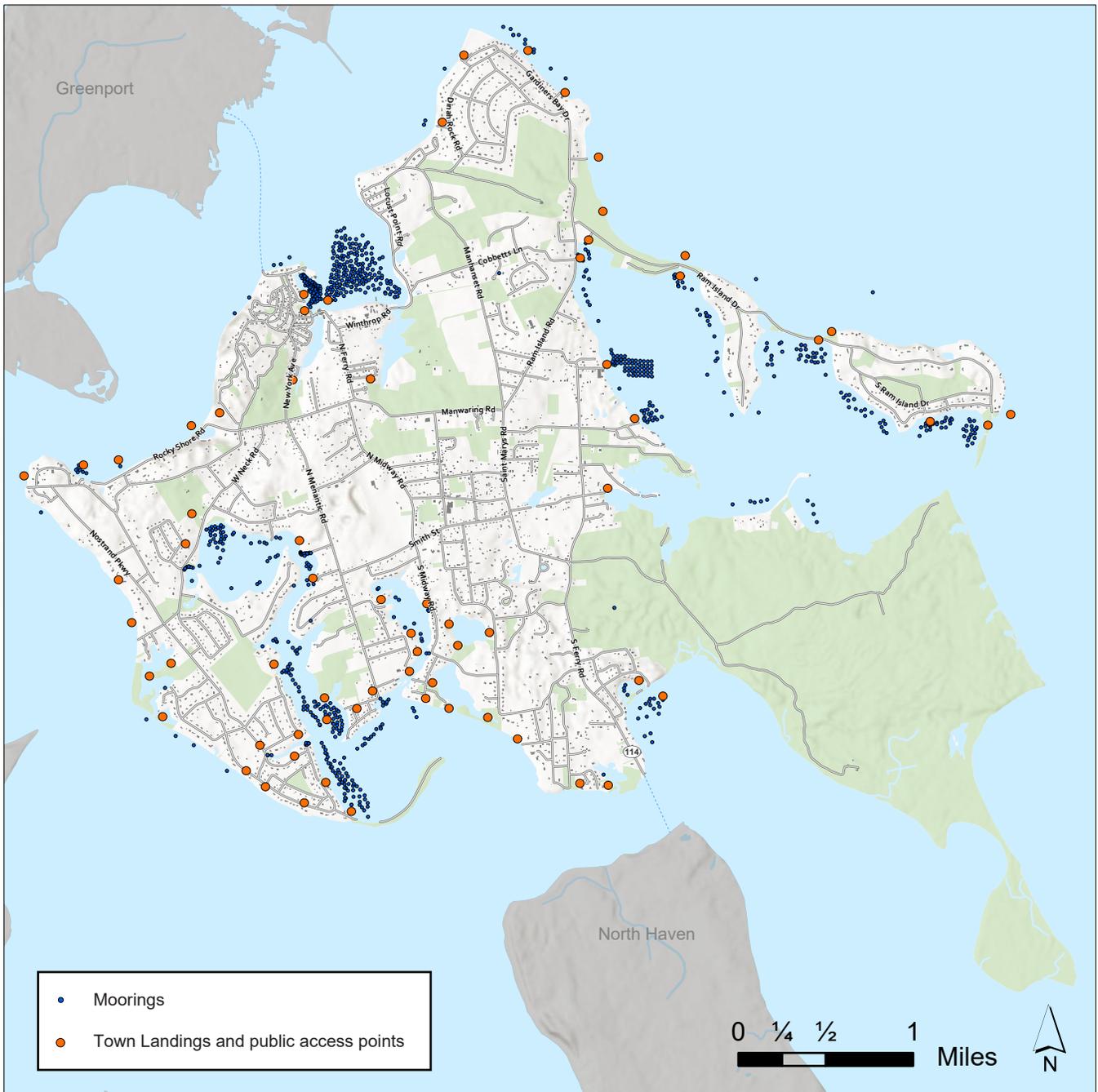
The Shoreline Access Task Force, an ad hoc Town committee, issued a report to the Town Board in 2022 which provided a survey of Town landings and shoreline access points. They identified 70 Town-owned shore points included 8 beaches, 14 ramps where boats can be launched, and 46 landings. These numbers, of course, will change over time as new waterfront lands are acquired by the Town.

### Shoreline Access Points

The Town has issued approximately 800 mooring permits and recognizes the possibility of limiting future mooring permits in order to maintain safe navigation and keep open water for recreational use. Mooring permits are limited to Town residents and commercial marinas, and some areas have waiting lists. Non-residents can obtain moorings through the commercial marinas. Waterfront landowners are allowed one riparian mooring.

Town-owned docks at Congdon's Creek and Dering Harbor are regulated according to the Dock Law, Chapter 53 of the Town Code, which regulates commercial and private docks as well as Town-owned docks and underwater lands. The law requires an annual permit

from the Town Clerk and describes allowable uses, seasons and other issues regarding the town facilities. For commercial and private docks, the law regulates design and construction and establishes a review and permitting procedure. Design standards control the length, width, and depth of docks.



**FIGURE 13: MOORINGS AND TOWN LANDINGS**

Source: Town of Shelter Island

## GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

**Goal 8-1: Continue to preserve lands with high-quality natural resources, including wetlands, watersheds, shorelines, significant trees and woodland, and wildlife habitat; those lands with recognized scenic values; and smaller parcels that could provide for village greens or neighborhood pocket parks.**

#### Continue to purchase open space parcels.

Purchasing land for preservation remains one of the surest ways to protect the land. The Town continues to have a steady stream of income for land preservation from the Peconic Bay CPF program. In addition, the Town continues to receive grant funds and participate in partnerships with other entities to purchase open space.

- Prioritize the existing parcels for open space in a public process and using the following parameters as a guide:
  - Parcel will help to create a contiguous block of open space to improve the habitat values of natural lands
  - Parcel contains environmentally sensitive areas
  - Parcel will help protect surface and/or groundwater quality like kettle holes
  - Parcel provides meaningful access to the water in areas that lack public boat ramps and beaches
  - Parcel provides a trail extension or connection and enhances the Town's trail system
  - Parcel contains scenic values
  - Parcel is in the 100-year floodplain
  - Parcel provides value as a village green in or near a hamlet center
- Identify other financing opportunities and mechanisms to protect land including additional local bonds, partnerships, and other financing tools, including bargain sales and estate planning.

- Ensure that information about options for landowners regarding land preservation is readily available on the Town's website.

#### Continue to manage Town-owned open space/nature preserves through a land stewardship program.

Land stewardship is an important aspect of the land preservation program and involves managing Town-owned land. The purpose for managing and monitoring land preserved with Town funds is to ensure that the use of those lands meets the purpose(s) for which they were preserved.

The Town manages the open space/nature preserves it owns through routine maintenance and stewardship plans. The stewardship plans outline the uses for each preserve, the trail system (if any), and other appropriate uses, as well as steps the Town should take to responsibly manage the property for the purpose it was preserved, including creating and maintaining parking areas, wildlife habitat management, and trail maintenance. To ensure successful stewardship and maintenance the Town and Community Preservation Fund Committee shall:

- Review property stewardship management plans every 2 years with the intention of ensuring that they are adequate and being followed and make adjustments as necessary.
- Maintain current trails and public access points to Town nature preserves.
- Open additional preserves to the public as time and resources allow.

- Create policies and/or guidelines for routine maintenance of Town open space/nature preserves.
- Continue to write, adopt, and implement management plans for all preserves.
- Create a trail system that includes links to existing trails, recreational facilities, and new trails where feasible.
- Establish a formal process for the public to report problems at preserves.
- Educate the public about everyday land stewardship values they can follow when visiting preserves.

## **Goal 8-2: Improve and promote active recreation facilities and programming**

### **Maintain existing facilities and grounds**

Shelter Island Town offers numerous recreational opportunities on its land and waters and has acquired and manages many acres of land through its Community Preservation Fund. The Town should continue to enhance utilization of existing park lands, open spaces, beaches, and recreational facilities through ongoing maintenance, stewardship, and facility improvement.

Other specific actions the Town shall engage in include the following:

- Conduct a survey or needs assessment to evaluate whether existing recreational resources are adequate. It is imperative that the Town continually assess whether recreational needs are being met and purchase additional land and develop sites when warranted.
- Through land preservation stewardship offer more bicycle and walking/jogging trails.
- Develop community gardens with vegetables and flowers within designated Town facilities

### **Create New Recreational Opportunities and Facilities**

The Town should begin with a feasibility study that would include researching the availability of funding (public and private), operation (public and private) and suggested location of a year-round fitness center and swimming pool facility (like a YMCA).

A potential multi-purpose complex would ideally include a gymnasium with exercise equipment, weights, an indoor heated swimming pool to permit lap swimming, indoor basketball/volleyball court, etc. along with space for senior and youth programs. The feasibility study would assess potential partnerships with for-profit and non-profit groups that could make the creation and operation of the proposed multi-purpose complex financially viable.

The feasibility study could also identify land preservation opportunities for active recreation where needed.

### **Improve diversity of programming**

To ensure the provision of diverse recreational, educational, and leisure experiences catering to the multifaceted needs of Shelter Island's community, it is imperative to adapt programming to evolving trends and technological advancements while accommodating the interests of seniors, youth, and part-time residents.

Collaboration with existing cultural entities presents an opportunity to broaden offerings, encompassing educational classes, art exhibitions, concerts, and other enriching activities. Leveraging social media platforms and the town website serves to disseminate information on new programs efficiently while fostering community engagement through feedback mechanisms, including a centralized database of recreational options.

Continual assessment of community needs is paramount, facilitated through annual surveys and focus groups aimed at gauging desired recreational amenities and experiences. Supplementing these efforts with exit surveys for program participants ensures

ongoing refinement of offerings. Drawing insights from comparable municipalities regionally and nationally enables benchmarking and adaptation of best practices, fostering innovation in program development. Emphasis on seasonal outdoor pursuits, such as bird watching, cross-country skiing, and fishing, broadens the appeal of recreational options, with a commitment to affordability ensuring accessibility for a diverse range of households. Through these concerted efforts, Shelter Island can cultivate a vibrant recreational landscape that reflects and enriches the diverse fabric of its community.

### Promote health and wellness

Initiate a Town-wide wellness campaign aimed at enhancing both physical and mental health, capitalizing on the expanding educational initiatives to introduce residents to various avenues for fostering healthy lifestyles. This includes providing educational classes across the Town covering topics such as stress management, obesity, smoking cessation, and depression awareness and substance abuse.

## WATERWAYS

### **Goal 8-3: Comprehensively plan for use and protection of waterfront and waterways**

#### **Develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP)**

A Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is a comprehensive plan designed to guide the sustainable development, conservation, and enhancement of waterfront areas, including both coastal and inland waterways. Creating an LWRP can allow the Town to have more authority over the use of its waterfront areas. It establishes a long-term partnership among local governments, community-based organizations, and the State. State actions must be consistent with an approved LWRP. This process would include the establishment of policies regulating the use of waterways. Many of these policy considerations are discussed in subsequent recommendations below.

Developing an LWRP involves engaging with local communities, stakeholders, and experts. This collaborative approach allows residents to participate in shaping the future of their waterfront areas. Having an LWRP in place can help municipalities remain eligible for various financial assistance opportunities. Some state and federal programs prefer communities to have an approved LWRP to access certain grants and funding for waterfront-related projects.

#### **Develop a Plan for Moorings**

**Consider Grid Fields:** The total number of moorings has remained fairly constant over the past several years. However, the increasing Island population and national statistics regarding the significantly higher number of boats being purchased would indicate that demand for moorings (and docks) will increase in this boating community. The Waterways Management Advisory Council (WMAC) should be tasked with delineating boundaries for the existing mooring fields. This work should be done in consultation with baymen, aquaculturists, marinas, and the public. Once the areas are identified, the second task would be to determine how many moorings would be gained by utilizing a grid layout. Grid moorings maximize the use of available space, allowing more boats or vessels to be accommodated within a given area. This can be particularly beneficial in busy marinas or harbors where there is a high demand for mooring spots. The grids would have a graduated layout with small boats near the shore and larger boats offshore. It may be possible to build a grid over time on the established mooring fields using Online Moorings and GIS to shift coordinates as people renew or apply for new moorings. With annual renewals, there are more opportunities to make this shift.

It is also possible that the WMAC and Town Board may determine that the best course of action will be to not establish grids but to limit each mooring field to a maximum boundary. Overlaying a grid on an existing mooring field would be costly because it would necessitate moving the existing moorings into the grid boxes. Further, there is the question of who would pay to move the moorings – the Town or the mooring holder.

**Limit boat size on all moorings:** Consider where it may be appropriate to limit boat sizes (both length and height) which can impede vistas and site lines. Safety is a particular issue for difficult-to-see recreational users such as swimmers, kayakers, and paddle-boarders. Areas to delineate for limited boat size should be studied by the Waterways Management Advisory Council, and recommendations should be presented to the Town Board.

**Consider alternate pricing programs:** As the Town reaches the limits of mooring space, the idea of modifying fees to be based on the space they utilize should be explored. This idea has been considered before but never implemented largely because of potential administrative difficulties. However, given the increasingly automated process with Online Moorings, it has become easier to reduce the cost and effort to allocate scarce harbor resources.

**Limiting additional mooring fields:** If our existing mooring fields should reach build out, Shelter Island should not open additional mooring fields for environmental, aesthetic, and conflict of use reasons. The possible exception to this may be to accommodate larger boats in Smith Cove. As one Bayman said at a Town Board Work Session, we do not want the entire island to be a marina. Marine life as well as other recreational uses will benefit if the waters remain open and not increasingly congested with additional mooring fields and transient anchorages. If mooring field capacity is reached, consider limiting residences to 1 or 2 moorings instead of 3.

**Stake Mooring Pulley (SMP):** These types of moorings do impact the health of the tidal areas simply by boaters walking across and damaging marsh grasses to access their boats. The Waterways Management Advisory Council (WMAC) could be tasked with creating a map of the shoreline which identifies the types of grasses and other points of ecological interest. This map could

be used to delineate acceptable SMP areas. Although the WMAC has previously established areas that are acceptable for SMP installations, these areas should be formalized in consultation with the baymen and perhaps Cornell Cooperative Extension and/or Peconic Estuary Program. Areas that are not acceptable should also be signed. Limits should consider boat size, boat width, and depth. No boats should rest on the bottom at low tide.

**Mooring Gear:** Consider mandating less destructive mooring gear - known as conservation moorings. The WMAC, in consultation with the baymen and Cornell Cooperative Extension, should investigate this issue and make recommendations to the Town Board.

**Anchorage:** The Town should consider whether the anchorages in West Neck and Coecles Harbor should become Town managed mooring fields in order to reduce the negative impact of anchors on the bottom. This practice is common in many other municipalities. However, there are numerous considerations such as who owns and maintains the ground tackle and who manages the day-to-day operations of the fields.

One aesthetic consideration is that the mooring fields would not be clear when transients are not present. If the Town wished to explore this possibility, a business plan would be necessary to establish whether the expected revenue from the Town renting out transient moorings would cover the expense of maintaining the tackle and the costs involved in collecting that revenue

In the absence of Town-run mooring fields, the size of the transient anchorages should be limited to the current (2023) size and defined on a map. To better control and manage transient anchorages, the marker buoys and Town website should make it clear that there are fines for anchoring outside of the marked area. Fines should be substantial and several times what other towns typically charge for overnight moorings, which can be up to \$80/night or at least the cost of an overnight mooring at an Island marina.

## **Goal 8-4: Continue to work with the County, other towns, and groups to maintain navigable channels to ensure safe passage, preserve vistas, sustain marine life, and enable recreational use.**

### **Continue dredging projects where needed.**

Dredging is a difficult issue. In many cases, accretion is the result of tidal and wave action, and in others it is the result of flora and fauna dying off due to lack of oxygen and filling in the body of water. That can be the result of flow in/out being reduced, nutrient overload (septic issues, runoff, etc.) or both. If the underlying causes are not addressed, it will occur again and again. The Waterways Management Advisory Committee and the Water Advisory Committee are monitoring the health of various bodies of water.

Dredging is a difficult process, difficult because of the cost involved and the permitting and oversight from regulatory and County agencies. These regulations are in place to protect habitats for fish, birds, and other wildlife. The regulations also ensure that dredging spoils are disposed of properly. Any new proposals for Town dredging by the County must also go through a lengthy screening process and meet their specific criteria for consideration.

Town should investigate the economics and risk profile of entering a cooperative agreement with neighboring town(s) to share the costs and management of local dredging because the County dredges for the sole purpose of keeping navigational channels open, but the Town has an interest in increasing the rate that water bodies are flushed which is also an important outcome of dredging.

The Shelter Island Department of Public Works has been strongly committed to maintaining navigable channels, and continues to work closely with Town officials, the WMAC, and the Highway Department. A list of revolving dredge projects for Shelter Island follows:

- Coecles Inlet: dredged in late 2022
- Merkel Boat Basin Inlet dredge in late 2021
- Silver Beach Lagoon: dredged 11/2013, was permitted through 8/2018

- West Neck Harbor Entrance: dredged in 2013, 2017, and likely again in 2023-2024
- Dickerson Creek Entrance: dredged in 2013, 2017, and permitted through 1/2023
- Menantic Creek: permitted through 1/2021, SCDPW is currently applying for an increased depth modification for Menantic entrance & West Neck entrance.
- The Town might consider a private contractor for the “choke point” in Menantic Creek beyond where the County will dredge to assist in flushing that creek.
- South Ferry: dredged 2016 under a 10-year permit.

Areas that have been privately dredged include Mabel’s Creek, Crab Creek, Merkel Basin, South Ferry slips, Hay Beach Creek (Town) and a basin on the northeast side of Little Ram Island.

### **Protect Reel Point and Shell Beach.**

These “spits” or narrow peninsulas are threatened with breaching when storms roll in; the loss of either one would lead to extensive property loss in the respective harbors that they protect. The Town Board, through the efforts of Councilman Jim Colligan have been lobbying the Army Corps of Engineers to protect Reel Point. Although progress has been made, this effort needs to be continued and perhaps expanded to include Shell Beach.

Shell Beach, it must be noted, was an island up until the late 1900’s; the end was reachable only by boat or by walking at low tide. This configuration was thought to have encouraged flushing of the West Neck Bay area and Menantic Creek. The Town should explore the concept of opening up a canal or installing a culvert across the Shell Beach peninsula to increase the flushing of West Neck marine system.

## Prohibit excessive power boat wakes with code regulations and signage buoys

There have been complaints of large, multiple engine boats pulling skiers or tubes causing large wakes in West Neck Harbor & West Neck Bay. This can be harrowing for dock owners and human powered craft. There has to be a balance among users.

There may be some compromises that would permit the continuation of towing sports within the harbors and bays of the Town. Certain activities create much larger wakes than others, with waterskiing creating the smallest and wake surfing (where a water bladder in the boat is filled in order to sink the stern lower and create a surfable wake) creating the largest. "Tubing" is also an issue since the goal appears to be launching the tuber off the largest wake possible. The sizes of boats used for these activities have grown, as have the resulting wakes. Therefore, perhaps limiting the number of engines alone will not solve the problem unless it is also coupled with a prohibition on inside waters of the sorts of activities that require the largest wakes.

When and if damage from wakes in specific areas becomes untenable as noted by the Harbor Masters, waterfront property owners or the WMAC, speed limits and no wake zones may become necessary. Furthermore, since the primary issue seems to be large wakes, regulating the size of the boat together with operational displacement (i.e., include ski boats permanently designed to sit low or use water bladders) would perhaps best match this concern.

## Explore acquisition of a pump-out boat to service the anchorages and mooring fields throughout the summer.

In coordination with the Peconic Baykeeper and the Surf Rider Foundation, the Harbor Master is conducting weekly tests for fecal bacteria of the anchorages in Coecles Harbor, West Neck Bay, and Dering Harbor beginning in the summer of 2023. Other water bodies should be added when possible. The testing is for enterococcus and would inform the Town's decision to investigate, obtain, and operate a pump-out boat. Direct overboard discharge of sewage in coastal waters has been illegal since 1972; boats with heads will have a holding tank of some kind

designed in or retrofitted but these tanks, especially on older boats, tend to be undersized. As boaters know, once anchored for an evening or a weekend, boaters are reluctant to pull anchor and head to a land-based pump-out to the detriment of the harbor. A pump-out boat counteracts this tendency.

## Limit seaplane activity

Once a seaplane lands, it is a boat and thus a concern for the waterways of Shelter Island. Seaplanes have been seen regularly using Coecles Harbor and Crescent Beach. Seaplanes taking off in Coecles Harbor exceed the 45-mph speed limit while on the water, which should be enforced by the Town. Seaplane activity appears to be increasing, both by private residents and by commercial operators providing access between New York City and the Island. In fact, in 2022 there was a proposal to anchor a barge out in Gardiners Bay for helicopter landings to be serviced by a water taxi shuttle service. This plan was ultimately abandoned by its proponent, but the concept may well be put forth again.

The impact on the quality-of-life and the safety of the waterways of these activities is sure to grow as the demographics of the Island continue to shift. The Town Board should examine this issue, perhaps by tasking the WMAC or by hiring an outside consultant to determine the appropriate limits on this traffic. This issue could also be explored as part of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan process. Limits that could be explored include:

- Limiting commercial operators to daily takeoffs/landings,
- a prohibition on landing/takeoff on inside waters, and
- extension of the 500-foot Town control of the bottom in order to prevent the anchoring of a barge.

In a related matter, helicopters have been seen taking off from yachts anchored off of Crescent Beach. As a matter of public health and safety, the Town should require that helicopters only land or take off from boats that are at least 1,500 feet offshore.

## Review policy for establishment of new docks

While the assessment roll has 366 docks, a 2023 count by aerial found 426 docks. There are currently 48 vacant and potentially buildable (greater than 0.5 acres) waterfront parcels, indicating that, at the very minimum, build-out is perhaps 48 additional docks (an increase of about 10%) on land that is currently completely vacant. Furthermore, there are a total of 846 waterfront parcels, half of which currently have docks; therefore, potentially hundreds more docks are theoretically possible.

