

DRAFT



Shelter Island  
Comprehensive Plan Update

# Shelter Island 2020

Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

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Prepared for:

Town of Shelter Island, New York  
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“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.”

— Mother Teresa



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## **Note to Reviewers**

This draft of the 2020 existing conditions profile of Shelter Island reflects data that was available in February 2021. Data-gathering continues and will enrich the final draft with additional information from the 2020 Census (expected release of some data in mid-2021), and comments and information that Shelter Islanders will bring to the planning process.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update is a collaborative effort of Town elected officials, staff, organizations, volunteers and individual citizens. The following individuals and organizations have contributed to the development of the Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update and Shelter Island 2020.

## **Comprehensive Plan Task Force**

- Michael Bebon
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## **Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee**

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- Sean Clark
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- Petra Schmidt
- Wendy Turgeon

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force also wishes to acknowledge the important contributions of the **Town Board, Town Staff, Board and Committee Members, and Island Organizations and Institutions** that participated in the preparation of Shelter Island 2020.

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force thanks our Consulting Team for their guidance and hard work.

## **Dodson & Flinker, Inc.**

- Peter Flinker, FAICP
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- Tia Novak
- Nate Burgess
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## **Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.**

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# INTRODUCTION

Shelter Island is updating its Comprehensive Plan. This report, Shelter Island 2020, is a profile of existing conditions. It is the first written element of the Comprehensive Plan Update project. It is the beginning of the project, not the final plan.

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?"

In the next phases of the project, the Shelter Island community will develop a shared vision for the future—"What kind of community do we want to be? What do we want to preserve and what do we want to change?" A set of strategies and actions to achieve our vision will be an important part of the Plan Update.

A Comprehensive Plan sets high-level, long-term policy for the Town. It guides investments of Town resources and actions by town boards and departments over the course of decades. The Comprehensive Plan also provides the basis for the Town's land use regulation, including zoning. Though it is not regulatory itself, a Comprehensive Plan establishes the Town's vision for land development and preservation, as well as the future structure and priorities of town government.

The Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update project began in March 2020 and will be completed by early 2022. The Town last adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1994. The Town worked on an update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2008, but it was not adopted by the Town Board.

In consultation with a 12-member volunteer Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), the Comprehensive Plan Task Force (CPTF) directed a team of consultants in gathering information about many aspects of life on Shelter Island today. Before the Profile was made public, it was reviewed by CPTF, CPAC, Town staff, and members of Town committees.

Moving forward, Islanders, and others who care about the Island, will work together to evaluate the Island's strengths and weaknesses, explore emerging trends, and consider how best to respond to the unique challenges of life in this unique and fragile place. We will look at global and local social, economic, and environmental changes that are already impacting life on Shelter Island and explore alternatives for the future. We will produce a Vision statement for the future of the Island and the goals, objectives, and actions for carrying out the Vision. Added to the Profile, this community conversation and the decisions resulting from it will comprise the final Comprehensive Plan Update.

Throughout this report data deficiencies are noted. Shelter Island 2020 will be updated when 2020 census data becomes available. We hope you will review and comment on this profile of existing conditions and participate in upcoming surveys and community workshops.



Shelter Island  
Comprehensive Plan Update

You can find more information about the Plan and opportunities to participate at:

[www.shelterislandtown.us/  
comprehensive-plan-update](http://www.shelterislandtown.us/comprehensive-plan-update)

You can provide comments on this report or other aspects of the project process here:

[https://rebrand.ly/  
SICompPlanComments](https://rebrand.ly/SICompPlanComments)

# Shelter Island Base Map

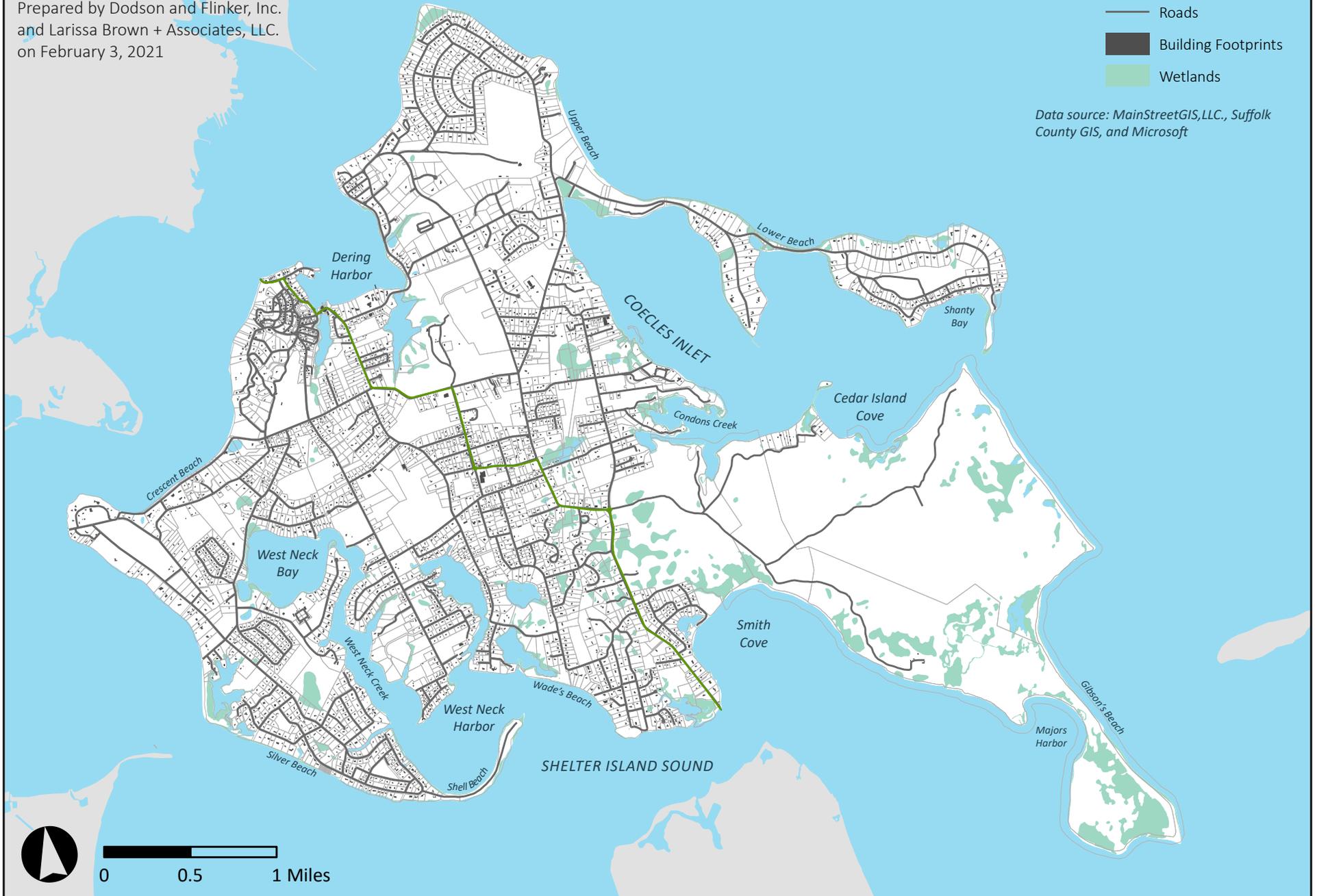
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021

### Legend

- Route 114
- Roads
- Building Footprints
- Wetlands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



# THE PEOPLE OF SHELTER ISLAND: WHO ARE WE?

## Historical Inhabitants of Shelter Island

Shelter Island's population over time reflects the changing world around the island.

- Native Americans occupied Shelter Island for 11,000 years, fishing, farming, and hunting before the arrival of the first Europeans in the seventeenth century. These Algonquian peoples were known as the Manhasset and the Montaukett at the time of contact.
- In 1652, the first European settlers, the Sylvester brothers, purchased the island from the Manhasset sachem (chief) and established a plantation on the island to provision the Caribbean sugar industry, as part of the “triangle trade.” On their farm, Sylvester Manor, they used enslaved Africans, Native Americans under some form of forced labor, and European colonists.
- New York gradually abolished slavery from 1788 until full emancipation in 1827. The Native American population of the island appeared to have disappeared, but they intermarried with Blacks and continued to identify with their Native American heritage. Over the course of the nineteenth century, many of these Islanders left the island to seek opportunities elsewhere in the growing American economy, but small numbers of non-white families continued to live on the island.
- Shelter Island remained a farming and fishing community into the 1870s, contributing captains and mariners to the whaling industry and the menhaden fishery, which included factories that processed menhaden oil for fertilizer and industrial lubricants.
- After the Civil War the smelly fish factories were shut down, and the seasonal vacation industry began with church camps, hotels, and the arrival of wealthy industrialists who built mansions.
- In addition to island residents, European and Chinese immigrants and African-Americans filled service jobs in the seasonal visitor industries, while farming and fishing by traditional residents continued.
- A new immigrant group arrived with the early-1950s emergence of the Beanery, a cooperative that produced lima beans and cauliflower, flash freezing them on site for national frozen vegetable brands. In addition to employing women from Shelter Island families, the Beanery also employed Black migrant workers from the South. Hurricanes and pests in the fifties destroyed the crops and the Beanery closed.
- Immigrants from Central America began to appear on Shelter Island in the 1990s to work in the hospitality, construction, and landscaping businesses. Census and school data indicate another increase in the Hispanic population since 2010.
- Assessor's data show that the majority of off-island property owners live in the New York metropolitan area and New England, but some can be found in Florida, the West Coast, big cities elsewhere in the country—and there are a few who live outside the US.



Map showing Census geographies used for this report: SI CDP, SIH CDP, and Village of Dering Harbor

## Understanding Population Dynamics on Shelter Island Today

Shelter Island today has complex population dynamics. The homeowner population consists of year-round residents and part-time residents. Year-round residents can include working-age people with families, who may have generational roots on the island and who may work on-island or off-island. Other year-round residents may be retirees who visited the island for years before retiring, 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 additional time on weekends throughout the year, while “snowbirds” live in warm regions such as Florida or Arizona during the winters. The population also includes renters by the month or season and visitors who come for shorter periods, staying in hotels, inns, B & B’s, and short-term rentals. 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 non-resident, seasonal and visitor population is typically much larger than the year-round population. In 2020, this complex demographic picture became even more complicated because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with more people spending the winter on Shelter Island while pandemic restrictions may have reduced the number of visitors during the summer.

This complicated demographic picture results in a small population on Shelter Island which is considered the year-round population and counted in census years as resident on April 1. It is difficult to identify precise demographic characteristics outside of the small set that are directly collected in the census year. As the Shelter Island 2020 Profile is being written, the results of the

2020 census have not been released and likely will not be available earlier than summer 2021. When the numbers are released, they will be added to this report. In the interim, “best estimates” have been developed for the comprehensive planning process using a variety of data sources.

## Best Estimates for Shelter Island Demographics

Estimates were developed using census counts and estimates as well as other data including assessor’s lists, school enrollments and student characteristics, voter registration, and PSEG utility accounts. (See the end of Shelter Island 2020 for an addendum with more details on how the estimates were developed.) The 2010 and 2020 census counts asked only a few questions: name, gender, age, race, ethnicity, relationship, housing tenure (own or rent), and, in the case of the 2020 census whether a person in the household “usually lives” somewhere else (including a seasonal or second home). All other types of census data, such as income, housing characteristics, jobs, and so on, have been collected since 2005 through annual surveys called the American Community Survey (ACS) which are then consolidated into five-year ACS estimates. This means that the only data for Shelter Island that come from a census count (not an estimate) are in the answers to the decennial census questions. Because Shelter Island’s year-round population is well under 5,000 persons, the ACS data is not very reliable. Providing context through using other data, such as school enrollments, voter registration, and assessor’s data indicates that the 2015-2019 ACS may be especially unreliable.

## What's Our Year-Round Population?

Two estimates were developed for total population: a pre-pandemic 2019 population and a 2020 pandemic year population. There is considerable interest in the size of any year-round population increase during the pandemic year and potential impacts if the increase turns out to be a long-term change. However, this is just one of the future uncertainties to be evaluated during the Comprehensive Plan Update as Shelter Island plans for 2030 and beyond.

For other demographic characteristics one estimate was developed.

- **Best Estimate 2020 population without the pandemic: 2,463.** This estimate assumes a conservative growth rate of 2% between 2010 and 2020, adding 71 people to the year-round population, and a decline in K-12 school enrollment to below 190 students. The growth rate is based on estimated decennial population growth in nearby communities with larger populations: East Hampton (2.74%), Southampton (3.17%), and Southold (1.21%).
- **Best Estimate 2020 pandemic year population: 2,745.** The pandemic year saw an increase in the number of people and households living year-round on Shelter Island. Indicators of this increase in population include an increase of 26 students (Pre-K to 12) in the school district rather than an expected decrease in enrollment and an increase of 256 registered voters.

## What's the Sex Composition of Our Population?

- Older populations tend to have a somewhat higher number of women compared to men because statistically, men have higher death rates. The sex composition can be important when planning for services in a community. Census counts from 2000 and 2010, and the 2010–2014 ACS data all show a slight preponderance of 51–52% female. The 2015–2019 ACS data, shows 53% male to 48% female which is not reliable given other characteristics of the population.
- **Best estimate: 49% male and 51% female.**



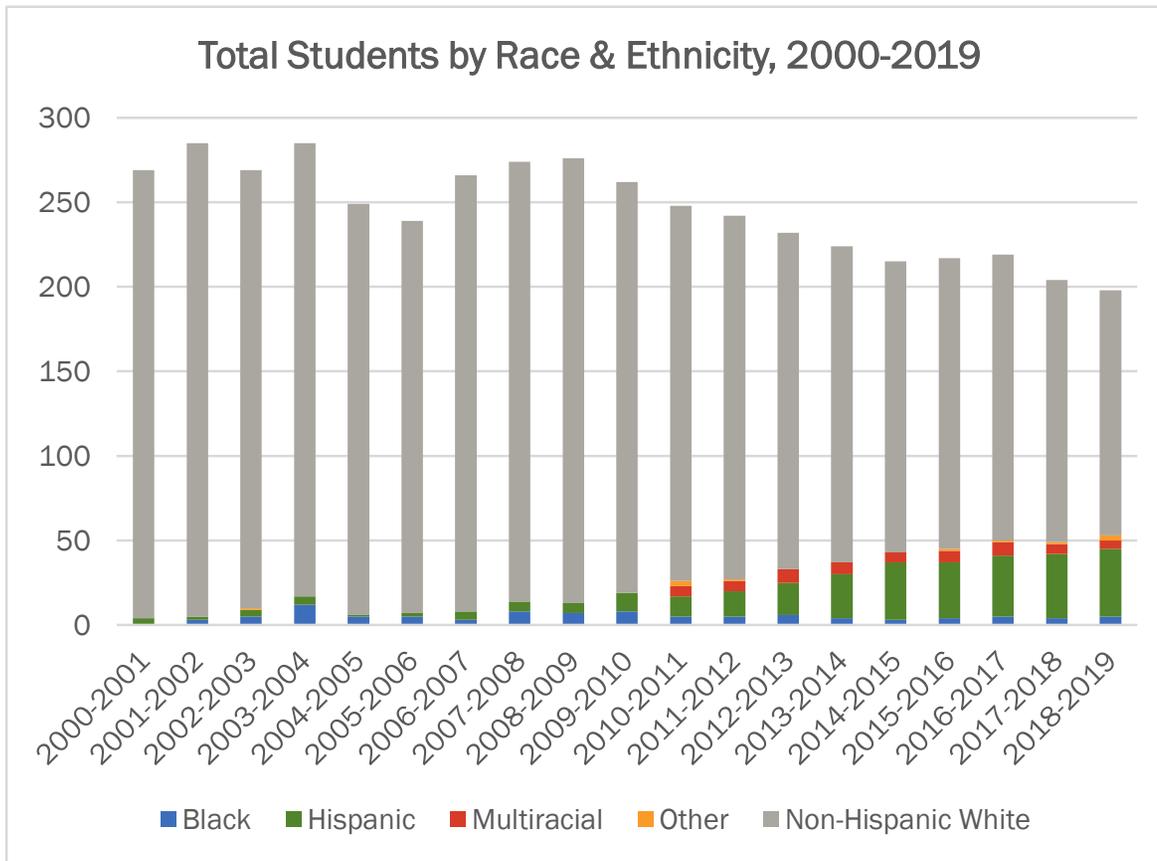
Source: Andrew Dallos, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Source: Shelter Island Union Free School District

## Race and Ethnicity—How Diverse Are We?

- Over 90% of Shelter Island’s population is White.
- The percent of the Black population grew between the 2000 and 2010 census counts.
- The Hispanic population (who can be of any race) more than doubled between the census counts of 2000 (40 persons and 2.2% of total population) and 2010 (127 persons and 5.2% of total population). Since school year 2009-2010, the school population has become more diverse. The number and percent of students identifying as Hispanic grew consistently between 2009-2010, when there were 11 students (4% of the total enrollment) to 2018-2019 with 40 Hispanic students representing 20% of the total.
- In addition to the Hispanic enrollment, the 2018-19 data identified 5 students (3%) as Black, 3 students (2%) as Asian/Pacific Islander, 5 students (3%) as multiracial, and 145 students (73%) as White. Eighteen students (9%) were identified as English language learners.



Source: Shelter Island Union Free School District Reports

- **Best Estimate: There is no reliable information since 2010 on race and ethnicity across all age groups.** School enrollment data showing a significant increase in the Hispanic population 2009-2019 cannot automatically be ascribed to the total population because of the many older households without children. When the 2020 census data is released, it will include numbers for race and ethnicity.

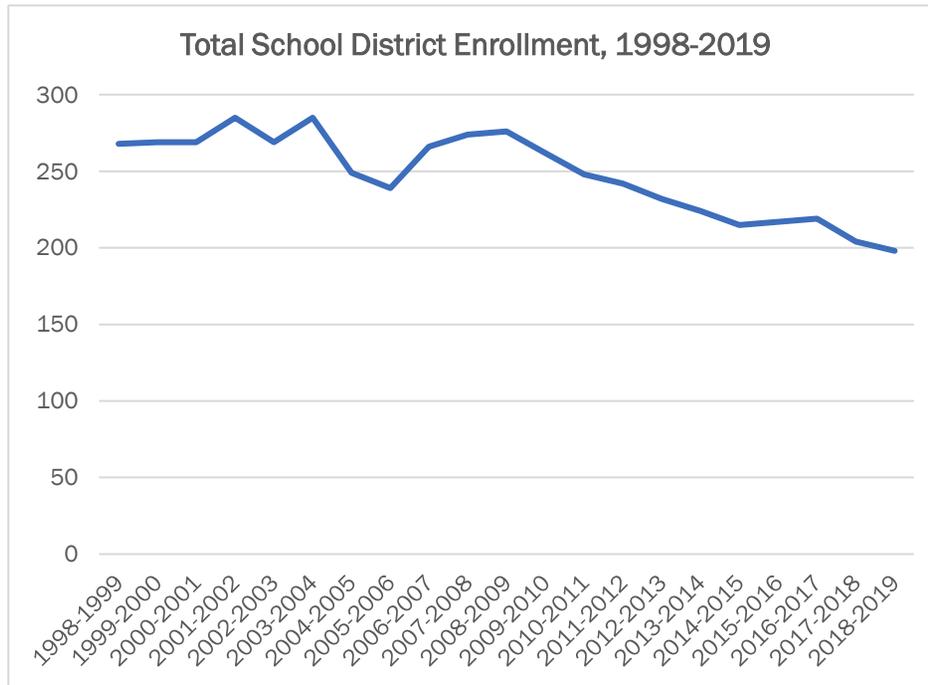
### Racial and Ethnic Composition, 2000 and 2010

| Population (one race or in combination)    | 2000 Census | 2010 Census |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| White                                      | 95.6%       | 94.0%       |
| Black or African American                  | 1.5%        | 2.1%        |
| American Indian and Alaska Native          | 1.0%        | 1.6%        |
| Asian                                      | 0.9%        | 0.6%        |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 0.0%        | 0.1%        |
| Some other race                            | 1.0%        | 1.5%        |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race)           | 2.2%        | 5.2%        |

Source: Census counts

## Age Composition—What’s Our Mix of Younger and Older People?

- 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; and a high percentage of the population over 50 years old.
- Millennials (born 1981-1996) and Gen Z (born 1997-2012) are underrepresented in Shelter Island, likely because of the paucity of jobs and affordable housing for groups at the height of or beginning careers and families.
- The ACS Five-Year Estimates for 2014 and 2019 show an increase in the percentage of the 0-19 age group and a corresponding decrease in the median age. These numbers not only have high margins of error but, in the case of the youth population, vastly overestimate the school population, for which we have enrollment data. The median age of Suffolk County as a whole is 42, which is higher than New York State (39.2) and the US as a whole (38.5).
- The official number for K-12 enrollment for school year 2020-2021 is 199. If Pre-K students were to be included, the enrollment would be 225. In addition, 3 special education students sent to off-island schools are not counted. The number of Island students who attend private schools off-island has declined slightly in 2020-21 to 29 students from 33 in the previous two years
- **Best Estimate of Median age: 50-52.** This estimate is based on the fact that the general characteristics of Shelter Island’s population, as well s conditions such as high housing costs, do not suggest any significant change in age composition over the last ten years.



Source: Shelter Island Union Free School District Reports

### Age Composition and Median Age, 2000 and 2010

| Age Group  | 2000 Census | 2010 Census |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 0-19       | 19.3%       | 18.0%       |
| 20-34      | 10.1%       | 9.9%        |
| 35-49      | 22.4%       | 18.4%       |
| 50-64      | 19.6%       | 25.5%       |
| 65-74      | 13.4%       | 14.6%       |
| 75+        | 15.1%       | 13.6%       |
| Median age | 49.2        | 52.5        |

Source: Census counts

## What Kinds of Households Live on Shelter Island?

The census bureau divides households into “family households,” which are households containing people related by marriage, blood or adoption, and non-family households, made up of unrelated people. Family households include married-couple households without children or without children living at home, and non-family households include single-person households.

- Shelter Island households are predominantly family households, with the majority of those being families without children under 18 at home. Single person households make up approximately a third of all households. Over half of all households include a person over 60 years old.
- The average household size in Shelter Island hovers above 2 persons, while family households are somewhat larger. For example, the 2010 census reported that the average household size was 2.12 and the average family household size was 2.72.
- **Best Estimate: For planning purposes, there is no reason to believe that the general distribution of household types or the median age are substantially different from the 2010 Census numbers.** The 2020 census release will provide more precise information. Shelter Island has had the smallest average household size of all towns in Suffolk County in all census years since 1960.

## What’s our Median Income and Are There Income Disparities?

Median income (half are higher, half are lower) shows a generally well-off population, but there are also income disparities.

- Business Analyst data from ESRI estimate 2020 median disposable household income at \$91,013. (Disposable income is the amount available to a household after income taxes.) The Shelter Island median income is similar to the Suffolk County household median income which was estimated at \$106,228 in 2019.
- The census data indicate that, as is typical, family households have higher incomes than non-family households. However, the median income of non-family households appears to be declining.

