



## CHAPTER 5: ECONOMY

WORKING DRAFT (9/8/23)

This document is presented in its current form as a preliminary draft for informational purposes only. It is intended to provide an overview of the proposed content and the direction of the Comprehensive Plan. Please note that this draft is subject to further editing, revisions, and updates.

A public meeting is scheduled for September 23rd, during which community feedback will be solicited and considered. Following this meeting, the document will undergo additional refinement based on the input received. This refinement process may include the incorporation of photos, graphics, and other visual elements to enhance clarity and understanding.

As a result, the information contained in this draft may evolve, and new content may be added or modified to accurately reflect the goals, aspirations, and needs of the community. We encourage all stakeholders to provide comments, either in written form or at the Public Workshop, as your input will play a vital role in shaping the final version of the Comprehensive Plan.

We appreciate your understanding of the dynamic nature of this planning process and your active participation in creating a comprehensive plan that best serves the interests of our community.

# 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.

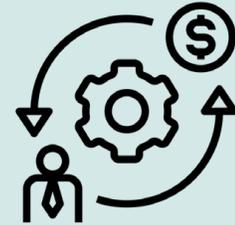
This chapter addresses key objectives such as diversifying the economy, providing a broader mix of housing options, improving education and workforce development, and enhancing community resilience and social support. It aims to create a balanced and thriving community where economic opportunities are 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 does not always support their long-term health and viability.**

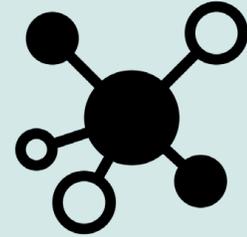
The B-1 zoning provisions limit non-residential uses to civic-related and professional (office) uses, which constrains the types of tenants that can occupy existing buildings; providing more flexibility in permitted uses may help to fill some of the vacant commercial spaces in the Town Center. The Heights/Bridge 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

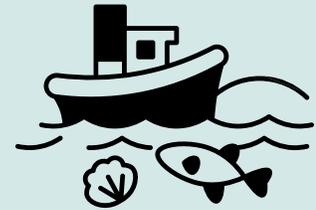
**The Town lacks a cohesive and comprehensive business community network, and the relationship between Town government and the business community could be strengthened.**

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 a 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

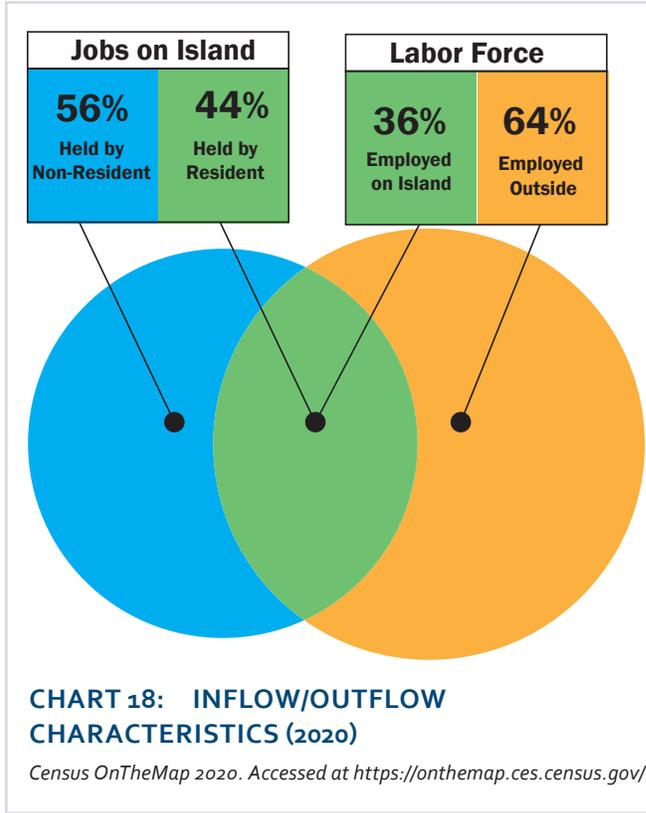
The OnTheMap tool also provides an estimation of the inflow and outflow of workers. According to the data, 56% of people that work on the Island live elsewhere. In addition, 64% of workers that live on the Island are employed elsewhere.

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.