In dock application reviews by the WMAC during 2022-23 meetings, the following issues were explored:

- Does the Town have a right and/or should the Town prioritize “pristine” shorelines even though the property owners may wish to have a dock? In addition, there are areas where docks simply should not be built due to existing environmental conditions which are predicted to become more extreme, environmental protection reasons, aesthetic issues, navigation issues, etc. If areas where docks cannot/should not be built were codified, that may have an impact on property values.
- Should the Town limit the size of boats allowed to dock at private and commercial docks? For example, properties high on a bluff where the presence of a larger vessel would not impact a neighbor’s view may be permitted a larger boat vs. those properties at sea level where a large boat would negatively impact views.
- Establish a database for docks. Online Moorings would be an efficient vehicle for this database. Reconcile and address the discrepancy noted above between permitted docks and imagery-based counts. Dock applications & permits should be filed according to property tax number not applicant name as is currently the case.
- Town Docks. Consider locations for new municipal docks. There are many considerations necessary to ensure that this is revenue producing, properly managed, and self-supporting.

## Review policies on boatlifts and boat paint

WMAC policy has been to not allow boatlifts on inside waters, but this has not been codified. In outside waters, boatlifts have been permitted up to 8,000 lbs. Thus far, the WMAC has not recommended codifying this, there may be parcels where boat lifts may be needed and don’t interrupt a neighbor’s view. This question – of whether or not to codify the permitting of boat lifts – should be further examined by the WMAC and a recommendation delivered to the Town Board.

Bottom paint choice is not mandated by any regulations, but they are thought to have an impact on the marine environment. The WMAC should develop an educational campaign to help boat owners make better decisions for boat bottom paint to reduce paint leaching when boats are lifted out of the water. New, silicone-based bottom paints contain no biocides (such as copper) and therefore do not pollute the marine environment. Further study and consideration of bottom paint by the WMAC is warranted, however, it is recognized that enforcement of paint choice would be hard without state or federal regulations on paint.

## Review policies on bulkheads

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) discourages-hardening of shorelines but is not expressly prohibiting bulkheads or revetments when property loss is imminent or substantial. The WMAC has not seen many applications for new bulkheads since Hurricane Sandy. The DEC has not looked favorably on new applications, but the DEC and the WMAC made exceptions for several properties where houses were compromised by Hurricane Sandy. The surrounding properties all had bulkheads, and the properties that didn’t were severely eroded. They now have bulkheads that were approved by all agencies.

The DEC, WMAC, and Town Board have been supportive of in-kind replacements of bulkheads, which tend to deteriorate over time. Measures to mitigate that effect and at the same time lengthen the life of the bulkhead, should be required for new construction. Public access stairways should be required along with a public right-of-way on or beside the bulkhead, where necessary, to preserve a facsimile of the public’s right to walk the beach below mean high tide where no beach remains.

### Explore expansion of programs that support aquaculture such as the restocking of shellfish.

Efforts to re-introduce both hard clams and scallops have been conducted at The Nature Conservancy and several sites in Town waters. An oyster program has been sponsored by the Cornell facility in Southold, and Island residents have participated as individuals. The Peconic Estuary Program and Cornell have also attempted to reseed eelgrass beds in Island waters with marginal success. Limited commercial production of oysters has begun on Town bottoms. Some opportunities to consider include the following:

- The Town should pursue grants for additional funding for renewing shellfish beds. Establishing an LWRP could help in this effort.
- Assign responsibility for monitoring shell fishing, off-bottom aquaculture, and transplant approaches to one committee or person to keep the Town abreast of opportunities.
- Consider leasing underwater Town, County, State, or private bottoms for aquaculture.
- Support continued efforts at habitat restoration, which may be an essential component for long-term success of reestablishing sustainable populations.
- Discuss with local baymen the viability of a specialized marketing program for "Shelter Island label" products.

The Town should also consider areas where aquaculture should be protected and controlled, especially on inside waters. There are areas in outside waters, where unchecked expansion of aquaculture endeavors could create conflicts, primarily with recreational boating.

### Identify habitat restoration measures.

Eelgrass beds, wetlands and shallows serve a nursery function for fish and shellfish, helping support a healthy ecosystem. The WMAC should lead in identifying problems and solutions for the coastal habitat. As the mooring permitting process and management is gradually taken over by the Harbor Master, WMAC will have an increased ability to take on these vital topics. The Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB)

and the Water Advisory Committee (WAC) should also be tasked to work in conjunction with the WMAC to achieve the goal of habitat restoration.

### Update, on an annual basis, the 2022 Shoreline access task force comprehensive inventory and evaluation.

This project includes the development of a maintenance program for all shoreline access points and Town landings, whether used or fallow. It would include a maintenance and repair program to identify upgrades and to assure that they remain useable and in good condition.

A survey of Town-owned shoreline access points was completed by the ad hoc Shoreline Access Task Force in early 2022. The DPW has an inventory that is directed towards conditions and maintenance plans. Periodic review and management of this topic should be under the remit of the WMAC. Shoreline access is congruent with the question of where stake and mooring pullies (SMPs) should and shouldn't go as well as with possible additional Town Dock locations.

The availability of usable and readily accessible Town landings reduces the need for docks for smaller boats, kayaks, and canoes. The Highway Department has inventoried Town landings, including location, type of structure, condition, estimated remaining life, thereby compiling a ranking system for maintenance. However, this list is not regularly maintained on the control sheet, and priorities seem uncertain. Some planning considerations for landings are as follows:

- There is limited parking at almost all landings. However, except for Fresh Pond, usage does not seem to require expansion of parking areas.
- Certain landings are difficult to use with steep slopes or rocky ground and not maintained. As such they represent a danger to the public, which needs to be addressed.
- Maintenance of Town landings is variable, with erosion and plant invasion at some sites.
- Most of the Town shoreline is passable with certain exceptions, generally caused where bulkheads have been installed and subsequent erosion of the beach has occurred.

It is recommended that the Town Landings list be updated and maintained on, at least, an annual basis. The Town should also develop a maintenance plan which lists action items by priority. Upgrade plans should include "Public Landing" signage at all landings.

### **Provide resources to the CAC and WMAC for community education and communication, both for residents and visitors**

Continuing education of aquifer and other resource issues is vital to Shelter Island as the Town has limited enforcement resources and the population is always changing. Over the past 10 years, the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC), the Nature Conservancy, Peconic Land Trust, Group for the East End, the Peconic Bay keeper and the Peconic Estuary Program and other environmental groups have produced a variety of educational documents. The Town should renew efforts to ensure that all relevant education materials are posted on the Town's website and that they are periodically updated as appropriate. The Town, CAC, and other groups should also work with community partners to distribute pamphlets at locations aside from Town Hall.

### **Review use of beaches by off road vehicles to protect the beach environment**

In areas where natural resources are threatened, recreational riding on beaches should be discouraged. Consideration should be given to allow access for fishermen.

### **Develop regulations to better protect bluff areas**

Regulations would establish setbacks for construction at the top of a bluff, so that structures are not constructed on the edge which can cause instability and degradation of the slope.



*Wades Beach taken from Shell Beach*

*Source: Jim Colligan*

# 9

## QUALITY OF LIFE: HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Shelter Island has a rich history, culture, and community that offer many resources for visitors and residents alike. In addition to creating a unique sense of place, these resources are economic engines that attract both full- and part-time residents and support many island businesses, jobs and future economic opportunities.

This chapter focuses on resources which tie the community together such as historic assets as well as community, public health, social, and government services. The community facilities section evaluates the current and future needs of the community for public facilities and services, such as schools, libraries, parks, fire stations, and other essential infrastructure. The governance section addresses the structure and procedures of the government, including capacity needed to assist in the decision-making and implementation of this plan.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **There is need to safeguard and communicate Shelter Island's unique identity and history.**

There are many structures throughout the Island that reflect the Island's early settlement and colonial past, but there is limited documentation of these historic resources that would tell the story of the Island. Many older homes of all sizes are at risk of demolition to make way for larger new homes, and there is nothing in the Town Code to prevent or discourage this from happening. There is also a need to protect critical visual assets, including scenic views from roads and coastal view corridors.



### **Cultural organizations are a source of community strength.**

Shelter Island has a number of well-known institutions, organizations, and events that are an important part of its cultural environment and contribute to the fabric of the community. The COVID Pandemic underlined the need to help the Island's cultural institutions become more economically self-sufficient.



### **Various community dynamics have changed, more so recently. The Plan needs to reflect the priorities and values of the current community and support the well-being of its residents.**

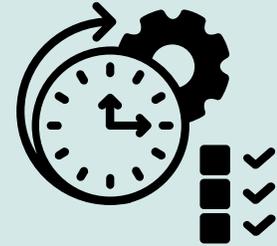
Recent growth in population and summer visitors has led to problems such as traffic, noise, light pollution, impacts on the water supply, overcrowding of beaches, littering, and an erosion of small-town traditions and shared community purpose, as the Island becomes more developed and the seasonal population wealthier and more transient. It has become increasingly challenging to afford to live on the Island, as property values and cost of living rise.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **Government capacity is limited, and there is the need for additional resources to address short- and long-term planning and implementation to include improved enforcement and compliance.**

The Town's operations are supported by a system of elected officials, small staff, and many community volunteers. Town government does not include in-house planning, housing, or economic development functions, which presents challenges to both short- and long-term planning and policymaking, inclusive of economic development.



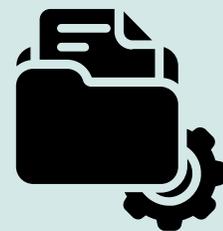
### **There is a need to improve upon the integrated approach to policymaking and implementation among various departments and committees.**

The Town has a robust network of active volunteer committees that support professional staff. The many volunteer committees often combine regulatory, management and advisory functions. The seasonal nature of the population combined with social and demographic changes make it harder to maintain volunteer organizations and a workforce serving the needs of residents and visitors. The reliance on volunteer committees and other issues of continuity in governance has contributed to challenges in policymaking and implementation of goals.



### **There are opportunities to empower Town government to be more efficient, effective, and transparent.**

Various departments struggle with modern records management, capital budgeting, asset management, and up-to-date regulations. There is also a need for improved communication about civic and community resources, such as events and community alerts (i.e., construction and emergencies).



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **Facility planning is needed to evaluate space needs and opportunities for existing municipal properties.**

The Town's community services are well-funded and generally perform well, benefiting both from public support and assistance from non-profit groups. Many Town assets need upgrades, according to staff and other sources, but Shelter Island lacks a formal facilities master plan and an asset management system to plan, prioritize, and implement improvements. The solid waste management and recycling programs are well-organized and successful but are facing regional challenges from the scheduled closure of the Brookhaven Landfill, which will increase costs. There are opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure at various public sites, such as solar panels at the recycling center and improvements to the library building and site.



### **Shelter Island is getting older and needs to ensure all residents have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.**

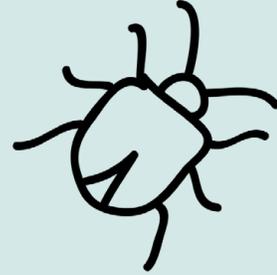
As discussed in the demographic chapter, the median age of Island residents has steadily increased over the past several decades. Some potential issues associated with an aging population include a strain on healthcare resources, increased demand for social services, and a decrease in the number of workers available to support the economy. Additionally, older adults may face challenges related to ageism and social isolation. Both the senior population and teenagers need more social opportunities to interact within and beyond their age groups. Investment may be needed in senior services, social services, and transportation options that help older adults remain independent and engaged in their communities.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### **Addressing tick-borne diseases will require a sustained and coordinated effort from all stakeholders.**

Managing and reducing the incidence of tick-borne diseases is a significant public health challenge. Addressing this issue will require a sustained commitment from all stakeholders, including government agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, and individual residents. Identified strategies may include improving awareness, sharing data and information about tick activity and disease incidence, as well as developing targeted interventions and treatment protocols. The Town should continue tick-borne disease monitoring and reduction by working with the Deer and Tick Committee to implement identified strategies.



## HISTORIC RESOURCES

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For some 13,000 years, Shelter Island was home to the indigenous Manhansett people, who called it Manhansack Aha Quash A Womak, or “Island Sheltered by Islands.” In 1638, Englishman James Farrett, an agent for the Earl of Sterling, who had been granted the Island by King James I, negotiated with the Manhansetts to “purchase” the 8,000-acre island, and sold it three years later to Connecticut merchant Stephen Goodyear. In 1651, a group of Barbados sugar merchants bought the Island from Goodyear for 1,600 pounds of sugar. The youngest partner, Nathaniel Sylvester, agreed to settle on the Island and establish a provisioning plantation to grow food and supply raw materials for the group’s sugar plantations on Barbados. Enslaved Africans and indentured servants were brought from the West Indies to perform the work needed to establish the plantation.

In 1652, the four native Sachems (leaders) of Eastern Long Island: Pogatticut, the Sachem of Manhansett (Shelter Island); Wyandanch, the Sachem of Meuntacut (Montauk); Momoweta, Sachem of Corchake (Cutchogue); and Nowedonah, Sachem of Shinnecock, brought a suit to the court of Colonial commissioners in Hartford against Sylvester and the partners, as they did not share the same concept of land ownership as the European colonizers. The court decided in the Sachems favor, a deed was signed, and another payment of sugar was provided. The Manhansett people reluctantly gave up their claim to the Island and left to join clans within the Shinnecock, Montauket, and Corchaug family groups. Those that remained were forced to work for Nathaniel Sylvester alongside enslaved Africans and indentured servants. These three groups made up the historical inhabitants of Shelter Island. The Island remained a diverse community after slavery was abolished, with people of color becoming landowners and church members.

The descendants of Nathaniel Sylvester remained on Shelter Island for the next 350 years, though with diminishing land ownership, as the Island grew and evolved into a diversified community, with the economic drivers being agricultural activities, fishing, religious retreats, and summer resorts.

After the Civil War, the Methodist’s Shelter Island Grove and Camp Meeting Association, established in 1871, sparked the growth over subsequent decades of a vibrant resort community that continues to transform the Island every summer. After World War II, change continued in the form of residential subdivisions and individual homes lining the waterfront. Since then, the Island has seen relatively steady increases in population, except for the years following 9/11 and the COVID pandemic, which were both periods of expedited influx and development.

Each of these eras left its mark on the Island, and many historic homes and other features have been preserved and maintained by generations of Islanders. The value of these resources is most obvious in recognized historic sites like Shelter Island Heights and Sylvester Manor, but may be found throughout the Island, where each neighborhood forms a unique composition of landscape, water, and buildings. The result is an exceptional level of scenic beauty and a rich sense of place. Preserving these resources in the face of ongoing social, economic, and environmental change is one of the key challenges in perpetuating the unique character of the Island for future generations.

### DESIGNATED HISTORIC SITES

Shelter Island has 10 sites that have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Eight of these are considered to have local significance, while the Sylvester Manor Windmill is of Statewide Significance and Sylvester Manor is of National Significance.

**The Presbyterian Colonial Cemetery** land was donated by Jonathan Havens in 1732. There are eight stones of American revolutionary patriots, three of whom served in George Washington’s first Continental Congress. The Shelter Island Cemetery Association cemetery, behind the Presbyterian Church, was incorporated in 1903 and includes the grave sites of many veterans from past wars.

**Quaker Cemetery** was established when Anti Quaker laws were passed in 1656, Nathaniel and Grizzell Sylvester made Shelter Island a refuge for persecuted Quakers. Quaker meetings are still held there today.

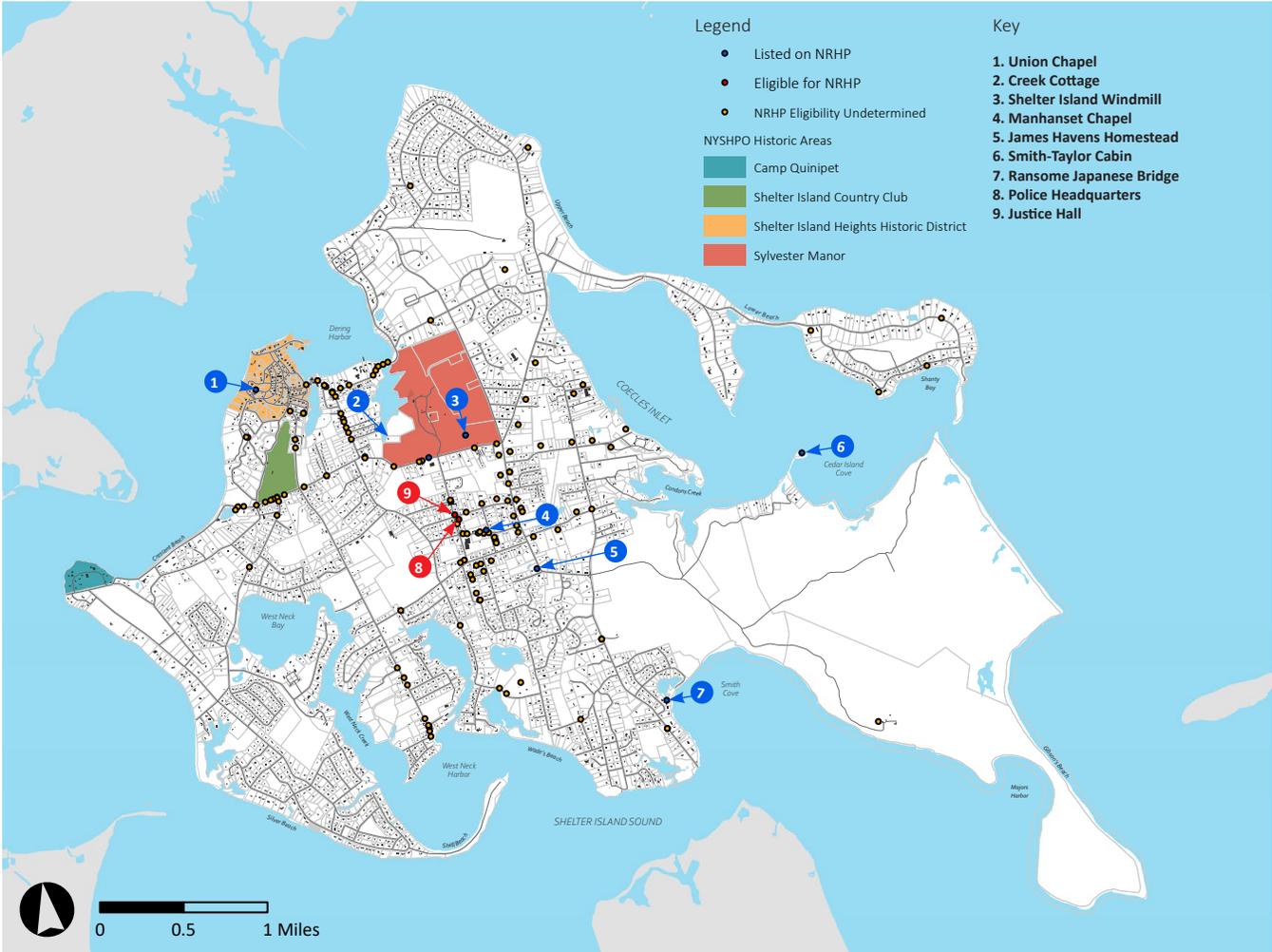
**Camp Quinipet**, a Methodist camp and retreat center founded in 1922, was added to the Register in 2005. The camp includes 19 buildings constructed between 1830 and 1965, of which 13 are considered contributing buildings. The gazebo on the grounds and “Kissing Rock,” adjacent to the Camp, are both island landmarks.

**The James Haven Homestead**, built in 1743 and expanded in the mid-19th century, is the second oldest house on the Island. Added to the Register in 1986 and expanded in 2019, it is home to the Shelter Island Historical Society.

**Manhasset Chapel**, also known as Mechanics’ Hall, was originally built on the grounds of the Manhasset House Hotel in 1890 and moved to its current site in 1924. It was added to the Register in 1997 and is now privately owned.

**Shelter Island Country Club**, listed in 2009, is a golf course and club house established in 1909 to serve summer visitors to the Island. Now owned by the Town, the course is managed by a non-profit. The porch provides a lovely view of Dering Harbor and, in the far distance, the Atlantic Ocean.

**Shelter Island Heights Historic District**, listed in 1993 as a national and NYS historic district, includes 141 contributing buildings and one contributing structure.



**FIGURE 14: HISTORIC PLACES**

Source: Data source: NYS Department of Transportation, Main Street GIS, and Microsoft  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

The Heights was laid out in 1872 by Robert Morris Copeland for the Shelter Island Grove and Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

**The Smith-Ransome Japanese Bridge**, listed in 2018, was designed by Ernest Ransome in 1905 for the “Borax King” Francis Marion Smith’s estate. It represents an unusual use of reinforced concrete to implement a Japanese-inspired design. While the bridge is still used, a non-profit conservancy has been collecting donations and planning for its restoration, which will begin with repair of concrete abutments and balustrades.

**Smith-Taylor Cabin**, listed in 2007, is an Adirondack-style log cabin built on Cedar Island in Coecles Harbor around the turn of the 20th century by Francis Marion Smith. The cabin was donated to the Town for public use and enjoyment. The non-profit Taylor’s Island Foundation is dedicated to assisting the Town in restoring, maintaining, and providing public access to this unique treasure.

**Sylvester Manor**, established in 1651 as a provisioning plantation for the Barbadian sugar trade, has remained in the same family ever since. It includes the 1735 Manor House, the 1810 windmill (separately listed), and 235 acres of fields, forests, gardens, and wetlands. Over the past decade, the family donated the Manor to the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, which is dedicated to interpreting its history while bringing sustainable agricultural practices back to Shelter Island. The Manor was added to the National Register in 2015.