## Household Types and Percent of Total Households, 2000 and 2010

|   | 2000 Census | 2010 Census |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Households                                  |             |             |
| Family households                           | 66.1%       | 60.3%       |
| Non-family households                       | 33.9%       | 39.7%       |
|   |             |             |
| Married couple family households            | 55.2%       | 49%         |
| Households with own children under 18 years | 20.8%       | 35.4%       |
|   |             |             |
| Single-person households                    | 28.8%       | 32.7%       |
| Households w/ people 60+                    | 52.6%       | 54.4%       |

Source: Census counts

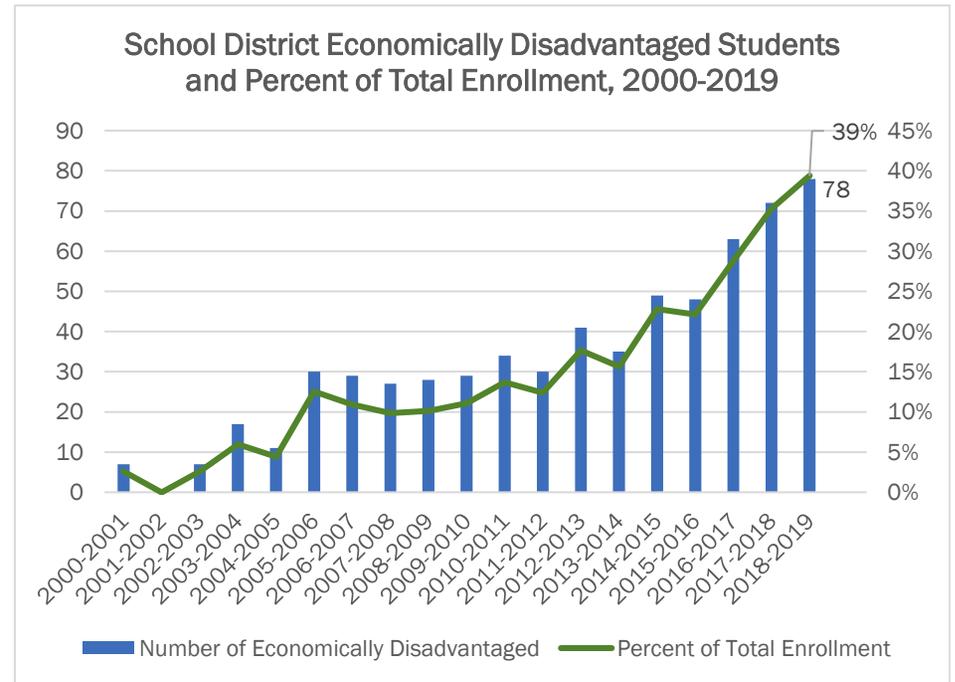
## Median Income by Household Type, 2000 and 2010

|                       | 2000 Census | 2010 Census |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| All households        | \$78,986    | \$82,805    |
| Family households     | \$94,988    | \$89,844    |
| Non-family households | \$52,347    | \$44,515    |

Source: Census counts

## Are There People and Households in Poverty or Economically Disadvantaged?

- Census data and estimates indicate that in the last 20 years, poverty has been nearly eliminated on the island. The 2000 census registered a 7.7% poverty rate for Shelter Island. By 2010, the poverty rate was 1.6%. The Census Bureau measures poverty using a set of money income thresholds that do not vary geographically. The result is that official poverty thresholds are very low. (In 2020 a family of 4 is at poverty level with an income of \$26,200 or below.) In a high-cost location like Shelter Island, there can be significant numbers of low-income households that are not technically at poverty level.
- School district data from 2018-19, when total enrollment was 198 students, show 77 students (39% of the total school enrollment) as economically disadvantaged, defined by the New York State Department of Education as: “those who participate in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs, such as the free or reduced-price lunch programs, Social Security Insurance (SSI), Food Stamps, Foster Care, Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Safety Net Assistance (SNA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), or Family Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household (economic unit) may be identified as low income.” The school district reports that almost all economically disadvantaged students qualify for free or reduced price lunch through Medicaid. In 2020, New York State Medicaid eligibility for children aged 1 to 18 is household income at no more than 154% of poverty level, adjusted for household size. This means that households of 3 or 4 would qualify with annual incomes in the \$33,000 to \$43,000 range.



Source: Shelter Island Union Free School District Reports

## How Well-Educated Are We?

Shelter Island has long been a highly educated community. Over half the adults over 25 years old and living on Shelter Island are estimated to be college graduates, with a significant additional group with graduate or professional degrees. The population with only a high school degree has been declining.

### Educational Attainment, 2000 and 2010

|                                 | 2000 Census | 2010 Census |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| High School only                | 26.0%       | 22.5%       |
| Bachelors Degree                | 23.7%       | 22.3%       |
| Graduate or professional degree | 19.2%       | 21.4%       |

Source: Census counts

## What Do We Know About the Population of Part-Time and Seasonal Residents and Visitors?

- There are no direct data on the current population of part-time, summer, and visitor populations. In 2018, Suffolk County estimated the total Town of Shelter Island seasonal population as 8,825, including occupancy of seasonal (not year-round occupancy) homes, an estimate of guests in year-round homes, and an estimate of lodging guests. These estimates may not include Short Term Rental numbers, and do not include day visitors.
- **Best estimate 2020 part-time and seasonal (non-year round) population: 7,300.** The same assumptions about guest and occupancy factors used by Suffolk County in 2018 can produce an estimate of seasonal population in 2020. In 2020, the assessor's database shows 2,459 single family homes, of which 1404 have off-island tax bill addresses, suggesting that they are not occupied year-round. With a 4-person occupancy factor, the 1,404 seasonal homes would result in a population of 5,616.
- The 1,055 year-round homes, with a 0.5 "guest factor," would result in 528 guests.
- Adding the 2018 lodging population of 662 to the previous numbers results in a seasonal population of 6,806. Short Term Rentals and day visitors may contribute another 500 people for a seasonal estimate of 7,300. Combining this population with the best estimate of 2,463 pre-pandemic year-round residents results in a total population for the island's high season of 9,763.
- Using these numbers, the summer resident population represents about 75 percent of the Island's population from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend.
- The Town has contracted with a firm to monitor short term rentals, which will help with estimates for the number of visitors who use that option. Other potential sources of information on part-time and seasonal residents and visitors include mobile data platforms.



## Findings

### Year-round population

- The year round population of Shelter Island in 2020 is estimated at 2,745, including an estimated increase due to the pandemic.
- Island residents are generally well-educated and affluent.
- Most households are composed of married couples without children under 18 at home, but there is also a significant number of single-person households.
- Over half the population is over 50 years old and over half the households include a person over 60 years old.
- In contrast, about a quarter of households include children under 18.
- The population has become slightly more racially diverse over the last 20 years, but remains over 90% white, non-Hispanic.
- School district data show growing diversity in the last decade. There has been a growing percentage of Hispanic students as well as of economically-disadvantaged students indicating income disparities in the year-round population.

### Seasonal population

- The summer seasonal population is estimated at approximately 7,300 persons.

## Challenges

- Precise population numbers and other demographic information are currently not available, due to delays in the 2020 Census. Accurate data or credible best estimates will be required to enable planning focused on current and future populations.
- Managing and balancing the interests and needs of all groups in the population will require better data.
- If the Baby Boomers in the full-time population continue to live on the island, aging into more fragile age groups, the demand for senior-friendly community systems and senior services and supports will increase.
- Growing diversity on the island, evidenced by the increase in Hispanic and low-income groups served by the public school system, may require responding to new needs but also bring economic and cultural benefits.



# HOUSING: HOW WE LIVE

The developed portion of Shelter Island is predominantly residential and expensive. It is made up of the Town of Shelter Island, which has two small business clusters, in Shelter Island Heights and in the Town Center; the entirely residential incorporated Village of Dering Harbor; and the Mashomack Preserve, comprising one-third of the island and owned by the Nature Conservancy.

## How Many and What Kind of Housing Units Are There?

The exact number of housing units on Shelter Island is not available but a combination of census and assessor's data can be used to approach it.

- The 2000 census counted 2,338 housing units, increasing to 2,719 units in the 2010 housing count. Sharing the island with the Town is the Village of Dering Harbor, which grew from 32 housing units in 2000 to 35 in 2010.
- The 2020 assessor's list (which includes Dering Harbor) shows 2,458 residential parcels with dwellings on them. Ninety-eight percent (2,414) are single family houses. The remainder are listed as seasonal (31 or 1.3%) which are single family houses that are not winterized; 6 mobile homes; 12 units in 6 two-family residences; and one multi-family structure or parcel with multiple dwellings.
- There are 214 "dependent residences" on 204 of the single family properties (a few have more than one dependent residence). Some of these dependent residences are rented year-round, seasonally, or as

short term rentals, while others are used for guests and family.

- Adding the parcels with single family dwellings, the 31 seasonal residences, the mobile homes and the 12 units in two-family homes, to the 214 dependent residences results in a total of 2677 housing units. (The one parcel with an unspecified number of "multiple residences" is not included.)
- There are reports of an undetermined number of illegal rental units.
- In January 2021, PSEG, the Island's electricity utility, listed 3111 total residential accounts, including Dering Harbor, of which 259 were inactive and 41 vacant.
- **Best Estimate of total residential units: 3,000.** The estimate of 3,000 housing units reflects the uncertainties at the margin in the Town's housing stock.

## How Many Vacant Residential Land Parcels Remain?

Residential land without a dwelling unit makes up 1,139 acres in 657 parcels. Vacant parcels with improvements that are not dwellings (such as a shed or garage) account for 10 percent of the acres. The remaining 90% of that land (1,027 acres) is coded as vacant, but may or may not be developable.

**Vacant Residential Land, 2020**

|                                   | Parcels    |             | Acres       |             |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   | Number     | Percent     | Number      | Percent     |
| Residential vacant land           | 567        | 86%         | 1027        | 90%         |
| Residential land with improvement | 90         | 14%         | 112         | 10%         |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>657</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>1139</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor's Data, 2020

## How Many Seasonal or Part-Time Housing Units are There?

There are many ways to characterize Shelter Island residents who do not live here 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 study uses census count data from 2010 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 occu-

pancy; not constructed for year-round occupancy (inadequate insulation, heating, etc.)."

- Suffolk County data from the 2010 Census clearly use a different definition, showing 52% of units in the Town of Shelter Island as seasonal.
- An analysis of tax bill addresses in the 2020 assessor's parcel data suggests that approximately 43% of residential properties in Shelter Island are owned by full-time residents or owners who spend enough time here to receive important mail, while approximately 57% are domiciled off the island. Compared with the 2010 data from Suffolk County, this indicates growth in the off-island percentage of property owners. Note that the number of residential parcels does not include the additional dependent units. The distribution of dependent units between year-round and seasonal residences has not been compiled.
- Owners with off-island tax addresses also own the majority of vacant residential land.
- Best Estimate for seasonal (not year round) housing units: 1404 units with off-island addresses.** Because dependent units and illegal units are not included, this number may slightly undercount seasonal housing units.

**Residential Parcels by Taxpayer On-Island or Off-Island Address, 2020**

|                    | Built Residential |         | Vacant Residential |         |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
|                    | Number            | Percent | Number             | Percent |
| On-island address  | 1054              | 42.9%   | 240                | 36.5%   |
| Off-island address | 1404              | 57.1%   | 417                | 63.5%   |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>2458</b>       |         | <b>657</b>         |         |

Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor's Data

# Property Ownership

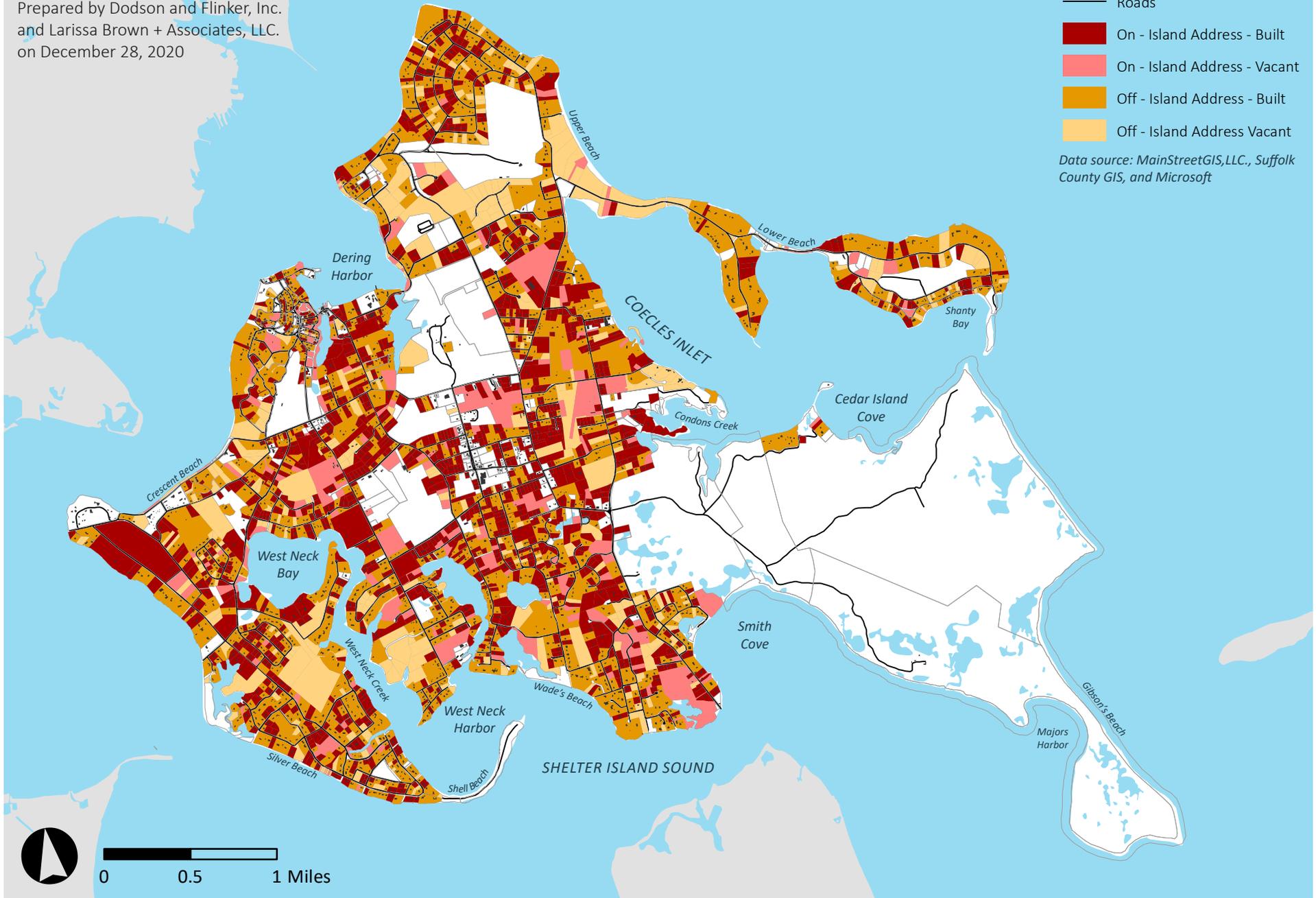
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on December 28, 2020

### Legend

- Building Footprints (2018)
- Roads
- On - Island Address - Built
- On - Island Address - Vacant
- Off - Island Address - Built
- Off - Island Address Vacant

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



## What Is the Balance Between Owner-Occupied and Renter-Occupied Units Among Full-Time Residents?

The majority of full-time residents live in owner-occupied housing. The percentage of year-round occupied housing units that were rented increased to approximately one in five by 2010. 2020 Census data will include a count of the number and percentage of renters on the island.

- **Best estimate of rental units occupied by full-time residents: approximately 250 or approximately 20% of year-round occupied units.**

### Town of Shelter Island Year-Round Housing Tenure, 1990, 2000 & 2010

|                            | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|
| Year- round occupied units | 975  | 996  | 1123 |
| Owner-occupied units       | 810  | 836  | 879  |
| % Owner-occupied units     | 83%  | 84%  | 78%  |
| Renter-occupied units      | 165  | 160  | 244  |
| % Renter-occupied units    | 17%  | 16%  | 22%  |

Source: US Census

## How Much New Construction Has Been Occurring?

- 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 from 2014. The number of new construction single family houses represents a small percentage of the overall housing numbers. 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 113 single family homes, which constitute 4.6% of the 2,458 single family properties in the assessor's database.

### New Construction and Demolition Permits, 2005-2020

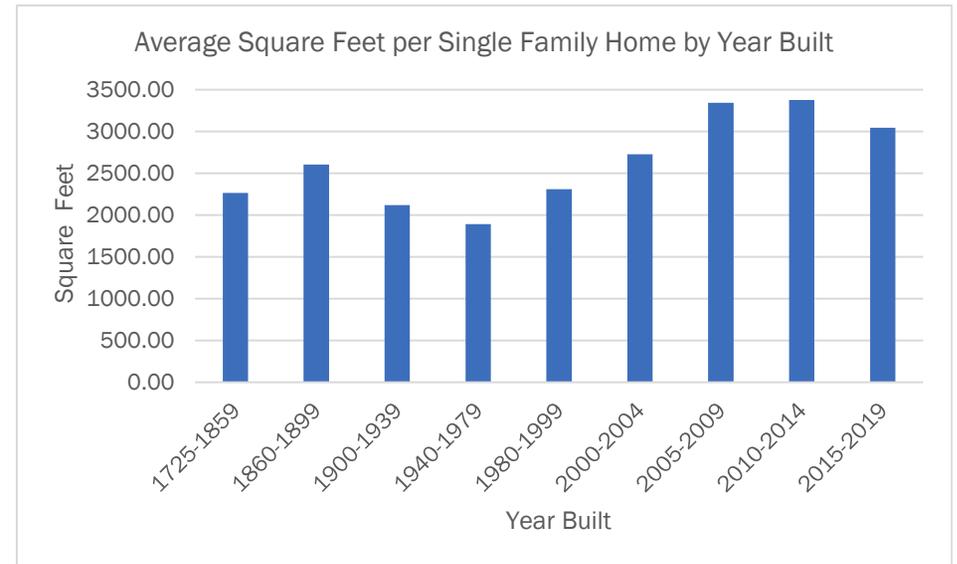
| Year   | New Construction | Demolition |
|--------|------------------|------------|
| 2005   | 27               | 0          |
| 2006   | 25               | 0          |
| 2007   | 13               | 1          |
| 2008   | 14               | 8          |
| 2009   | 12               | 7          |
| 2010   | 11               | 8          |
| 2011   | 4                | 1          |
| 2012   | 10               | 7          |
| 2013   | 2                | 2          |
| 2014   | 12               | 8          |
| 2015   | 17               | 7          |
| 2016   | 14               | 14         |
| 2017   | 16               | 16         |
| 2018   | 9                | 11         |
| 2019   | 18               | 11         |
| 2020   | 15               | 5          |
| Totals | 219              | 106        |

All permits are for single family homes.

Source: Shelter Island Building Department

## Are Houses Getting Bigger, With More Amenities?

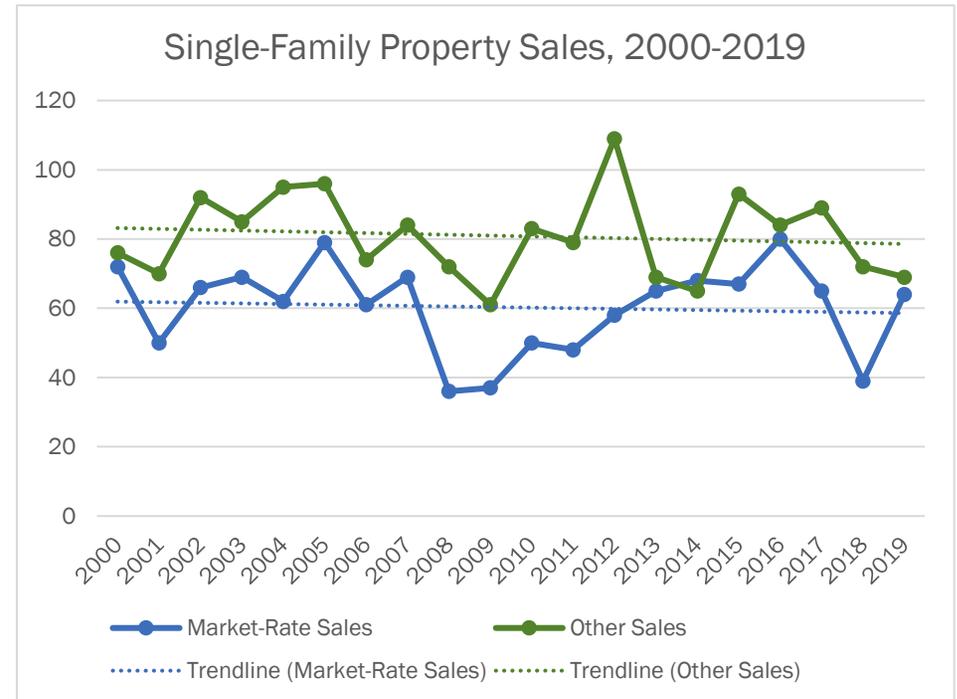
- There are a few very large houses on Shelter Island. Assessor's data show that the median single-family house has 2,007 square feet. On-island taxpayers have slightly smaller houses with a median of 1,900 square feet, and off-island taxpayers' houses are slightly larger at 2,090 square feet. The Town 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 houses built since 2000 is larger than that of houses built in earlier periods. Note: the graph shows the current size of houses, including all additions, not just the size of a house when it was first built.
- Building department pool permit data for the 2005-2020 period show a total of 469 permits for new swimming pools, with the largest annual numbers in the years 2006-2008. Assuming these pools are on separate single-family properties, the numbers suggest more than 20% of Island single family properties have pools.



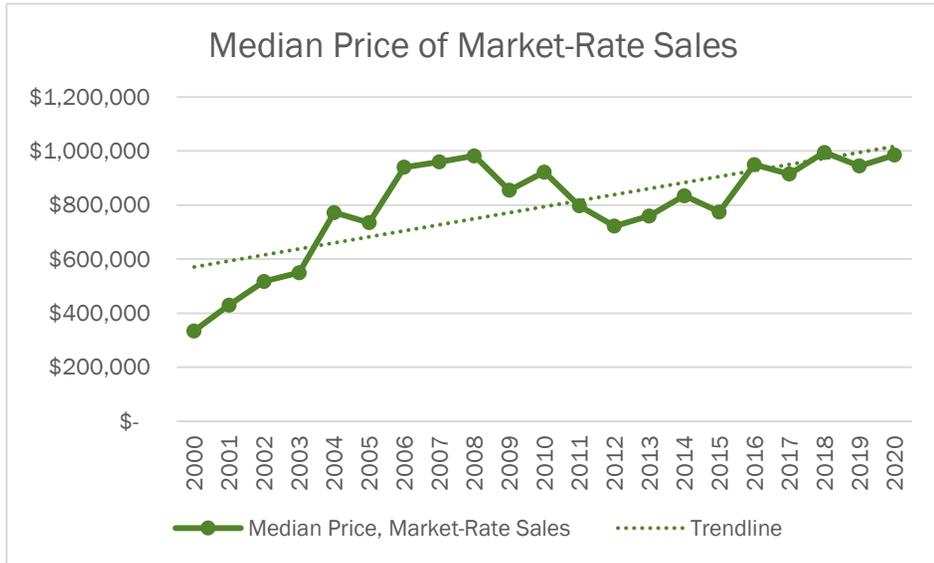
Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor's Data

## What Are the Trends in Sales and Other Real Estate Property Transfers?

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 reduced prices, for example, transfers for \$1. Between 2000 and 2019, market-rate sales ranged from 34 in the recession year of 2009 to 81 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 at right shows that there were usually fewer market rate sales of single family properties than other transfers.



Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor's Data; Real Estate Data



Note: Values in this graph are not corrected for inflation.  
 Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor’s Data; Real Estate Data

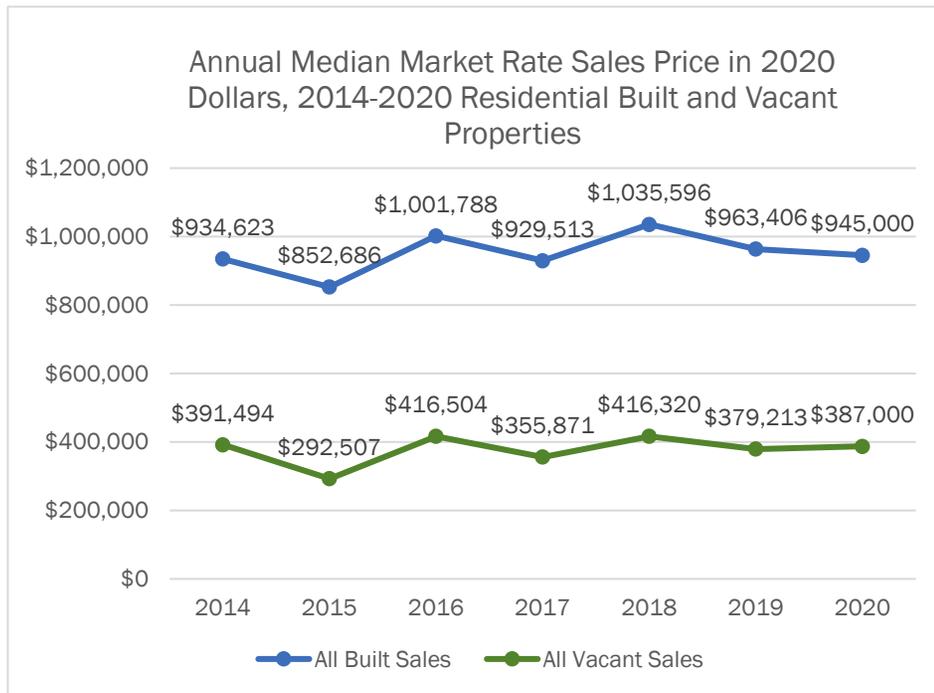
## How Much Does Shelter Island Housing Cost?