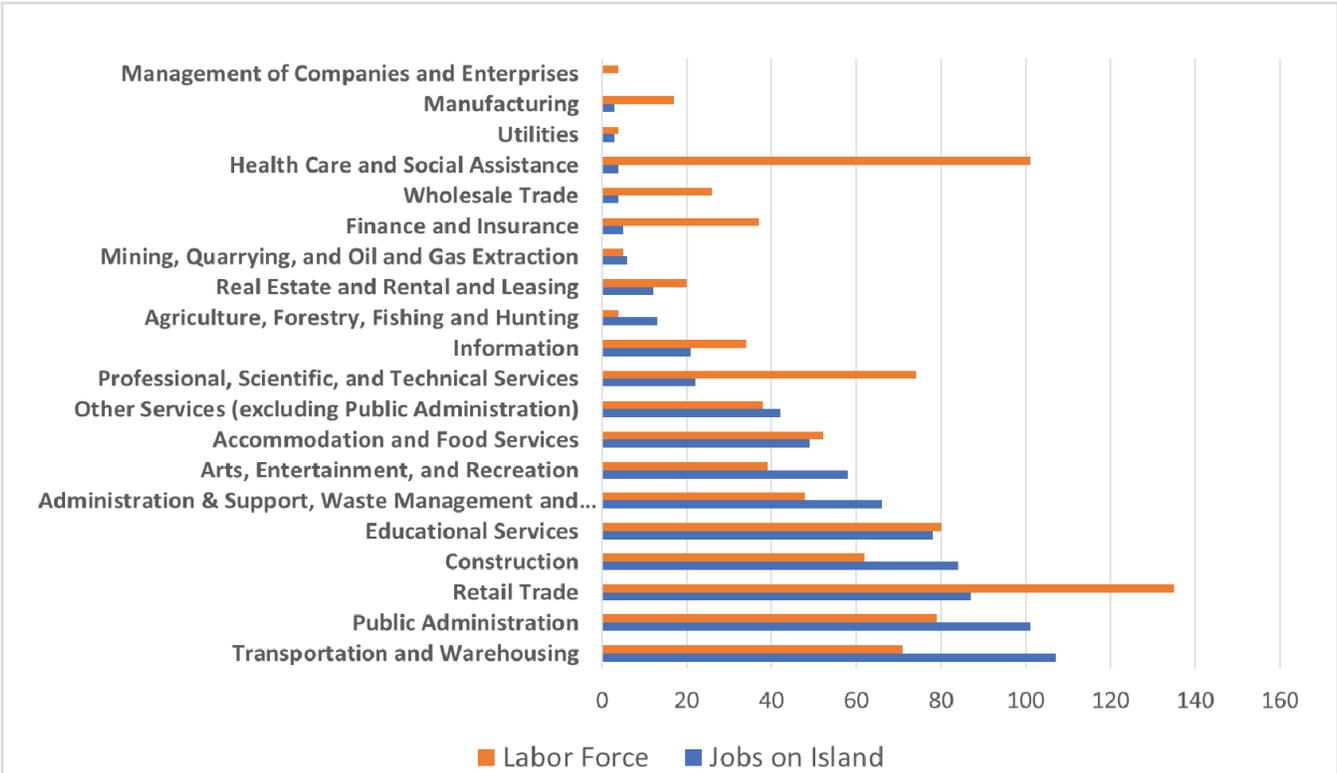
While there are data on many types of jobs and industries via the Census and ESRI, what is more difficult to determine is the economy surrounding seasonal and short-term rentals. Some businesses operating in the accommodations and food services sector and in



	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 11: 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/>

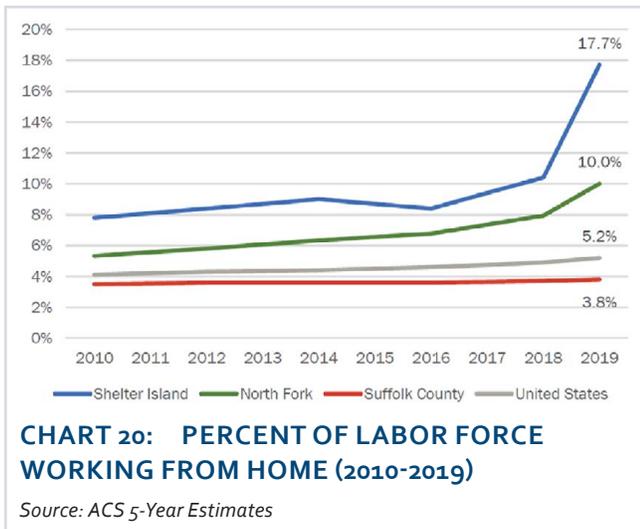
recreation hire summer employees from abroad. Host Compliance, LLC estimated that there were 169 short term rentals, both registered and not, operating on the Island as of September 1, 2022. If most of these properties engage cleaning, landscaping, and management services, they would be meaningfully 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.