**The Shelter Island Windmill**, listed in 1978, is located on the on the Manor property. It was constructed in 1810, moved to the Island in 1840, and moved to Sylvester Manor in 1926. The Sylvester Manor Educational Farm is in the process of restoring the mill with the aim of once again grinding grain grown on the Island.

**Union Chapel**, listed in 1984, is a historic Methodist chapel within the Shelter Island Heights historic district. Built in 1875, it is considered the most important extant structure associated with the original Camp Meeting Association, established in 1872. An important feature is the extraordinary windows by Walter Brigham Cole.



*Store in Shelter Island Heights Historic District*



*Sylvester Manor*

*Source: Jim Colligan*

## OTHER LOCALLY SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC RESOURCES

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Data from the New York Cultural Resource Information System (NYCRIS) show additional structures, including the Police Station and Justice Hall, Shelter Island Yacht Club (1886), and Gardiners bay Country Club (1896), which are potentially eligible for listing on the State and Federal Registers of Historic Places but have not been fully documented and nominated. In addition, NYCRIS shows over 100 properties as “undetermined,” which are potentially important due to age of construction, architectural value, or historic interest, but have not yet been documented. Many other properties remain to be evaluated, ranging from the gracious homes surrounding Dering Harbor to more modest homes and summer cottages found throughout the Island - many of which are threatened by demolition to make way for larger new houses.

## ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

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The entire island is considered an Archaeologically Sensitive Area by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and Phase I Archaeological Investigations have been carried out on 11 properties according to NYCRIS. From 1999-2005, the University of Massachusetts Boston held an archaeological field school on Sylvester Manor property exploring the three cultures on the plantation in the 1600s. Over 1 million specimens from this dig are housed at the Fiske Center at UMass Boston. After the formation of the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, UMass has continued to be involved in digs on the site. Archaeological studies have also been carried out on the Mashomack Preserve by scientists from the University of California.

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

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While homes, churches and other structures are often the focus of historic preservation efforts, the land surrounding and connecting those buildings - the cultural landscape - is often equally significant. The National Park Service defines cultural landscapes as including both historic sites and historic designed landscapes (such as parks, gardens, and estates), as well as the common vernacular landscapes that emerge from human activities such as agriculture, fishing, commerce, and

industry. Even though these vernacular landscapes – harbors, farm valleys, lighthouses, fishing villages, etc. – were not designed, per se, they often are among the most beautiful.

On Shelter Island, several of the National Register properties incorporate a larger district that combines historic buildings with an important cultural landscape, including Shelter Island Heights and Sylvester Manor. Others, including the Shelter Island Country Club and the Smith-Ransome Japanese Bridge, represent historic landscapes designed for a particular purpose. There is a wealth of other landscapes around the Island that fall into the category of vernacular cultural landscapes. These include farms, historic roads and trails, hunting grounds, harbors, docks, and other sites associated with the natural resource-based economy of farming, hunting, fishing, and the processing, storage, and shipping of the resulting products.

One of the reasons that cultural landscapes are important is that they represent the lion's share of what residents and visitors actually experience on the Island. When people talk about “a sense of place,” it rarely is embodied in a single structure or feature. Rather, it emerges from the larger experience of moving through and experiencing the landscape. Walking from one's home down a quiet, tree-shaded walkway to the edge of the harbor; exploring the winding streets of an older neighborhood; hearing the thwack of a tennis racket down the lane; smelling the water and hearing boat shrouds rattling in the harbor – each of these is a cultural landscape experience that couldn't happen the same way in another place.

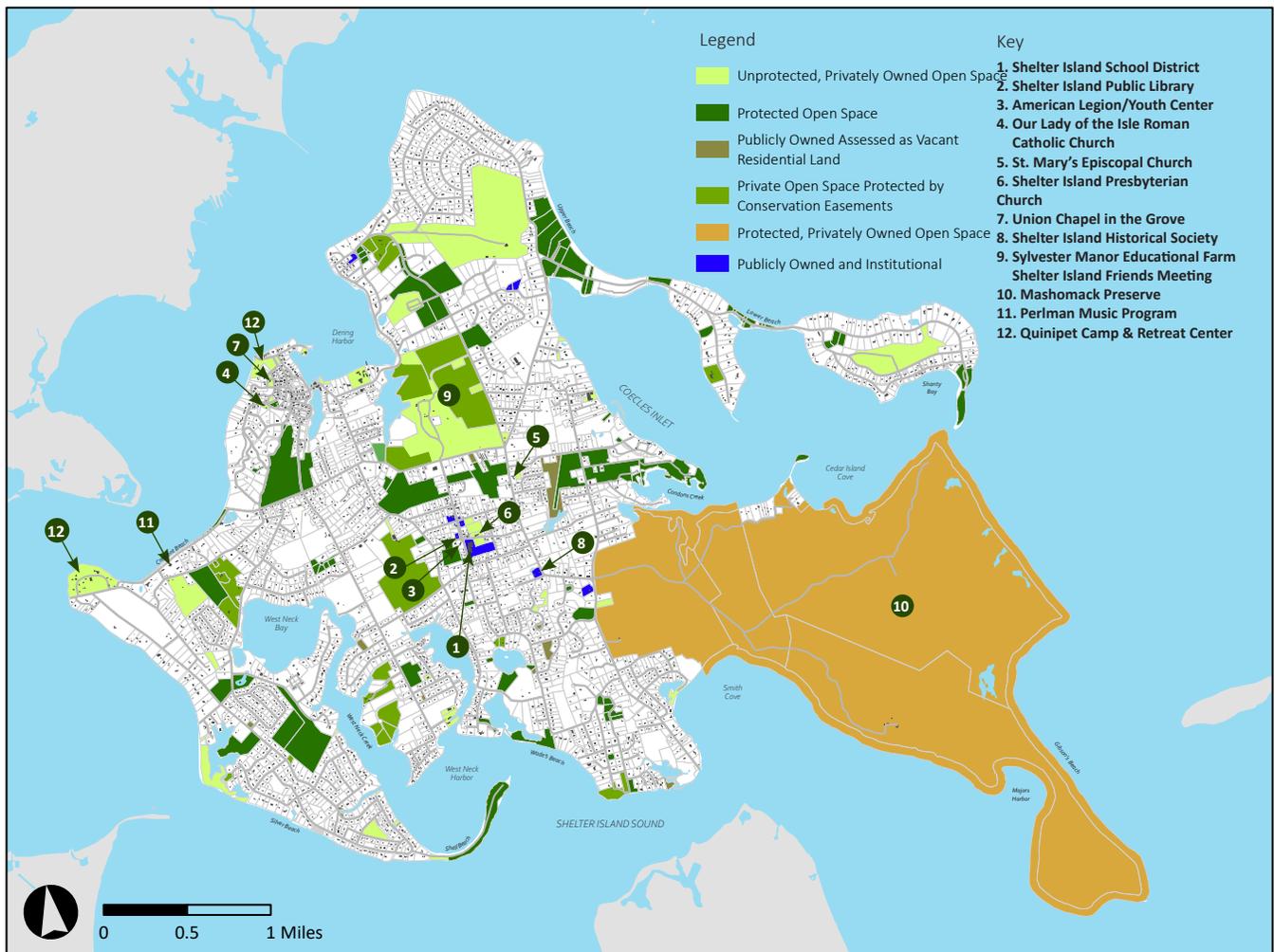
## CULTURAL RESOURCES

Shelter Island has a number of well-known institutions, organizations, and events that are an important part of its cultural environment and contribute to the fabric of the community.

### Shelter Island Historical Society

Founded in 1922, the Shelter Island Historical Society was reinvigorated in 1966 and recognized as a non-profit in 1969. Chartered as an educational institution by the NY State Board of Regents, the Society functions as the Town’s historical repository, with an archive of more than 100,000 documents dating back to the 1600s, and

maintains the Shelter Island House Registry, which has historical information on Island homes. The Society hosts many cultural and community events throughout the year, as well as ongoing efforts such as the Living History Project, which documents the lives of Shelter Islanders. The Society provides programming for school children through the Shelter Island History Project; runs the popular weekly farmers’ market from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend; sponsors community musicals based on historical events; has sponsored research projects; and mounted a major exhibition of the work of local artists. The Havens Store offers books



**FIGURE 15: COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS & QUALITY OF LIFE**

Source: Data source: NYS Department of Transportation, Main Street GIS, and Microsoft  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

on Island history and history-themed products and has become a popular source of hand-crafted items by Island artisans.

The Society's headquarters is the Havens House, a State and National Historic Registry property that was acquired in 1971. The house was renovated and expanded in 2018 to create the Shelter Island History Center, which now boasts state-of-the-art exhibition spaces, offices, and rooms for meetings and educational programs.

### Shelter Island Public Library

The Shelter Island Library was established in 1885 and has a mission "to provide state-of-the-art resources, services, programs and technologies that meet current and evolving needs of the community, and to foster lifelong learning on Shelter Island." The Library plays a critical role in the community providing space for different organizations to meet, providing after school programs for students and organizing clubs and events such as cooking club and battle of the brains. The Library is a highly utilized community resource.

### Sylvester Manor Educational Farm

The Sylvester Manor Educational Farm was established by descendants of the original Sylvesters, who founded the manor in 1651, and is dedicated to bringing sustainable agricultural practices back to Shelter Island. Its mission is "to preserve, cultivate and share historic Sylvester Manor to ensure that food and art remain connected to community and the land." The farm offers diverse programs aligned with this mission, including field trips for school children, archaeological digs, a 150-member Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm and farm stand, summer youth and family programs, music and interpretive history programs, and public hiking trails. Sylvester Manor is comprised of 236 acres. Between 2009 and 2020, more than 121 of the Manor's 236 farmland and open space acres were preserved in perpetuity through partnerships with the Peconic Land Trust, the Suffolk County Farmland Preservation Program, the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and the Town of Shelter Island Community Preservation Program.



**Shelter Island History Center**

*Source: Jim Colligan*



**Shelter Island Public Library**

*Source: Jim Colligan*

## American Legion

The American Legion Mitchell Post 281 serves 2 very important functions in the Shelter Island Community: it is a haven for military personnel and veterans as well as a Community Center. Founded after World War I in 1922, the Post took over a building constructed as “the Community Club.” Its nonpartisan mission is to provide service to active-duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces and veterans, their families, and the community. The post, along with its active Ladies Auxiliary, maintains the Island’s war memorials, supports active-duty service members and veterans, provides local military funeral details, organizes events for Memorial Day and Veteran’s Day, and provides support to a multitude of organizations in and around our community. Two bowling lanes are in the basement of the Community Center and are operated by the Legion for the use of Islanders through league play. Also on the lower level, is a bar and commercial kitchen that the Legion operates and makes available for community events.

The second function of the Legion building, as a Community Center, was established in 2008 when the town and the Legion signed a 99-year lease for the main floor of the building for \$1. The Recreation Program operates its programs from this space.

## Mashomack Preserve

In addition to maintaining 2,039 acres of open space, the Nature Conservancy supports the community with recreational opportunities, education, and outreach, including 11 miles of hiking trails, supported by parking, restrooms, and benches; designated areas for kayaking and cross-country skiing; a visitor center; volunteer opportunities; nature programs, and guided hikes.

The Preserve welcomes 40,000 visitors every year, providing education on the history of the site and the changing landscape of the Island. It has prepared a three-volume Natural and Cultural Resource Assessment of the entire property. Mashomack was entered into the Shelter Island Town Nature Preserve System on April 9th, 1999.

## Taylor’s Island Foundation

This non-profit foundation was formed in 2006 to assist the Town in fundraising for restoration and preservation of the Smith-Taylor Cabin. It led to restoration of the



**Environmental Education Summer Program at Mashomack Preserve**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Springtime at Mashomack Preserve Visitor's Center**

Source: Jim Colligan

building from 2011-2014, including assistance with replacement of bulkheads on the Island. The foundation shares the history of Taylor’s Island through docent-led tours of the cabin.

### Shelter Island Friends of Trees

Shelter Island Friends of Trees (FoT) is a non-profit organization founded in 1996 with the mission of planting trees on Shelter Island’s public spaces as well as educating residents about Island trees. Since its inception, FoT has planted 106 trees, funded through donations of its members. It collaborates with the Shelter Island Town Highway Department to decide where to plant trees and, when possible, share planting costs. In addition to its collaboration with the Town, FoT has partnerships with the Shelter Island School, Sylvester Manor Farm, and the Shelter Island Historical Society.

### Churches

Religious communities on the Island provide religious services as well as a broad range of community services and events consistent with their individual missions and capabilities. As in any small town, they are among the few regular gathering places for community members other than school events and Town meetings and provide critical support to senior citizens and families.

### Arts, Cultural Organizations, and Community Events

#### *Shelter Island Friends of Music*

The Shelter Island Friends of Music (SIFM) was founded in 1977 and incorporated as a non-profit in 1979, with a mission of presenting both world-renowned artists and rising stars of concert music to music lovers on the East End. SIFM presents five free, public concerts annually at the Shelter Island Presbyterian Church, generally three in spring and two in autumn.

#### *Perlman Music Program*

Founded by acclaimed violinist Itzhak Perlman and his wife Toby in 1994 and arriving on Shelter Island in 2000 at the sight of the historic Peconic Lodge, the Perlman Music Program (PMP) runs a summer program for young musicians at its campus on Shore Road. Each summer, 40



*St. Mary's Episcopal church*

Source: Jim Colligan

12–18-year-old musicians come from around the world for a seven-week residency. In 2012, the PMP opened the new Kristy and James H. Clark Arts Center, which includes a recital hall, soundproof practice rooms, music library, and girls' dormitory. The PMP offers a year-round alumni recital series at the Clark Arts Center that is open to the public, as well as an annual family concert and special concerts in collaboration with the Shelter Island Public Library.

### **Studios and Galleries**

Shelter Island boasts numerous resident artists and artisans, some of whom open their studios to the public, and as well as a few galleries, some seasonal, others year-round. An annual open studio is organized every August by Artists of Shelter Island (ARTSI).

### **Annual Community Events**

A series of annual events - many of them organized by the institutions - bring the community together and add to the quality of life on the Island, some are listed below and shown in the photos to the right:

- Fireworks Celebration at Crescent Beach in July
- Shelter Island 10-K in June, which attracts globally elite runners
- Shelter Island 5-K Run/Walk in October for breast cancer charities
- Havens House Farmers Market: local food, music and crafts (May-September)
- Shelter Island Historical Society Play (Summer)
- Memorial Day Parade
- Shelter Island Chamber of Commerce Arts & Crafts Fair and Green Expo (August)
- ARTSI Open Studio Tour (August)
- Cricket Match to benefit Ambulance Corp. (August)
- Lions Club Scallop Dinner (October) & Corn Hole Tournament (August)
- BBQ Contest at the Legion to benefit the Legion (August)
- Lions Club Spring Clean up (April), Snapper Derby (August) and Chamber of Commerce Rubber Duck Race (August)



**10K Run (2013)**

Source: Adam Bundy, Shelter Island Reporter



**Memorial Day Parade**

Source: Ambrose Clancy, Shelter Island Reporter



**Arts & Crafts Fair and Green Expo**

Source: Adam Bundy, Shelter Island Reporter

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### TOWN GOVERNANCE

Towns within New York State are considered municipal corporations with geographical jurisdictions, home rule powers and fiscal capacities to provide a wide range of services to their residents. Shelter Island is classified as a Town of the second class under the New York State Town Law, as are all towns in Suffolk County. The Town Board exercises both executive and legislative functions. Judicial functions are held by Town Justices.

### Town Government Officers, Staff, and Volunteer Committees

The Shelter Island Town Board is the governing board of the town. It approves additions, deletions, and modifications of provisions of the Town Code, and also acts as the Police Commission. Among other functions, the Town Board approves certain permit applications; fills vacancies in town offices, elective or appointive; selects the town attorney and town engineer; appoints harbor masters and police officers; and provides for the hiring of other employees as necessary for the conduct of the town's business. Finally, the Town Board adopts a budget, fixes the salaries of officers and employees, establishes rules of board procedure, and designates the official newspaper of the town.

The Town Supervisor fulfills a "first among equals" managerial and supervisory role but is technically not a Town executive. The Supervisor presides over Town Board meetings, legislates as a member of the Town Board, implements Town Board decisions, and serves as the chief financial officer and budget officer in charge of preparing the draft annual budget. The Deputy Supervisor, who may be any Town officer, official, or employee, is appointed by the Town Supervisor. In Shelter Island, the Deputy Supervisor has traditionally been a Town Board member and takes on an important role in oversight of the budget process.

The Town employs staff with technical knowledge and experience to implement decisions and to oversee consultant work, for example, the Town Attorney, the Town Engineer, and building inspectors. Additional expertise is available from County government, nonprofit organizations, and consultants. Records management

appears to be a concern, as some staff continue to depend on paper records and others report growing resident and legal demands for records and data. The Town is implementing a digital conversion strategy through file sharing and management software.

The Town of Shelter Island relies on many volunteer committees and boards to perform municipal functions or advise town government. Town Board members oversee their activities by serving as liaisons to these groups. The Town also appoints temporary task forces and committees to address specific projects and issues. Committees can have regulatory, management, and advisory functions. Some committees are regulatory, such as the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, others have a strong policy implementation role, and yet others are primarily advisory. In many cases, there is a mix of functions. All boards and committees have a presence on the Town website, though the amount of information and documentation of committee activities that is available to the public through the website is highly variable.

Small towns depend on volunteers to assist with administration of Town functions and provide services. In a seasonal community like Shelter Island, many property owners are part time or seasonal only, which limits their ability to participate in Town government. Most committees meet monthly year-round and in person. For this reason, committee members are typically year-round residents. In many towns, changing lifestyles, such as the time demands on two-earner families, have made it more difficult to find volunteers for town committees. Retirees often become the main source of volunteers. Shelter Island's combination of a high percentage of older year-round residents, a small economy, and a large part-time, seasonal population, is reflected in its volunteer participation.

### Special Purpose Districts

Special purpose districts are unique public entities that are not Town departments but play an important role in community life. In Shelter Island, local special purpose districts are the Fire District, the School District, the Library, and the West Neck Water District, each governed by a board of commissioners or trustees. The water district is owned by the Town and operated by Suffolk County Water Authority.

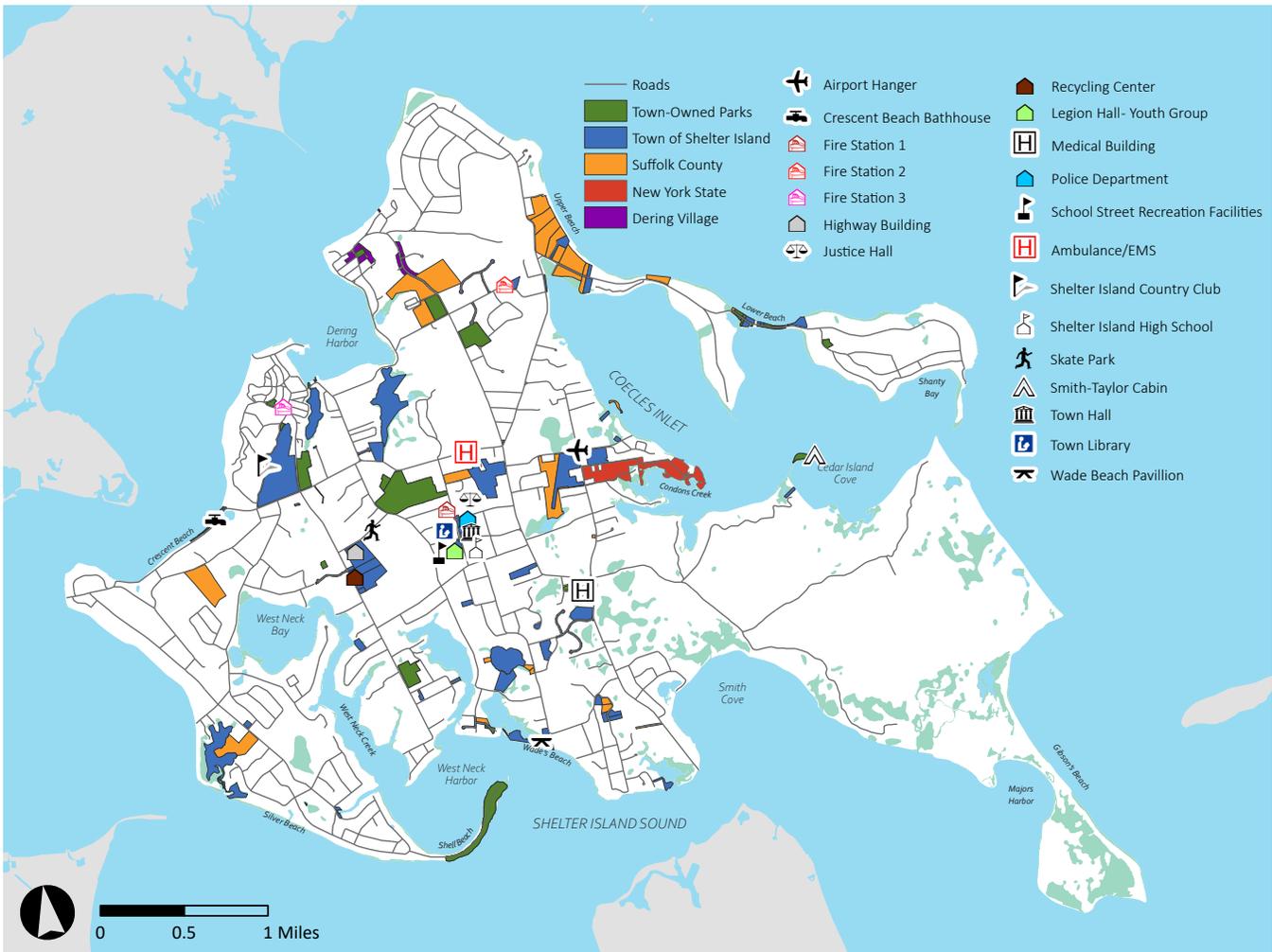
### Budgeting

Taxes collected by the tax levy go into four major separate budgets: Town of Shelter Island, Shelter Island Union Free School District, Shelter Island Library, and the Shelter Island Fire District. (The Town Assessor also

assesses property in the Village of Dering Harbor, which has a separate budget.) Government and special district activities are primarily funded by the property tax, though there are some other income sources.