- Housing and land on Shelter Island are expensive, like in other seasonal vacation island communities near affluent metropolitan areas. When discussing the high cost of housing, Islanders typically say that the “bottom of the market” for a modest house is \$800,000. The assessor’s data for market-rate sales shown earlier (2000-2019) indicate that the median price of single family properties was already over \$700,000 by 2004.
- Combining assessor’s data and real estate data, the Town compiled a sample of market-rate sales data for 2014 to 2020. The data is organized using property codes that distinguish Waterview and Waterfront properties from Inland properties and includes vacant residential lots as well as parcels with houses. Not surprisingly, waterfront property typically costs substantially more than inland property, but prices depend on many different characteristics of the property.
- The graph of 2000-2020 median market-rate prices at left is not adjusted for 2020 dollars, but it shows how prices increased during the housing boom years of 2005 to 2008, dipped after the Great Recession and then started to rise again.

**Median Residential Market-Rate Sales Price by Category (2020 Dollars)**

|            | 2014        | 2015        | 2016        | 2017        | 2018        | 2019        | 2020        |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Built      |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Inland     | \$827,100   | \$728,508   | \$822,120   | \$851,433   | \$889,884   | \$818,895   | \$886,000   |
| Waterview  | \$2,178,030 | \$2,146,891 | \$1,415,570 | \$1,208,366 | \$1,248,960 | \$973,655   | \$804,167   |
| Waterfront | \$2,641,206 | \$2,657,399 | \$2,695,028 | \$2,230,830 | \$1,884,889 | \$1,691,085 | \$3,000,000 |
| Vacant     |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Inland     | \$344,625   | \$251,115   | \$411,604   | \$339,936   | \$394,463   | \$348,466   | \$387,000   |
| Waterfront | \$545,886   | \$631,926   | \$1,524,460 | \$849,840   | \$1,035,596 | \$4,202,090 | No Sales    |

Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor’s Data; Real Estate Data



Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor's Data; Real Estate Data

## What Is the Tax Burden for a Single-Family House?

- The median single family house tax bill based on the 2019-2020 \$6.099 in total tax levy rate per \$1000 in assessed value is \$5,239.04. According to the Empire Center's Benchmarking project, in 2019 Shelter Island was listed as among the 20 municipalities with the lowest effective tax rates on Long Island, which were among the lowest in the state. Localities in Southampton, East Hampton, and Fire Island were the only towns that had tax rates lower than Shelter Island.

## What Do We Know About Short-Term Rentals and Rental Management?

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, LuxuryRetreats.com, Booking.com, and dozens of others have encouraged the growth of short-term rentals (STR) on the Island. These rentals on Shelter Island 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 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 cities that attract visitors, such as Austin, TX and New Orleans, LA. 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 fourteen-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. Although the Court dismissed almost all of the plaintiffs' claims, the survival of the Fourth Amendment claim (unreasonable searches and seizures) resulted in Shelter Island amending its STR Law in May 2019, including many exemptions and eliminating penalties for violations.

- The Town engaged a firm, Host Compliance, to provide information services to facilitate enforcement. The firm provides real-time monitoring of the short-term rental market and access to the information by Town

officials. Relevant statistics are shown below from a March 2020 presentation to the Town Board:

- 294 listings in or near the boundaries, representing 191 unique rental units
- Annual growth rate of 6.2% in listings and 4.6% in units.
- Listings are frequently removed and reposted, and new listings created. From March 2019 to March 2020, 194 listings became inactive, 100 were reposted, and 112 were new postings. Of the listings active in March 2020 (when the pandemic impacts were just becoming evident), 69% were not on the platform in March 2019.
- A December 2, 2020 monthly status report from Host Compliance reported the following:
  - 170 properties in or near Shelter Island, 166 with addresses
  - 63 compliant short-term rentals
  - 97 non-compliant properties
  - 10 properties with unknown compliance
- The turnover and change in listings may reflect the opportunistic character of many listings 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.

### **Affordable and Attainable Housing**

Shelter Island real estate has long been expensive and the need for affordable housing for on-island workers has been under discussion since the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, if not before. The robust summer rental market has also resulted in a shortage of affordable year-round rentals as the rental income from the three summer months typically exceeds the revenue from a full-time rental. 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. These effects have also resulted in few options for town and school employees, other workers, and seniors wishing to downsize or sell their homes to raise funds to supplement their retirement

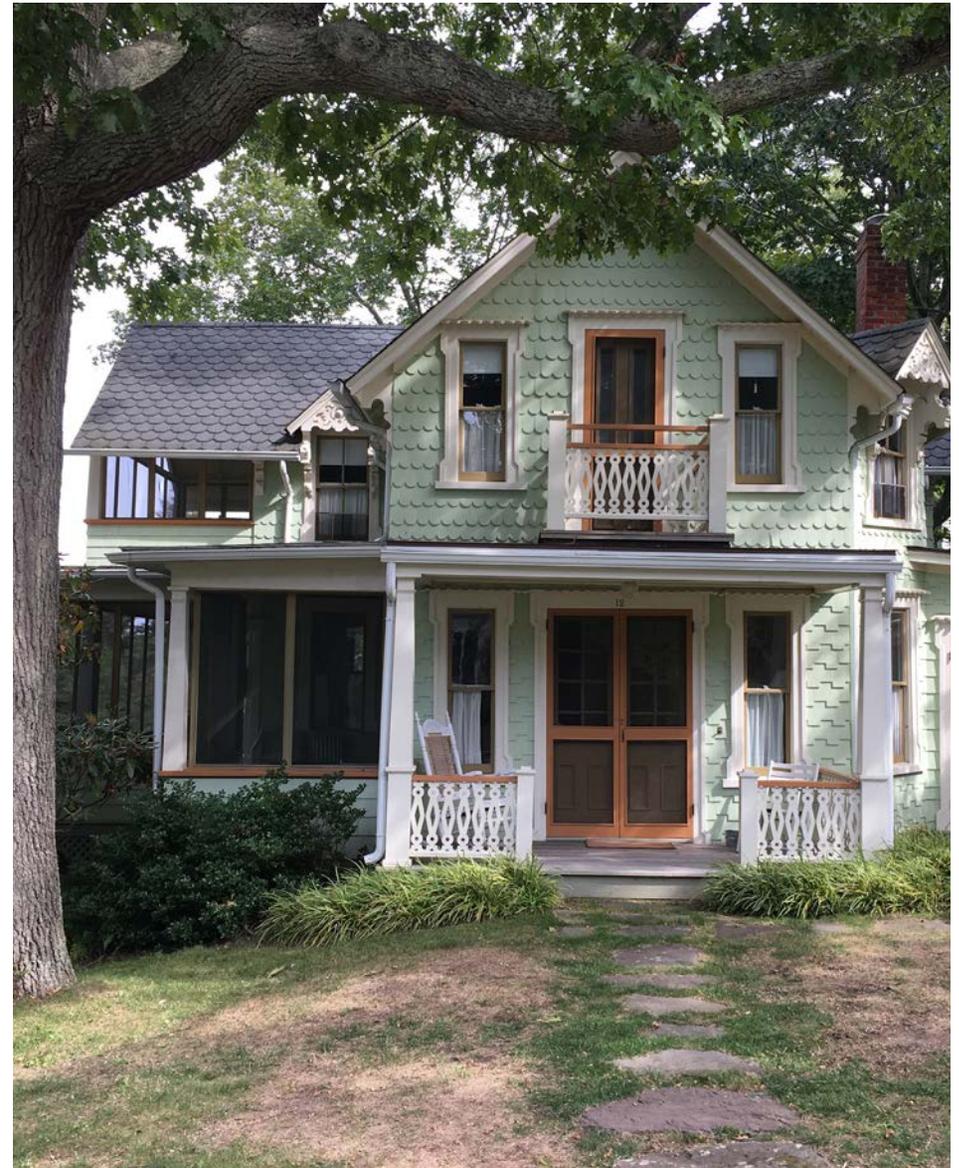
and move to an affordable rental apartment. Full-time town staff is currently required to live on the island, unless given an exception by the Town Board.

- 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, is \$64,824 in 2020. To buy an \$800,000 house with a 10% down-payment of \$80,000 (which may not be available), an income of approximately \$135,000 per year would be required. This would result in a monthly payment of about \$3,000 on a 30-year mortgage. Young families need two primary incomes and/or multiple jobs to approach purchasing a single family home in Shelter Island.
- There is a very limited supply of rental apartments. Some property-owners rent apartments that are not legal under the zoning code.
- As noted earlier, 2010 census data in which households reported their housing tenure show rentals as of April 1 to be 244 units, almost 22% of the 1123 occupied Shelter Island units at that time.
- The monthly rental for a one-bedroom year-round apartment is reported to be approximately \$1,100 to \$1,200. 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 (such as families on Medicaid) would find it difficult to pay \$1,000 in rent. In practice, they are likely paying more than 30% of income in housing costs.
- Renters seeking year-round housing find out about it by word of mouth. Landlords report that when they have a rental opportunity, they quickly receive multiple calls about the property.
- There are also an unknown number of room rentals that accommodate lower-income individuals.
- A few businesses with seasonal employees provide housing for their workers.
- The 1994 Comprehensive Plan reported that only 6 percent 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. The plan's goals and objectives included: "Create and maintain affordable housing opportunities for the diversity of age and income groups that make up Shelter Island's year-round population." The plan called out young working households, first time homebuyers, and elders as groups that could benefit. It also suggested creation of an

on-island organization to facilitate affordable housing.

- The only affordable housing initiative implemented so far was in 1996. Six affordable houses were auctioned to local homeowners. 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: the Town would buy a property of five to seven 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 in recent years, SIHOP has recently been revived. 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 affordable 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 (the plan was not adopted) identified continuing challenges to creating affordable housing, rated progress on achieving affordable housing objectives as mediocre, and supported the goal of affordable housing from the 1994 plan.
- Local knowledge and comments at public meetings suggest a need for 20-40 affordable rental and purchase options. Few people have signed up on the Housing Registry, perhaps because there is no affordable inventory attached to the registry. Proposals for developing community housing have typically triggered petitions against the projects early in the conceptual phase, which has led the proponent to abandon the attempt.
- The lack of public water supply in most areas of the Island has also limited developer interest in affordable housing because of the Suffolk County Board of Health requirement for sanitary loading. County and state funding programs are focused on transit-oriented development and downtown revitalization projects for off-island communities.
- Advocates for affordable housing note its importance for the economic and civic identity of Shelter Island and healthy generational turnover. Town government and businesses need employees. If school enrollment

falls too low, the Town's school may be lost to consolidation. Volunteers are needed for the Fire Department, Emergency Management Services, and town government committees.



A house in Shelter Island Heights

## Findings

- Ninety-eight percent of housing units on Shelter Island are single family houses.
- More than fifty percent of housing units and residential vacant land is owned by taxpayers with off-island tax addresses.
- Waterfront property is also owned predominantly by off-island owners.
- Over the 2005-2020 period, there was a net increase of 113 new single family homes (new houses minus demolitions). The overall average in new construction was 7.5 new houses per year.
- The median size of single-family houses is 2,007 square feet, with off-Island taxpayers' houses slightly larger at a median of 2,090 square feet.
- Housing and land is expensive. In 2020 dollars, the annual median sales prices for the years 2015 to 2020 ranged from \$728,508 for an inland house in 2015 to \$3 million for a waterfront house in 2020.
- The Town is trying to manage the lucrative Short-Term Rental (e.g. Airbnb) business.
- Despite concerns about the lack of affordable housing since the 1990s, only one project of six ownership houses has been completed since 1996. No deed restriction was included, with the result that there are no longer any affordable units on the island.

## Challenges

- The majority of housing and residential vacant land is owned by people with off-island tax addresses. These property owners may have less ability or interest to support the year-round needs of Town government and management.
- There is little data to distinguish part-time residents who spend most of the summer and/or weekends year-round in Shelter Island, from those who rent to visitors during most of the year.
- There is little year-round rental housing for employees because seasonal and short-term rentals are much more lucrative.
- The number of affordable, year-round rental or ownership housing units needed has not been well-quantified.
- The few affordable housing projects that have been proposed since the 1996 project have resulted in quick opposition.
- For-profit developers are unlikely to become interested in affordable housing, especially rental housing to be owned and managed by the developer, under current market conditions in Shelter Island.

# HOW DO WE MAKE A LIVING? JOBS & BUSINESSES ON SHELTER ISLAND

- Shelter Island has been a seasonal vacation community for almost 150 years, but elements of its farming and fishing community persisted well into the twentieth century. Today, however, the legacy of these economies survives under the special conditions of the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, a few other farm enterprises, and a small number of people who make all or most of their living on the water.
- The employment base of Shelter Island has largely shifted to tourism-related industries and services for the seasonal market. Accommodations and food service and arts, entertainment, and recreation account for 23 percent of businesses and 31 percent of employees. Because the ferry trip to the North and South Forks is short, many island businesses have employees who live off-island, and many island residents work on the mainland. 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 Shelter Island locations are headquartered off-island.
- About 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.
- 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 outside of the summer season.

## Understanding the Shelter Island Economy

To understand the economy, it is necessary to examine the following questions:

- What are the business sectors and businesses on Shelter Island?
- What are the jobs on Shelter Island? Are the jobs held by people who live on-island or off-island?
- What is the size and characteristics of the labor force on Shelter Island? How many work on-island or off-island? What is the unemployment rate?

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 for the Economy

- ESRI Business Analyst is the major source for this analysis. 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 US 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 US locations where consumers can spend money or time, including places like restaurants, grocery stores, parks, and cultural venues.
- The Census Bureau also provides economic data, including in the American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. As discussed in the section on the People of Shelter Island, these data have limitations in a place with a small year-round population, but can still be worth consulting.
- Information gathered through interviews provides additional information and context about the Shelter Island economy.

## Total Businesses

- The Shelter Island Chamber of Commerce has 112 members, including 15-20 nonprofits that are important enterprises for the island economy and also including 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. This is similar to an ESRI Infogroup estimate of 160 businesses and 1,050 employees on Shelter Island.
- A list of 194 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 one location—while others may have been left out—this number is not exhaustive and subject to change.
- 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 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.
- There are also a number of home-based businesses on the Island, but little reliable data on how many.
- **Best Estimate: 185 businesses**

## Employment Base

- The employment base of a community refers to the industries or economic sectors that bring wealth from outside the community into the local economy. Service industries support the basic industries.
- The employment base of Shelter Island is largely composed of tourism-related industries: accommodations and food service and arts, entertainment, and recreation account for 23 percent of businesses and 31 percent of employees. Real estate and construction are also important sectors that generate significant economic activity.
- The Location Quotient (LQ) is a way to identify base industries by comparing how much employment is concentrated in the community compared to the larger region, such as the North Fork or Suffolk County in this case. A LQ more than 1.0 means that there is a greater than expected concentration of employment.
- Shelter Island has a high LQ for tourism-related industries, the construction industry, and real estate. The island also has a high LQ for the transportation and warehouse industry because of employment at the two ferries. High LQs for the finance and insurance sector and the professional, scientific and technical services sector likely exist because consultants or similar workers can have broad markets outside the region.
- The low LQ for some sectors, such as manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and wholesale trade are not surprising, but the low LQ for retail trade suggests barriers to retail expansion on Shelter Island.

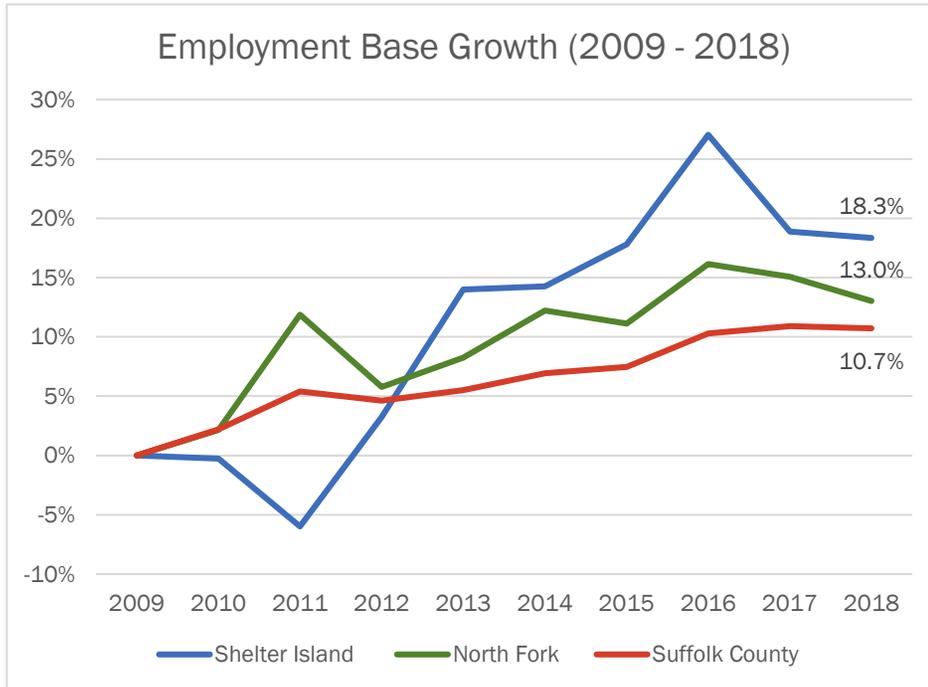
**Shelter Island Business Sectors, Employees and Location Quotient 2020**

| Industry   | Businesses |         | Employees |         |   |   |
|--|------------|---------|-----------|---------|---|---|
|  | Number     | Percent | Number    | Percent | LQ: Shelter Isl. compared to North Fork | LQ: Shelter Isl. compared to Suffolk County |
| Accommodation & Food Services                                      | 27         | 16.9%   | 236       | 22.5%   | 2.4                                     | 3.2   |
| Retail Trade   | 26         | 16.2%   | 126       | 12.0%   | 0.6                                     | 0.9   |
| Arts, Entertainment & Recreation                                   | 9          | 5.6%    | 89        | 8.5%    | 1.5                                     | 4.3   |
| Other Services (except Public Administration)                      | 16         | 10.0%   | 81        | 7.7%    | 1.0                                     | 1.4   |
| Construction   | 15         | 9.4%    | 83        | 7.9%    | 1.9                                     | 1.5   |
| Public Administration  | 12         | 7.5%    | 80        | 7.6%    | 1.1                                     | 1.9   |
| Transportation & Warehousing                                       | 5          | 3.1%    | 67        | 6.4%    | 3.2                                     | 2.5   |
| Professional, Scientific & Tech Services                           | 9          | 5.6%    | 66        | 6.3%    | 1.7                                     | 0.9   |
| Finance & Insurance  | 6          | 3.8%    | 56        | 5.3%    | 2.4                                     | 1.5   |
| Real Estate, Rental & Leasing                                      | 10         | 6.2%    | 45        | 4.3%    | 1.9                                     | 1.9   |
| Educational Services   | 3          | 1.9%    | 45        | 4.3%    | 0.7                                     | 0.4   |
| Wholesale Trade  | 4          | 2.5%    | 21        | 2.0%    | 0.8                                     | 0.4   |
| Information  | 3          | 1.9%    | 16        | 1.5%    | 1.4                                     | 0.7   |
| Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services | 5          | 3.1%    | 16        | 1.5%    | 0.3                                     | 0.5   |
| Manufacturing  | 2          | 1.2%    | 12        | 1.1%    | 0.3                                     | 0.1   |
| Health Care & Social Assistance                                    | 3          | 1.9%    | 11        | 1.0%    | 0.1                                     | 0.1   |
| Unclassified Establishments  | 5          | 3.1%    | 0         | 0.0%    |   |   |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting                           | 0          | 0.0%    | 0         | 0.0%    | 0.0                                     | 0.0   |
| Mining   | 0          | 0.0%    | 0         | 0.0%    | 0.0                                     |   |
| Utilities  | 0          | 0.0%    | 0         | 0.0%    | 0.0                                     | 0.0   |
| Management of Companies & Enterprises                              | 0          | 0.0%    | 0         | 0.0%    |   | 0.0   |
| Total  | 160        | 100.0%  | 1050      | 100.0%  |   |   |

Source: Infogroup/ESRI

## Employment Base Growth

According to U.S. Census OnTheMap data, the employment base of Shelter Island has risen 18.3 percent since 2009, a greater increase than the North Fork area and Suffolk County as a whole. (Like other data based on Census surveys, this data should be viewed with caution, but the general upward trend is likely correct.)



Source: U.S. Census OnTheMap 2009-2018

## The Shelter Island Labor Force (People Who Live on the Island)

While the year-round population of Shelter Island increased slightly, the labor force living on the island shrank between 2010 and 2018, according to ACS estimated data, the only data available. If correct, this may be indicative of reduced employment opportunities during the Great Recession and its aftermath, the lack of sufficient workforce housing, individuals in the labor force taking multiple jobs, or more retirees moving to the island. It is reported that many working-age year-round residents and households have more than one job in order to afford to live on Shelter Island.

|                | 2010    | 2014    | 2010-14 % Change | 2018    | 2010-18 % Change |
|----------------|---------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|
| Shelter Island | 1,245   | 1,307   | 5.0%             | 1,208   | -3.0%            |
| North Fork     | 27,982  | 29,380  | 5.0%             | 28,741  | 2.7%             |
| Suffolk County | 77,3746 | 78,7323 | 1.8%             | 78,2446 | 1.1%             |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

The estimated unemployment rate among Shelter Island residents has consistently remained lower than on the surrounding North Fork area and Suffolk County.

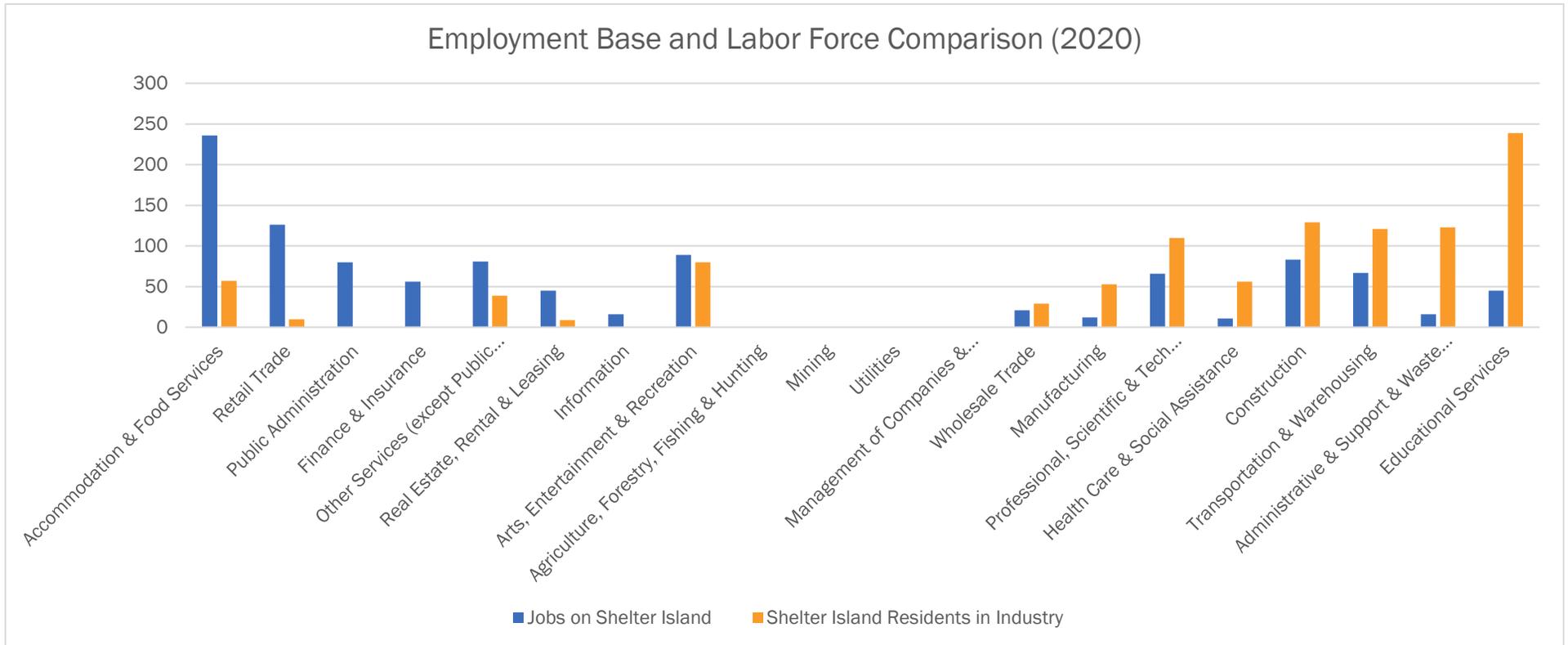
|                      | 2010 | 2014 | 2018 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|
| Shelter Island       | 1.3% | 5.2% | 0%   |
| North Fork (average) | 4.6% | 7.4% | 3.0% |
| Suffolk County       | 5.8% | 7.1% | 4.7% |

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

**ESRI Estimates: Shelter Island Labor Force 2020**

| Age Group | Population | Employed | Unemployed | Unemployment Rate | Labor Force Participation Rate | Employment-Population Ratio |
|-----------|------------|----------|------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total 16+ | 2065       | 1053     | 115        | 9.8               | 56.6                           | 51                          |
| 16-24     | 167        | 70       | 14         | 16.7              | 50.3                           | 41.9                        |
| 25-54     | 659        | 555      | 58         | 9.5               | 93                             | 84.2                        |
| 55-64     | 460        | 338      | 34         | 9.1               | 80.9                           | 73.5                        |
| 65+       | 779        | 90       | 10         | 10                | 12.8                           | 11.6                        |

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Source: ESRI/Infogroup

However, the high unemployment rate among Shelter Island residents in the labor force for 2020 (as reported by ESRI) is likely due to the impact of the pandemic.

