

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 needs to assist in the decision-making and implementation of this plan.



Summary Findings

This section provides a summary of priorities informed by the key findings from the Quality of Life chapter.

Historic Preservation and Visual Landscape:

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 houses, and there is nothing in the Town Code to prevent or discourage this from happening. There is also the need to protect critical visual assets, including scenic views from roads and coastal view corridors.

Cultural Resources:

Support cultural organizations and strengthen our sense of community.



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.

Changing community dynamics:

Ensure this plan reflects the priorities and values of the current community and supports 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 for those with low or moderate incomes to afford to live on the island, as property values rise.

Government Capacity:

Increase capacity for short- and long-term planning and implementation.



The Town's operations are supported by a system of elected officials, small staff, and many community volunteers. Town government does not include planning, housing, or economic development functions, which presents challenges to both short- and long-term planning and policymaking, inclusive of economic development.

Summary Findings (Continued)

Decision Making:

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.

Record Keeping and Communication:

Empower local 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 more communication about civic and community resources, such as events and community alerts (i.e. construction and emergencies).

Town-owned Facilities:

Evaluate space needs and opportunities for existing municipal services.



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.

Summary Findings (Continued)

Access to goods and services:

Become a more resilient and less dependent island community.



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 with other age groups. Investment may be needed in healthcare infrastructure, social services, and transportation options that help older adults remain independent and engaged in their communities.

Senior Services:

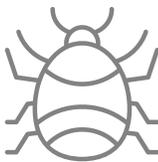
Plan and prepare for changing demographics to ensure that older adults have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.



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Invasive Species:

Support and coordinate efforts to address tick-borne diseases



Managing and reducing the incidence of tick-borne diseases is a significant public health challenge. Addressing this issue will require a sustained commitment and 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.