### Town-Owned Facilities

The Town of Shelter Island owns 25 buildings and nine other facilities. The Town’s assets are maintained by the Department of Public Works (DPW). Funding for Town facility improvements and initiatives comes from the general fund or grants from the state, county, and/or federal governments. The Town applies for \$50,000 per year in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) federal funds which must be spent to benefit seniors, disabled persons, or people in low- and moderate-



**FIGURE 16: PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PUBLIC LAND**

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft  
 Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

income areas. Town officials and staff have identified a number of projects that need attention. Several themes emerge from project planning and implementation lists:

- Sea level rise: Various projects to address sea level rise on coastal Town properties and low-lying roadways.
- Water issues: Ground and Surface Water Management Plan, sewage plant discharge at the Shelter Island Heights Treatment Plant, municipal buildings wastewater treatment.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance: Scheduled for upgrade in 2023-2024 are the Community Center, Police Building, and Justice Hall
- Repairs and improvements to facilities: Legion Hall, Senior Center kitchen and bathroom project, Medical Center roof, Town Hall and Medical Center emergency generators, solar arrays on the Recycling Center roof and at the Town Hall Campus. Some of these projects have been completed, while others are in process or listed for future implementation.
- Municipal Facilities Master Plan: Town Building and Infrastructure Asset Evaluations need updating.
- Town Center planning and improvements: Facility Needs Assessment.
- Building a capital reserve fund.

### Capital Planning and Grants

The Capital Planning and Grants Committee (CPGC) advises the Town Board on priorities, costs, and funding resources for capital projects. The Committee is developing a Multi-Year Capital Plan to guide maintenance, repair, and replacement of infrastructure and assets so that these expenditures can be scheduled.

The timeline for this project targets completion year end 2023. The CPGC will be requesting each Town department to examine, and report anticipated expenditures on capital projects that would fall outside of normal operating budgets. Once the CPGC has the requests of each department, they will work to prioritize the projects, seek grant funding, and/or budget for the project in future fiscal years.

### Highway & Public Works Department

The Shelter Island DPW is responsible for buildings operations and maintenance; grounds maintenance; solid waste management including recycling, composting, and household solid waste management; and maintenance of Town-owned parks, beaches, docks and other recreational assets within the Town.

The Highway Department is responsible for fleet services; road and right-of-way maintenance, including repairs, repaving, snow removal, and mowing. The Village of Dering Harbor and the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation (SIHPOC) manage their own roadways and other assets, sometimes contracting for services with the Town.

### Solid Waste Management

The Town of Shelter Island does not provide curbside collection of trash and recyclables but is responsible for solid waste management on the Island. A more detailed discussion of this topic can be found in Chapter 10: Utilities, Sustainability, and Resilience.

### Senior Services and Programs

The Shelter Island Office for Senior Services (the Senior Center) is located on the lower level of the Town-owned Medical Center at 114 South Ferry Road, open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. It offers a wide array of social, recreational, public health, and educational programs for people aged 60 years or older. Some 200-300 people typically participate in senior programs over the course of a year, including seasonal residents. In the last four years, with a new director, the Town's senior services and programs have expanded, including a greater focus on mental health. Although some programs were suspended because of the pandemic, there are plans to develop more programs to attract younger, active seniors and more programs for men. Broader planning issues also affect seniors and their quality of life. For example, the limited extent of sidewalks on the Island affects people who want to walk for exercise, especially those who use walkers, and people who use wheelchairs.

Senior Center programs are funded by the Town, the NY State Office for the Aging, Suffolk County Office for the Aging, federal CDBG funds, program fees, and voluntary contributions. A non-profit organization, the

Senior Citizen’s Foundation of Shelter Island, provides funding to improve life on the Island for senior citizens, from purchasing two new buses to contributions toward making the Town’s beaches more accessible.

## Public Safety

The Shelter Island Police Department (SIPD) has a full-time staff of 10 police officers and one police clerk. Part-time positions include four bay constables, a police clerk, a crossing guard, seven jail attendants, an animal control officer, two traffic control officers, and a court officer. Seasonal officers serve from the third week in May until the second week in September. Dispatch is handled by the Southold Police Department. Marine programs include two grant-funded police vessels, boater education, shellfish monitoring, boat storage on Town property, and rescue diving. Community policing includes speed enforcement education, home assistance to seniors, and assistance at special events. The Police Headquarters in the Town Center also operates as Shelter Island’s Emergency Operations Center. A more detailed discussion of emergency services can be found in Chapter 10: Utilities, Sustainability, and Resilience.

The SIPD is a New York State Accredited Agency. Less than a third of all police agencies in the state have achieved this status, which requires meeting a series of professional standards and regular reviews and inspections. Training of the Town’s police and law enforcement personnel is provided and coordinated in part by the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD) and the NYS Department of Criminal Justice. SIPD’s 2022 operating budget represented about 17% of the Town budget, lower than any other East End town or village. Expenses are controlled, in part, by a variety of shared services among Shelter Island, the County, and other East End communities.

Police call data (2017-2021) indicates annual calls of between 3,500 and 4,000 calls a year, with a high degree of seasonality. Violent crime is extremely rare, but Shelter Island is subject to broader societal trends such as financial crimes. Deer collisions account for about a quarter to a third of motor vehicle accidents.

In general, demands on the Police Department have been increasing in the last 10 years, reflecting changes to the law and requirements for documentation as well as a greater demand for residential services. Improved



**Town Hall**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Fire Department in the Heights**

Source: Jim Colligan



**Police HQ**

Source: Jim Colligan

records management is an important issue as the public requires more documents for various purposes. A new records management system for Suffolk County town police departments will be instituted in Shelter Island.

Fire protection in the Town is provided by the volunteer Shelter Island Fire Department (SIFD), operating under and governed by an area fire district. The Fire District is run by five publicly elected, unpaid commissioners who have the power to provide fire protection services within their boundaries, levy taxes, and incur debt. The Fire Department typically responds to 125–150 calls per year. There are 60 volunteer firefighters on Shelter Island with an average age of 59 years old that operate a combined 14 pieces of firefighting equipment. There are 3 classifications of firefighters in our volunteer force: Interior Firefighters (22) Exterior Firefighters (24) and Fire Police (14). The marine unit also participates in joint training exercises with the Coast Guard and the Shelter Island Police Department.

The SIFD maintains three department locations in the Town to house equipment and enhance fire protection and response. Fire alarm calls are handled by SIFD, and mutual aid agreements are in place at the state, county, and local levels to provide additional resources should SIFD need assistance.

Basic and advanced firefighting training is offered through the Suffolk County Fire Academy. Fire protection also includes a Town Fire Inspector and Fire Marshals from the County, who have broad responsibilities across their jurisdictions. The SIFD also relies on the Suffolk County Police Department Arson Squad for suspicious fire and arson investigations.

Emergency medical services are provided by the EMS Ambulance Company, a Town department, which took over responsibility for ambulance services from the Red Cross in 2012. There are 36 volunteers and three ambulance vehicles available within the Town to respond to emergency situations as needed. In addition to 15 drivers, there are 16 volunteers with Basic Life Support certification, three with Advanced Life Support certification (including one paramedic), and two critical care technicians.

Suffolk County Division of Emergency Medical Services assists in the training and certification of EMS personnel. The Division also has the responsibility for county-wide coordination of the emergency system and the

development of support services to aid in improving all phases of emergency medical care. The EMS Director reports that the types and number of calls have not changed significantly over 20 years, with totals typically in the 200-300 range and a spike in the summer.

The Shelter Island EMS Advisory Board supports the EMS program, and the non-profit Shelter Island Ambulance Foundation raises money to purchase ambulances and equipment and to fund continuing education programs for EMTs.

## Public Library

The Shelter Island Library, established in 1885, is located in a 1965 single-story, 6000-square-foot, ADA-compliant brick building at 37 North Ferry Road on 1.27 acres of land. Open six days a week, the library provides traditional library services along with a wide variety of electronic, educational, cultural, and entertainment programs. In the most recent year for which data are available (July 2021-June 2022), the library had over 76,000 visits and over 9,000 people attended programs.

The facility has a community meeting space on the lower level that can be expanded to accommodate up to 75 people. It also contains a children's library, a staff lunchroom/kitchen and a patio off the lower level with table seating and a retractable awning. The main level holds adult materials and computer stations.

The Shelter Island Library is an "Association Library," that is, a public library created by a membership association. It is not a Town department, but the library does depend on tax revenue (the rate for 2023 was 0.1987 per \$1,000 in assessed value) to cover the lion's share of its budget. The library's portion of the tax bill is usually around 3%. This amount is voted on annually by registered voters via an election run by the School's District Clerk. The 2022-23 budget called for \$755,796 in taxes, an amount that covers 81% of operating costs. Total expenditures were budgeted at \$926,715. The balance of expenses not covered by property taxes comes from gifts, grants, fundraising, fees, and investments.

A key service provided by the library is technology support and access via the 12 computers which are available in-house and Wi-Fi for patrons' personal devices. The use of these resources, and digital services, has grown exponentially, across all segments of the

population, in the years of the pandemic. The library also provides passport processing, notary public services, and periodic health clinics. On June 17, 2023, Shelter Island voters approved a proposed \$9.5 million expansion of the library. This project will renovate the existing structure of approximately 4500 square feet while adding 6000+ square feet of new space.

The goals outlined in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan include more support for non-traditional education and coordination with the school district; more specialty spaces, such as a maker space; and sustainability and resiliency improvements to the library's property. In 2020, the library was awarded certification by the Green Business Partnership in recognition of efforts to reduce waste, conserve water and energy, implement green purchasing, and make an organizational commitment to sustainability.

Governed by a Board of Trustees, the library has a staff of 13 (four of whom are full-time). The Friends of the Shelter Island Public Library, a non-profit organization, supports the library through fund-raising events for cultural and educational programs and for resources and materials not within the annual operating budget.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Shelter Island School District (SIUFSD) provides education for grades pre-K through 12th, in addition to supporting community life through concerts, sports, and other activities.

The district is led by a seven-member elected Board of Education and is not a Town department. It is funded primarily by a property tax levy (\$2.89 per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value for the 2022-23 budget of \$12,445,523). Approximately 46% of the total Town tax levy goes to the School District.

Historically, cost per pupil has been higher than similar districts and significantly above the New York State average. According to data from the State Education Department, the cost per pupil in 2020-2021 was \$47,871, compared with a countywide average of \$25,638, and up 41% from \$33,944 in 2010-2011 some of which can be attributed to the decline in enrollment

The SIUFSD exists in a single building at 33 North Ferry Road. Enrollment has declined during the last two decades, from a high of 285 students in 2003-2004 to a



**Shelter Island School**

*Source: Jim Colligan*

low of 186 in 2022-2023. Student population numbers are anticipated to stabilize, as the graduating classes are being replaced with like numbers in the lower grades. In recent years, there have been approximately 30 students who attend private schools off-Island. During the pandemic, the district experienced a temporary increase in student population, which showed that the school can absorb more students without an overall increase in costs. The superintendent has initiated a program designed to attract tuition-paying students from surrounding towns.

Certified by the New York State Board of Regents, Shelter Island School employs 34 professional staff in addition to five teaching assistants and aides, a guidance counselor, a school nurse, a school psychologist, and a school social worker. Some 84% of all professional staff have graduate degrees. The number of teachers has been stable in a range of 31-36 since 1998.

The school is rated at the highest level (4) for College, Career and Civic Readiness. The graduation rate for the 2021-2022 school year was 98% according to US News & World Report. The average class size is 16, with a student-teacher ratio of 8:1.

The school population has become more ethnically and economically diverse. As of the 2021-22 school year, 20% of students identified as Hispanic, while 35% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The high school athletic department runs sports programs under the umbrella of the NY State Public High School Athletic Association. While some sports (cross country and track, volleyball, men's basketball, golf, baseball, and softball) remain active, others that were historically combined with neighboring schools (such as football, lacrosse, tennis, and wrestling) are no longer offered.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

Shelter Island is generally a safe and secure community, comparable to others with similar demographic characteristics and subject to broader social stresses, such as pandemic conditions in 2020. In addition to varying levels of Town government financial support for health and safety services and programs, the Fire Department, EMS, and Senior Center receive support from separate non-profit foundations, similar to non-profits that support the school and the library.

As a small and relatively well-off community in a very diverse county, Shelter Island does not appear directly in the numerous public health studies and data sources for Suffolk County, Long Island, or New York State. The 2014-2017 Suffolk County Community Health Assessment identified health challenges and behavioral/risk factors that may be especially relevant to the Town, including obesity, the relative remoteness of the Island, volunteer medical staff related to emergency medical transportation, and potential contaminants in water. According to Census data, almost all of the Town of Shelter Island residents have health insurance.

Severe storms of various types are the greatest natural risks to Shelter Island's people and property, according to the 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan. Climate change estimates for 2050 project more days over 90 degrees and heat waves; fewer days below freezing; more extreme storm events; and rising sea levels.

### Available Medical Services

Shelter Island faces challenges in accessing medical services due to its limited infrastructure, remote location, and scarcity of healthcare professionals. For example, there are only two local primary physicians, no dental practice, and most specialty medicine, including home nursing care, is off-Island on the East End.

There are no hospitals on Shelter Island. Residents are served by three regional hospitals: Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital (70 beds) in Greenport, Stony Brook Southampton Hospital (124 beds in Southampton, and Northwell Health's Peconic Bay Medical Center (200 beds) in Riverhead. Peconic Bay also operates a 60-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility. Patients are transported by ambulance primarily to Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital and, less frequently, to

Southampton Hospital by the Shelter Island Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Medivac transport is provided by the Suffolk County Police Department to the level one trauma center at Stony Brook University Hospital. Island residents also rely on urgent care centers located on both the North and South Forks.

### Mental Health and other Social Services

The East End Mental Health Awareness initiative is supported by the towns of Southampton and East Hampton and publishes an online provider directory for the East End. In addition, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services supports a community-based outpatient mental health clinic in Riverhead. Lastly, although based in Hauppauge, DASH (Diagnostic, Assessment, and Stabilization Hub) is a mobile crisis hotline for anyone in Suffolk County. SIPD employs this resource when responding to calls that require such intervention. Stony Brook Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) is also a frequently used resource in the community.

In addition to the Town Social worker, we also have a group of volunteers that formed in response to the COVID pandemic and the toll that it could take on the mental health and wellness of the community called the Health and Wellness Alliance. In recent years there have been increasing numbers of people struggling with mental health which can be exacerbated by any number of factors. World wide stressors such as the recent COVID pandemic combined with more local and personal challenges such as food and housing insecurity could be contributing to the observed increase.

There are some organizations that are helping combat food insecurity on the Island and they are the Food Pantry at the Presbyterian Church, CAST (Community Action Southold Town), the Towns free venison program, and Sylvester Manor who provides locally grown fresh produce to the food pantry.

## Tick-Borne Disease

Diseases caused by tick-borne pathogens are widespread on Shelter Island and nearby communities and they pose a major health concern. While Lyme Disease is the most common and well known, similar diseases include babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Southern tick-associated rash illness, and Powassan virus are also transmitted by ticks. In recent years people have also begun developing an allergy to meat following a tick bite called Alpha-gal syndrome.

Managing conditions for rodent populations and deer management are critical to managing the tick population. Like many locations in the US, Shelter Island has an overabundant deer population that causes ecological damage from over grazing, public health and safety impacts, and other negative impacts. The Shelter Island Deer and Tick Committee, created in 2005, has historically pursued a three-pronged strategy to control tick borne disease: deer management, reduction of ticks through application of chemical acaricide at “4-Poster” deer feeding stations (program currently suspended pending state regulatory changes), and public education.

The Town’s deer hunting program is managed by the Police Department and extends from October 1 through March 31. In addition, the Nature Conservancy and Sylvester Manor have deer management plans and coordinate with the town programs.



*White-tailed Deer in Winter*

*Source: Jim Colligan*

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND VISUAL LANDSCAPE

**Goal 9-1: Preserve archaeological and cultural resources in order to protect linkages between the Town's history and its present life, to improve community self-understanding, to strengthen the sense of community, and to protect Shelter Island's unique identity.**

#### Activate and staff the Historical Advisory Commission

A historical advisory commission was established in Town code to coordinate and advocate actions for managing historic resources. While this commission was established, it is not active as of this writing. The powers of the Commission as stated in Chapter 77 may include the following:

- Coordinate and advocate actions for managing historic resources as set forth in the towns comprehensive plan
- Undertake a program of serving and documenting of the town's historic landmarks and historic districts within the town
- Provide recommendation for designation of identified historic landmarks
- Increase public awareness of the value of historic preservation by developing and participating in public education programs preparing a manual describing the towns history highlighting the distinctiveness of the Islands historic landmarks and neighborhoods and suggesting guidelines for building in harmony with that inheritance
- Make recommendations to town government concerning the utilization of state federal or private funds to promote the preservation of historic landmarks and districts within the town

- Assist the Historical Society in updating their Shelter Island House Registry. A goal for the Society is to continue this project and include architecturally significant homes built since the 1980's. The Society anticipates that a multi-year endeavor would be necessary to update the Registry. As transactions take place and new homes are built, there is an opportunity to maintain the Registry with more recent information.
- Task this commission with developing a historic home designation and registry that people could voluntarily register for and see if there are incentives for people to participate.

The first step to establish this commission would be to advertise for applications from residents who are interested in serving. The next step would be the selection process.

### Create a Historic District Zone

The purpose of this zoning district would be to preserve and protect important historic assets in the community. One potential location could be the Shelter Island Heights National Historic District. A floating historic district overlay zone could also be created for other properties which meet certain criteria.

The historic district zone regulations may include restrictions on the types of changes or alterations that can be made to buildings or structures within the district, guidelines for the design and construction of new buildings, and other rules and regulations that are designed to preserve the area's historic character. It could also establish an architectural preservation review committee to review proposed modifications, demolitions, and new construction within the district.

A floating zone for historic properties typically includes a set of development criteria and standards that must be met in order for a property to be eligible for development under the floating zone designation. These criteria and standards may include requirements for preserving or restoring historic buildings, maintaining the historic character of the surrounding area, and limiting new development that would negatively impact the historic properties or area.

Such a district would be an overlay on existing zones which would, in turn, trigger an additional level of review. The floating "Historic" designation, if adopted by the town, will not change, supersede, down-zone, or alter the uses permitted in any existing zoning district on Shelter Island.

### Continue to maintain and preserve historic records

Preserving historic records is an essential function of the municipality as it plays a critical role in protecting the community's history and cultural heritage. Municipal records can provide valuable insight into the growth and development of a community, including its political, social, economic, and cultural history. They can also help to document significant events, individuals, and organizations that have shaped the community over time. One example of documents that need to be preserved are the historic records contained in the headstones and monuments located in historic cemeteries.

### Promote the Town's history and cultural resources under the charge of the Historical Advisory Commission (named above)

Promoting Shelter Island's history and culture on the town website can be a great way to showcase the unique characteristics and heritage of the community. The website should be connected with social media platforms so updates on photos, historical facts, and cultural insights can be shared regularly. This will encourage visitors to follow the town's social media accounts to stay engaged and informed about ongoing heritage and cultural initiatives. Other potential items to include are:

- **Historical Timeline:** Highlights significant historical events, milestones, and developments in the town.
- **Historic Landmarks and Sites:** Information about the town's historic landmarks, buildings, and sites.
- **Photo Galleries:** Curated historical images and photographs of the town, its landmarks, and notable events.
- **Oral Histories and Personal Stories:** These accounts can provide unique insights into the town's past, preserving personal experiences and memories for future generations.
- **Events and Festivals:** Highlight upcoming cultural events, festivals, and celebrations in the town.
- **Museum and Cultural Institutions:** Information about local museums, art galleries, cultural centers, and heritage organizations.
- **Heritage Trails and Walking Tours:** Develop interactive maps or guides for heritage trails and self-guided walking tours.
- **Historical Documents and Archives:** Digitize and make available historical documents, maps, newspapers, and archives related to the town's history.
- **Cultural Traditions and Artistic Expressions:** Highlight the town's cultural traditions, local crafts, artistic expressions, and performing arts.

**Community Involvement:** Encourage community participation by inviting residents to contribute their own stories, photographs, and memorabilia related to the town's history. This can foster a sense of ownership and pride among community members.

## **Goal 9-2: Protect the Island's small-town way of life, rural character, and natural resources through coordination of land use with the land's natural and visual qualities and protection of critical visual assets, including scenic views from roads and coastal view corridors.**

### **Develop a program to encourage preservation easements**

Preservation easements, also known as conservation easements, are legal agreements between property owners and a qualified organization, such as a land trust or a government agency, to protect and preserve the historic, cultural, or natural features of a property. This tool is a valuable way to protect and preserve land while still allowing the property owner to retain ownership and use of the property. One example of a preservation easement is Cackle Hill on West Neck.

These agreements typically limit the future use and development of the property to ensure that its historic or natural character is maintained. They may prohibit certain types of alterations or demolitions, require that specific features of the property be preserved or restored, or limit the density or scale of future development. The organization that holds the preservation easement is responsible for monitoring the property and enforcing the terms of the agreement. This may involve regular inspections, documentation of any changes to the property, and legal action if the terms of the agreement are violated.

Preservation easements are voluntary agreements. To date, it does not appear that this preservation tool is typically utilized. There are a variety of strategies the Town can take to encourage property owners to declare a preservation easement. For example, the Town, in collaboration with the Shelter Island Historical Society can:

- Develop a potential list of potential sites which might qualify,
- Provide information about the benefits, including tax incentives, reduced property taxes, and reduce maintenance costs.