## On-Island and Off-Island Jobs

A comparison of the estimated employment base and labor force reveals that jobs on Shelter Island in the accommodation and food service and retail trade tend to be staffed by non-residents. The public administration category can include more types of jobs than Town government, so the estimate of no residents employed in public administration is likely an artifact of the data collection parameters. Similarly, many Shelter Island residents work off-island in sectors such as health care, educational services, construction, and transportation. For example, there are 236 jobs in Accommodation & Food Services, but residents have 57 of those jobs, with 179 held by workers from off-island. In contrast, there are 45 Shelter Island jobs in Educational Services, but 239 residents who work in that sector. That means that 194 residents work in off-island jobs. In addition, some businesses in the Accommodations and Food Services sector and Recreation hire summer employees from abroad.

## Self-Employment and Working from Home

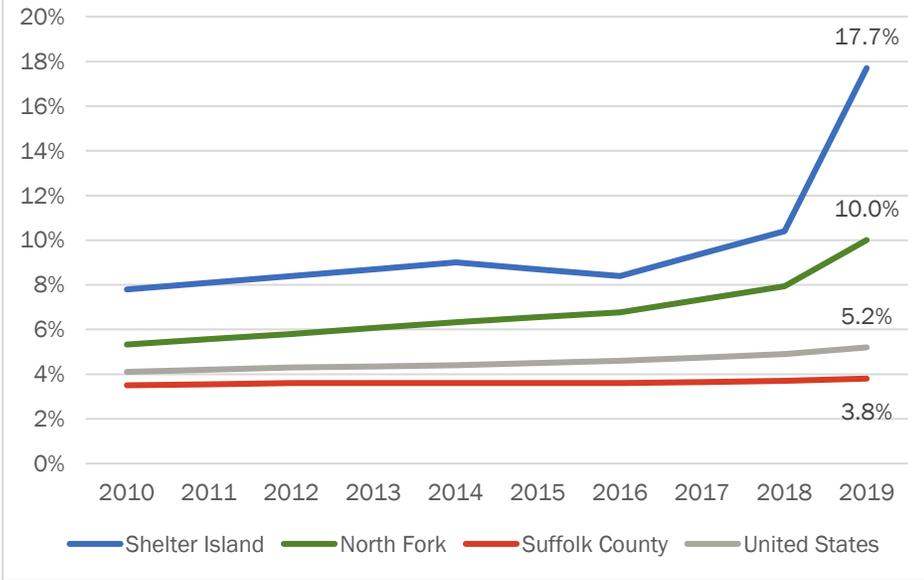
- Many of the businesses on Shelter Island are sole proprietorships operated by self-employed Islanders. Some businesses are owned by retirement-aged residents. In addition, there are multi-generational businesses on the island.
- Changes in the economy combined with pandemic protections have resulted 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, particularly the 2019 data. However, there is good reason to believe that working from home increased during the 2020 pandemic year. See the graph of this data on the following page.

## Employment Base and Labor Force Comparison, 2020

| Industry                                      | Jobs | Residents | Difference |
|---|------|-----------|------------|
| Accommodation & Food Services                 | 236  | 57        | 179        |
| Retail Trade                                  | 126  | 10        | 116        |
| Public Administration                         | 80   | 0         | 80         |
| Finance & Insurance                           | 56   | 0         | 56         |
| Other Services (except Public Administration) | 81   | 39        | 42         |
| Real Estate, Rental & Leasing                 | 45   | 9         | 36         |
| Information                                   | 16   | 0         | 16         |
| Arts, Entertainment & Recreation              | 89   | 80        | 9          |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting      | 0    | 0         | 0          |
| Mining  | 0    | 0         | 0          |
| Utilities                                     | 0    | 0         | 0          |
| Management of Companies & Enterprises         | 0    | 0         | 0          |
| Wholesale Trade                               | 21   | 29        | -8         |
| Manufacturing                                 | 12   | 53        | -41        |
| Professional, Scientific & Tech Services      | 66   | 110       | -44        |
| Health Care & Social Assistance               | 11   | 56        | -45        |
| Construction                                  | 83   | 129       | -46        |
| Transportation & Warehousing                  | 67   | 121       | -54        |
| Administrative & Support & Waste Management   | 16   | 123       | -107       |
| Educational Services                          | 45   | 239       | -194       |

Source: Infogroup/ESRI 2020

Percent of Labor Force Working From Home  
2010-2019 (ACS 5-Year Estimates)



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

### Are there any geographic business clusters in Shelter Island?

Although there are individual businesses scattered across the island, many businesses tend to be clustered in two locations:

- Shelter Island Heights has two clusters of businesses in the Grand Avenue/Chase Avenue/Bridge Street area, including two hardware stores, a post office, a pharmacy, a bookshop, a café, several restaurants, marina, gas station, a barber shop, and a bike repair and rental shop.
- In the Town Center, businesses are stretched along Route 114 from the intersection with Manwaring Road where the IGA supermarket is located to the intersection with St. Mary's Road. In addition to civic institutions such as Town Hall, the Library, the School, the Fire Department, and the post office, businesses include several restaurants, a bank, and several professional offices. There are empty storefront and business locations in the Town Center, which has raised concerns. Some parts of this area are potentially walkable. In an effort to avoid sprawl character, the zoning for much 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. A design guideline overlay or similar approach might be more successful.



Businesses in Shelter Island Heights



Businesses in the Town Center



## A Taste of Island Businesses

A non-exhaustive list of businesses on the Island developed by members of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force and Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee from Chamber of Commerce listings, the Shelter Island Telephone Book and local knowledge shows the variety of existing businesses that can be found on Shelter Island. Some of these businesses are duplicates, for example, businesses that sell food and other goods and services.



Shelter Island Heights Pharmacy

### Non-Exhaustive List of Island Businesses

| Island Business List       | Number |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Accountants                | 1      |
| Architects                 | 2      |
| Artists                    | 18     |
| Attorneys                  | 6      |
| Auto Repair                | 3      |
| Banking                    | 2      |
| Builders/Contractors       | 23     |
| Catering Venues            | 3      |
| Electricians               | 1      |
| Food Markets               | 5      |
| Florist                    | 1      |
| Fuels (Fuel Oil & Propane) | 2      |
| Funeral Home               | 1      |
| Furniture Services         | 1      |
| Gas Stations               | 2      |
| Graphic Arts               | 1      |
| Hotels/Bed & Breakfasts    | 10     |
| Insurance                  | 2      |
| Interior Design            | 5      |
| Landscapers                | 9      |
| Marinas/Marine Services    | 5      |
| Medical Services Providers | 7      |
| Moving Companies           | 1      |

### Non-Exhaustive List of Island Businesses (continued)

| Island Business List          | Number     |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Personal Grooming             | 4          |
| Pest Control                  | 1          |
| Pet Services                  | 3          |
| Plumbers                      | 3          |
| Pool Services                 | 2          |
| Real Estate Offices           | 10         |
| Recreational Services         | 11         |
| Restaurants and Delicatessens | 24         |
| Retail/Shopping               | 15         |
| Sanitation                    | 2          |
| Transportation/Taxi/Ferry     | 4          |
| Water Analysis                | 1          |
| Wellness                      | 3          |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>194</b> |

Source: CPTF/CPAC members

## Legacy Economic Sectors

Until the mid-20th century, Shelter Island continued to have significant farm and fishing economies. This legacy still contributes to the island's sense of identity. However, agriculture and water-related enterprises are not significant drivers of the economy, as they once were.

- Agriculture: The assessor's list classifies only two agricultural properties, the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm and a horse farm at 60 Smith Street. There are reportedly several other farm enterprises on the Island.
- Marine-related businesses: There are a handful of marine-related businesses in town.
- Aquatic property (e.g., for mooring) and oyster beds: there are 6 private owners of underwater property (in addition to the Town, Suffolk County, and the State), one of whom lives on the island.
- Marinas/boatyards: 4, including the Shelter Island Yacht Club.
- Commercial fishing: A limited number of people depend on commercial fishing or shellfishing for all or most of their livelihoods. Commercial shellfishing is highly regulated. There are many more part-time and recreational fishermen and shellfishermen. Scallops, once abundant, have been devastated by parasites and an invasive species in recent years. Similarly, lobstering disappeared 20 years ago.

## Are There any Groups That Promote and Support the Shelter Island Business Community?

- Shelter Island Town government does not have any focused 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. Shelter Island does not have a SCORE Chapter, an organization of retirees who can advise business owners. There are no incubator facilities or "maker spaces" available on the Island, however the need for a "maker space" has been identified in the Shelter Island Library Strategic Plan.
- The Chamber of Commerce has four goals: build the local economy;

enhance local business visibility; expand business networking; and advocate for business. Their 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 town government. The impacts of the pandemic year 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.

- 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 it detracts from the quiet rural character of the Island.

## How Many Banks are There on Shelter Island?

- There are two branch banks in Shelter Island: BNB Bank at 21 North Ferry Road and Chase at 48 North Ferry Road. Both serve the business community.



## Findings

- The Shelter Island economy is focused on services to support residential life and for the seasonal visitor economy.
- Many employees of on-island businesses live off-island.
- Year-round residents in the labor force hold jobs off-island as well as on-island.
- The number of self-employed and “work from home” workers has been increasing.
- On-island workers report that it is not uncommon for islanders to have multiple jobs or sources of income.
- There is no formal Town government official or entity with the responsibility to work with the business community.

## Challenges

- Seasonal changes in population and the small year-round population are barriers to business development.
- Employees of on-island service businesses often do not have incomes high enough to access housing on Shelter Island.
- The resident population is ambivalent about how much and what kind of additional business they would like to see on the island—if any.
- Developing stronger and more effective relationships between the business community and Town government may benefit the island economy..

# LAND USE AND ZONING

## How Are Various Land Uses Distributed Across the Island?

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. New York State has developed “property class codes” which provide a uniform system of land use classification used by assessors across the state. While these designations can sometimes be confusing (as when a large forested property with one house is labeled as a residential use), they provide the most up-to-date record of land use change.

Please note that 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 be made **now and in the future**. In each of Shelter Island’s three residential districts, two business districts, causeway district and near-shore overlay district the zoning ordinance sets specific standards for uses, densities and dimensions which must be followed. Current uses may generally continue, but any change in use has to go through a permitting and approval process.

According to current assessor’s records, of the Island’s 7,229 acres of total land area, almost 40% is in residential use. The next largest category is recreation and open space, at 35.5%, agriculture at 4% and another 4.6% comprised of commercial, industrial, institutions, transportation, utilities, surface water and waste management properties. These uses, totaling about 84.1% of the Island’s landscape, are unlikely to change significantly. The remaining 15.9% is made up of “vacant” land uses, meaning it is unprotected, in private ownership and zoned for residential or commercial development.

**Shelter Island Land Uses**

| Land Use                | Number of Parcels | Acreage         | Percentage  |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Agriculture             | 5                 | 287.4           | 4.0%        |
| Commercial              | 94                | 107.98          | 1.5%        |
| Commercial Vacant       | 21                | 18.59           | 0.3%        |
| Industrial              | 6                 | 14.07           | 0.2%        |
| Institutional           | 25                | 62.77           | 0.9%        |
| Recreation & Open Space | 91                | 2,566.52        | 35.5%       |
| Residential             | 2,458             | 2,885.66        | 39.9%       |
| Residential Vacant      | 511               | 834.91          | 11.5%       |
| Surface Water           | 4                 | 41.76           | 0.6%        |
| Transportation          | 53                | 78.66           | 1.1%        |
| Utilities               | 3                 | 9.9             | 0.1%        |
| Vacant                  | 146               | 3,03.95         | 4.2%        |
| Waste Management        | 4                 | 17.27           | 0.2%        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>3,421</b>      | <b>7,229.44</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor’s Data, 2020

# Land Use

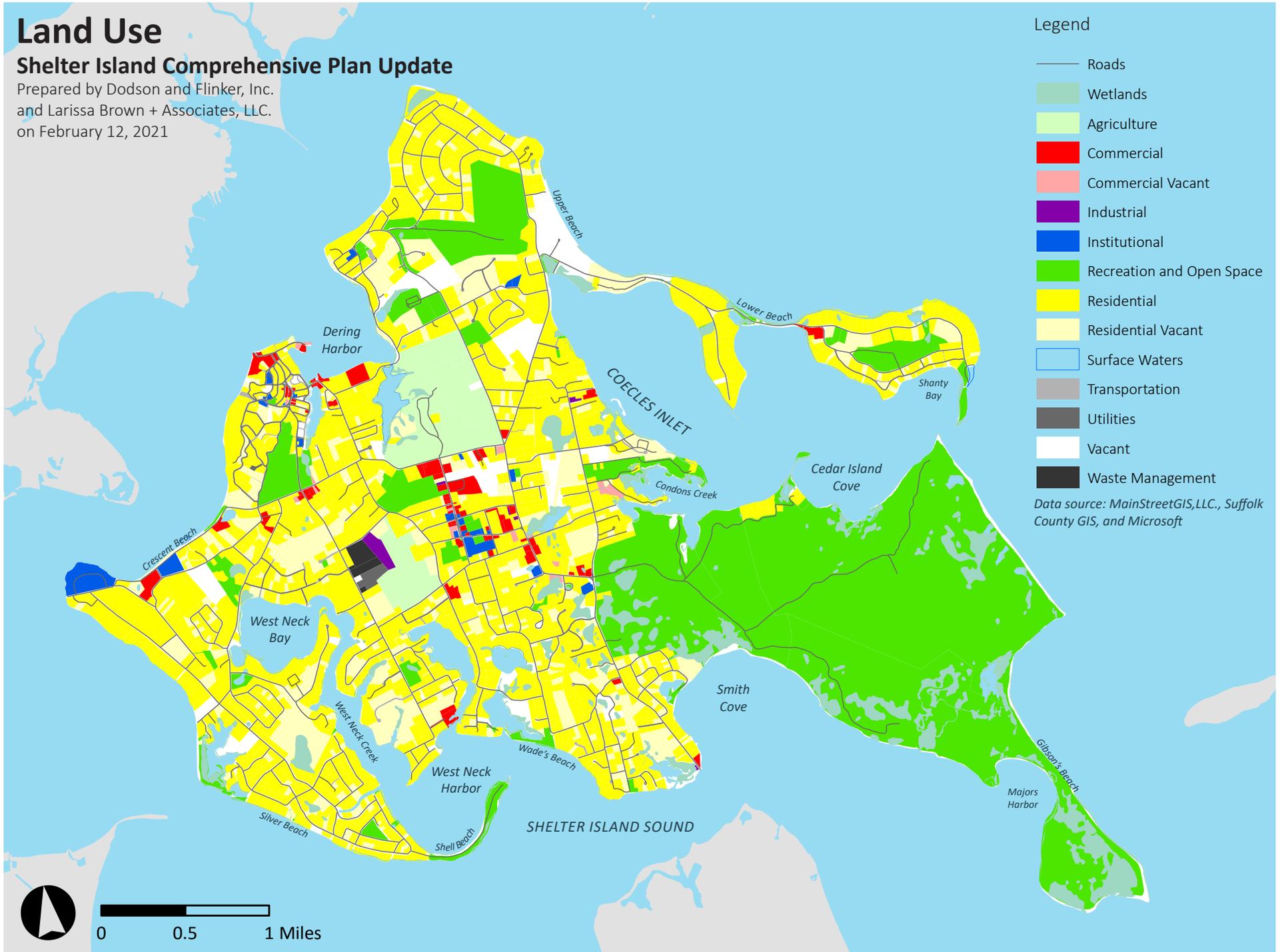
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 12, 2021

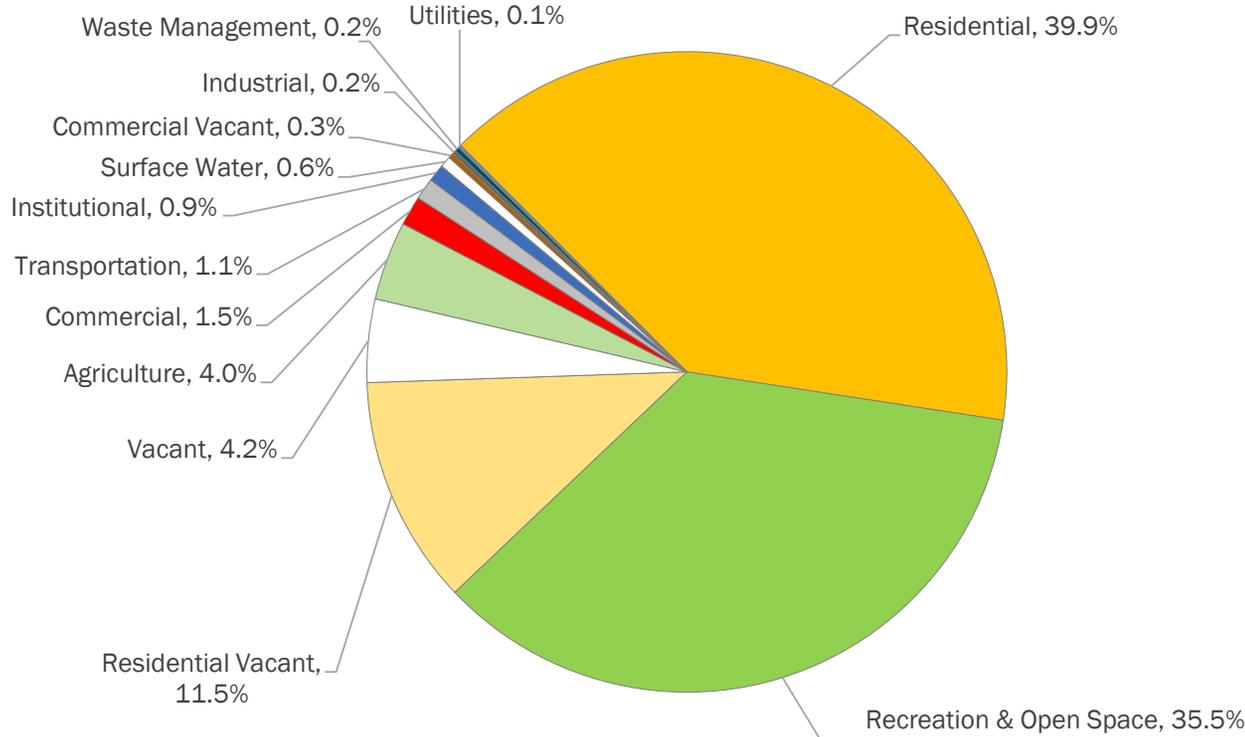
### Legend

- Roads
- Wetlands
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Commercial Vacant
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Recreation and Open Space
- Residential
- Residential Vacant
- Surface Waters
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Vacant
- Waste Management

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



## Land Use Composition (2020)



Source: Town of Shelter Island Assessor's Data, 2020

Shelter Island was dominated by agriculture and fishing, within a natural setting of forests, ponds, marshes, inlets and beaches. Structures were isolated on large farms and estates, or clustered within small village centers. According to the Assessor's records, just 65 structures existing today date from before 1865. After the Civil War, the growth of Shelter Island Heights and later resort development transformed the island into a summer colony, with 265 structures built between 1865 and 1900, and another 315 built by 1940. The post-war suburban boom saw another 375 structures by 1960, 633 from 1961-1980 and 659 from 1981-2000. In the first twenty years of

this century growth has slowed somewhat, with 445 new homes. As another way of looking at it, after three centuries of European settlement, in 1951 the Island had 780 structures, most of them single-family homes. In the following 50 years this total tripled to 2,310 structures in 2001, and 448 structures have been added since then, for a total of 2,756.

Protection of the 2000-acre Mashomack Preserve in 1980, and conservation of other large parcels such as Sylvester Manor, has balanced this residential growth with preservation of 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 the island retain something of its historic rural character. But for much of the island the traditional rural landscape of farmsteads and villages 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.

## How Much of the Island Has Been Permanently Protected?

Mid-century growth and change on Shelter Island inspired a conservation movement that continues to this day. Close to 2,600 acres of land have been permanently protected or otherwise placed into an open space use that is unlikely to change. The largest area is the 2,039 acres of the Mashomack Preserve, and there are more than 24 other properties that are open to the public. The Open Space and Recreation Map shows protected and publicly-owned park and recreation areas in dark green. In light green are privately owned open space parcels that are unprotected. This includes recreational land such as the Gardiner's Bay Country Club, and a portion of the lands owned by the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm. It also includes the Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve, which is preserved as a matter of policy, but not in fact legally protected. In beige are publicly owned properties classified by assessor as "vacant land."

# Open Space and Recreation

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

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on February 12, 2021

### Legend

- Unprotected, Privately Owned Open Space
- Protected Open Space
- Publicly Owned Assessed as Vacant Residential Land
- Private Open Space Protected by Conservation Easements
- Publicly Owned and Institutional

- Trails and Bike Routes
- Coecles Harbor Marine Water Trail
- ⚓ Town Landings

*Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, 2020-2021 Shelter Island Open Space and Preserved Land Map, and Microsoft*



**Key to Properties Shown on the Open Space and Recreation Map**

| Map # | Property Name (or Owner/MGR)        |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1     | Bunker City County Park             |
| 2     | Cackle Hill Preserve                |
| 3     | Congdon Creek Shorefront Preserve   |
| 4     | Crab Creek Preserve                 |
| 5     | Dickerson Pond Park                 |
| 6     | Dickerson Creek Overlook            |
| 7     | Foxen Point Tidal Wetlands          |
| 8     | Gardiner's Creek Preserve           |
| 9     | Ice Pond Park                       |
| 10    | Locust Woods Preserve               |
| 11    | Mashomack Preserve                  |
| 12    | Mildred Flower Hird Nature Preserve |
| 13    | North Menantic Preserve             |
| 14    | Old Lima Bean Fields                |
| 15    | Old Nursery Woodlands Preserve      |
| 16    | Reel Point                          |
| 17    | Sachem's Woods                      |
| 18    | Shell Beach                         |
| 19    | St. Gabriel's Meadow                |
| 20    | Sylvester Manor Educational Farm    |
| 21    | Taylor's Island                     |

| Map # | Property Name (or Owner/MGR)                |
|-------|---|
| 22    | Turkem's Rest Preserve                      |
| 23    | Wades Beach                                 |
| 24    | Wayside Park                                |
| 25    | West Neck Preserve                          |
| 26    | Cedar Island Overlook                       |
| 27    | PLT/County Conservation Land                |
| 28    | PLT/Nature Conservancy                      |
| 29    | Lower Beach (PLT/County/Town)               |
| 30    | PLT/Town                                    |
| 31    | Westmoreland Farms (Town/County)            |
| 32    | Shorewood (PLT/Shorewood Civic Association) |
| 33    | Osprey Rd (Town)                            |
| 34    | Willow Pond Park (Town)                     |
| 35    | Union Free School Playfields (PLT/UFS)      |
| 36    | Ryan Horse Farm (PLT)                       |
| 37    | Dickerson (PLT)                             |
| 38    | Sunshine Road Park (PLT/Town)               |
| 39    | Smith Cove - Underwater Land (NYS)          |
| 40    | Klenawicus Airfield (Town CPF)              |
| 41    | Dering Harbor Village Lands                 |

| Map # | Property Name (or Owner/MGR)                 |
|-------|--|
| A     | Gardiner's Bay Country Club                  |
| B     | Catholic Church Cemetery                     |
| C     | Ram island County Park (owner: Osprey Acres) |
| D     | Shelter Island Cemetery                      |

## How Does the Town Pay for Conservation?

The 2,039-acre Mashomack Preserve was created by the Nature Conservancy in 1980, following the largest fundraising campaign in its history to that point, with over 1700 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 non-profit 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 \$250,000 of the purchase price is exempt from the tax. The money 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. Shelter Island’s CPF revenue totaled \$1.12 million in 2018, increased to \$1.54 million in 2019, and through October 2020 had reached \$2 million.