### 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 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, 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.

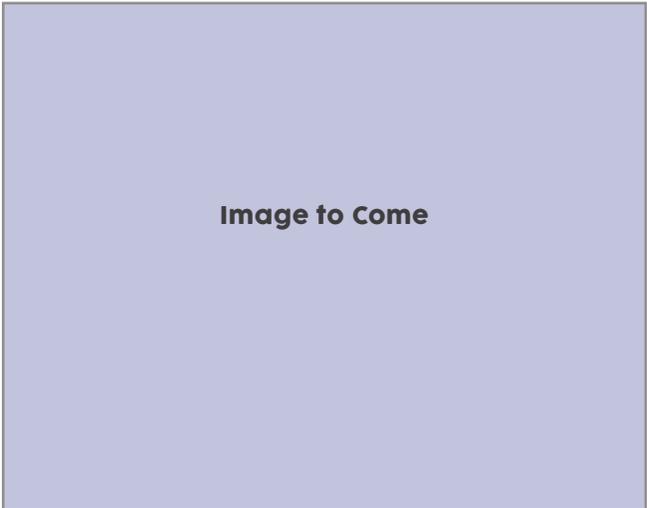
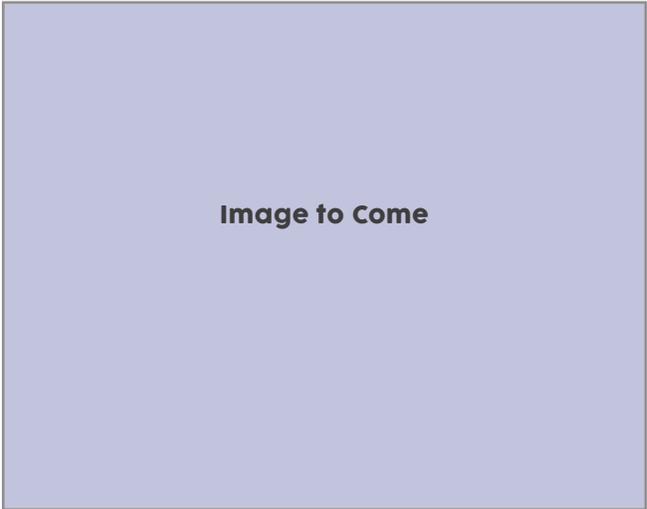
About one-half to two-thirds of Island businesses are members of the Chamber of Commerce. However, according to a Chamber representative, there is not a strong sense of common interest or identity among businesses on the Island. In addition, the market/service area for on-island businesses is generally 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 merging the B and B-1 business zones

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

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:** 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.

	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 12: BULK AND COVERAGE REGULATIONS FOR B AND B-1 ZONING DISTRICTS**

- 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.

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.

**Heights/Bridge Street – Need for Design Guidelines**

The commercial buildings in the Heights/Bridge Street area have the look and feel of a historic hamlet center, 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

## **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.

### **Work with the Chamber of Commerce to set up a group health plan for local businesses**

A chamber of commerce can play a valuable role in creating a group health plan for local businesses by leveraging the collective bargaining power and resources of its members. A key aspect of a group health plan is pooling the risks and resources of multiple businesses together. The first step in this process would be outreach to local businesses to assess healthcare needs, budgetary constraints, and desired coverage. The chamber could then reach out to insurance providers to explore partnerships. Working with the selected insurance provider, the chamber can then develop different plan options tailored to meet the needs of its member businesses. It would be important to determine what resources are available from the Chamber for continued administration and support. The Chamber would also need to regularly evaluate the group

health plan's performance, member satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness, so the chamber can make necessary adjustments to ensure continued success.

### **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: Provide the highest level of educational services and job training to Island residents**

#### **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 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** on the Island, both small residential gardens/farms and larger institutional farms and their farm stands. 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

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