- Work with property owners and develop partnerships with qualified organizations to help them navigate the process of entering into a preservation easement.
- Offer financial incentives such as tax abatements or exemptions for properties who enter into preservation easements.

### **Review the approach to controlling noise disturbances**

Excessive noise can significantly impact the quality of life for residents. Typical issues have to do with sound amplification systems, boisterous late-night parties, use of noisy equipment and machinery, or similar activities. Excessive noise, especially during nighttime hours, can disrupt sleep patterns, cause stress, and affect overall well-being. By controlling noise disturbances, the town can create a more peaceful and livable environment for its residents.

Enforcing this issue can be difficult to accomplish. The Town's noise ordinance sets a sound level standard measured at or beyond the property line. According to a Town police report, enforcement of this is problematic and difficult to enforce. There are also no limits as to the time of day when noise can be generated (i.e. using landscaping machinery in the early morning). The Town should conduct a review of the code to determine areas that could be strengthened, and whether there should be times and days (i.e. Sunday) when certain noise-generating activities might be limited.

### **Control excessive night sky lighting**

While Shelter Island currently has little excessive night sky lighting, excessively bright and widespread lighting profiles do occur at businesses and residences. There is the need to review the 'dark skies' code for enforceability, to control excessive unnecessary bright and intrusive night lighting and to reduce Island-wide energy consumption and costs.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES (GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES)

### **Goal 9-3: Ensure an efficient, effective, and transparent Town government.**

#### **Increase Government Capacity for planning and implementation:**

**Facilities Master Plan:** A facilities master plan is needed to provide for additional office and meeting space to provide for anticipated additional hires. Increasing government capacity is essential for a small town like Shelter Island, which is facing increasingly complex challenges in areas such as economic development, infrastructure, and public services. Meeting these challenges will require specialized training and knowledge or expertise, which may not be currently available in-house, or, if it is available, capacity is limited. Some of the important key functions could be addressed with the hiring of additional staff listed below:

**Town Manager:** Shelter Island's governance includes a supervisor, an elected official who serves as the chief executive officer of the town. The supervisor is responsible for administering the day-to-day operations of the town government, including overseeing the various departments and staff. One issue with this structure is that continuity issues can arise when there is a change in leadership due to an election or other factors. This can impact the ability of the government to maintain consistency in policies, initiatives, and long-term planning efforts. To remedy this, the Town may consider the addition of a new administrative position such as a Deputy Town Supervisor. The person in this role can help ensure continuity in planning by overseeing the implementation of Town plans, monitoring progress, and adjusting as needed. This includes ensuring that zoning and land use regulations are up-to-date, enforcing these regulations, and coordinating with other departments to ensure that projects are aligned with the municipality's overall vision and goals.

**Town Planner part time or a consultant on retainer:** This role would help to manage physical development, ensuring that growth is sustainable, coordinated, and aligned with the community's vision. The Town Planner would work with the building department to review

development proposals, ensuring that they meet the town's zoning and planning regulations and are consistent with the town's overall vision for growth and development. This person would also advise the various land use boards, which may include topics related to a project's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, Town Code, Zoning Code and Environmental regulations. The Town Planner could also help to develop and implement long-term plans, including research and analysis to support those planning efforts.

**Water Specialist/Hydrologist part time or a consultant on retainer:** The need to protect the water supply in Shelter Island is critical, as it is a small island with limited freshwater resources. Having an in-house water specialist or hydrologist to work with the Town Engineer could help the town to be more resilient, sustainable, and prepared for the challenges of the future by helping to:

- Monitor water quality in various areas on a regular basis and identify potential risks and hazards.
- Plan for future water needs considering population growth, climate change, and changes in land use.
- Develop and implement water management strategies to help the town and residents manage its water resources effectively
- Respond to water related emergencies

#### **Improve record keeping technologies**

With the increasing use of digital technologies, it is essential to improve record-keeping technologies to help make town operations more efficient, transparent, and secure. Newer tools can also help to provide data and insights needed to make informed decisions and plan for the future. Some of the opportunities include:

- Streamlining administrative processes and town services: This can include faster and more accurate data entry, easier data retrieval and analysis, and improved communication and collaboration among town staff.

- Portal for building department applications: Software applications that track development applications can automate many of the processes involved, such as data entry, document management, and communications with applicants. This can save time and resources and enable town staff to process applications more quickly and accurately. It can also improve the experience of residents and staff using the portal.
- Record keeping: Digital record-keeping can also improve the security and privacy of town records. Digital records can be protected through secure backup and storage systems, and access to sensitive information can be restricted to authorized personnel.
- Tracking of planning and implementation items: With improved record-keeping technologies, the Town can better track trends and patterns in town services, helping to inform planning and decision-making.

### Utilize new tools for communication and transparency

Some in the community have expressed concern that it is difficult to find information about what is going on in the different government departments and committees as well as various events sponsored by the Town, school, or other groups. Shelter Island acknowledges that there is room to improve communication to help advertise these events. This could include hosting of a central calendar of events on the Town's website. There is also an opportunity to improve community outreach through mobile applications such as Notify Me or Nixle. These tools allow the municipal government to communicate directly with Island residents who sign up to receive notification on emergencies, road closures, meeting agendas, events, and Town initiatives and are being implemented by Town government by early 2024 along with an updated and more functional website.

The Town should also continue to explore the use of cable TV for community education about historic and cultural assets, including broadcasting of local events. The use of Channel 22 has greatly expanded the availability of visual/ oral information to Town residents. Zoom and other virtual meetings have also become a ubiquitous, cost effective, and easy way to allow people to watch and participate from home.

## **Goal 9-4: Assure that community facilities provide adequate service to the population and businesses over time, in a fiscally efficient way that positively contributes to the Island's character.**

### Develop a Facilities Master Plan

This would provide an opportunity to comprehensively assess the current and future needs related to public facilities and infrastructure. The Plan would holistically evaluate existing facilities, identify gaps or deficiencies, and prioritize future municipal development and improvement projects. Recommendations would include cost estimates associated with facility development, operation, and maintenance over the short and long term. This would help the Town make informed decisions about the acquisition, construction, expansion, or renovation of public facilities. It would also address

public service needs which are not currently being met or may be needed in the future. Some of the priority topics to address are the following:

- Evaluate of the capacity of the existing Town buildings to adequately support the functionality of the current government, departments, staff, and resources and its capacity to support any anticipated expansions or changes to current systems.
- Investigate potential new locations for the Senior Center. It may be beneficial to relocate the senior center closer to the center of town and other

resources such as the library and the community center so the senior center programs could more conveniently take advantage of those resources. If a new location can be found, explore new uses for the current senior center space.

- Assess relocating the FIT Center from the school grounds, where it creates safety concerns for the school administration, by acquiring a centrally located property to house the FIT Center (including a half-gym space), youth programs, senior activities, and a community park/recreation area. Explore setting up this new community center as an emergency shelter.
- Identify opportunities to incorporate a public, 24-hour restroom facility in the center of town.
- Assess ADA compliance for all Town facilities.
- Identify upgrades at the Tot Lot on School Street to make it more attractive to parents and children.
- Evaluate the safety and use of the skateboard park and either close it or move it into the center of Town where it would be easier to maintain and monitor.
- Define oversight and maintenance needs for all Town recreation facilities.

- Evaluate need for improved street lighting in the center of town

### **Develop a framework to monitor and measure the progress of the Comprehensive Plan's implementation**

This Comprehensive Plan represents not only a product of much time and effort, but also the beginning of a process which involves changing conditions, regulations, and procedures in the Town. Sustained town effort and public involvement is necessary to bring the items in this plan to fruition.

Chapter 11 provides an Action Agenda as a policy implementation tool, which identifies the action, responsible parties, and proposed timeframes. This "To Do" list will help the Town to review and report on implementation progress. The Town may consider creating a new implementation committee to help track and monitor action item implementation. This committee may be composed of current town committee members or community members and 1 or 2 town board members.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### **Goal 9-5: Support cultural organizations and strengthen our sense of community**

#### **Promote volunteerism to maintain a strong and self-perpetuating volunteer corps of ambulance and fire department members, while recognizing that there may come a day when a paid force of first responders may be necessary.**

Volunteerism strengthens community resilience by ensuring the availability of critical emergency services. Volunteers from the community bring valuable local knowledge and a deep commitment to serving their neighbors. They understand the unique needs, challenges, and dynamics of the small island town, which can contribute to more efficient and effective emergency response. In addition to emergency services, volunteers can contribute to other activities such as community events, fundraising, disaster preparedness, and educational programs. The knowledge and experience gained through volunteerism contributes to the overall growth and development of individuals and the community as a whole.

From a fiscal perspective, recruiting and training volunteers is more cost-effective than maintaining a paid workforce, allowing the Town to allocate resources to other community needs while still providing essential services.

The Town should continue to support the following programs, and pursue others, which cultivate the volunteer and professional Town staff base:

- Create an annual Volunteer Opportunity Day.
- Develop stronger connections with the high school to generate interest in volunteering.
- Establish a Junior Corps for both the Fire Department and EMS Ambulance Corps.
- Create shadowing opportunities in Town departments that could lead to internships.

- Consider offering a stipend to the volunteer 1st responders. The EMS stipend could be tied to the level of certification achieved while the Fire Department could offer a stipend to those who take on the additional duties of the officer corp.
- Ensure that PD, FD and EMS staff is sufficient (more than 1 officer on duty) and develop a long term plan or strategy to manage possible staffing issues.

#### **Expand recreation department and library programming.**

Expand Recreation Department and Library coordinated activities for seniors, children, and adolescents, including a Head Start-type program for children too young for preschool and after-school programming for pre-K through middle school.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

### **Goal 9-6: Improve access to goods and services to help the Island be a more resilient and less dependent community**

#### **Support Expansion of Services for Senior Population**

As the senior population increases, in part due to the part-time residents becoming full-time retirees, it is essential to ensure that basic needs are met for this demographic. Addressing the evolving needs of the community will help seniors to age with dignity, maintain their independence, and actively participate in community life. For the Town, expanding services can include provisions for affordable housing, access to healthcare, transportation, and nutritious meals. Isolation and loneliness are common challenges, so it is important to support and expand senior-friendly activities that foster social connection and engagement. The Town can also help to expand public transportation options, such as shuttle services to medical facilities and shopping centers, and volunteer-based transportation programs.

Many seniors prefer to age in their own homes, but some require assistance to do so safely and comfortably. Expanding services can include home support and healthcare services. By enabling seniors to age in place, the town can honor their preferences while also reducing healthcare costs associated with institutional care.

#### **Address food insecurity**

Supporting and coordinating non-profit efforts to address food insecurity on the Island is essential to ensure that no one goes hungry. Working with groups and volunteers on the ground will help to maximize impact, target assistance, mobilize resources, take a comprehensive approach, raise public awareness, and work towards long-term solutions.

Food insecurity is a complex issue with underlying factors such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to affordable and nutritious food options. By collaborating, organizations can develop holistic programs that not only provide immediate food assistance but also address the root causes through initiatives like job training, education, and advocacy.

#### **Provide resources for mental and behavioral health**

Work with the Town Social worker to develop a network of resources on the East End and develop an educational tool to inform the public and spread the word.

### **Goal 9-7: Support efforts to address tick-borne diseases.**

#### **Continue tick-borne disease monitoring and reduction**

Conducting tick-borne disease monitoring is essential to protect public health, promote early detection and treatment, implement targeted prevention strategies, understand environmental factors, raise community awareness, and support research efforts. These monitoring initiatives are instrumental in mitigating the impact of tick-borne diseases and ensuring the well-being of the local population.

The Town should continue to work with the Deer and Tick Committee to implement identified strategies, which include methods for monitoring, targeted prevention strategies, and improving community awareness and education. The Town should also continue to evaluate environmental and ecological considerations and collaborate with other researchers who are studying disease patterns, effectiveness of interventions, and emerging tick-borne diseases or strains.

# 10 UTILITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, AND RESILIENCE

In an increasingly interconnected world, the seamless availability of utilities is an essential component of a well-functioning municipality. Utilities play a pivotal role in shaping the fabric of our daily lives by providing essential services like water, energy, and communication networks that are crucial in supporting public health, education, and economic growth. However, with the mounting challenges posed by climate change, population growth, and resource constraints, ensuring the sustainability and resilience of these crucial systems has emerged as a pressing priority both locally and on a global scale.

This chapter addresses the physical infrastructure and services that provide basic needs such as electricity and communications, supply networks for fuel, and solid waste collection and recycling. While water supply and wastewater systems are also essential components of the Town's infrastructure, those topics are discussed in Chapter 7, as these systems rely on and interact with various natural elements.

This chapter delves into the dynamic interplay between utilities, sustainability, and resilience, exploring the intricate relationships that govern the perseverance of our infrastructure in the face of evolving environmental realities. The primary goal to be achieved is the assurance of robust, renewable, and reliable services to the population and businesses, done with fiscal efficiency and environmental responsibility.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

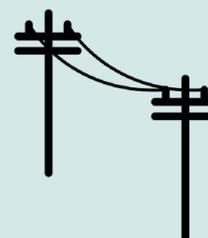
### **The Island's sole-source aquifer has the capacity to meet the population's water needs for the foreseeable future – but only if it is protected.**

Shelter Island has an adequate drinking water supply system, provided for the most part by individual private wells, but water quality is an issue in some parts of the Island, most notably elevated nitrates in the center, saltwater intrusion along the coast, and spot chemical contamination from old gas stations and other sources. Sea level rise will exacerbate saltwater intrusion into the aquifer in low-lying coastal areas of the Island. Securing reliable drinking water for the future will require careful management of a system made up of over a thousand private wells and a thousand private wastewater systems. The distributed nature of both water supply and wastewater treatment makes comprehensive solutions difficult – protecting the town's water supply will require continual, diligent action at all levels. Water supply issues and recommendations are largely discussed in Chapter 7.



### **Shelter Island's electric and communication infrastructure is vulnerable.**

As Shelter Island is an island community, it may be more vulnerable to disruptions in power supply from the mainland, especially during extreme weather conditions. Communications and water availability via pumping are dependent on the availability of electric power. Older infrastructure is more susceptible to breakdowns and may require more frequent maintenance and upgrades to ensure reliability.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

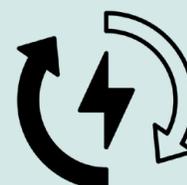
### Investment is needed in infrastructure for communications:

The Island has only one internet provider leading to higher monthly costs for residents and inconsistent service.



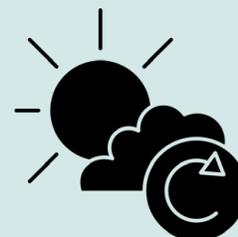
### There are a limited number of green energy installations.

Transitioning to more renewable energy will require participation by individuals, institutions, and the town.



### Climate change will see rising temperatures and more frequent droughts, and an increase in the number and severity of storms and flooding.

Sea level rise will increase coastal flooding that will impact waterfront facilities and properties including private homes, coastal roads, harbors and the ferry terminals. It will also change the ecological function and visual character of coastal marshes and mudflats.



## EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

### PUBLIC WORKS

#### Highway & Public Works Department

The Shelter Island Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for buildings operations and maintenance; grounds maintenance; solid waste management including recycling, composting/mulching, and household solid waste management; and maintenance of Town-owned parks, beaches, docks and other recreational assets within the Town.

The Highway Department is responsible for fleet services; road and right-of-way maintenance, including repairs, repaving, snow removal, and mowing. The Village of Dering Harbor and the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation (SIHPOC) manage their own roadways and other assets, sometimes contracting for services with the Town.

#### Solid Waste Management

The Town of Shelter Island does not provide curbside collection of trash and recyclables but is responsible for solid waste management on the Island. Solid waste, including recyclables, is handled at the transfer station and recycling center on Menantic Road, which is open seven days a week. Town residents can also contract with private haulers for refuse management. The Town is required to update its Municipal Solid Waste Plan every 10 years; the most current plan (2019-2028) is in the appendix to this Plan.

The Town has competitively bid hauling services since 1991 to transfer waste. The Town markets materials from separated recyclables to offset operational costs and is increasing its in-house capacity to bale and haul these materials. All waste and recyclables, except yard waste, are transported off-island via ferry and taken to the Brookhaven Town Landfill—which is scheduled to be closed and capped in 2024. Like other Long Island communities, Shelter Island will have to find another waste facility for its non-recycled waste stream. Household hazardous waste is accepted one Saturday morning a month in the Stop Throwing Out Pollutants (STOP) program. Commercial hazardous waste is not

accepted. The Town is in the process of developing a Local Solid Waste Management Plan (LSWMP), which will include strategies to address issues discussed above.

Since 1992, in order to incentivize recycling, the Town has used a pay-per-bag system for waste and does not charge for recycling. This system is also intended to fund both the cost of waste disposal and the cost to process the recyclables; fees have been periodically adjusted to reflect these expenses. The Town website has information and recycling rules, including for use of the “Goody Pile” area where items that are “too good to throw away” are exchanged.

The Town currently accepts the following recyclables which must be separated: newspaper and mixed paper, cardboard, glass, tin and aluminum cans, and #1, #2, and #5 plastics. Many municipalities have stopped accepting recyclables due to the increasing costs associated with recycling programs and the lack of profitability in the recycling industry. Additionally, the contamination of recyclable materials and the limited market demand for certain types of recyclables have contributed to the decision of many municipalities to discontinue accepting them.

The Town’s Highway Department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the recycling center and transfer station. Six employees maintain and operate the facilities. The Town also has an extensive yard waste management program, including a yard waste composting operation and a chipping operation for woody materials. Although the Solid Waste Management Plan states that yard waste inflow matches outflow, there is some concern that as the Island approaches build-out, the recycling center will run out of room.

Other materials, which are also source-separated for management, include construction and demolition (C&D) debris, metal, and bulky wastes. Bulky wastes and residual C&D are managed by having them hauled after removal of asphalt and concrete, which is recycled by the Town. C&D glass is ground and used in road repair. The Town also accepts e-waste (electronics). In addition, subject to compliance with “picker” procedures,

residents can pick through the C & D, metal, and furniture recycling piles as well as aluminum cans and glass bottles for redeemables.

Shelter Island's solid waste management program has been very effective over the last 20 years, with the daily average of municipal solid waste reduced from 3.3 tons per day in 2002 to 1.80 tons per day in 2019. Of course, because of the seasonality of the Town's population, the amount of waste produced varies according to the season. The recycling rate for the Shelter Island recycling center is about 88%, compared with the 2013 U.S. EPA national average of 34%. The Town's high proportion of residents over 50 (who typically generate less waste), its acceptance of yard waste throughout the year, and an emphasis on waste reduction practices all influence its positive waste generation rates.

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

### Public Safety

The Shelter Island Police Department (SIPD) has a full-time staff of 10 police officers and one full time and one part time police clerk. Chapter 9 provides additional details on SIPD including police call data and general demands on the department. The Police Headquarters in the Town Center also operates as Shelter Island's Emergency Operations Center. Key operations at SIPD, Town Hall, Justice Court, the American Legion, and the school have emergency power generators.

Fire protection in the Town is provided the volunteer Shelter Island Fire Department (SIFD), operating under and governed by an area fire district. The Fire District is run by five publicly elected, unpaid commissioners who have the power to provide fire protection services within their boundaries, levy taxes, and incur debt. The Fire Department typically responds to 125–150 calls per year. There are about 64 volunteer firefighters on Shelter Island that operate a combined 14 pieces of firefighting equipment. The marine unit also participates in joint training exercises with the Coast Guard and the Shelter Island Police Department.

Emergency medical services are provided by the EMS Ambulance Company, a Town department, which took over responsibility for ambulance services from the Red Cross in 2012. There are 36 volunteers and

three ambulance vehicles available within the Town to respond to emergency situations as needed. In addition to 15 drivers, there are 16 volunteers with Basic Life Support certification, three with Advanced Life Support certification (including one paramedic), and two critical care technicians. Recruiting efforts among young people have been successful, with 10 volunteers aged 22 or younger as of early 2021. As of the 2023 Town budget, EMS Ambulance Company has hired its first paid Advanced EMT to cover 24 hours/day, every day.

### Emergency Management

The 2020 Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), prepared in accordance with standards of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), guides emergency response in Shelter Island. The CEMP describes the management of emergencies within the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and details emergency management programmatic efforts to accommodate present standards. Located in the Police Department, the Shelter Island Town Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is maintained by the Police Department under the Police Chief (as the Town's Emergency Manager) and staffed by Town personnel and partners. The Shelter Island Town Police (all of whom are either EMTs or Certified First Responders) work hand in hand with the Emergency Response Teams from the Shelter Island EMS and Shelter Island Fire Department.

The American Red Cross works with Shelter Island EOC to shelter and care for the population during a disaster situation. The primary shelter is the Shelter Island School, with the Shelter Island Senior Center and the American Legion used as secondary shelters. The Senior Center also functions as a special needs shelter. Residents are encouraged to subscribe to the local Code Red system allowing email, text, and telephone information to residents, as well as reverse "all call" messaging through the 911 database.