## What Is the History of Planning and Zoning on Shelter Island?

Following a 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 two-acre house lots across most of the Island. While this reduced the overall density of development, growth continued, with more than 1000 homes built from 1960 to 1990. In 1991 the Town Board established a Comprehensive Plan Committee, which worked with planning consultant Phil Herr to create a comprehensive plan that was adopted in 1994. The plan projected growth in housing from 2,200 units in 1990 to 3,000 housing units by 2010 (there were instead about 2,600), and even though growth rates moderated somewhat many of the issues discussed in the plan—economic development, housing, town services,

taxes, environmental protection and water supply—are still top of mind.

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 highlighting 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.

### Zoning Districts and Basic Dimensional Requirements

| Zoning District        | Minimum Lot Size         | Maximum Impervious Lot Coverage | Lot Frontage | Front/Side/Rear Setbacks (in feet) | Maximum Building Height |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A Residential          | 40,000 sf                | 25% buildings, 40% overall      | 140 feet     | 40/25/25                           | 2 stories/ 35 feet      |
| AA Residential         | 80,000 sf                | 25%/40%                         | 160 feet     | 50/30/30                           | 2 st./35'               |
| C Residential          | 40,000 sf                | 30%/40%                         | 100 feet     | 30/10/10                           | 2 st./35'               |
| B Business             | 40,000 sf                | 70%/75%                         | 100 feet     | 30/10/10                           | 2 st./35'               |
| B1 Restricted Business | 40,000 sf                | 50%/75%                         | 100 feet     | 30/10/10                           | 35 feet                 |
| Causeway District      | 80,000 sf-<br>200,000 sf | varies                          | 160'         | 50/30/30                           | 25 feet                 |

# Zoning and Overlay Districts

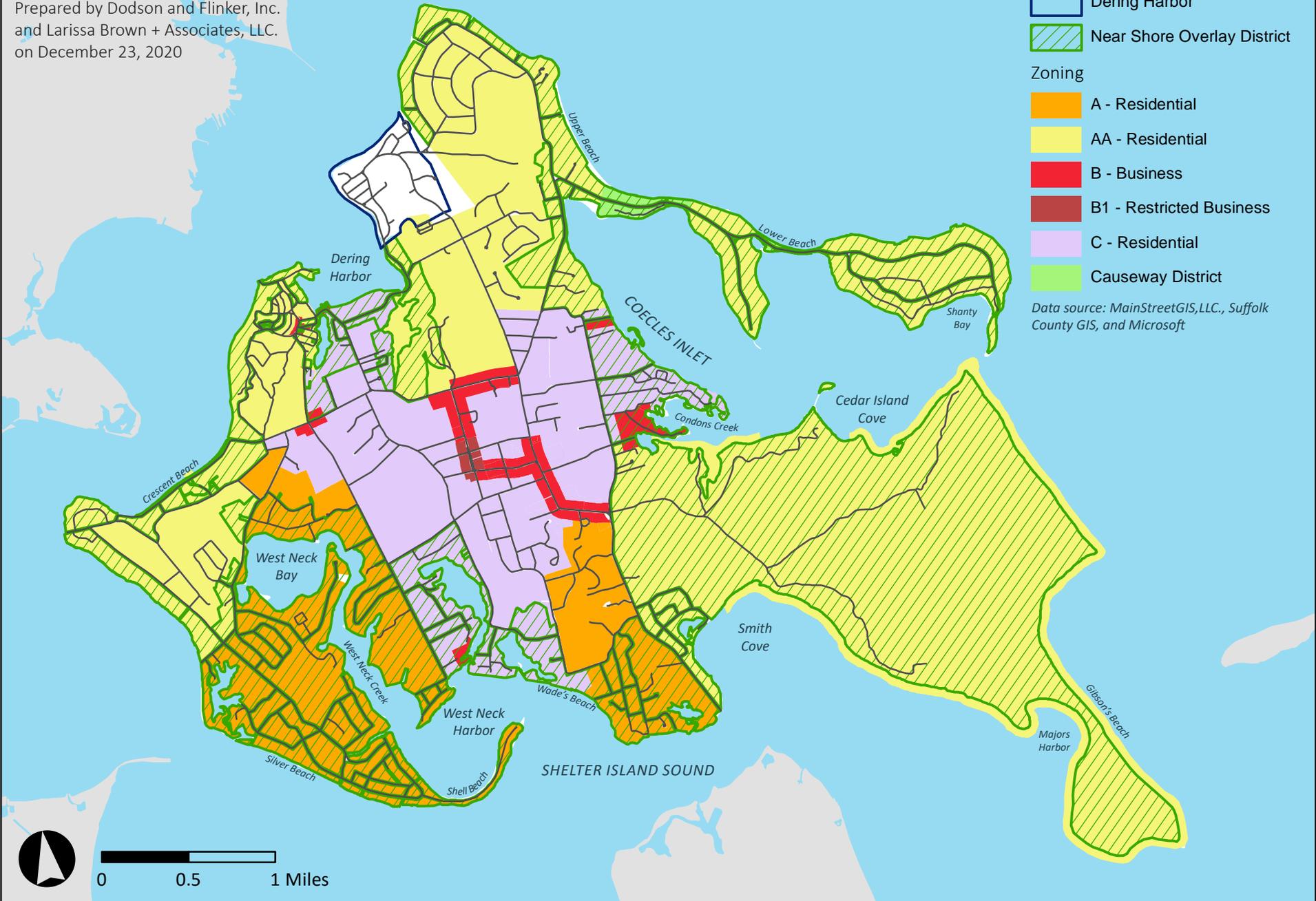
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on December 23, 2020

### Legend

- Roads
- Dering Harbor
- ▨ Near Shore Overlay District
- Zoning**
- A - Residential
- AA - Residential
- B - Business
- B1 - Restricted Business
- C - Residential
- Causeway District

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



## How Does the Town's Zoning Shape Land Use on Shelter Island?

Section 133 of the Town Code establishes six zoning districts, with three residential districts with 40,000-80,000 square-foot minimum lot size, and two business districts with 40,000 square foot minimum lots. The sixth district is the Causeway District, established in 2011 to protect part of the causeway to Ram Island.

In addition to the base zoning districts, section 133-12 of the Zoning Code establishes a Near Shore and Peninsular Overlay District that is designed "...to protect selected areas of unique importance to the water and other natural resources of the town." This requires 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; requires permeable pavement for driveways; and establishes standards for on-site stormwater recharge.

Since zoning was adopted by the town, 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 pattern of development on Shelter Island. Shelter Island was once marked by compact village centers surrounded by open countryside, farms and estates. The one and two-acre lots required by zoning are too big to allow for walkable centers in places that could best support them, while allowing large areas of important natural and cultural landscape to be fragmented by suburban house lots.

## How Much Future Development is Possible on Shelter Island?

The potential for future growth can be estimated by identifying all of the land available for additional development and calculating the potential "buildout" on those parcels based on current zoning. Assuming current trends continue, one can predict that every developable parcel could eventually be developed according to the restrictions of zoning, building codes and environmental regulations. The buildout 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 buildout is creation of a "Buildout 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 full-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 which are protected by environmental regulations or which are simply too steep or wet to be developable.

The Buildout Status map includes:

- Developed land, shown in light grey, including parcels classified by the assessor as developed lots. (This map does not indicate potential for subdivision of developed lots that are large enough for more than one house lot. Larger lots and properties with lower value structures may still be subject to redevelopment.)

- Protected land, shown in dark grey, including publicly owned parks, recreational and wildlife areas and protected conservation land. These areas would either be impossible or extremely difficult to develop. (Note that for this purpose we are including the Mashomack Preserve and that part of Sylvester Manor which is not under a conservation easement. Even though those lands are not legally protected, because of the goals and policies of the non-profits that own them they are very unlikely to be developed in the future.
- Undevelopable land, shown in black, including freshwater and tidal wetlands and the regulated 75' vegetated buffer where most new building construction is prohibited by local zoning and state regulation.
- Land otherwise unsuitable for development, also in light grey, including cemeteries and utility properties.
- Unprotected land, shown in light green, that is less likely to be developed considering current use, including agriculture and recreation uses such as golf.
- Vacant, developable land, shown in yellow on this map, represent parcels that are subject to further development.

The Buildout Status map illustrates that there is development potential on lots scattered throughout the town, amounting to more than 1000 acres. Assuming that a private water supply well and wastewater system could be accommodated on these lots, each of these parcels could someday be developed for one or more new homes. During the next phase of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the area of developable lots within each zoning district will be calculated in order estimate the number of homes that could be built.

# Buildout Status Map

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

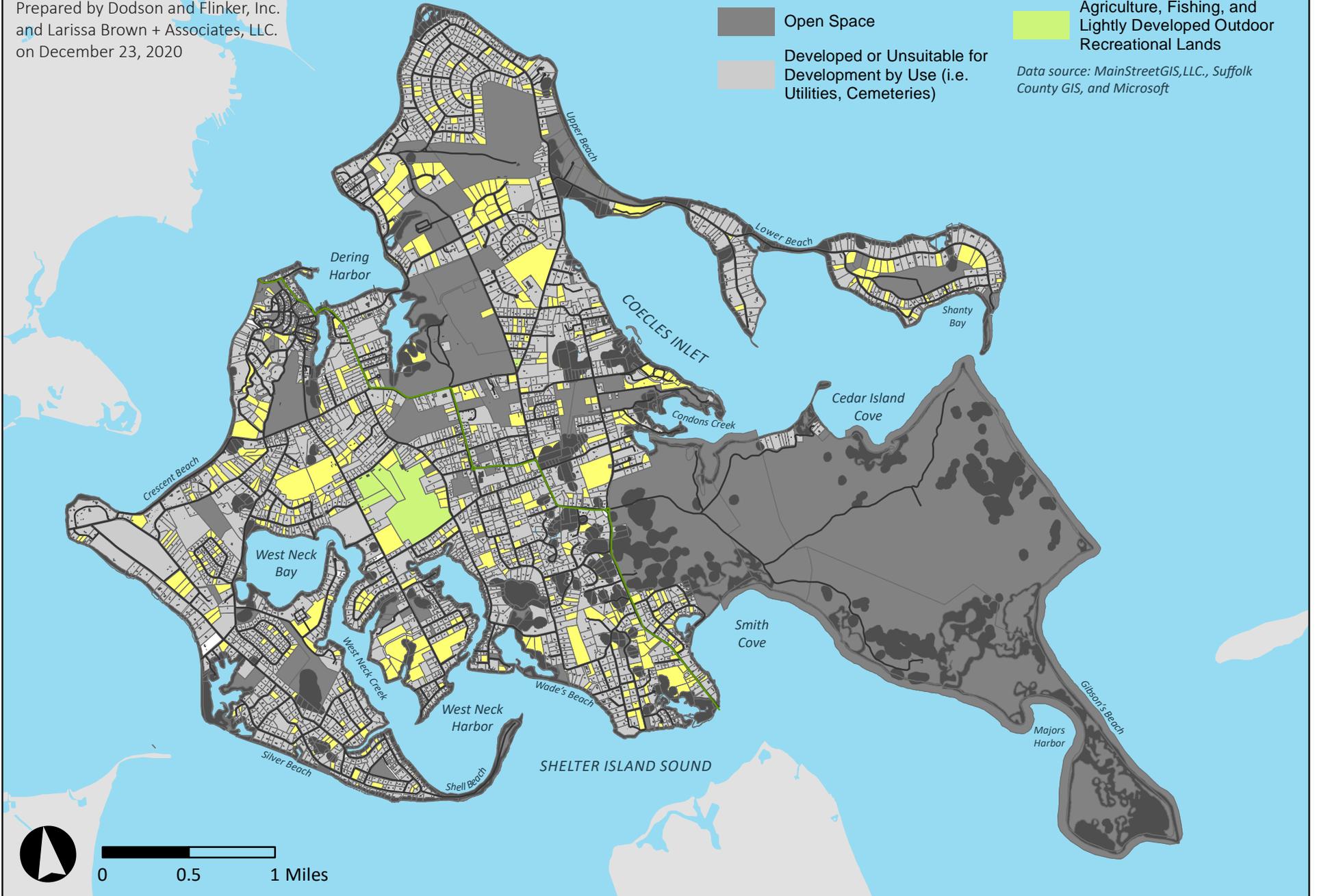
Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on December 23, 2020

### Legend

- Wetlands and Vegetated Buffer
- Open Space
- Developed or Unsuitable for Development by Use (i.e. Utilities, Cemeteries)

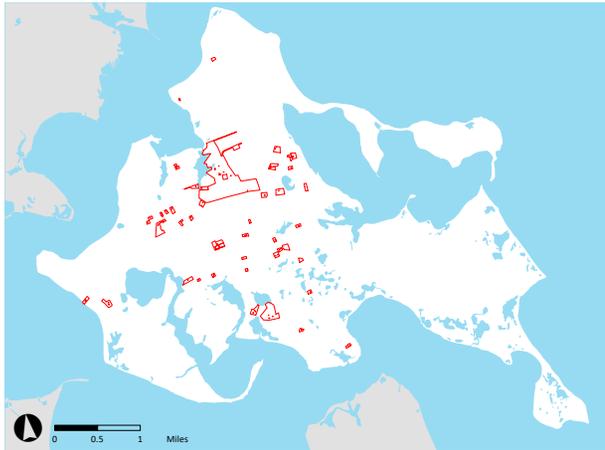
- Vacant Land
- Agriculture, Fishing, and Lightly Developed Outdoor Recreational Lands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft

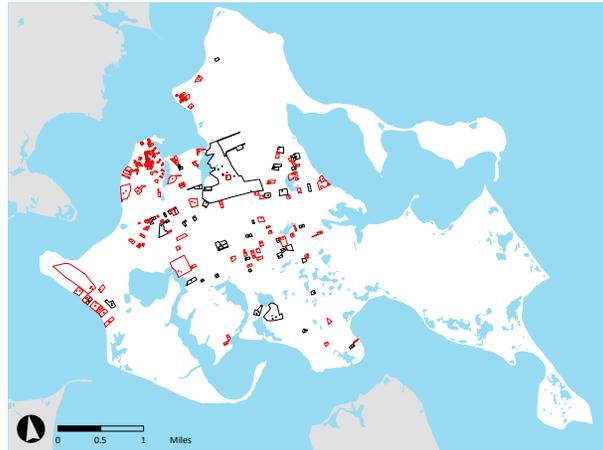


## Shelter Island's Development Over Time

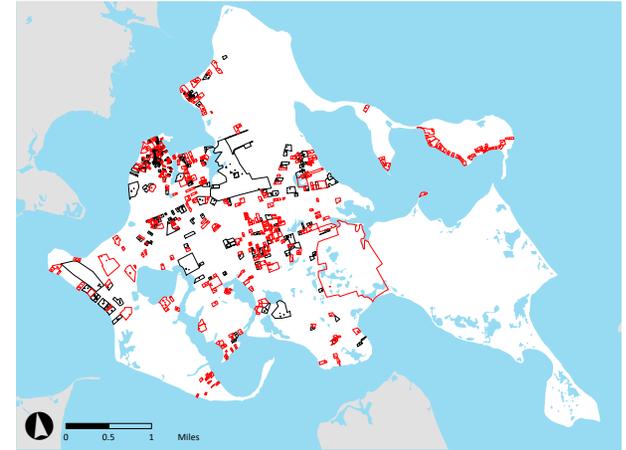
The maps below show the new development in each significant era of the town's history. This is based on the date of construction of structures shown in the assessor's table. It doesn't show all of the houses that once existed but are now gone, but it does give an idea of how development proceeded over time. In each map, parcels with new development within the era are shown in red.



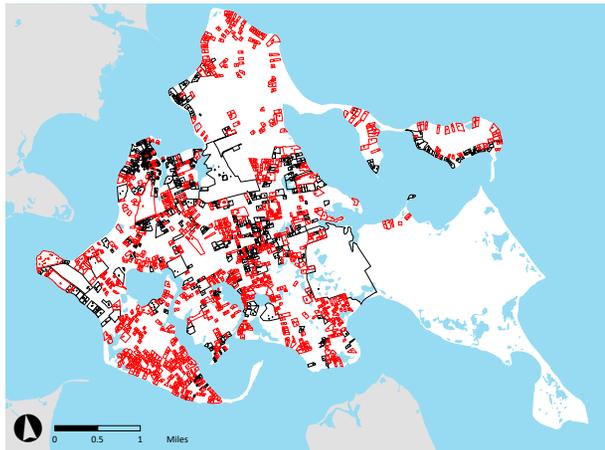
Early History (1700s to 1860)



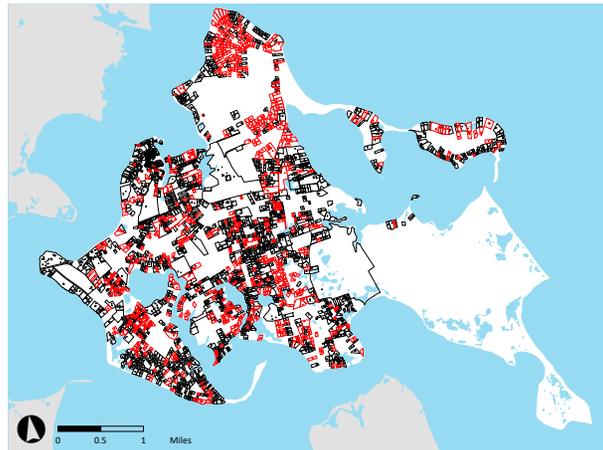
Post-Civil War Boom (1860 to 1899)



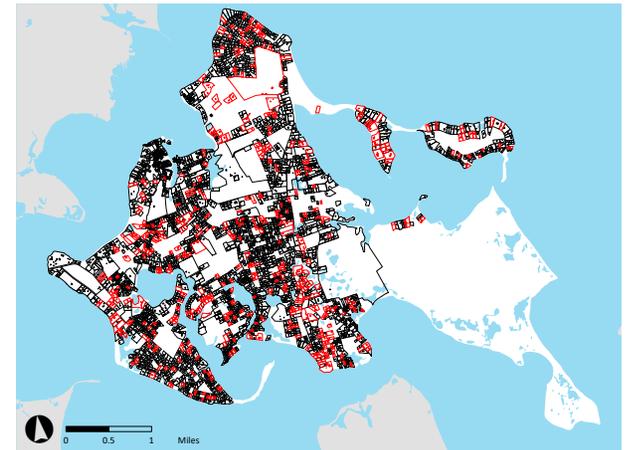
Hotel Heyday (1900 to 1939)



Postwar Suburban Growth (1940 to 1979)



Maturing Suburbs (1980 to 1999)



21st Century (2000 to 2020)

## Findings

- For much of its history after European settlement, Shelter Island remained a quiet rural town built around agriculture, fishing and other natural resources.
- The 1860 population was only 506 people.
- From the 1870s through the 1920s, the Island grew into a summer resort, and population more than doubled to 1,113 in the 1930 Census.
- After a decline in the depression, post-war growth saw the population double again by 1990, to 2,263 people.
- Population growth was mirrored by construction of new homes, many of which supported a much larger population of summer residents.
- Zoning adopted in 1957 put an upper limit on growth, but established a new, more suburban growth pattern.
- Conservation of Mashomack, Sylvester Manor and dozens of smaller properties has protected more than a third of the island.
- About 15% of the Island consists of vacant, unprotected parcels, with about 1,000-1,100 acres of developable land.
- Additional growth is likely as existing developed parcels are subdivided and small homes are replaced by larger one.

## Challenges

- Development of vacant parcels is likely to accelerate over the next decade
- Expansion and replacement of smaller homes and subdivision of previously-developed parcels are likely to accelerate as available land is used up land values rise.
- Current zoning limits overall growth, but promotes a suburban growth pattern.
- Lack of public water supply and wastewater systems limit the opportunity for more compact growth patterns.
- The CPF provides a reliable source of conservation funding, but rising values limit its impact.
- Protecting open space and limiting growth can drive up prices and limit access to all but the wealthy.



Source: John Weiss

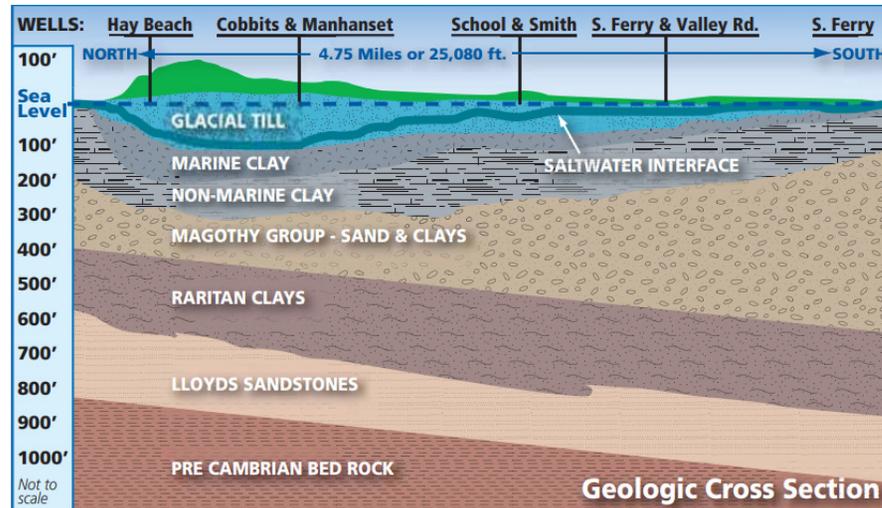
# NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

## What is the Underlying Geology of Shelter Island?

Shelter Island is composed of bedrock overlain with a sedimentary sand formation deposited at the end of the last ice age. Geologists have identified six geological units:

- The deepest is crystalline bedrock found at an elevation 700 to 1000 feet below sea level (BSL);
- Raritan formation, layers of coarse quartz sand, gravel and sandy clay with isolated layers of clay dispersed throughout, lying 510 – 800 feet BSL.
- Clay Layer overlying Raritan - The overlying clay layer is encountered at an elevation of 400-625 feet BSL. It consists of gray clay to silty clay with some sandy layers.
- Magothy formation – Found at elevation 300 feet BSL, with a thickness of 100-325 feet. It is comprised of fine to medium sand mixed with silt and clay and some beds of coarse sand and gravel.
- Clay Layer overlying Magothy – this has an overlying clay layer formed by two distinct units comprised of an upper unit of marine origin (60-100 feet BSL) and a lower unit of non-marine origin (160-180 feet BSL).
- Upper Glacial – Surficial deposits at the land surface Mostly stratified and unstratified sand interspersed with clay and isolated beds of clay.

The soils that formed on top of this geological layer cake are composed entirely of the Mon-



A N-S Cross Section through the Island showing its underlying geology and the saltwater interface (Source: Group for the East End)

tauk-Haven-Riverhead Association. These are characterized as deep, well-drained to moderately well-drained soils with a moderate texture. These supported agriculture on the island long before the first European settlement in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

## How Does the Island's Topography Affect 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 the island. Water drains quickly into the gravelly soil, and there are few streams in the upland areas. The 2014 Watershed Management Plan identified 64 distinct subwatersheds on the

island, ranging from less than 3 acres to over 240 acres in size. The island is surrounded by marine surface waters arranged in networks of harbors, coves, sounds and bays, and there are several tidal creeks and estuarine marshes along the coastline. In the interior glaciation left a number of small kettlehole 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 has identified 70 freshwater wetlands totaling some 105 acres. There are likely other smaller 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.