## ELECTRICAL AND COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

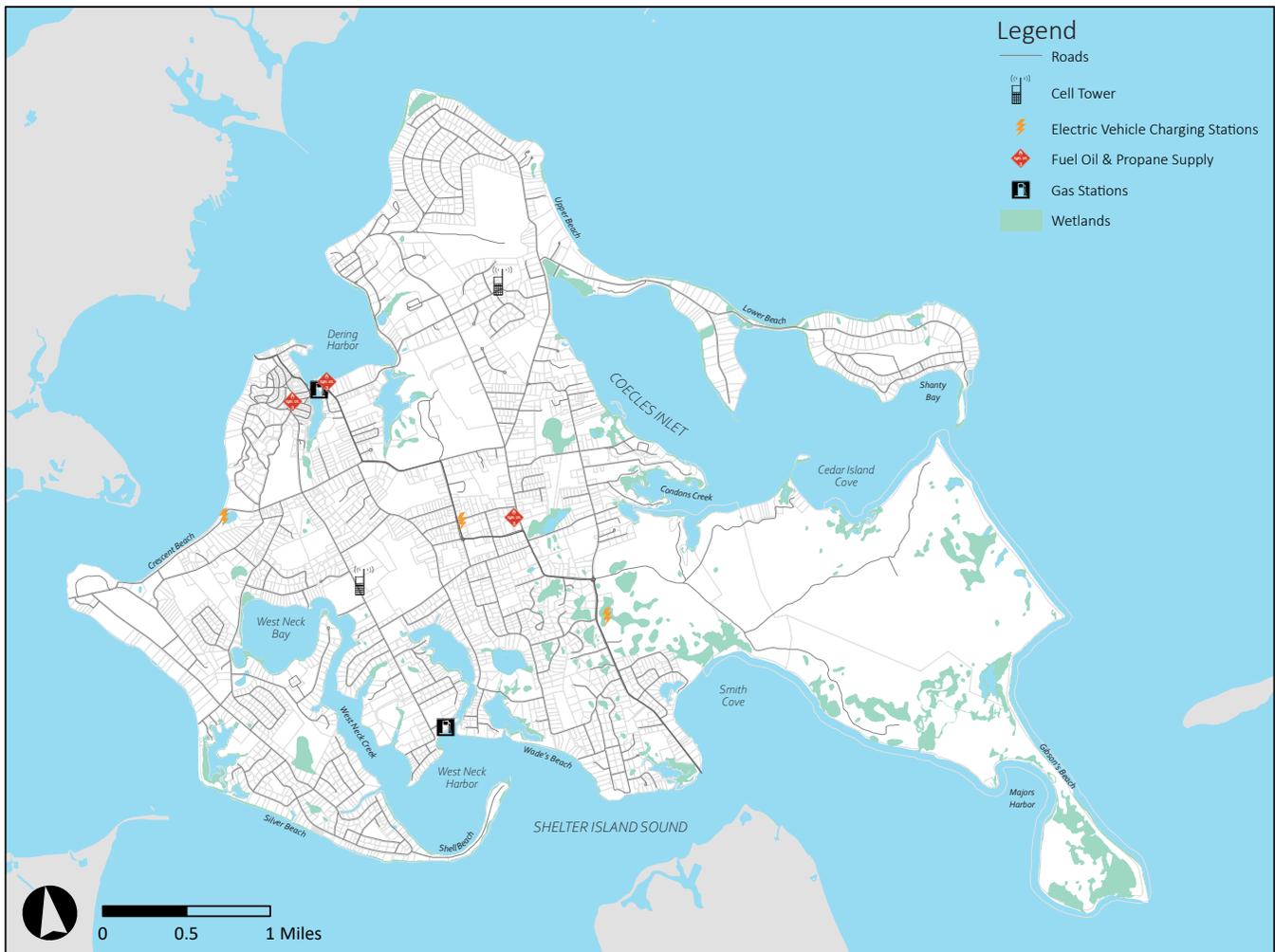
### Power Feeds and Distribution System

Shelter Island’s electric power is supplied from the Long Island Power Authority grid by underwater cables that run from Greenport to Shelter Island on the north side and from North Haven to Shelter Island on the south side. Long Island Power Authority utilizes a public-private partnership model and contracts with PSEG to operate the electrical grid.

Prior to Superstorm Sandy, Shelter Island was served by three distribution feeder lines, two from the North Fork and one from the South Fork. During the storm,

one of the North Fork feeders was damaged and failed. A replacement cable was laid from Greenport in 2018 in one of three new underground conduits, leaving two for future backup.

The engineering department completed the engineering specifications for standby generators at the Town Hall complex and Medical Center under a FEMA grant. All town buildings now have emergency generators. To help deal with compromised power during the cable project, an island-wide emergency generator hook-up was installed at the old highway department facility at 12 South Ferry Road. The generators have since been removed but the wiring remains, so we have the option of installing new generators and switches - providing another potential option for emergency back-up power.



**FIGURE 17: POWER AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft

Map prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc. and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC

Shelter Island, through the work of the Green Options Committee, was recently awarded the U.S. Department of Energy's, Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project (ETIPP) Grant. The ETIPP grant provides technical assistance opportunities for remote and island communities to evaluate the communities needs and help to develop a plan for access to resilient, affordable, sustainable, and clean energy resources. Shelter Island will receive support for a project scoping phase (approximately one to six months), followed by 12- to 18-month-long energy planning and analysis projects that will respond to the community's own energy priorities, goals, challenges, and opportunities, advance the community's ability to implement strategic, whole-systems solutions, and develop replicable community energy transition approaches that can add value in neighboring communities, or those that share similar characteristics. By participating in ETIPP, Shelter Island will receive substantial support from the partnering national labs in the form of energy analysis and planning and, where appropriate, support for leading-edge technology solutions. ETIPP regional partners also provide general program guidance and education. Shelter Island will not receive direct funding as part of the ETIPP program, but will be connected with experts in the field.

## Communications

Shelter Island has traditional phone service supplied by Verizon. Optimum provides cable, internet, and internet-based phone service. Underwater cables from both forks of Long Island bring these utilities to the Island to be distributed via a cable network. In addition to traditional land-line telephone service, Verizon offers DSL internet service over the same lines. The Town negotiates a franchise fee for Optimum's cable and internet service which is without any competition, and some residents have found the service to be lackluster. To characterize Optimum as being without competition is, however, slightly misleading as the streaming services continue to eat into cable TV subscriptions and cell companies such as T-Mobile add internet capability to their networks.

There are two cell towers utilized by various carriers to provide service to the Island, one at the recycling center and a second, installed in 2018, at the Potato Barn Fire Station on Cobbetts Lane. Both cellphone and internet

service are said to be slow and uneven on parts of the Island especially during the summer months, and expensive.

## Green Energy and Initiatives

Green energy is a priority for Shelter Island. Research and planning recommendations are carried out by the Town's Green Options Committee. Construction on the Island is governed by the New York State Energy Conservation Code. To date, a small percentage of homeowners have installed residential solar. There has been no development of central station solar or wind energy generating plants on the Island. Many residents have purchased electric or hybrid vehicles. There are two charging stations for electric vehicles adjacent to Police Headquarters, two at the Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve Visitor Center and a destination charger at Sunset Beach Hotel. The library is currently pursuing a grant that will allow them to install a charging station on their property. When at all feasible the Town is opting to purchase electric vehicles for town use.

Shelter Island should support the New York State goals of 70% of electricity from renewable energy by 2030 and 100% renewable electricity by 2040 through the promotion, installation, and use of renewable technologies. We should also support the Federal goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Long Island Power Authority/ PSEG LI has installed an off-shore wind farm, built New York's three largest utility-scale solar farms, and developed the state's first utility-scale battery project. Concurrently with the emissions goals, we want to ensure we maintain or enhance electric system reliability on both an individual customer and Island wide basis while maintaining downward pressure on resident and business energy costs.

## FUEL SUPPLY

### Household Fuel Supply

Fuel oil and propane, the primary household fuels, are delivered in bulk to Shelter Island homes and businesses by two Shelter Island vendors: J.W. Piccozzi's Fuel Oil and Propane and John's Gas Service. Their storage facilities are located on Bridge Street and St. Mary's Road, respectively. Some households utilize off-Island vendors. Small propane tanks (for example, for BBQ grills) are refilled at the Bridge Street gas station, Shelter Island (ACE) Hardware and John's Gas Service.

### Vehicular Fuel Supply

There is one active gas station for road vehicles on the Island and that is Piccozzi's Mobil Station on Bridge Street. Boaters can get gas and diesel at the Island Boatyard on the south side of the Island and at Piccozzi's on the north side. Coecles Harbor Marina only sells diesel. There are public EV charging stations located in the parking lots next to the police station and Mashomack Preserve.

## WATER SUPPLY AND WATER QUALITY

A summary of the Town's water supply is provided in Chapter 7: Natural Resources and Water Quality. The discussion includes information provided in the 2020 Ground and Surface Water Management Plan prepared by the Town of Shelter Island Water Advisory Committee. The Ground and Surface Water Management Plan is intended to be the Island's strategic plan for ground and surface water management, and it is the primary resource for such issues. The document is officially part of the Comprehensive Plan and has been incorporated as an appendix to the main document. Chapter 7 also includes information from two guiding documents for water resource management in Suffolk County: the Suffolk County Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (2015) and the Suffolk County Sub watersheds Wastewater Management Plan (SWP)(2020).

In general, four water supply systems on Shelter Island provide approximately 10% of the estimated total water demand. The remaining water demand is sourced from approximately 2,300 private wells. These small-capacity well pumps are typically located on private property and draw supplies from the Upper Glacial aquifer. An increasing inability to source potable water on private

property in some locations has led the Town, in special cases, to permit a homeowner to move his/her well onto adjacent Town property. Many residents have found the need to install water treatment systems to attain acceptable water quality. A full discussion of issues related to water quantity and quality can be found in Chapter 7.

### Sanitary Wastewater Disposal

A summary of sanitary wastewater systems is provided in Chapter 7: Natural Resources and Water Quality. This discussion is inherently linked to water quality as the Island's water quality is threatened by nitrate contamination from septic systems, saltwater intrusion, and other pollutants. As is the case on much of Long Island, the majority residential and commercial sanitary wastewater disposal is through the use of privately owned, on-site septic or disposal systems. There are approximately 2,400 on-site disposal systems on Shelter Island, including cesspools, septic systems (septic tank with leaching pools), or I/A OWTS. Shelter Island Heights is the only area of the Island that has a sewer system and sewage treatment plant. The Town's engineering department has studied the possibility of consolidating wastewater treatment for municipal buildings in the Center, that study is ongoing.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

### STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

Much of the stormwater that falls on Shelter Island is absorbed into the ground. However, stormwater that falls on impervious surfaces like roads and parking lots can run off into sensitive areas and needs to be managed. Climate change will likely increase both yearly rainfall and the intensity of individual storms, necessitating further changes to stormwater management systems. A Municipal Separate Stormwater System (MS<sub>4</sub>) is “a publicly owned conveyance or system of conveyances (including but not limited to streets, ditches, catch basins, curbs, gutters, and storm drains) that is designed or used for collecting or conveying stormwater that discharges to surface waters of the state” (NYDEC). A 1990 federal law established the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) which requires every community to maintain an MS<sub>4</sub> permit showing how it will protect water bodies from polluted stormwater runoff. Under Phase II of the regulations, adopted in 1999, smaller communities like Shelter Island were brought into the system.

On Shelter Island, the MS<sub>4</sub> consists of approximately 400 catch basins designed to capture runoff and guide it away from roadways and parking areas (see figure 9 in Chapter 7). Many of these are fed into leaching catch basins that prevent the water from running off into the bays and creeks, but many others still connect to outfalls. Maintenance of catch basins can be a challenge. Runoff that previously collected in low points along 114 is diverted to the street due to curbing potentially causing flooding.

The loss of natural low points to development and site improvements has reduced the amount of natural filtration and recharge that is occurring. As part of its Municipal MS<sub>4</sub> compliance program, the Town is working to eliminate all outfalls into the Peconic Estuary, which would allow the Town to qualify for an exemption to MS<sub>4</sub>. This could include installation of bioretention systems that use biological mitigation to reduce runoff pollution.

In addition to piped outfalls, stormwater controls need to be installed at the foot of roads that terminate at the water’s edge, at boat ramps and town landings. The

engineering department has completed a conceptual design for control of runoff from the Town golf course onto West Neck Road, but much more engineering is needed. The department also assisted with assessment of the Town’s salt storage barn, and improvements have been made that will ensure that stormwater will not wash salt contamination into the aquifer from the storage area.

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

New York State has prepared projections by region of climate change and sea level rise in three different scenarios (low, medium, high) for use in community resilience planning. In Region 4, which includes Shelter Island along with the rest of Long Island and New York City, the middle range climate change scenario suggests an increase in average annual temperature of 4.1 to 5.7 degrees Fahrenheit by 2050. This has important implications for Shelter Island. Under this scenario, the Island can expect the following changes:

- Higher Average Temperature: over the next decade, the average temperature is likely to rise anywhere from 2 to 3 degrees Fahrenheit.
- More Hot Days: twice as many days over 90 degrees F, and more than twice the number of heat waves by the 2050s.
- Fewer Cold Days: 14 fewer days below freezing by the 2050s.
- More Severe Storms: an increase in extreme precipitation events.

### Rising Sea Levels

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) maintains coastal stations that continuously monitor daily tides and long-term average sea levels. The Montauk Station, established in 1947, has documented a rise of 9.5 inches since that time, while the New London, CT station has seen a rise of 8.6 inches since 1938. Of perhaps greater concern, the rate of sea level rise measured from 2005 to 2019 was double the

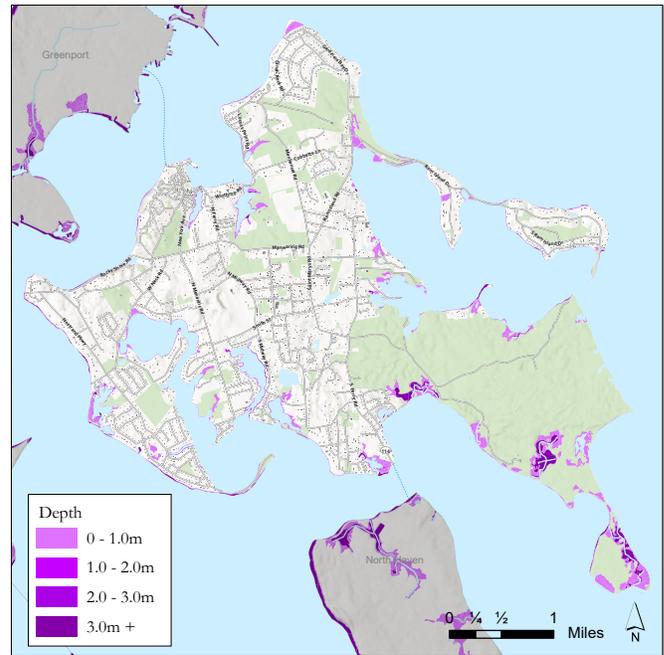
rate during the 20th Century. Sea level rise is caused by the melting of glaciers and ice sheets, combined with thermal expansion of ocean water as it warms.

NOAA, along with a host of scientists at universities and nonprofit groups, has been modeling the potential for future sea level rise for many years. To provide a shared basis for planning and regulation in New York State, in 2014 Governor Cuomo signed into law the Community Risk and Resiliency Act. The intent of the law is to ensure that state permits and expenditures consider climate risk, including sea-level rise, and that projections be based on the best available science. The result is 6 NYCRR Part 490, Projected Sea-level Rise, which establishes projections for sea level rise for three geographic regions.

### Sea Level Rise Impact on Shelter Island

Low-lying areas on Shelter Island are subject to flooding. Figure 18 shows designated floodplains, which is based the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Flood Hazard Layer dataset, organized by recurrence interval. The “100 Year Floodplain,” is an area with a 1% annual chance of flooding. The FEMA Velocity Zone, or Coastal High Hazard Area, is shown in purple and has a 1% annual chance of flooding with damaging waves of 3 feet or greater. The “500 Year Floodplain is an area with a 0.2% annual chance of flooding. The impact of sea-level rise will be most pronounced in areas that are already subject to flooding, as defined by FEMA. The greatest potential impact of flooding is around the bays and harbors, and along the low-lying coast of the Mashomack Preserve and the Ram Island Causeway. The high ground on the northwest side of the Island is not as vulnerable.

Sea level has already risen a foot in the last century and could rise another 1-2 feet in just the next 20 years. Figure 18 shows areas projected to be inundated with water at various degrees of sea level rise. The projected floodplain map will also change as sea-level rises over coming decades (additional scenarios using the same data may be explored at: <https://services.nysed.gov/SLRViewer/default>). Areas already subject to flooding will be inundated more frequently, while the potential for flooding expands into new adjacent areas. This will likely be felt most severely in areas where roads, docks, and marinas are close to the water. Impacts on existing homes and businesses will be concentrated in Dering

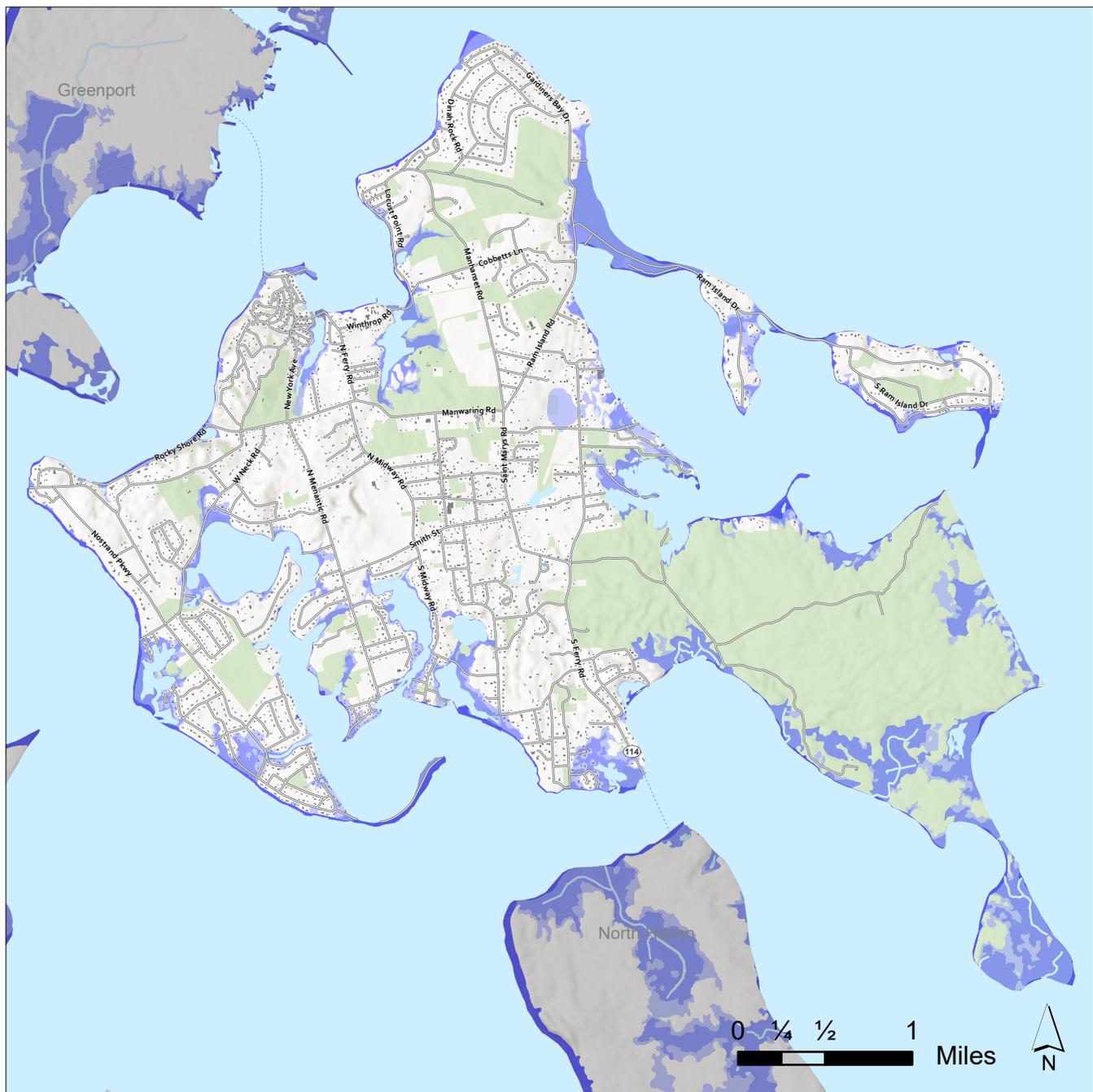


**FIGURE 18: SEA LEVEL RISE (1 FOOT)**

Source: NOAA

Harbor, Coecles Harbor, and West Neck Harbor, while most existing homes will remain safely above flood level. Ram Island will become a true island more frequently as flooding of the causeway becomes more common.

The particular impact on beaches, marshes, and mud flats as sea level rises is expected because development of the adjacent upland areas leaves no room for them to shift inland. In an undeveloped shoreline environment, the beaches and dunes are in constant motion, reacting to wind, tide and changing sea levels. Marshes form in the intertidal zone and normally shift inland gradually as sea level rises as they have for centuries. If the inland edge of the marsh is too steep, or has been hardened or otherwise bulkheaded, the marsh has no place to go and is permanently flooded – and the plant and animal communities that once thrived there will disappear.



- 500-Year Floodplain (X-Shaded)
- 100-Year Floodplain (AE, AO)
- 100-Year Floodplain with Velocity Wave Action (VE)

**FIGURE 19: HIGH FLOOD RISK AREAS**

Source: FEMA

## GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Goal 10-1: Ensure that all Shelter Island residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local state and federal standards.**

### Continue to implement the Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.

Shelter Island's Ground and Surface Water Management Plan is intended to be the Island's strategic plan for ground and surface water management, and it is the primary resource for such issues. The Ground and Surface Water Management Plan is officially part of the Comprehensive Plan and has been incorporated as an appendix to the main document. The Plan identifies a series of recommended implementation actions to be taken over period of 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11 years and beyond. While several of the recommendations can and should be acted on immediately, others need to be further developed through a robust stakeholder engagement process.

Recommendations in this Comprehensive Plan that address water supply and quality can be found in Chapter 7 in Goals 1-7. The recommendations are listed below:

- Continue to implement the Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.
- Continue to investigate methods to treat effluents from municipal buildings in Town Center.
- Partner with the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation to upgrade the existing sewer plant in the Heights, provide service to other areas, and explore alternative methods of disposing of the treated effluent.
- Create a phased Master Plan for public water utility service to challenged areas on Shelter Island.
- Educate the public on the water quality in their area and encourage testing of private wells and the installation of Nitrogen reducing septic systems.
- Develop an incentive program for residents to test their well water and share the data with the Town for the purpose of establishing groundwater quality mapping.
- Continue the grant program for I/A System installation.
- Develop wellhead protection zoning for the area of recharge for the wells of each of the public water systems.
- Implement source water protection programs that identify vulnerable areas around wells and other groundwater sources.
- Revisit the Town's I/A OWTS code.
- Address issues and risks of underground fuel oil storage
- Implement water use restrictions as indicated in the drought monitoring criteria established by the Water Advisory Committee (WAC)
- Begin development of a groundwater model
- Improve education about water conservation and landscaping best practices
- Reduce the discharge of volatile organic compounds and other contaminants to groundwater through education and Town Code modification.
- Provide upland storm water catchment detention and recharge infrastructure to better control stormwater runoff and to reduce contamination of ground and surface waters.
- Continue to monitor health of surface waters

## **Goal 10-2: Promote renewable and environmentally responsible utilities**

### **Establish a group to investigate means of creating greater energy independence and resiliency for the Island.**

Shelter Island, through the work of the Green Options Committee, was recently awarded the U.S. Department of Energy's, Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project (ETIPP) Grant. This grant connects the Town with professionals in the energy field to evaluate the community's needs and to help develop a plan for access to resilient, affordable, sustainable, and clean energy resources. Membership in this group should include representatives from the Green Options Committee, the Public Works Department, the Town Engineer, and one or 2 Town Council members. This group should be in contact with PESG/LIPA and should also participate in regional energy planning initiatives and programs. Energy resiliency questions that need to be addressed are:

- What are the contingency plans for a failure of the transmission line(S)?
- For demand side planning purposes, what is the peak summer demand and how has it changed/ increased?
- For reliability enhancement, determine the outage profile (number and duration) over the recent past (10 years).
- Identify areas where electricity transmission is less reliable and more vulnerable.
- While the Town buildings have emergency power, most homes and businesses at this point don't. What is best use of resources to assist during power outages?

Once these questions are addressed, the group should direct the Green Options Committee to draft and present to the Town Board a plan for Stage 2 which will include tactics to support the above objectives Island wide within the time frame specified. The Town should then meet with LIPA/PSEG to identify relevant data to aid in the

development of the Stage 2 plan so that it is consistent with above objectives while maximizing the value to Town residents.

### **Encourage the use of renewable energy sources**

Electricity demand will increase as people move from gas-powered to electric vehicles, gas stoves to electric stoves, and oil to electric heating systems. The Town should continue to embrace sustainable energy sources such as solar, wind, and other renewable sources. Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) for renewable energy purchase is being evaluated by the Green Options Committee. Approved by the NYS Public Service Commission in 2016, CCA allows individual communities to aggregate their demand and negotiate a fixed-rate energy supply with multiple energy providers. CCAs can lower costs and allow communities to channel their energy dollars towards renewable sources. There have been recent updates to the program and the Green Options Committee is following them closely and will present recommendations to the Town Board as appropriate.

### **Evaluate use of geothermal energy**

While geothermal is generally considered to be an environmentally friendly and sustainable energy option, it can present a risk to the aquifer. The Town should work with property owners to get well construction data on existing geothermal systems, including total depth and estimated range of thickness, yield, drawdown, soil strata, saltwater interface. Depending on the analysis of data collected on existing systems, a sunset provision should be considered to phase out some or all of the open loop systems over a period of time and upgrade closed loop systems with current technologies.

**Goal 10-3: Take action against climate change by reducing energy consumption and promoting sustainable patterns of development**

**Promote sustainable construction and design standards**

Sustainable development means protecting the resources and systems that support us today so that they will be accessible to future generations. In order to do this, the Town should adopt and enforce land use policies that reduce energy consumption, generation of waste, and promote sustainable construction methods (i.e. for new construction and remodeling projects). This could include provision in the zoning code to promote sustainable construction methods, including consideration for adding green building standards and providing incentives for sustainable construction processes. The Town can consult green building standards, including the U.S. Green Building Council LEED Standards and the National Association of Homebuilders Green Building Initiative. Examples of standards are consideration of site orientation and design to reduce energy consumption; use of low-energy fixtures, water-saving fixtures, and other appliances; use of natural light through building design; and use of LED lights instead of incandescent ones. The Town should revisit the prohibition of ground mount solar panel arrays to encourage more solar installations.

**Continue to improve the energy efficiency of Town facilities and fleets.**

The Town should also encourage sustainable development policies on its own facilities and assets that minimize waste and energy use. This could include the following:

- Conducting energy audits of all Town owned buildings, reviewing those audits and, where appropriate, implementing their recommendations.

- Obtain cost estimates in order to evaluate the installation of solar on Town buildings as well as a heat pump system for district heating and cooling of Town buildings.
- Develop infrastructure for charging electric vehicles

**Goal 10-4: Promote sustainable transportation alternatives**

**Explore the possibilities of electric vehicle charging stations at more Town locations.**

Shelter Island should embrace opportunities to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) by encouraging alternative modes of transportation and energy. The Town can support the transition from gas-powered to electric vehicles by providing electric vehicle (EV) chargers in public spaces such as schools, libraries, community centers and public parking lots. Another opportunity would be to install an EV station at the Town recycling center.

**Goal 10-5: Prepare for and adapt to the effects of climate change and rising sea levels**

**Develop a Coastal Resilience Plan.**

Developing a coastal resilience plan would require a comprehensive and collaborative approach. The plan should assess the unique challenges and vulnerabilities on Shelter Island while aiming to enhance the community’s ability to adapt to and recover from various environmental and climate-related hazards. It is important that this plan builds on and does not conflict with other related plans (i.e. a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan or a Hazard Mitigation Plan). Here are some key strategies to consider when developing a coastal resilience plan for Shelter Island:

- **Vulnerability Assessment:** Asses the Island’s coastal vulnerabilities, including from sea-level rise projections, storm surge risks, erosion, and risks to critical infrastructure and natural habitats.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve residents, businesses, local organizations, and government agencies in the planning process to gather input, build awareness, and ensure that the plan reflects the needs and concerns of the Island’s diverse stakeholders.
- **Integrated Land Use Planning:** Implement land use planning strategies that reduce exposure to coastal risks.
- **Natural Infrastructure and Ecosystem-Based Solutions:** Promote the preservation and restoration of natural coastal ecosystems, such as wetlands, dunes, and coastal forests, which provide vital protection against storm surges and erosion while supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- **Infrastructure Resilience:** Assess and enhance the resilience of critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water and wastewater systems, and emergency services.
- **Green and Gray Infrastructure:** Employ a mix of green infrastructure (natural elements) and gray infrastructure (engineered solutions) to manage stormwater, reduce runoff, and improve coastal resilience.
- **Emergency Response and Preparedness:** Develop and communicate clear emergency response and evacuation plans for coastal hazards such as hurricanes, storm surges, and flooding.
- **Coastal Monitoring and Data Collection:** Establish a robust system for monitoring coastal changes, sea-level rise, and weather patterns.
- **Long-Term Financing and Funding:** Explore opportunities for funding through grants, partnerships, and potential cost-sharing mechanisms to support the implementation of resilience measures.
- **Climate Education and Outreach:** Promote educational programs that encourage sustainable behaviors and community involvement in resilience efforts.

**Goal 10-6: Assure that community facilities provide adequate service to the population and businesses over time, in a fiscally efficient way that positively contributes to the Island’s character.**

**Update and distribute homeowner manual**

Updating and distributing a homeowner manual to provide education on property waste removal, septic maintenance, water/well maintenance, irrigation, and related topics can be highly beneficial for homeowners. It equips homeowners with the necessary information to promote sustainable practices, protect their property, ensure safety, and enhance the overall quality of life in their homes. It also helps homeowners to take an active role in property maintenance, make informed decisions, troubleshoot minor issues, and engage with professionals more effectively when needed.

The manual could provide information on the following:

- **Proper Waste Removal:** This would address regular waste removal as well as recycling, composting, and hazardous waste. This knowledge helps homeowners minimize their environmental impact and comply with local waste management regulations.
- **Septic Maintenance:** Regular maintenance is crucial to prevent issues such as backups, odors, and groundwater contamination. The manual would provide guidance on septic tank maintenance schedules, proper usage of the system, and signs of potential problems.

- **Water/Well Maintenance:** Homeowners with wells need to understand how to maintain and monitor their water supply. This would include information on well maintenance, including testing water quality, well pump care, and preventive measures against contamination. Consider partnering with the real estate industry to assist in distributing homeowners manuals and educational materials to new homeowners.
- **Irrigation:** Efficient irrigation practices are essential for water conservation and maintaining healthy landscapes. This would educate residents about current regulations and proper use of irrigation systems, including scheduling, water-saving techniques, and regular maintenance.
- **Pools:** educate homeowner on the possible consequences of topping off their pools with well water and promote the use of pool covers to reduce evaporation.

### **Harden and Improve Communications Systems**

Establishing municipal internet service that is cellular-based can provide reliable and accessible internet connectivity to residents and businesses. By leveraging cellular technology, the Town can offer broadband internet coverage without relying on traditional wired infrastructure. While the upfront costs may be daunting, the service may be a way to lower costs for residents over time.

The first step would be to conduct a feasibility study to assess the technical, financial, and regulatory aspects of implementing a cellular-based municipal internet service. The study should analyze the coverage area, estimated demand, potential revenue streams, and the costs of infrastructure deployment and maintenance. The Town should also collaborate with existing cellular network carriers to explore the possibility of sharing infrastructure or leasing network capacity. Such public-private partnerships can reduce initial investment costs and accelerate the deployment of the service. The Town can also leverage their expertise and resources in building and managing the cellular network.

### **Continue to improve recycling center and waste management systems**

The anticipated closure of the Brookhaven landfill poses significant waste management challenges for Shelter Island as well as other easterly towns on Long Island. The closure creates a need to find alternative solutions for waste disposal, which may involve increased transportation costs and logistical challenges associated with transporting waste to other facilities outside the area. These costs can potentially impact local budgets and may result in increased taxes or fees for residents. The following are key issues for the Town to address in the short- and long-term:

- **Recycling and waste reduction:** The closure of the landfill underscores the need for effective recycling and waste reduction programs. By reducing the amount of waste generated and increasing recycling rates, the Town can alleviate the burden on traditional waste disposal options. Implementing comprehensive recycling programs and promoting waste reduction initiatives can help mitigate the impact of the landfill closure and move towards a more sustainable waste management system.
- **Integration of renewable energy and other new technologies:** The Town should identify ways to offset energy consumption and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, contributing to long-term energy savings. One method would be to install renewable energy systems, such as solar panels or wind turbines, to generate clean energy on-site. The Town can also implement waste heat recovery systems to capture and reuse heat generated during various processes. This captured heat or methane gas can be utilized for space heating, water heating, or to power other processes, reducing the need for additional energy inputs. The Town should also consider use of new technologies such as those using compaction and controlled high temperature burning of vegetative (stumps, brush, wood chips) and animal waste.
- **Collaborative solutions:** The closure of the landfill necessitates collaborative efforts between the affected towns, local government authorities, waste management companies, and community stakeholders. Working together, they can explore innovative waste management strategies, such as

waste-to-energy facilities, composting, or regional partnerships for waste disposal. This could include participation in regional workshops which cover material disposal. Collaborative approaches can leverage collective resources, expertise, and shared infrastructure to address waste management challenges more effectively.

- Public education and awareness: It is crucial to educate the public about the closure of the landfill and the importance of responsible waste management practices. Increasing public awareness about recycling, proper waste sorting, and waste reduction strategies can help reduce the overall waste stream and enhance recycling participation. Public education campaigns can also inform residents about alternative disposal options and the potential impacts of improper waste disposal.
- Long-term planning: Long-term planning helps ensure that the Town can adapt to evolving waste management needs. A comprehensive waste management plan should consider the landfill closure with strategies for sustainable waste disposal, recycling, and waste reduction. The plan would assess the added expense of wet garbage disposal when the landfill closes.

- Waste Management and Analysis: Track and analyze data to identify areas for improvement and to measure the success of recycling programs.
- Grant Writing and Fundraising: Work with government agencies and stakeholders to advocate for improved recycling policies and incentives and to secure resources for expanding programs
- Resource Coordination: The recycling coordinator collaborates with local waste management companies, recycling facilities, and recycling vendors to facilitate the proper disposal and recycling of collected materials.

**Consider appointing a Town Recycling Coordinator to further increase recycling opportunities in Town.**

This role would help to promote recycling efforts, waste reduction, and overall sustainability within the town. The specific tasks and responsibilities would depend on the resources available, but could include:

- Program Development: Develop and implement recycling programs tailored to the town’s needs and resources.
- Public Education and Outreach: Educate and engage the community on recycling practices.
- Collection and Logistics: Oversee logistics of recycling collection including coordination with waste management companies or municipal crews to ensure regular and efficient recycling pick-up. It would also include coordination with these groups to facilitate the proper disposal and recycling of collected materials.



*Photo courtesy of Eleanor Labrozzi, Shelter Island Reporter*

# 11 IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan represents not only a product of much time and effort, but also the beginning of a process which involves changing existing conditions, regulations, and procedures in the Town. Some of these changes will require further, more detailed studies and plans. Sustained public involvement is necessary to bring the items in this plan to fruition.

The implementation phase is the crucial bridge between the vision and goals outlined in the previous chapters and the realization of the plan's objectives. In this chapter, we delve into the practical steps required to turn ideas into action. This chapter serves as a detailed roadmap in the form of a "to-do list" that guides decision-makers, stakeholders, and the community towards the successful execution of the plan's recommendations.

Additionally, effective implementation is not a one-size-fits-all process, as each recommendation is unique in its scope and objectives. Therefore, this chapter aims to provide a flexible framework that can be tailored to the specific needs of Shelter Island, ensuring that the plan's goals are not only attainable but also adaptable to changing circumstances.



## IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Having an adopted Comprehensive Plan is a critical public policy tool, but it is not sufficient on its own to make change or preservation happen – the Plan must be realized. There are six critical methods that Shelter Island will follow to ensure that this Plan is implemented. It is recognized that, given financial constraints that may affect the Town as well as other municipalities, implementation of this Plan is dependent on availability of funding and other economic factors.

- 1. Regulation/Policy (Legislation):** The Town’s zoning code is the primary legislative tool that can be used to implement the Plan. Several zoning updates have been proposed in the Comprehensive Plan. If the Town chooses to pursue additional changes to support Comprehensive Plan recommendations, those changes should be consistent with Plan language. The Town Board is the responsible party for zoning changes and other regulatory changes.
- 2. Capital Projects:** The Town’s capital budget is the next method for implementing the Plan. Public spending on infrastructure, major equipment, municipal buildings, parks and open space, and resilience measures all have a major impact on quality of life, efficient day-to-day operations, sustainability, and the Town’s image. Recommendations that may have an impact on the Town’s capital budget were included with an understanding of this potential fiscal impact. The Town should continue to evaluate recommendations and prioritize capital projects for implementation based on priority and the availability of funding, be it from local taxes or from outside sources.
- 3. Programming:** Programming refers to things like educational campaigns, events, staffing, and other activities. These actions are typically also included in the Town budget but may be funded by other sources.
- 4. Grants:** Shelter Island has been successful in obtaining grants for major projects. The Town will continue seeking grant funding for planning and capital projects and will also engage with third-party organizations and corporate partners, as available and appropriate, to meet its planning objectives in a fiscally judicious way. Having a Comprehensive Plan enables the Town to apply for funding sources and grants that require an updated Plan for eligibility, opening new opportunities for State and Federal funding. This additional funding can supplement Shelter Island’s capital budget, lessening the potential financial burden on taxpayers.
- 5. Future Planning Studies:** Some recommendations require additional study and analysis before detailed implementation measures can be determined. In these cases, appropriate Town agencies should explore funding opportunities to produce supplemental analysis to move recommendations from the planning phase towards implementation.
- 6. Partnerships:** Finally, the Town should continue working with regional agencies, adjacent municipalities, Suffolk County, and local non-profit organizations to advocate for the Town’s interests and develop partnerships in support of Comprehensive Plan goals. Some recommendations would be in the jurisdiction of regional agencies, such as the Suffolk County Department of Public Works.

## ACTION AGENDA

In order to implement the various recommendations contained in this Comprehensive Plan, the following Action Agenda is proposed, which outlines key actions, the type of action, the primary responsible entity for implementation, and an estimated level of difficulty.

The primary responsible entity, by the nature of its mission and authority, is the logical party to oversee implementation of each recommendation. Zoning decisions will be made by the Town Board. Some projects will involve multiple entities, including State agencies. The nature of activity required of the primary responsible entity will vary depending on the type of recommendation. Some activities involve budget commitments and capital expenses, while others entail advocacy and promotion, and some call for administrative action.

In the pages that follow, we outline the overarching implementation principles and mechanisms that will guide the realization of our Comprehensive Plan’s vision. We address the coordination and collaboration required to ensure that recommendations are effectively harmonized with the diverse elements of our community. The action items begin at chapter 4 as there are no action items in Chapters 1 through 3 of this Plan.

**Difficulty:** The difficulty field generally categorizes the type of barriers to implementation:

- \* Relatively easy actions that can be conducted immediately. This could include changes to local ordinances, partnerships, and small budget expenditures. It also includes activities or policies already in place that should be continued.
- \*\* Actions that potentially require further study with a relatively simple regulatory path or projects that involve continued coordination with a partner.
- \*\*\* Actions that require study with follow-up capital improvements or a more complicated regulatory change.
- \*\*\*\* These actions have at least one of the following: High cost, requires coordination and/or approval of multiple partners, and/or has other constraints or contingencies
- \*\*\*\*\* These actions have more than one of the following: High cost, coordination and/or approval of multiple partners, and/or has other constraints or contingencies. These items may also include long term capital projects such as upgrades to Town-wide infrastructure.

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
<b>Chapter 4. Housing</b>						
<b>Goal 4.1. Preserve the quality and character of existing single-family residential zones and other residential neighborhoods</b>						
4.1.A	Establish a graduated limit on the size of a new house (both knock downs and new construction)	55	Regulation/ Policy	Town Board	PB, BD	*
4.1.B	Address issue of illegal conversions	55	Regulation/ Policy	Town Board	PB, BD	*
4.1.C	Strengthen limits on density in residentially zoned areas while allowing for potential increased density in business zones.	56	Regulation/ Policy	Town Board	PB, BD	*
4.1.D	Monitor the effectiveness of the short-term rental law and make necessary code adjustments to increase enforcement ability and renter safety	56	Regulation/ Policy	Town Board	BD	*
<b>Goal 4.2. Provide for a broader range of year-round housing options across income, household size, and age groups.</b>						
4.2.A.	Consider allowing second floor apartments above retail in business zones (B and B-1 zones)	56	Regulation/ Policy	Town Board	PB, BD	**
4.2.B.	Develop educational materials and resources to assist and educate homeowners in the process of developing ADUs on their property	57	Program	Town Board	CHFAB, CHB, PB, BD	*
4.2.C.	Establish funding sources such as grants and low-interest loans to encourage homeowners to develop year-round Accessory Dwelling Units	57	Partnership, Program	Town Board	East End Towns, New York State, Financial Institutions, CHFAB	***

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

<i>Recommendation</i>		<i>Pg #</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
4.2.D.	<b>Update Community Housing Plan every five years</b>	57	Study	Town Board	CHB	**
<b>Goal 4.3: Create and maintain attainable and workforce housing opportunities to support the diversity of age and income groups that make up Shelter Island’s year-round population.</b>						
4.3.A.	<b>Support creation of a Shelter Island Land Trust, to assist with the acquisition and management of land for community housing.</b>	58	Partnership, Program	Town Board	NPOs, SC, CHB	***
4.3.B.	<b>Proactively identify sites and build com-munity housing in appropriate locations.</b>	58	Study	Town Board	CHB	****
4.3.C.	<b>Establish a low-interest loan program for first-time home buyers.</b>	58	Program	Town Board	Financial Institutions, CHB, NPOs such as CDCLI	***
<b>Goal 4.4: Ensure that new housing construction or conversions of existing housing are sensitive to the natural environment, are of high design and build quality, and are consistent with the general scale of Shelter Island’s existing housing and traditional development pattern.</b>						
4.4.A.	<b>Ensure development is appropriately sized in sensitive shoreline areas (Near Shore Overlay District).</b>	59	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, ZBA, BD	**
4.4.B.	<b>Adopt a Tree Preservation Local Law.</b>	59	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, HD/DPW, BD, members of a subcommittee of environmental committees	*
<b>Goal 4.5: Identify ways to leverage development and forge public-private partnerships to achieve other community goals such as open space preservation.</b>						
4.5.A.	<b>Strengthen subdivision ordinance to require land for open space</b>	60	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, BD	*

Recommendation	Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty	
<b>Chapter 5: Economy</b>						
<b>Goal 5.1: Improve the function, appearance, and quality of commercial areas, and ensure that the mix of uses meets the needs of residents and visitors.</b>						
5.1.A.	Consider adding additional uses to the B-1 business zone	70	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, BD, property owners	***
5.1.B.	Provide design guidance for Route 114 corridor	71	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, Building, Department, property owners	***
5.1.C.	Heights and Bridge Street – Need for Design Guidance to maintain the unique character of the area	72	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, Building, Department, Shelter island heights property owners	***
<b>Goal 5.2: Support improvements that make the Island more attractive for businesses and workers.</b>						
5.2.A.	Identify opportunities to improve and expand high-speed internet infrastructure while ensuring that services are reasonably priced.	72	Partnership	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Internet service providers, Cellular and Satellite Companies	**
5.2.B.	Establish standards for home-based businesses in residential areas	72	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, BD	*
<b>Goal 5.3: Explore an apprenticeship program between the Town, school and local businesses</b>						
5.3.A.	Explore an apprenticeship program between the Town, school, and local businesses.	73	Partnership, Program	Town Board	Chamber of Commerce, School District, Local Businesses, NPOs	**
<b>Goal 5.4: Continue to support the agriculture and aquaculture industries</b>						
5.4.A.	Protect legacy businesses related to agriculture and aquaculture	73	Partnership	Town Board	Local Farmers and Businesses, Environmental Orgs, Academic Institutions, Government Agencies, WQIAB, Baymen, CCE	**
5.4.B.	Consider leasing municipally owned underwater properties for aquaculture	74	Partnership	Town Board	Local Farmers and Businesses, SC, NYS, baymen, CCE	***