The Island's complex and dynamic coastline has likewise left a diverse collection of marine environments, ranging from wave-wracked 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, while always retaining their essential form.

# Stormwater Infrastructure and Surface Hydrology

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021

### Legend

- Stormwater Catch Basins
- Stormwater Outfalls
- Stormwater Discharge Pipes
- ▭ Watershed Boundaries
- 10ft Contours
- ▭ Wetlands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



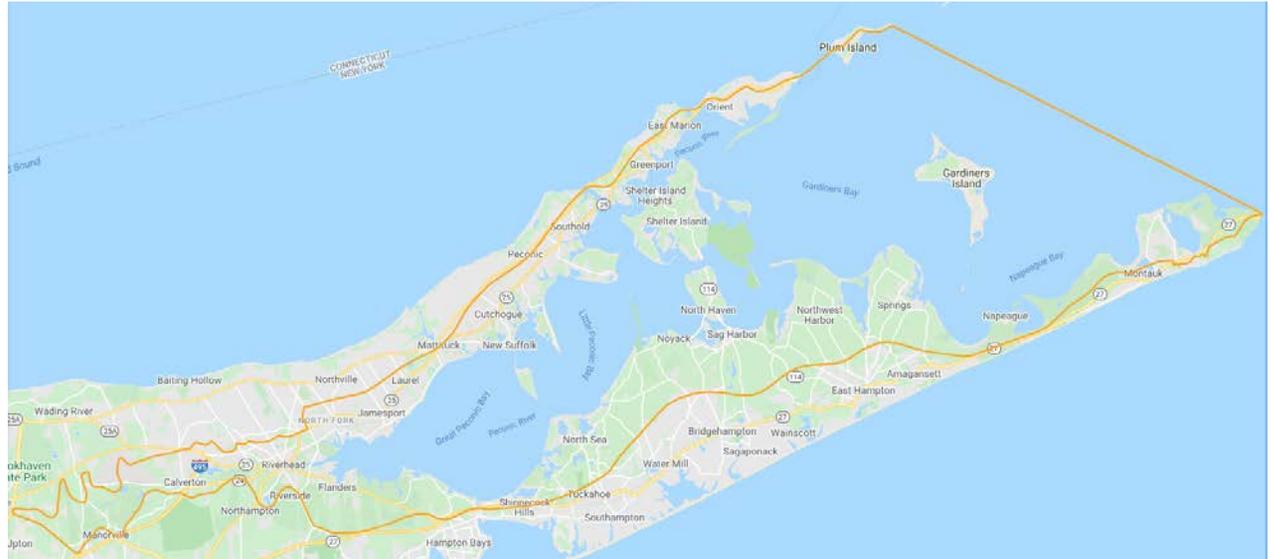
## How Does Shelter Island Fit Into the Peconic Bay Environment?

The Peconic Estuary was named an Estuary of National Significance by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992. This inaugurated the Peconic Estuary Program, a coalition of local, state and federal agencies, governments, non-profit 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/>).

The subject of all this attention is an estuary 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 this is Shelter Island.

The Peconic Estuary Partnership has identified threats to the ecosystem that start with the direct impacts of human activities such as dredging of navigational channels, hardening of shorelines with bulkheads and other structures to control erosion, and clearing of upland forests to build new roads, homes and businesses. 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 of streams flowing in to the Estuary



Peconic Estuary Partnership Watershed Boundary: 442 square miles of land and water

that prevent the movement of diadromous fish from salt to freshwater.

- Invasive species of plant and animals, that outcompete 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 move inland because of topography or man-made barriers.
- Nitrogen pollution, increased water temperature and human disturbance that 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 are inextricably bound to 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 in the first place, and ongoing changes 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 ten percent of their extent between 1974 and 2005 - with the greatest losses in East Hampton and Shelter Island, according the 2020 CCMP. This includes the drowning of some 25 percent 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 services 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 with them are the traditions of fishing and scalloping that long supported Shelter Island's baymen.

## What Are Shelter Island's Most Important Ecological Resources?

The Island's diverse landscape supports a rich cross section of plant and animal communities, which is 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 table on the following page.

The New York State Dept. of State has designated three Significant Coastal Fish & Wildlife Habitats on the island, including:

- 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

Finally, the NY Natural Heritage Program has identified nine Significant Natural Communities, all of



Marshes behind Wades Beach (Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)

which are associated with the Mashomack Preserve and nearby areas. Each of these, ranging from upland forests to tidal beaches and creeks, is significant due to its quality, age or rarity within New York State. They include:

- 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.

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 of New York. 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.

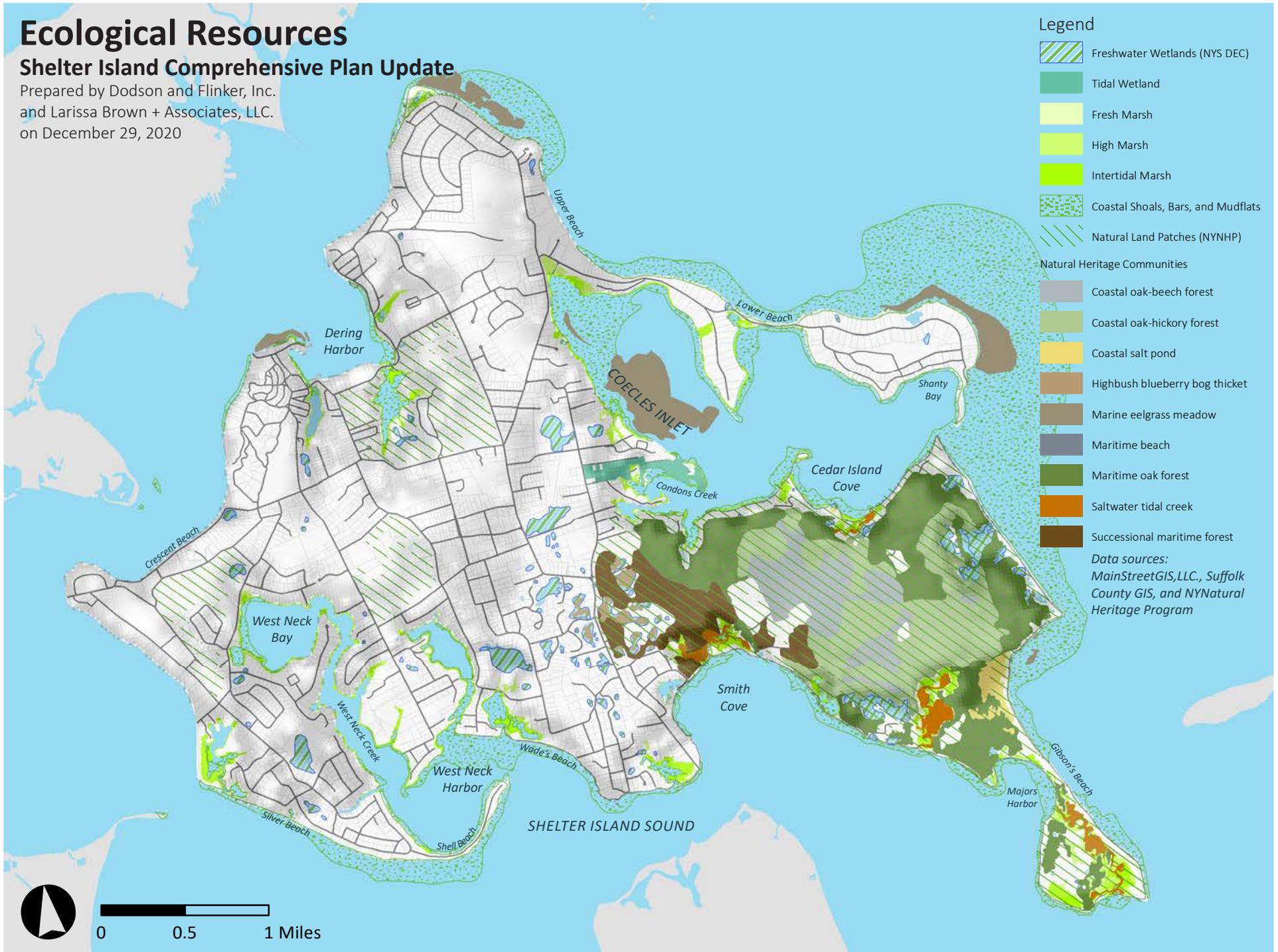
## Rare Species Identified on Shelter Island by the New York State Natural Heritage Program

| Habitat Type                                 |  | NYS Legal Status<br>(Endangered, Threatened,<br>Rare, Special Concern) | Year Last Documented |
|--|--|--|----------------------|
| <b>TIDAL RIVER</b>                           |  | --   | --                   |
| <b>Species Common Name</b>                   | <b>Species Scientific Name</b>           | --   | --                   |
| Inland Silverside                            | <i>Menidia beryllina</i>                 | Unlisted   | 1980                 |
| Atlantic Silverside                          | <i>Menidia menidia</i>                   | Unlisted   | 1980                 |
| <b>SUCCESSIONAL FIELD/GRASSLAND/CLEARING</b> |  | --   | --                   |
| <b>Species Common Name</b>                   | <b>Species Scientific Name</b>           | --   | --                   |
| White Milkweed                               | <i>Asclepias variegata</i>               | Endangered   | 2010                 |
| Little-leaf Tick-trefoil                     | <i>Desmodium ciliare</i>                 | Threatened   | 1923                 |
| Oakes' Evening-primrose                      | <i>Oenothera oakesiana</i>               | Threatened   | 1996                 |
| Whip Nutrush                                 | <i>Scleria triglomerata</i>              | Threatened   | 1996                 |
| <b>TIDAL WETLANDS/SALT MARSH</b>             |  | --   | --                   |
| <b>Species Common Name</b>                   | <b>Species Scientific Name</b>           | --   | --                   |
| Marsh Fimbry                                 | <i>Fimbristylis castanea</i>             | Threatened   | 1996                 |
| Rambur's Forktail                            | <i>Ischnura ramburii</i>                 | Unlisted   | 1994                 |
| Seaside Plantain                             | <i>Plantago maritima var. juncooides</i> | Threatened   | 2010                 |
| Seabeach Knotweed                            | <i>Polygonum glaucum</i>                 | Rare   | 2005                 |
| Dwarf Glasswort                              | <i>Salicornia bigelovii</i>              | Threatened   | 2010                 |
| <b>PINE BARRENS</b>                          |  | --   | --                   |
| <b>Species Common Name</b>                   | <b>Species Scientific Name</b>           | --   | --                   |
| New Jersey Pine Barrens Tiger Beetle         | <i>Cicindela patruela consentanea</i>    | Unlisted   | 1946                 |

# Ecological Resources

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on December 29, 2020



## How Is the Island's Ecology Changing Over Time?

In addition to Mashomack and other areas with statewide ecological significance, Shelter Island is blessed with 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 farm land, 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 ubiqui-



Two bucks in a yard (Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)

tous deer, there are rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, raccoons, opossums, woodchucks, skunks, porcupines and predators such as foxes and possibly, coyotes. Also benefiting from the diverse “edge landscape” common on the island are the typical backyard and edge-dwelling birds and large numbers of turkeys. Some other once-common species, such as bobwhite quail, spacefoot/fowlers toads, muskrat, otters and mink have declined with the reduction of grasslands and mashes that support them.

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 have prospered on the Island, and can become pests under the wrong 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 Lyme Disease.

### Control of the Deer Population

The Town of Shelter Island created a Deer and Tick Committee in 2005, which has since pursued a three-pronged strategy of deer management, reduction of ticks through application of chemical acaricide at “4-poster” deer feeding stations, and public education. In 2016 the deer population was estimated to be more than 100 per square mile, a level too high to avoid continued negative impacts on native vegetation and human health and safety. The Committee's goal, as stated in their 2019 Deer Management Plan, is to reduce the density of the deer population to less than 50 per square mile by 2022.

Early in 2020, the NY Department of Environmental Conservation put new regulations in place that require that all homeowners within 745 feet of a “4-poster” station grant permission to use them. This resulted in the Town ending the program on Shelter Island in March, 2020.

Hunting has been the most successful method of reducing the deer population. The Shelter Island Police Department oversees hunting on Town-managed properties, working with neighbors to reduce problems and issuing permits to

licensed hunters for three different seasons; recreational archery from October through January, recreational shotgun from Jan. 6-31, and culling, from Feb. 1 to March 31. Culling hunts are also pursued at Mashomack and Sylvester Manor during January. The hunting programs have resulted in the deer herd being culled by approximately 550 animals in both 2018 and 2019.

### Ecological Impacts of Exotic and Invasive Plant Species

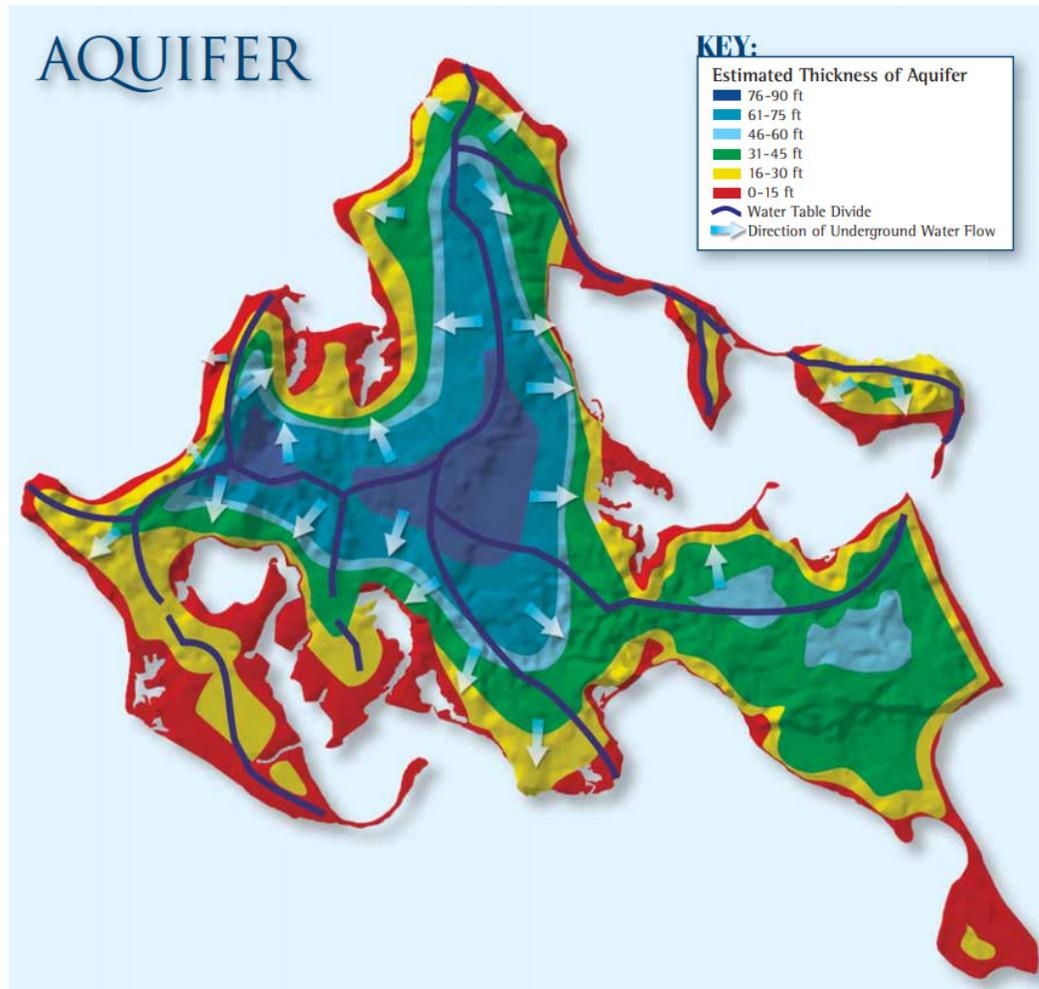
In addition to changing animal communities on the island, land use change has brought with it a host of exotic and invasive plant species. This includes trees like Black Locust, Bradford Pear, Norway Maple and Mulberry, vines such as Asiatic Bittersweet, Wysteria and Mile-a-Minute, and shrubs like Autumn Olive, Japanese Barberry, Japanese Knotweed and Multiflora Rose. A long list of perennials, grasses and waterplants threaten gardens, forest and wetland habitats. Some of these were imported for use in landscaping or erosion control, while others have arrived by 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 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 change to the Islands fresh and salt-water wetlands, aquifers, woodlands and other open lands.

## Where Does the Island Get its Drinking Water?

Shelter 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 typical 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. There is no potable water supplied to Shelter Island through pipelines from either the north or south fork, though some water is trucked in to comply with Town laws. There are four shared water supply systems on Shelter Island, but together they supply only 13% of the potable water need. The remaining 87% is supplied by private groundwater wells (please note that most of the information in this section is from the 2020 Ground and Surface Water Management Plan prepared by the Town of Shelter Island Water Advisory Committee).

All of the wells on the island together draw an estimated 260 Million Gallons each year, of which 95% is returned to the aquifer through wastewater treatment systems. Recharge through rain and snowfall is estimated to provide 4.4 Billion gallons to the aquifer; the excess flows into surface water bodies or into surrounding salt-water bodies through the “fresh water-saline interface.” While this suggests an abundance of fresh water, not all areas of the island are equally blessed, with thinner aquifers in the peninsular areas like the Ram Islands, and a seasonal pattern that sees a drawdown of the aquifer during the summer months and 90% of the recharge happening between October and march.



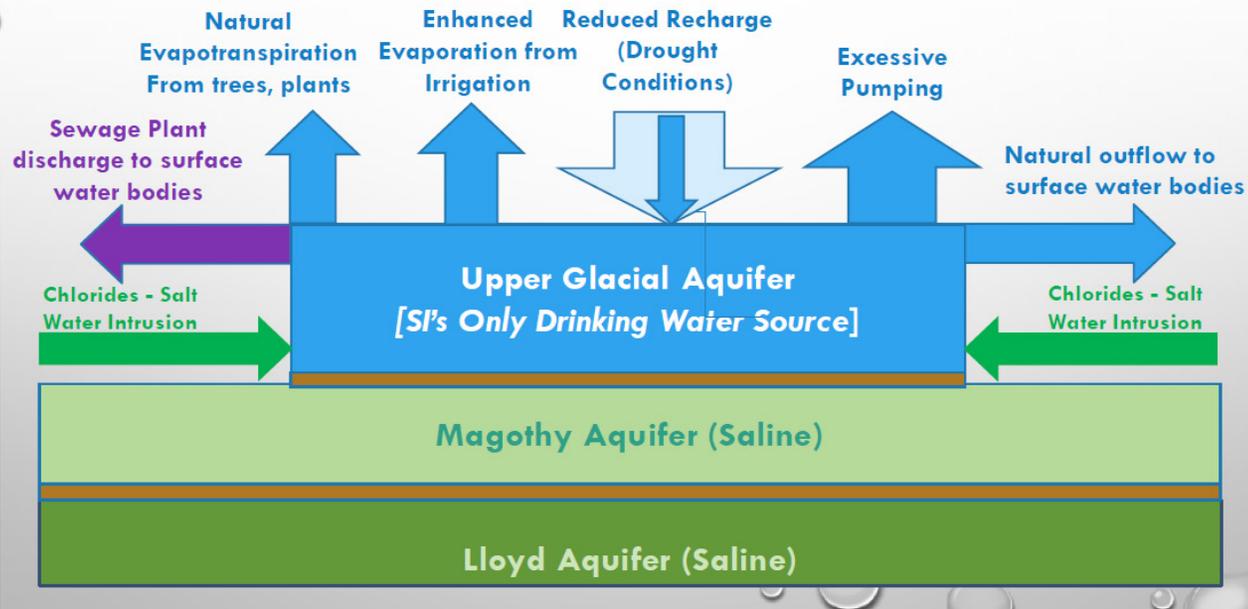
Estimated Thickness of Shelter Island's Drinking Water Aquifer (Source: Group for the East End)

Of equal concert 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 and pesticide applications, and introduction of contaminants from various sources. Nitrate levels have slowly but steadily increased and in some areas are approaching the state and federal Maximum Contaminant Level of 10 mg/L. Recent groundwa-

ter monitoring has also detected volatile organic compounds, PFAS, pesticides and pharmaceuticals in the Island's groundwater. Finally, salt water 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.

Protecting the island's water supply and ensuring continued clean water for every home and

# THREATS TO AQUIFER QUANTITY



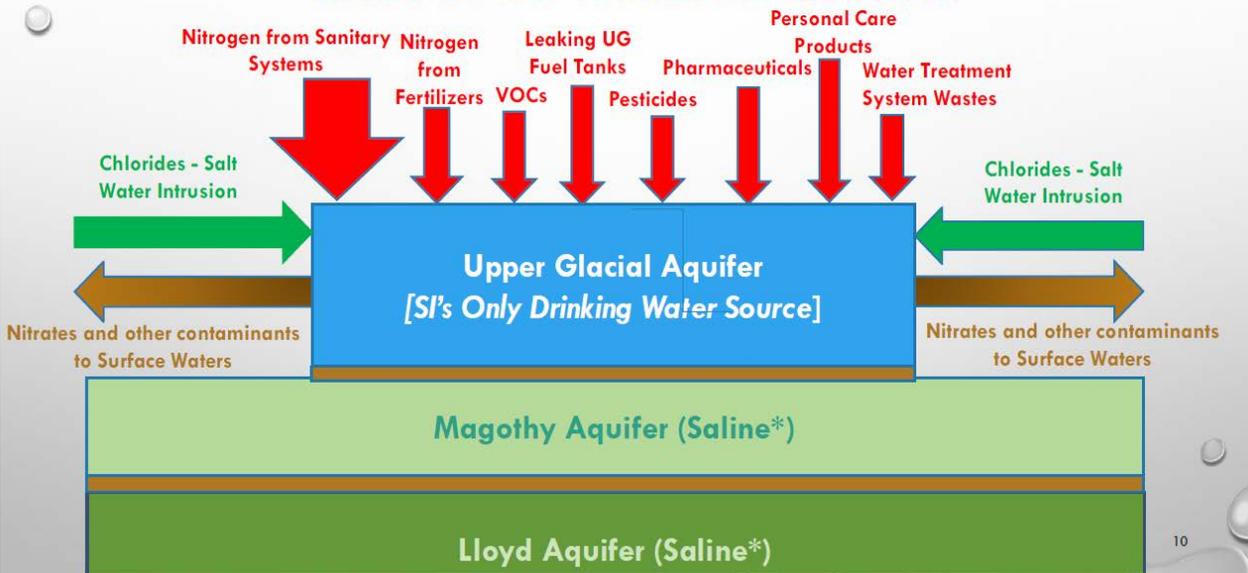
business has been a focus of planning on the island going back to the 1994 comprehensive plan, which recommended better management of contamination sources and downzoning to reduce the density of development in sensitive areas. In 2005 the town commissioned a Water Supply Alternative Study, which took 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.

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:

- Key Outcome 1: All Shelter Island residents have ready access to drinking water that meets all applicable local, state and federal standards.
- Key Outcome 2: 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.
- Key Outcome 3: 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.
- Key Outcome 4: Surface waters surrounding shelter Island will not be negatively impacted by human activity on Shelter Island.

FIGURE 4-1

# THREATS TO AQUIFER QUALITY



## How Will Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Affect the Island?

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 temperature average annual temperature of 4.1 to 5.7 degrees Fahrenheit by 2050 (see table below). This has important implications for Shelter Island. In the ‘Middle Range’ scenario, Shelter 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

### Projected Change in Mean Annual Temperature - NYCity

| Baseline (1971-2000)<br>54.6 °F | Low Estimate (10th Percentile) | Middle Range (25th to 75th Percentile) | High Estimate (90th Percentile) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 2020s                           | + 1.5 °F                       | + 2.0 to 2.9 °F                        | + 3.2 °F                        |
| 2050s                           | + 3.1 °F                       | + 4.1 to 5.7 °F                        | + 6.6 °F                        |
| 2080s                           | + 3.8 °F                       | + 5.3 to 8.8 °F                        | + 10.3 °F                       |
| 2100                            | + 4.2 °F                       | + 5.8 to 10.4 °F                       | + 12.1 °F                       |

### Projected Sea-level Rise for Long Island (source: NYS DEC)

| Time Interval | Low Projection | Low-Medium Projection | Medium Projection | High-Medium Projection | High Projection |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 2020s         | 2 inches       | 4 inches              | 6 inches          | 8 inches               | 10 inches       |
| 2050s         | 8 inches       | 11 inches             | 16 inches         | 21 inches              | 30 inches       |
| 2080s         | 13 inches      | 18 inches             | 29 inches         | 39 inches              | 58 inches       |
| 2100          | 15 inches      | 21 inches             | 34 inches         | 47 inches              | 72 inches       |

The US 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. The New London, CT station has seen a rise of 8.6 inches since 1938. In both. 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 non-profit groups have 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, Chapter 355 of the Laws of 2014 (CRRA). 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 sci-

ence. The result is 6 NYCRR Part 490, Projected Sea-level Rise, which establishes projections for sea level rise for three geographic regions. The resulting table of probabilities for sea level rise on Long Island is shown above.