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Pg #</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>	
<b>Chater 6: Transportation</b>						
<b>Goal 6.1: Design “Complete Streets” that are safe for all modes, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.</b>						
6.1.A.	<b>Adopt a Complete Streets Policy to encourage roadways that are designed for all users.</b>	86	Policy/ Regulation	Town Board	PB, HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Shelter Island Heights	***
6.1.B.	<b>Consider an Island-wide speed limit of 30 mph to ensure the safety of all street users.</b>	86	Policy/ Regulation	Town Board	HD/DPW, Police Department, Town Engineer, SC, NYS	***
6.1.C	<b>Conduct a sidewalk study to determine where improved safety will enhance walking.</b>	86	Study, Capital Plan	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Shelter Island Heights	***
6.1.D.	<b>Pursue grant funding to develop a dedicated bicycle lane on Route 114.</b>	86	Grant	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, NYSDOT, SC	***
<b>Goal 6.2: Continue to maintain and invest in roadways</b>						
6.2.A.	<b>Incorporate wider paved shoulders along roadways where feasible</b>	87	Study, Capital Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Shelter Island Heights, NYS, County	***
6.2.B.	<b>Address maintenance of vegetation along roadways</b>	87	Policy/ Regulation	Town Board	HD/DPW, Shelter Island Heights	**
<b>Goal 6.3: Identify ways to facilitate traffic flow and improve the efficiency of the roadway network</b>						
6.3.A.	<b>Study impact of ferry traffic on local roads.</b>	87	Study	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Ferry corporations, Ferry Study Group, County, State, Police	***
6.3.B.	<b>Improve roadway maintenance and develop a capital plan</b>	88	Capital Plan, Capital Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer	**
<b>Goal 6.4: Continue to monitor helicopter, airplane, and seaplane traffic to ensure their presence doesn’t impair quality-of-life on the Island.</b>						
6.4.A.	<b>Monitor air traffic and address regulations as needed</b>	88	Policy/ Regulation, Study	Town Board	WMAC, Harbor Masters	**
6.4.B.	<b>Develop and adopt a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)</b>	88	Study	Town Board	New York State, WMAC, Various Stakeholders Depending on the Scope, Baymen	****

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
<b>Goal 6.5: Improve on-Island transportation options</b>						
6.5.A.	Explore the possibility of providing “around-the-island jitney” service	88	Study/ Program, Capital Project	Town Board	Chamber of commerce, Senior Services, Shelter Island Heights	***
<b>Goal 6.6: Improve the resilience of the transportation network</b>						
6.6.A.	Reduce stormwater runoff along roadways	89	Policy/ Regulation, Capital Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer	***
6.6.B.	Address the Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan and search for funding	89	Study, Grant	Town Board	PD, FD, EMS Department, EMS Advisory Board, HD/ DPW, PB, BD, New York State, SC	***
<b>Chapter 7: Natural Resources and Water Quality</b>						
<b>Goal 7.1: Ensure that all Shelter Island residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local, state, and federal standards. All groundwater shall follow the stricter of New York State Ambient Groundwater standards and guidance values or Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) to the greatest extent feasible and practicable. Water quality that is better than the existing standards should be preserved, to the greatest extent feasible and practicable.</b>						
7.1.A.	Continue to implement the Shelter Island Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.	104	Study/Program	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, USGS, New York State, SC, SBU, SC Water Authority, The Nature Conservancy	***
<b>Goal 7.2: Develop plans for wastewater and water supply management to safeguard public health, protect the environment, and promote sustainable development.</b>						
7.2.A.	Continue investigating methods to treat effluents from municipal buildings in Town Center.	105	Study, Capital Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, WAC, WQIAB, consultants	*****
7.2.B.	Explore partnering with the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation to upgrade the existing sewer plant in the Heights, provide service to other areas, and explore alternative methods of disposing of treated effluent.	105	Partnership, Capital Project	Town Board	Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation, HD/DPW, WAC, WQIAB, Private Companies	*****

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

Recommendation	Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty	
<b>Goal 7.3: Develop a water supply plan to ensure residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local, state, and federal standards.</b>						
7.3.A.	Create a phased Master Plan for public water utility service to challenged areas of Shelter Island.	105	Study, Capital Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, BD, WAC, WQIAB, Private Companies, Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation, Bridge Street Water Company, West Neck Water Company, and Dering Harbor Water Company	*****
<b>Goal 7.4: Educate and Assist Property Owners on how to prevent contamination of private water wells and safeguard their drinking water quality.</b>						
7.4.A.	Educate the public on water quality in their area and encourage testing of private wells and the installation of Nitrogen reducing septic systems.	106	Program	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, BD	**
7.4.B.	Develop an incentive program for residents to test their well water and share the data with the Town for the purpose of establishing groundwater quality mapping.	106	Program	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, BD, Tax Assessors	***
7.4.C.	Continue the grant program for I/A System installation.	106	Program	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, BD,	**
7.4.D.	Develop wellhead protection zoning for the area of recharge for the wells of each of the public water systems.	107	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, HD/DPW, Town Engineer, BD, WAC, WQIAB	**
7.4.E.	Pursue grant and other funding opportunities for water quality improvement projects.	107	Grant	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, CPF Advisory Board	**
<b>Goal 7.5: Strengthen Town regulations to protect groundwater and prevent contamination.</b>						
7.5.A.	Implement source water protection programs that identify vulnerable areas around wells and other groundwater sources.	107	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, Town Engineer, BD, WAC,	***
7.5.B.	Revisit the Town's I/A OWTS code.	107	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, Town Engineer, BD, WAC, WQIAB	**

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
7.5.C.	Address issues and risks of underground fuel oil storage	108	Policy/Regulation, Program	Town Board	PB, HD/DPW, Town Engineer, NYS, SC	***
<b>Goal 7.6: Continue to monitor water table levels and implement water use restrictions as indicated to support the drinking water needs of the Island residents without the need for “off island” water.</b>						
7.6.A.	Implement water use restrictions as indicated in the drought monitoring criteria established by the Water Advisory Committee (WAC).	108	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	NYS, WAC	*
7.6.B.	Promote water conservation policies.	108	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, BD, WAC, WQIAB	*
7.6.C.	Develop a groundwater model	109	Study/Program	WAC	USGS, Town Engineer, BD, WQIAB	***
7.6.D.	Identify high-volume water users to target future education, funding, and support.	109	Study/Program	Town Engineer	Homeowners, BD, WAC, USGS, WQIAB	****
7.6.E.	Improve education about water conservation and landscaping best practices.	109	Program	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, BD, HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Green Options committee, CAC, County, NPOs	**
<b>Goal 7.7: Protect surface waters surrounding Shelter Island from being harmed by human activity and stormwater runoff.</b>						
7.7.A.	Reduce the discharge of volatile organic compounds and other contaminants to groundwater through education and Town Code modification.	110	Policy/Regulation, Program	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, WAC, CAC, Green Options Committee	***
7.7.B.	Provide upland storm water catchment detention and recharge infrastructure to better control stormwater runoff and to reduce contamination of ground and surface waters.	110	Capital Project, Program	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, WAC, CAC, Green Options Committee, SC, NYS	****

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

<i>Recommendation</i>		<i>Pg #</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
7.7.C.	<b>Continue to monitor the health of surface waters.</b>	111	Partnership	Town Board	Nature Conservancy, PEP, Peconic Baykeeper/Blue Water Task Force, CCE, Commercial Baymen, Shelter Island Heights	**
<b>Goal 7.8: Identify, protect and enhance the quality of freshwater and marine habitats.</b>						
7.8.A.	<b>Restore tidal and freshwater wetlands habitats to foster their continued existence as natural systems.</b>	112	Policy/Regulation, Study/Program	Town Board	Conservation Advisory Council, The Nature Conservancy, PEP, CCE, bayman	****
7.8.B.	<b>Protect and restore Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats and NYSDEC Critical Environmental Areas.</b>	112	Policy/Regulation, Program	Town Board	PB, Conservation Advisory Council, The Nature Conservancy, PEP, CCE, Commercial Baymen, Aquaculturists, DEC	****
7.8.C.	<b>Review, clarify and strengthen the wetlands code chapter 129 to enhance protections on the wetlands.</b>	112	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, Conservation Advisory Council, Water Advisory Committee	*
<b>Goal 7.9: Protect Upland Habitats and Trees</b>						
7.9.A.	<b>Promote habitat preservation and restoration so that Islanders and visitors can enjoy a healthy ecosystem</b>	113	Policy Regulation, Program	Town Board	Planning Department, HD/ DPW, Town Engineer, Conservation Advisory Council, Green Options Committee, The Nature Conservancy, friends of trees	***
7.9.B.	<b>Adopt a Tree Preservation Local Law for the purposes of protecting woodlands and individual historic, significant, and scenic trees important to the community.</b>	113	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	BD, friends of trees	**
7.9.C.	<b>Engage NY DEC and local resources to explore establishing a controlled burning program.</b>	113	Program	Town Board	NYSDEC, FD	*****

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
<b>Goal 7.10: Monitor and Control Nuisance Species</b>						
7.10.A	<b>Manage Whitetail Deer populations and work with wildlife management agencies to educate the public on the impact of deer populations.</b>	114	Partnership, Program	PD	Deer and Tick Committee, PD, Nature Conservancy, Sylvester Manor, DEC	***
7.10.B	<b>Work with organizations and property owners to help assess and control ticks and prevent tick-borne diseases.</b>	114	Program	Town Board	Deer and Tick Committee, SBU, DEC	***
7.10.C	<b>Develop an education program prohibiting the introduction, throwing, dumping, depositing, or placing invasive species on/in Town land and waters.</b>	114	Program	Town Board	CCE of SC, NYSDEC, CAC, Green Options Committee	***
<b>Chapter 8. Parks, Open Space, and Waterways</b>						
<b>Goal 8.1: Continue to preserve lands with high-quality natural resources, including wetlands, watersheds, shorelines, significant trees and woodland, and wildlife habitat; those lands with recognized scenic values; and smaller parcels that could provide for village greens or neighborhood pocket parks.</b>						
8.1.A.	<b>Continue to purchase open space parcels.</b>	124	Partnership/ Policy	Town Board	CPF Advisory Board, SC, Peconic Land Trust, PEP	*
8.1.B.	<b>Continue to manage Town-owned open space/nature preserves through a land stewardship program.</b>	124	Partnership/ Policy/Capital planning	CPF Advisory Board	CPF Advisory Board, HD/DPW, CAC, Green Options and Deer & Tick Committees	*
<b>Goal 8.2: Improve and promote active recreation facilities and programming</b>						
8.2.A.	<b>Maintain existing facilities and grounds</b>	125	Capital planning	HD/DPW	Board, HD/DPW, RD, School District	*
8.2.B.	<b>Create New Recreational Opportunities and Facilities</b>	125	Capital planning	Town Board	RD, Senior Services, FIT Center, Public, Consultants, School	****
8.2.C.	<b>Improve diversity of programming</b>	125	Programing	RD	RD, Senior Services, FIT Center,	*
8.2.D.	<b>Promote health and wellness</b>	126	Programing	RD	RD, Senior Services, FIT Center, Town Social Worker	*

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

<i>Recommendation</i>		<i>Pg #</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
<b>Goal 8.3: Comprehensively plan for use and protection of waterfront and waterways</b>						
8.3.A.	<b>Develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP)</b>	126	Study	Town Board	WMAC, DEC, NYS, USACE	*****
8.3.B.	<b>Develop a Plan for Moorings</b>	126	Study/Program	Town Board	WMAC, Commercial Baymen, Marinas, Harbormasters	***
<b>Goal 8.4: Continue to work with the County, other towns, and groups to maintain navigable channels to ensure safe passage, preserve vistas, sustain marine life, and enable recreational use.</b>						
8.4.A.	<b>Continue dredging projects where needed.</b>	128	Capital Project, Partnership	Town Board	HD/DPW, WMAC, SC, East End Towns	*****
8.4.B.	<b>Protect Reel Point and Shell Beach.</b>	128	Partnership, Capital Project	Town Board	USACE	*****
8.4.C.	<b>Prohibit excessive power boat wakes with code regulations and signage buoys</b>	129	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	WMAC, harbormasters	**
8.4.D.	<b>Explore acquisition of a pump-out boat to service the anchorages and mooring fields throughout the summer.</b>	129	Capital Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, WMAC, harbormaster	****
8.4.E.	<b>Limit seaplane activity</b>	129	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	WMAC, harbormaster	**
8.4.F.	<b>Review policy for establishment of new docks</b>	129	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	WMAC	***
8.4.G.	<b>Review policies on boatlifts and boat paint</b>	130	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	WMAC	**
8.4.H.	<b>Review policies on bulkheads</b>	130	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	Waterways Management Advisory Council, NYDEC	**
8.4.I.	<b>Explore expansion of programs that support aquaculture such as the restocking of shellfish.</b>	131	Partnership, Program, Grants	Town Board	The Nature Conservancy, CCESC, SBU, Peconic Estuary Program, Conservation Advisory Council, Commercial Baymen, Aquaculturists, WQI	***
8.4.J.	<b>Identify habitat restoration measures.</b>	131	Study/Program	WQIAB	Conservation Advisory Council, WMAC, WAC, CCE	***
8.4.K.	<b>Update, on an annual basis, the 2022 Shoreline access task force comprehensive inventory and evaluation.</b>	131	Program, Capital Plan/Project	HD/DPW	WMAC, Shoreline Access Task Force	***

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
8.4.L.	Provide resources to the CAC and WMAC for community education and communication, both for residents and visitors	132	Study/Program	Town Board	CAC, WMAC	**
8.4.M.	Review use of beaches by off road vehicles to protect the beach environment	132	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	CAC	**
8.4.N.	Develop regulations to better protect bluff areas	132	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, CAC	*
<b>Chapter 9. Quality of Life</b>						
<b>Goal 9.1: Preserve archaeological and cultural resources in order to protect linkages between the Town's history and its present life, to improve community self-understanding, to strengthen the sense of community, and to protect Shelter Island's unique identity.</b>						
9.1.A.	Activate and staff the Historical Advisory Commission	155	Policy/Regulation, Program	Town Board	Historical Society	*
9.1.B.	Create a Historic District Zone	156	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, Historic Advisory Commission, BD, Shelter Island Heights, historical society	***
9.1.C.	Continue to maintain and preserve historic records	156	Program	Town Clerk	Town Board, Local Museums and Organizations, Historical Society	**
9.1.D.	Promote the Town's history and cultural resources under the charge of the Historical Advisory Commission (named above)	156	Program	Historic Advisory Commission	Historical Society, Local Museums and Organizations	**
<b>Goal 9.2: Protect the Island's small-town way of life, rural character, and natural resources through coordination of land use with the land's natural and visual qualities and protection of critical visual assets, including scenic views from roads and coastal view corridors.</b>						
9.2.A.	Develop a program to encourage preservation easements	157	Program	Town Board	Historical Society, Historic Advisory Commission	**
9.2.B.	Review the approach to controlling noise disturbances	157	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PD, BD	*
9.2.C.	Control excessive night sky lighting	157	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	PB, BD, PD	*

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
<b>Goal 9.3: Ensure an efficient, effective, and transparent Town government.</b>						
9.3.A.	<b>Increase Government Capacity for planning and implementation:</b>	158	Program/Study	Town Board	Town Staff	***
9.3.B.	<b>Improve record keeping technologies</b>	158	Capital Project	Town Board	Town Staff	***
9.3.C.	<b>Utilize new tools for communication and transparency</b>	159	Program	Town Board	Town Staff, IT and Media Department	***
<b>Goal 9.4: Assure that community facilities provide adequate service to the population and businesses over time, in a fiscally efficient way that positively contributes to the Island’s character.</b>						
9.4.A.	<b>Develop a Facilities Master Plan</b>	159	Study, Capital Plan	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, RD, Senior Center, Recycling Center	****
9.4.B.	<b>Develop a framework to monitor and measure the progress of the Comprehensive Plan’s implementation</b>	160	Program	Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee	Town Board	*
<b>Goal 9.5: Support cultural organizations and strengthen our sense of community</b>						
9.5.A.	<b>Promote volunteerism to maintain a strong and self-perpetuating volunteer corps of ambulance and FD members, while recognizing that there may come a day when a paid force of first responders may be necessary.</b>	161	Program	Town Board	FD, Polic Department, EMS Department, Town Departments, School District	*
9.5.B.	<b>Expand RD and library programming.</b>	161	Program	RD, Library	Town Board, Recreation Commission, School District, Senior Center	***
<b>Goal 9.6: Improve access to goods and services to help the Island be a more resilient and less dependent community</b>						
9.6.A.	<b>Support Expansion of Services for Senior Population</b>	162	Program, Policy/Regulation	Town Board	Senior Center, RD, Shelter Island Public Library, Recreation Commission, Healthcare Institutions, NPOS and Community Organizations	***

Recommendation		Pg #	Type	Responsible Party	Partners	Difficulty
9.6.B.	<b>Address food insecurity</b>	162	Partnership	Town Board	NPOs and Community Based Organizations	**
9.6.C.	<b>Provide resources for mental and behavioral health</b>	162	Partnership	Town Social Worker	Town Board, IT and Media Department	**
<b>Goal 9.7: Support efforts to address tick-borne diseases.</b>						
9.7.A.	<b>Continue tick-borne disease monitoring and reduction</b>	162	Study/Program	Town Board	Deer and Tick Committee, SBU, Nature Conservancy, DEC, SC Vector control	***
<b>Chapter 10: Utilities, Sustainability, and Resilience</b>						
<b>Goal 10.1: Ensure that all Shelter Island residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local state and federal standards.</b>						
10.1.A.	<b>Continue to implement the Ground and Surface Water Management Plan.</b>	174	Study/Program, Capital Plan/Project, Grants	Town Board	WAC, WQIAB, USGS, New York State, SC, SBU, SC Water Authority, The Nature Conservancy, Shelter Island Heights	*****
<b>Goal 10.2: Promote renewable and environmentally responsible utilities</b>						
10.2.A	<b>Establish a group to investigate means of creating greater energy independence and resiliency for the Island.</b>	175	Study/Program	Town Board	Green Options Committee, HD/DPW, Town Engineer, LIPA/PSEG,	*
10.2.B.	<b>Encourage the use of renewable energy sources</b>	175	Program	Town Board	Green Options Committee, HD/DPW, Town Engineer, LIPA/PSEG	***
10.2.C.	<b>Evaluate use of geothermal energy</b>	175	Study/Program, Policy/Regulation	Town Board	Green Options Committee, WAC, BD, Town Engineer	***
<b>Goal 10.3: Take action against climate change by reducing energy consumption and promoting sustainable patterns of development</b>						
10.3.A.	<b>Promote sustainable construction and design standards</b>	176	Policy/Regulation	Town Board	Green Options Committee, BD, Town Engineer, Planning Department, U.S. Green Building Council, National Association of Homebuilders	***

Partners: Planning Board (PB), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Building Department (BD), Highway Department (HD), Department of Public Works (DPW), Recreation Department (RD), New York State (NYS), Police Department (PD), Fire Department (FD), Community Housing Fund Advisory Board (CHFAB), Non-profit Organizations (NPOs), Suffolk County (SC), Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Waterway Management Advisory Council (WMAC), Water Advisory Committee (WAC), Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Community Preservation Fund (CPF), Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board (WQIAB), Community Housing Board (CHB), Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP), Stony Brook University (SBU)

<i>Recommendation</i>		<i>Pg #</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
10.3.B	<b>Continue to improve the energy efficiency of Town facilities and fleets.</b>	176	Policy/ Regulation, Capital Plan/Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer	****
<b>Goal 10.4: Promote sustainable transportation alternatives</b>						
10.4.A	<b>Explore the possibilities of electric vehicle charging stations at more Town locations.</b>	176	Capital Plan/ Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, School District, Shelter Island Public Library, Town Departments, Shelter Island Heights	****
<b>Goal 10.5: Prepare for and adapt to the effects of climate change and rising sea levels</b>						
10.5.A	<b>Develop a Coastal Resilience Plan.</b>	176	Study	Town Board	Conservation Advisory Council, Green Options Committee, WMAC, WQIAB, Town Engineer, Shelter Island Heights, Both Ferry Companies, nature conservancy	***
<b>Goal 10.6: Assure that community facilities provide adequate service to the population and businesses over time, in a fiscally efficient way that positively contributes to the Island's character.</b>						
10.6.A	<b>Update and distribute homeowner manual</b>	177	Program	Town Board	BD, CAC, WAC,	*
10.6.B	<b>Harden and Improve Communications Systems</b>	178	Partnership, Capital Project	Town Board	IT & Media Department, Cellular Network Carriers and Internet Providers, Shelter Island Heights	****
10.6.C	<b>Continue to improve recycling center and waste management systems</b>	178	Capital Plan/ Project	Town Board	HD/DPW, Town Engineer, Recycling Center, Green Options Committee, East End Towns, SC	*****
10.6.D	<b>Consider appointing a Town Recycling Coordinator to further increase recycling opportunities in Town.</b>	179	Program	Town Board	HD/DPW, Recycling Center, Green Options Committee	**