How will this impact the island? Low-lying areas are already subject to flooding, as shown by the map of **Existing Floodplains** on the following page, which is based on data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) The Floodplains map displays data from FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer dataset, organized by recurrence interval. The “100 Year Floodplain,” an area with a 1% annual chance of flooding, is shown in blue. The FEMA Velocity Zone or Coastal High Hazard Area is shown in purple, an area with a 1% annual chance of flooding with damaging waves of 3 feet or greater. The “500 Year Floodplain, an area with a 0.2% annual chance of flooding, is shown in orange. Note that 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, of course.

# Floodplains

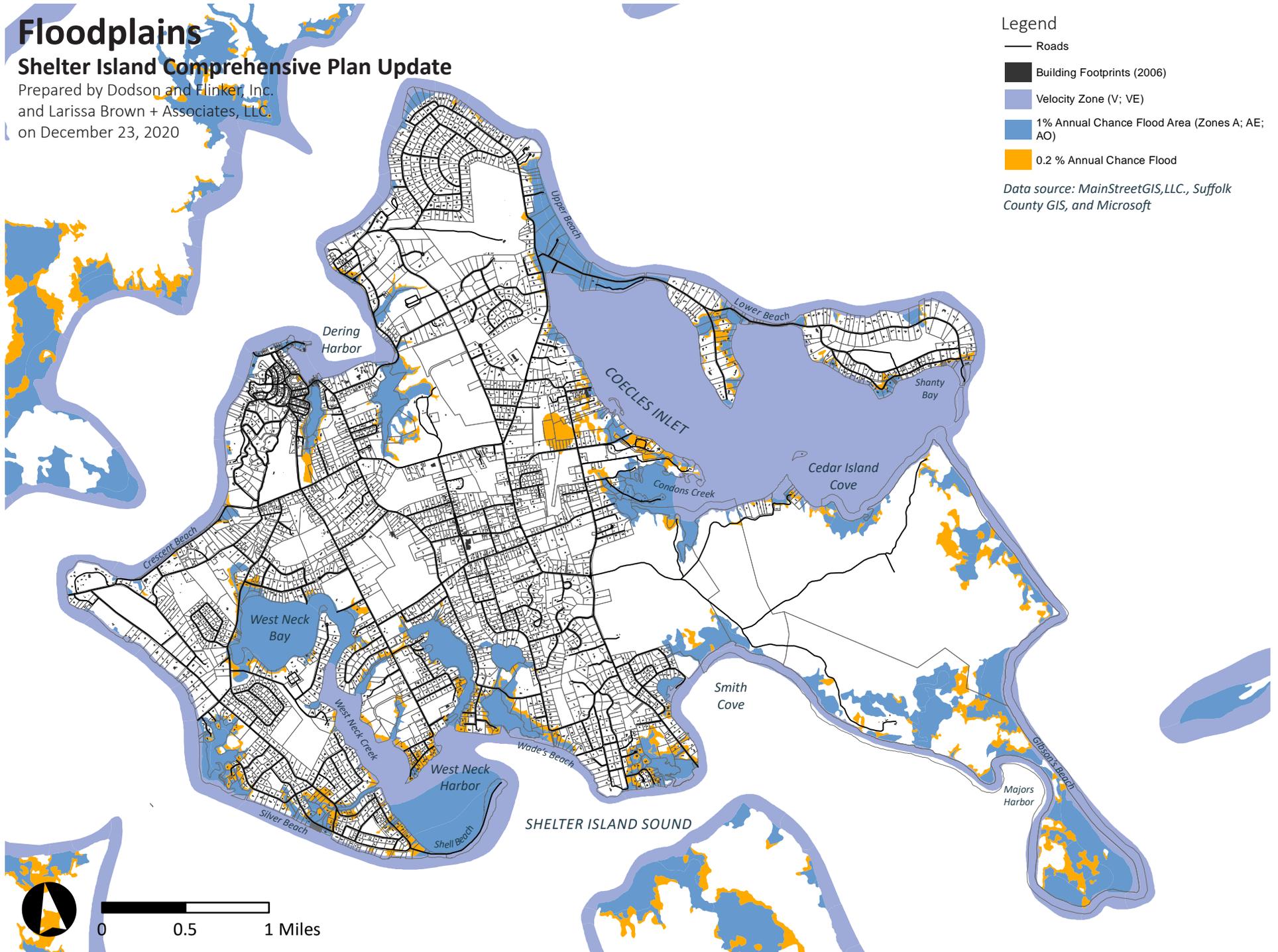
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on December 23, 2020

### Legend

- Roads
- Building Footprints (2006)
- Velocity Zone (V; VE)
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Area (Zones A; AE; AO)
- 0.2 % Annual Chance Flood

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



The impact of sea-level rise will be most pronounced in areas that are already subject to flooding, as defined by FEMA. Sea level has already risen a foot in the last century and could rise another 1-2 feet in just the next twenty years. The projected floodplain maps shown on the following pages show how existing floodplains will change as sea-level rises over coming decades. (Additional scenarios using the same data may be explored at: [https://services.nyscrda.ny.gov/SLR\\_Viewer/default](https://services.nyscrda.ny.gov/SLR_Viewer/default)).

The map of Floodplains with 18 inches of sea level rise illustrates how areas already subject to flooding will be inundated more frequently, while the potential for flooding expands into adjacent areas. With 36 inches of flooding, possible sometime between 2060 and 2100, floodplains expand further inland. This will likely be felt most severely in areas where roads, docks and marinas are close to the water. Impact on existing homes and businesses will be concentrated in Dering 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.

There is likely to be a particular impact on beaches, marshes and mud flats as sea level rises – particularly 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.

**Probability Projections for Sea-Level Rise of 18 and 36 Inches**

| Sea Level Rise | Expected Decade   |                        |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
|                | Low-end Scenario  | Median Scenario        | High End Scenario |
|                | (10th Percentile) | (25th-75th Percentile) | (90th Percentile) |
| 18"            | >2100             | 2050s                  | 2030s             |
| 36"            | >2100             | 2090s                  | 2060s             |



Projections for sea-level rise make long-term planning essential for low-lying areas of the Island (Source: Chris Tehan)

# Floodplains - 18 inches Sea Level Rise

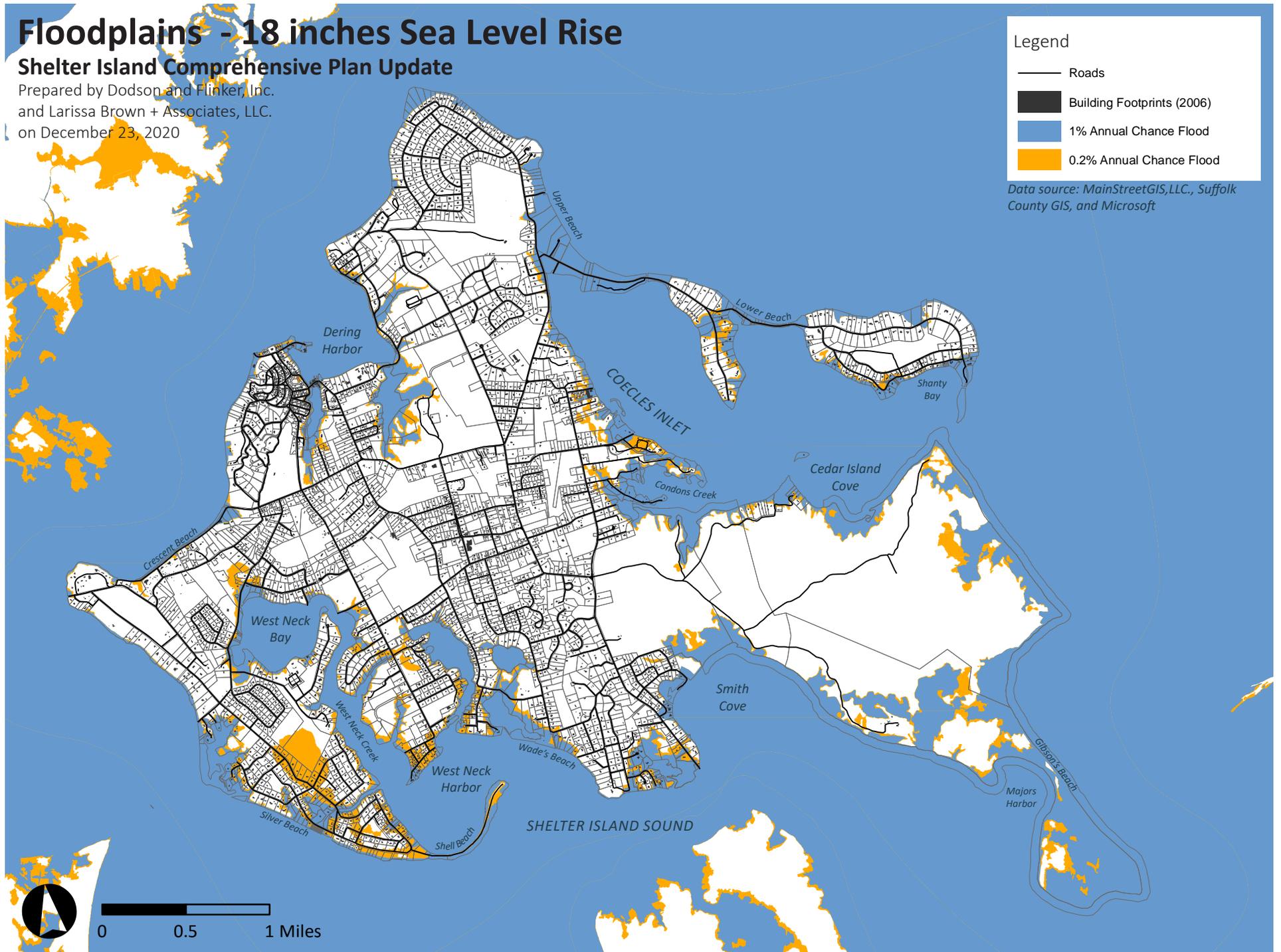
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on December 23, 2020

### Legend

- Roads
- Building Footprints (2006)
- 1% Annual Chance Flood
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



# Floodplains - 36 inches Sea Level Rise

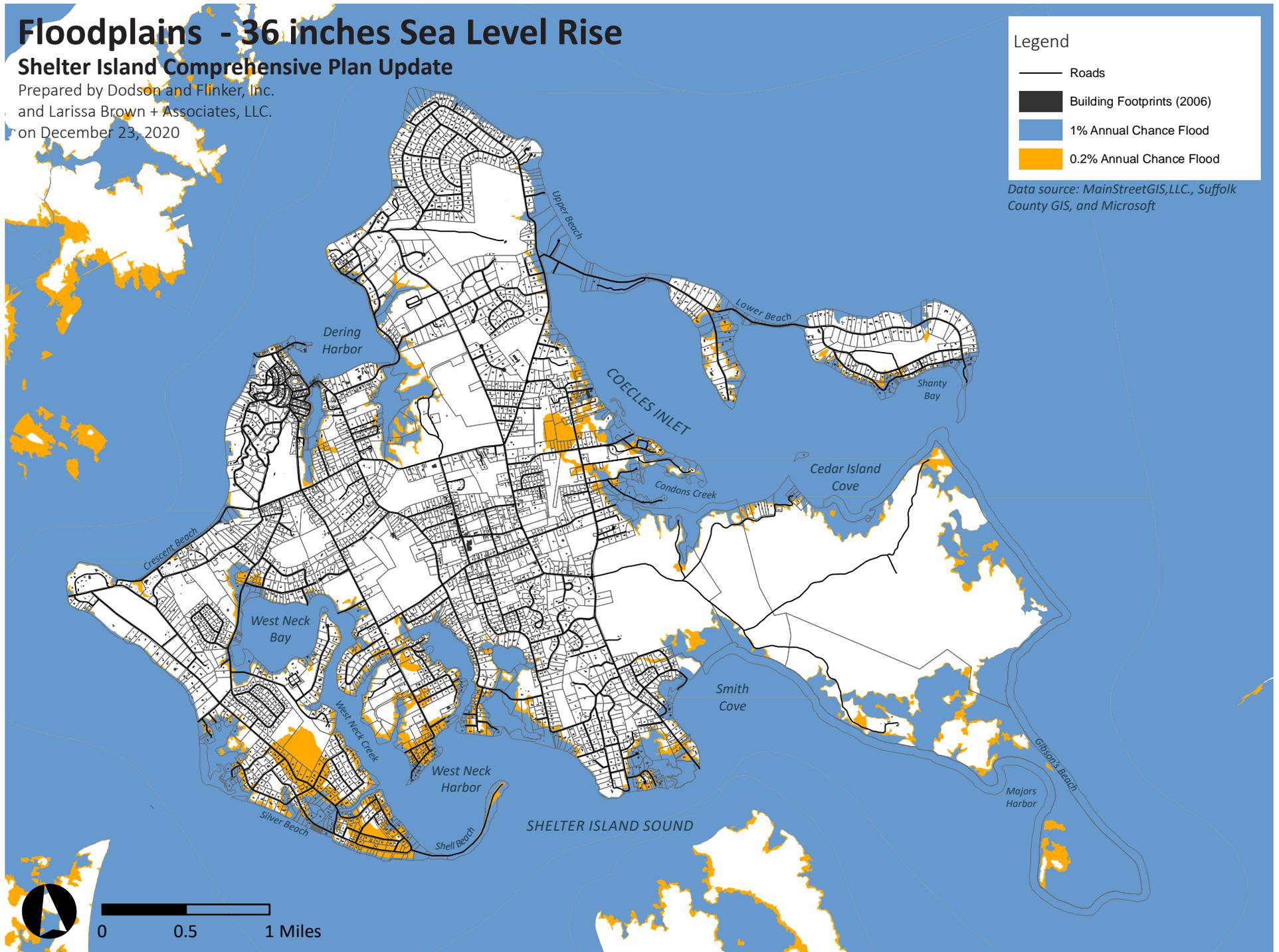
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### Legend

- Roads
- Building Footprints (2006)
- 1% Annual Chance Flood
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



## Findings

- Shelter Island's Aquifer can supply the quantity of water needed, but the quality of that water is threatened by nitrate contamination from septic systems, salt water intrusion, and other pollutants.
- In the Mashomack Preserve and other areas, the island retains ecological resources of statewide importance.
- Low-lying areas of the island are subject to flooding, but over the near-term impacts will remain focused on waterfront facilities, roads and natural areas along the coast.

## Challenges

- 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.
- The recreational demand on natural areas needs to be balanced with protection of sensitive resources.
- Climate change will see rising temperatures and more frequent droughts, and an increase the number and severity of storms.
- Sea level rise will increase coastal flooding that will impact waterfront facilities and change the ecological function and visual character of coastal marshes and mudflats.
- Sea level rise will exacerbate salt water intrusion into the aquifer in low-lying coastal areas of the island



Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey

# HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

## Why Are Shelter Island's Historic and Cultural Resources Important?

Before the first European settlers arrived in the 1600s, Shelter Island was home to the Manhansett tribe, who called it *Manhansack Aha Quash A Womak*, or “Island Sheltered by Islands.” In 1638, 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 island, and sold it three years later to Stephen Goodyear. In 1651, a group of Barbados sugar merchants bought the island for 1,600 pounds of Sugar. In 1651, one of their number, Nathaniel Sylvester, settled on the island and established a plantation to grow food for the sugar plantations of Barbados. Sylvester Manor remained in the same family for the next 350 years, even as the rest of the island grew and evolved into a diversified agricultural, whaling and fishing settlement. After the Civil War Shelter Island started changing again. 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, growth continued on the island in the form of residential subdivisions and individual homes lining the waterfront.

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 preserving the unique character of the island for future generations.

## What Historic Sites Have Been Documented on Shelter Island?

Shelter Island has ten 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.

**Camp Quinipet**, a Methodist camp and retreat center founded in 1922, which 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 and “Kissing Rock” on the grounds of the Camp are both Island landmarks. The grounds themselves reflect the origin of the five massive glacial boulders that give the camp its name.

**The James Haven Homestead**, built in 1743 and expanded in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, is the second oldest house on the Island. Expanded in 2019, it is now home to the Shelter Island Historical Society. It was added to the Register in 1986.



The James Haven Homestead, built in 1743, is now headquarters for the Shelter Island Historical Society (Source: SIHS)



Union Chapel

**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 was recently renovated as a community arts space.

**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 an unparalleled view across Dering Harbor to the Atlantic.

**Shelter Island Heights Historic District**, listed in 1993, which include 141 contributing buildings and one contributing structure. The Heights was laid out in 1872 and is considered "a beautiful example of the picturesque, naturalistic landscape and romantic rural residential areas created by the first generation of American landscape architects." It was laid out by Robert Morris Copeland for the Shelter Island Grove and Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

**The Shelter Island Windmill**, listed in 1978, 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.

**The Smith-Ransome Japanese Bridge**, listed in 2018, 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 making plans for its restoration, which will begin with repair of concrete abutments and balustrades.

**Smith-Taylor Cabin**, listed in 2007, an Adirondack-style log cabin built on Taylor's Island around 1900, also by Francis Marion Smith.

**Sylvester Manor**, established in 1651 as a provisioning plantation for the Barbadian sugar trade. The property has been in the same family ever since, and includes the 1735 Manor House, the 1810 windmill, 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.

**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.

## What Other Historic Resources Are Present on the Island?

Data from the NY Cultural Resource Information System show additional structures that are potentially eligible for listing on the State and Federal Registers of Historic Places, but have not been fully documented and nominated. These include the Police Station and the Justice Hall. In addition, NYCRIIS shows properties listed as "undetermined." This includes more than 100 properties that have been identified as potentially important due to age of construction, architectural value or historic interest, but have not yet 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.

## What Do We Know About the Island's Archaeological Resources?

The entire island is considered an Archaeologically Sensitive Area by the State Historic Preservation Office, 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 the 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.

“Avocational Archaeology” is an important part of preserving and sharing the story of the Island. The Shelter Island Historical Society recently mounted an exhibit by local collector and artist John Pagliaro entitled “Witness the Manhansett.” The project features a collection of more than 2,000 arrowheads, spear points and other stone tools collected on Island beaches - some thought to date back some 9,500 years.

## Is Shelter Island's Landscape Considered Historic?

While homes, churches and other structures are often the focus of historic preservation efforts, the land surrounding and connecting those buildings - the cultural

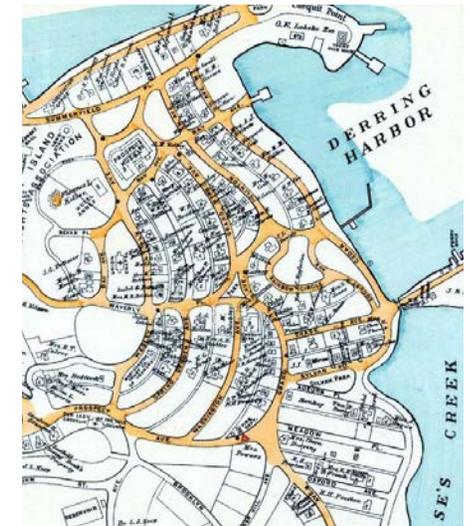
landscape - is often equally significant. The National Park Service defines cultural landscapes as including both historic sites and historic designed landscapes (such as parks, gardens and estates), as well as the common vernacular landscapes that emerge from human activities such as agriculture, fishing, commerce and industry. Even though these vernacular landscapes were not designed, per se, they often are among the most beautiful—think of a harbor, a farm valley, a lighthouse or a fishing village.

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.

As this planning process moves forward, participants will work on mapping and describing the cultural landscapes that embody the Island's history - including summer colony neighborhoods, farms, harbors, beaches, perhaps even mid-century subdivisions - and talk about how to preserve what makes them special.



Smith-Taylor Cabin, Taylor Island  
(Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)



Shelter Island Heights, as shown in a 1916 County Atlas, embodies the romantic ideals of 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape architecture and is a unique artifact of that time period..

# Historic Places

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021

### Legend

- Listed on NRHP
- Eligible for NRHP
- NRHP Eligibility Undetermined

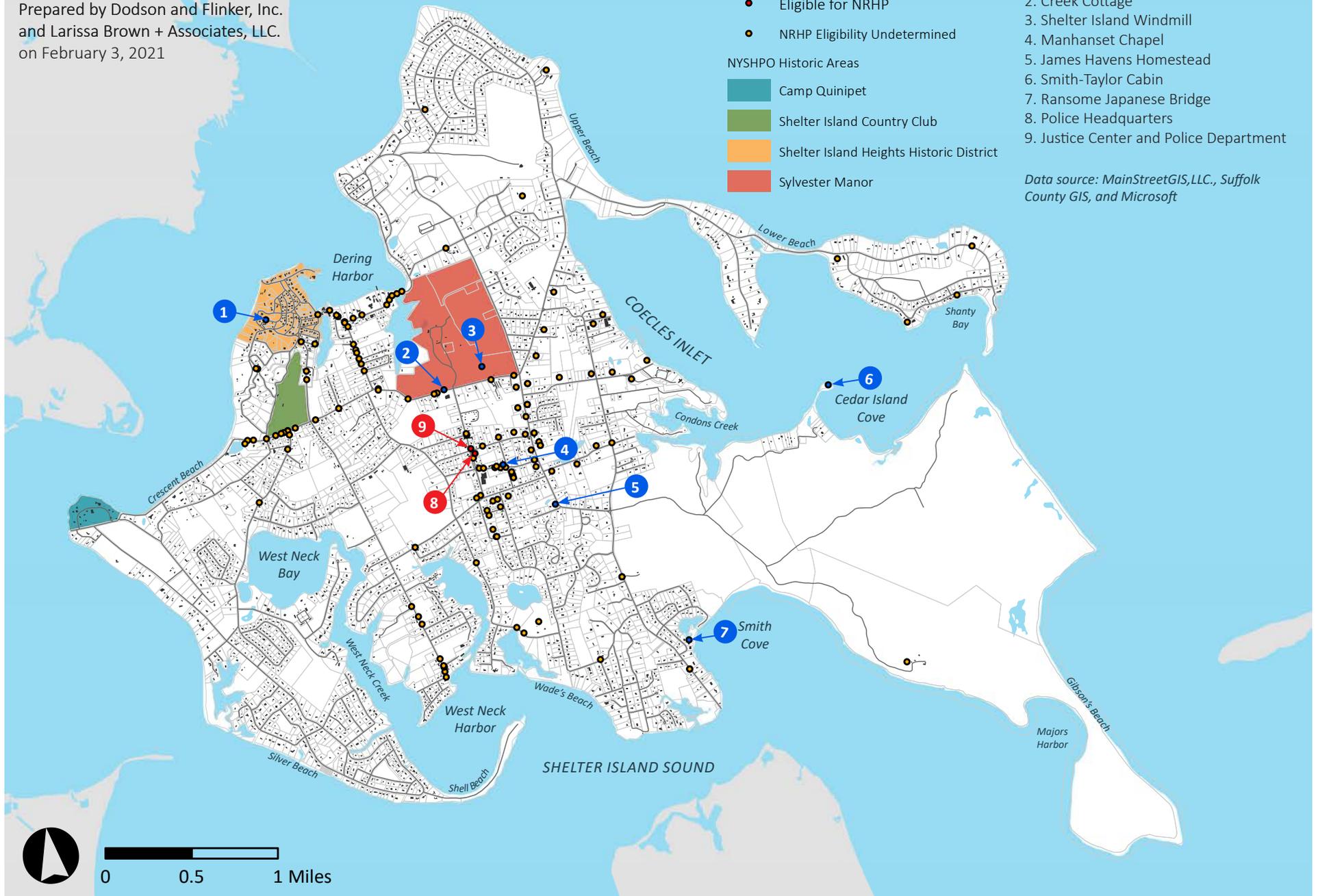
### NYSHP Historic Areas

- Camp Quinipet
- Shelter Island Country Club
- Shelter Island Heights Historic District
- Sylvester Manor

### Key

1. Union Chapel
2. Creek Cottage
3. Shelter Island Windmill
4. Manhasset Chapel
5. James Havens Homestead
6. Smith-Taylor Cabin
7. Ransome Japanese Bridge
8. Police Headquarters
9. Justice Center and Police Department

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



## How Can We Protect the Island's Visual Character and Sense of Place?

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 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.

Of course, sense of place is also tied to the social and economic character of the community, its institutions and traditions – as described elsewhere in this report – but can those traditions continue if the historic landscape from which they emerged is lost? At what point will that happen, and what can we do about it?

## What Are the Island's Cultural Institutions Doing to Preserve and Celebrate Its History?

Shelter Island has several well-known institutions that are working to preserve and share its history and culture. Each also sponsors a rich program of cultural activities and events that contribute to the fabric of the community (please also see section on *Community Institutions & Quality of Life*).



A scenic view (Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)

### Shelter Island Historical Society

- Functions as the Town's historical repository, with an archive of more than 100,000 documents dating back to the 1600's.
- Maintains genealogies, correspondence, and over 200 maps dating from the 1700s - including landmarks, colonial and Native American grave sites; records and maps from the Suffolk County Archaeological Association; maps and records from the Town Graves Committee; and proceedings from the Inter-Tribal Task Force.
- Produces programs such as *Voices from the Vault* and *Living History* that provide narrative and/or video accounts of key periods in Shelter Island History.

### Sylvester Manor Educational Farm

- Recently completed a detailed cultural landscape report to guide preservation and interpretation of the property.
- Explores the history of three cultures: Indigenous peoples, Enslaved Africans and Europeans.
- Supports UMass Archaeological field school to explore

the three cultures on the plantation in the 1600s.

- Maintains and restores historic manor house, wind-mill, gardens and other features.
- Hosts field trips and summer youth programs that educate children about farming, music and history.
- Preserves and celebrates Shelter Island's agricultural roots through preservation of farmland, diverse crop cultivation, a farm stand, and a 150- member Community Supported Agriculture farm (CSA) .

### **Mashomack Preserve**

- Prepared 3-volume Natural and Cultural Resource Assessment for the entire property.
- Preserves and reuses historic buildings.
- Welcomes 40,000 visitors every year and provides education on the history of the site and the changing landscape of the Island.

### **Taylor Island Association**

- Formed non-profit Foundation in 2006 to assist the Town with fundraising for restoration and preservation of the Smith-Taylor Cabin.
- Led restoration of the Smith-Taylor Cabin from 2011-2014.
- Assisted with replacement of bulkheads.
- Shares the history of Taylor's Island through docent-led tours of the Smith-Taylor Cabin for individuals, families and groups, including school, library, scouts, and senior citizen's association.



Wind mill and crops at Sylvester Manor Educational Farm (Source: Chris Tehan)



Taylor's Island (Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)

## Findings

- Shelter Island's rich historic and cultural landscape - including ten sites and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places - makes for a unique sense of place.
- Together with several major historical and cultural institutions, these resources attract full- and part-time residents as well as visitors from both North and South Forks.
- There are many other historic structures existing throughout the Island, but they are not well-documented.
- Historic and cultural resources are economic engines that support many island businesses, jobs and future economic opportunities.
- The Shelter Island Historical Society maintains an extensive collection of artifacts and documents at its home at the Shelter Island History Center, originally the Haven House.

## Challenges

- Historic structures can be, and frequently are, torn down and replaced with new homes, and there is nothing in the Town Code to prevent it.
- Documenting and interpreting historic structures and other cultural riches is time-consuming but critically important.
- The historic value of viewsheds, farms and the cultural landscape is recognized but not well-documented – though Sylvester Manor is showing the way.
- The importance of historic and cultural resources to sense of place and tourism is not widely-understood.
- The Covid Pandemic has underlined the need to help the Island's cultural institutions become more economically self-sufficient.



MENANTIC  
SHELTER ISLAND  
NEW YORK

1

2

3



# TRANSPORTATION

## Roads

Shelter Island has one New York State Road, Route 114, which 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 for the state. The island has five designated Suffolk County Roads plus one former county road (CR 37) and one designated county road that is un-built (CR 44).

Route 114 and the county roads, except for CR116 and former CR 37 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). Local planning for the TIP is facilitated by the Nassau/Suffolk Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC). There is currently one project on the 2020-2024 TIP for Shelter Island—an approximately \$5 million project for North Ferry Road from north of Winthrop Road to southern Cedar Ave.

### Road Maintenance

The Shelter Island Highway Department is responsible for day to day road maintenance, including resurfacing roadways and patching potholes; street sweeping and clearing of catch basins and sumps; repairing curbs and sidewalks; and winter

**State and Suffolk County Roads on Shelter Island**

| Designation | Local Road Name   | Notes  | Federal-Aid Eligible |
|-------------|---|--|----------------------|
| NY 114      | South Ferry Road, North Ferry Road, Summerfield Place, Grand Avenue, Bridge Street, Cedar Ave (northbound), Clinton Ave (northbound), | Includes ferry routes  | Yes                  |
| CR 37       | Manwaring Rd  | No longer a County Road  | No                   |
| CR 42       | Shore Road in Shelter Island Heights  | From Rocky Point Ave to CR 115   | Yes                  |
| CR 44       | None  | Unbuilt; was designated for South Shelter Island Bridge                            | Yes                  |
| CR 69       | Cartwright Road and North Cartwright Road   | From NY 114 intersection to Ram Island Road  | Yes                  |
| CR 115      | West Neck Road  | From NY 114 to intersection of Brander Parkway/Nostrand Parkway/Bootlegger’s Alley | Yes                  |
| CR 116      | Smith Street and North Menantic Road  | From North Ferry (NY 114) to CR 115  | No                   |
| CR 117      | Burns Road  | From CR 69 to end  | Yes                  |

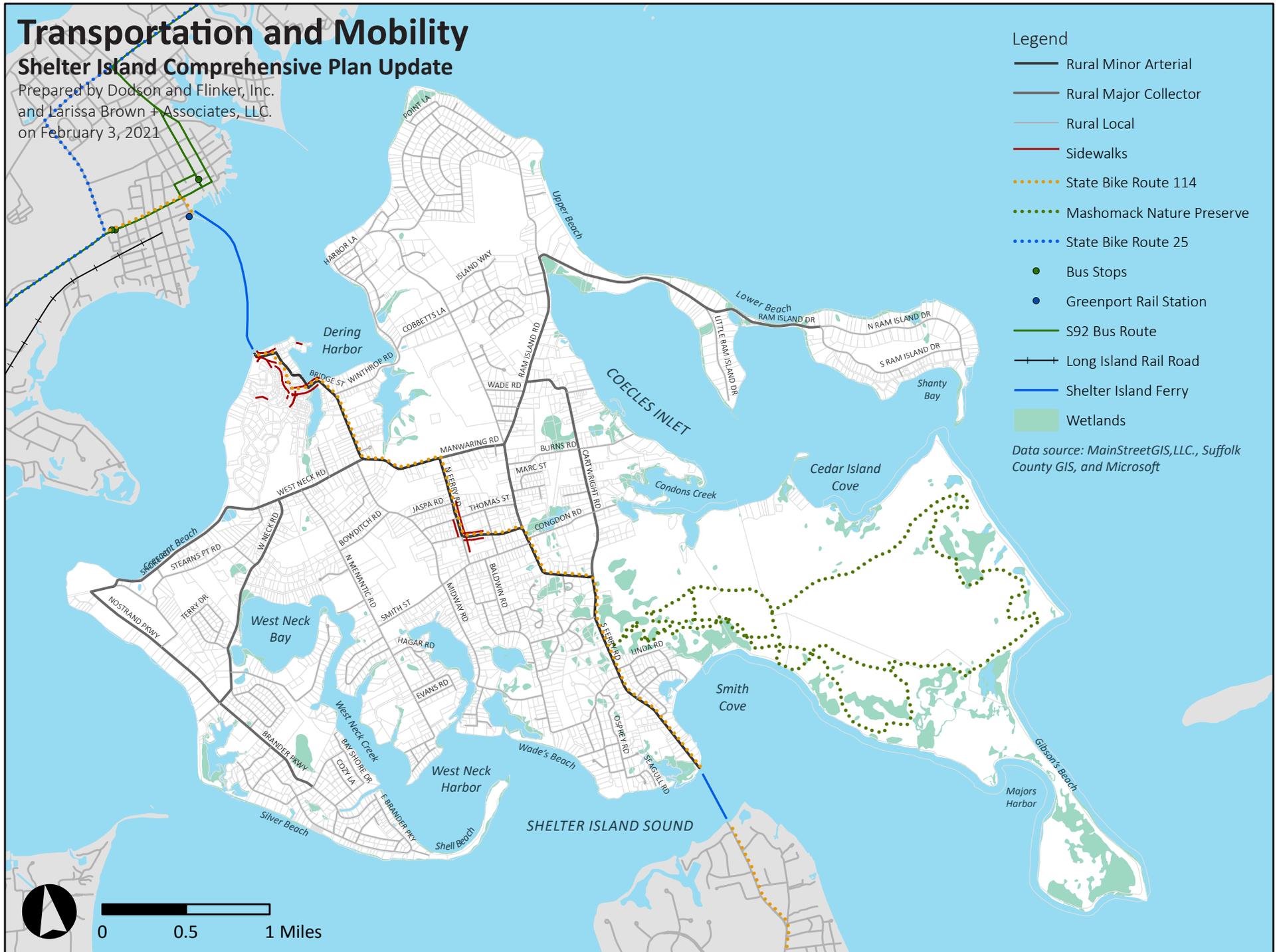
**Roads Miles by Ownership**

|            | New York State | Suffolk County | Town or Private |
|------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Road Miles | 4.8            | 5.0            | 49.5            |

# Transportation and Mobility

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021



snow plowing, sanding and de-icing. The town Engineer began a program to assess Town roads with help from summer engineering interns and the Cornell Local Roads Program. The resulting 2019 town-wide 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, an improvement over a rating of 63 made in 2015. This improvement was credited to a steady pace of repair over the last 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 need to be totally reconstructed.

The Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation also relies on the Cornell Local Roads Program to help prioritize annual repaving work on its network of private roads. Private contractors are hired to do paving and repairs. In 2020 this including part of Upper Spring Garden Ave., the top of Meadow Place, both sides of Chequit Triangle, and several smaller repairs.

### **Roads and Flooding**

According to the Draft *2020 Suffolk County Hazard Mitigation Plan*, numerous roads on Shelter Island are vulnerable to flooding (see list at right). Climate change is likely to increase the frequency and severity of flooding both from sea level rise and increased intensity of precipitation events. 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 made to increase the length of platforms from 24 feet to 30 feet to improve vehicular access from the ferries. Improvements are in design stage for extending and raising ramps for the North Ferry, starting at the Greenport side.

Roads vulnerable to coastal flooding:

- North Ferry Terminal
- South Ferry Terminal
- Bridge Street
- West Neck Road (Terry Drive-Westmoreland)
- Ram Island Rd (Sheep Pasture-Gardiners Bay Dr)
- 1st Causeway
- 2nd Causeway
- 3rd Causeway
- End of Congdon's Road
- Westmoreland Drive
- Midway Road (South End near Dickerson Creek)
- Menantic Road (South end at Montclair Ave.)
- All of Silver Beach (high water table)
- Crescent Beach (by bath houses) (County Rd)
- Winthrop Road From Cobbetts to Third Bridge

Roads vulnerable to rainfall/urban flooding:

- Clark Place (area)
- Valley Road
- Linda Road
- Osprey Road
- Smith Street (Midway-114)
- Midway Road (N. Jaspa)
- West Neck Road (Nostrand Parkway)
- Emerson Lane (dead end)
- Hay Beach (area)
- Big Ram (area)
- North 114 meets South 114 (medical center)
- Smith Street-Bowditch Road (County Road)

# Average Annual Daily Traffic

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021

### Legend

Average Daily Traffic

- <500
- 500-999
- 1000-1499
- 1500-1999
- >=2000

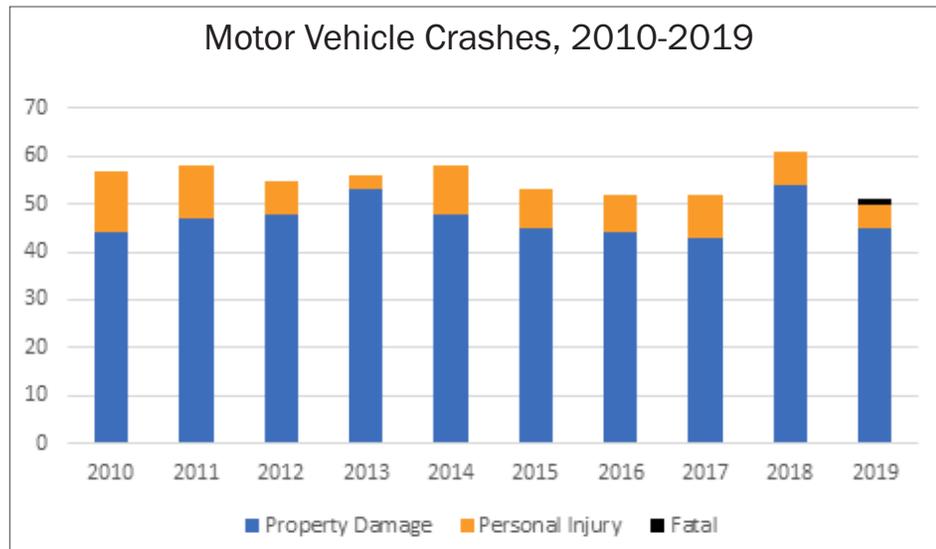
Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC.,  
New York State Department of  
Transportation



## Motor Vehicle Crashes

According to data compiled by the Institute for Traffic Safety Management and Research (a collaboration between the University at Albany and the NY Dept. of Motor Vehicles), between 2010 and 2019, Shelter Island saw an average of fifty-five motor vehicle crashes per year. An average of 47 crashes caused property damage only while 8 caused personal injury. There was one crash fatality in 2019. Bicyclists were injured by motor vehicles an average of 1 time per year. Pedestrians were injured by motor vehicles less than once a year on average, with 2 injuries reported in both 2010 and 2017 and no reported injuries in the other years. Large trucks were involved in crashes about twice a year, with one crash resulting in personal injury and the remainder involving property damage.

Crash data compiled by the Shelter Island Police Department shows a higher number of average yearly crashes, with an average of 73 crashes per year between 2009 and 2019. In addition, there have been an average of 31.4 deer-related crashes over the same time period. This demonstrates that 30% of total crashes are deer-related. Year-by-year crash totals are illustrated in tables which may be found in the Public Health and Safety Services section of this report.



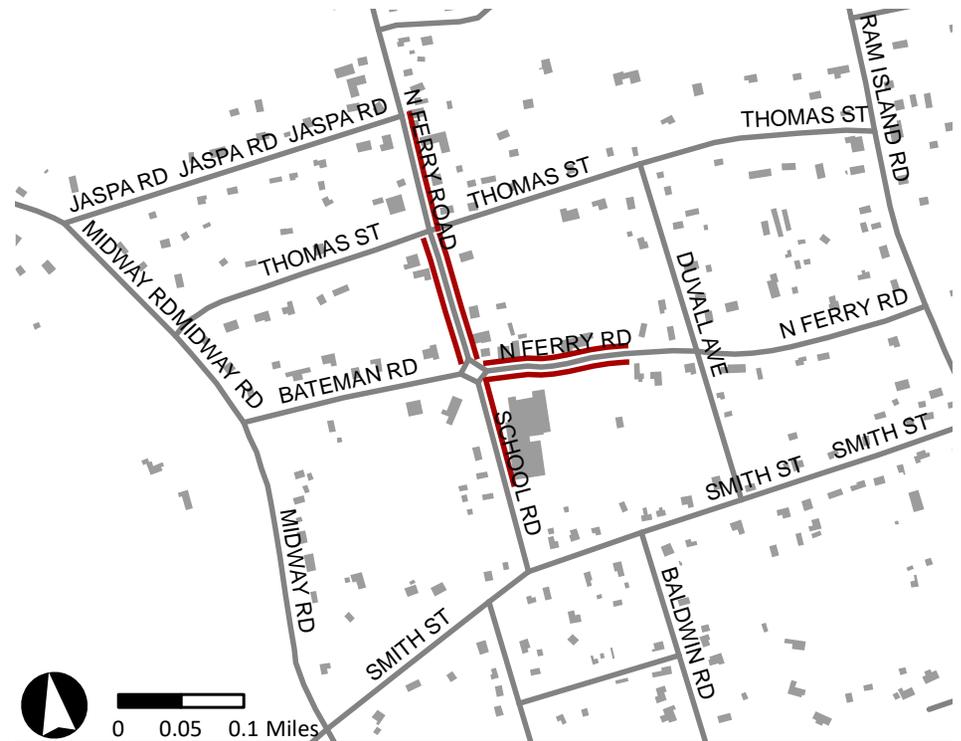
Source: The Institute for Traffic Safety Management and Research

## Sidewalks

Most areas of Shelter Island are rural in character, with no sidewalks in residential areas. Roads often have small shoulders, with approximately ten 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. Sidewalks are present in the following locations

### Town Center:

- North Ferry Road from just north of East/West Thomas Street to about 500 feet east of the roundabout
- The west side of School Street adjacent to the school



Sidewalks in Shelter Island Center

# Landings and Moorings

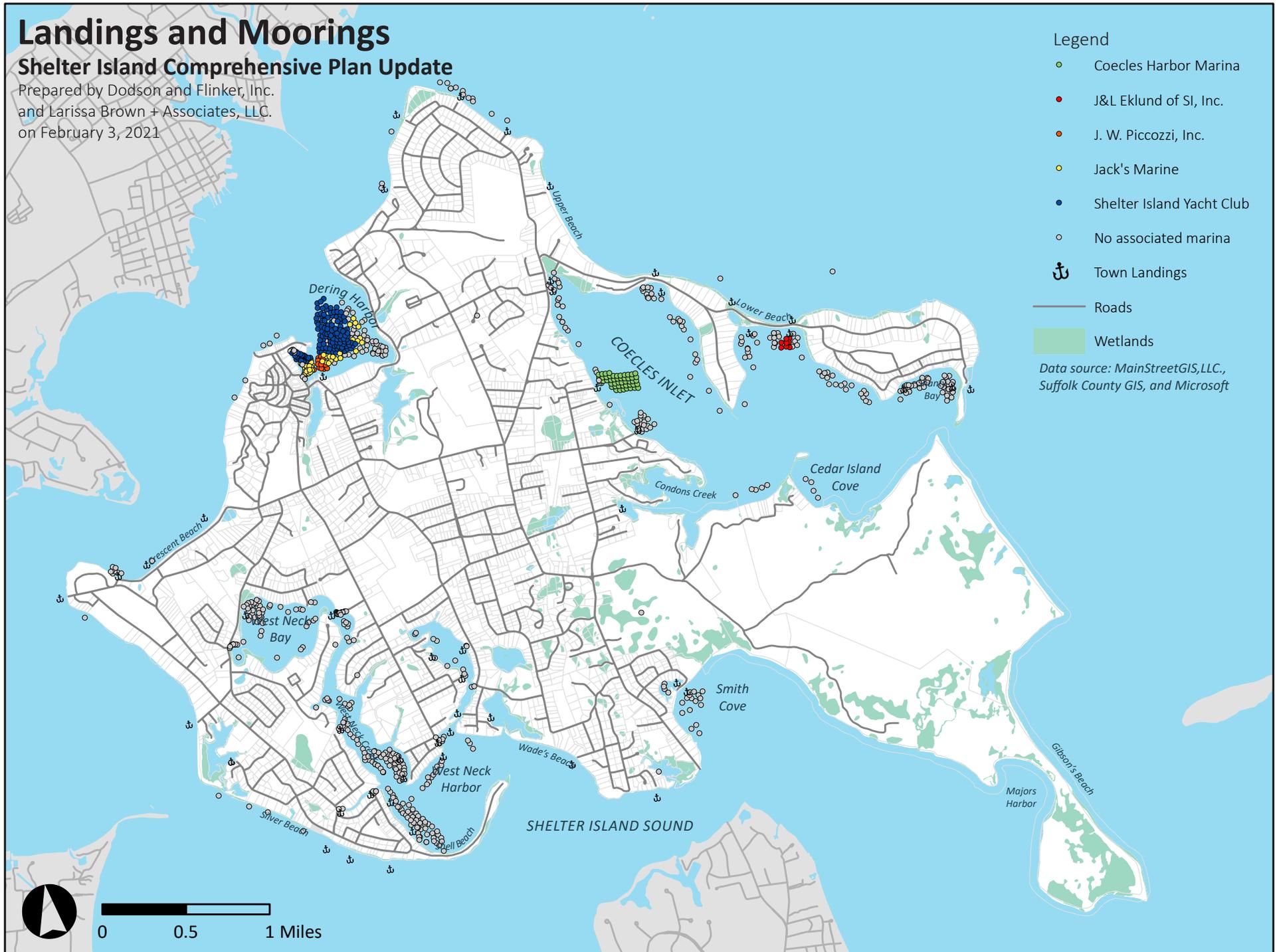
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

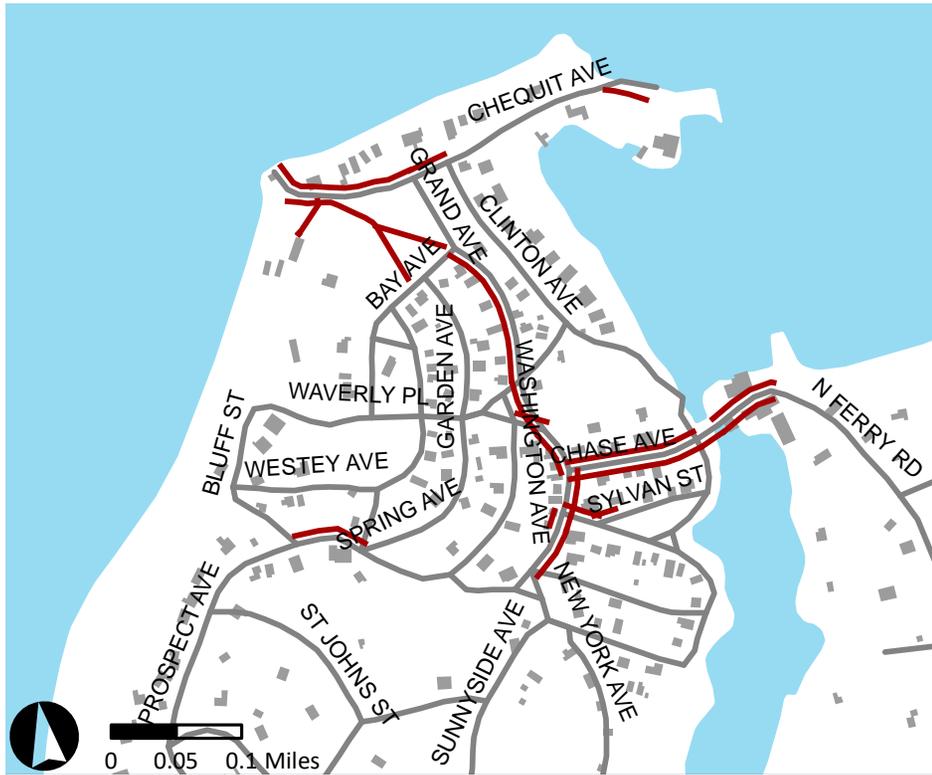
Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
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on February 3, 2021

### Legend

- Coecles Harbor Marina
- J&L Eklund of SI, Inc.
- J. W. Piccozzi, Inc.
- Jack's Marine
- Shelter Island Yacht Club
- No associated marina
- ⚓ Town Landings
- Roads
- Wetlands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC.,  
Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft





Sidewalks in Shelter Island Heights

**Shelter Island Heights:**

- Summerfield Place
- Grand Avenue from Bay Ave. to Prospect Ave.
- Chase Avenue
- Bridge Street
- Prospect Avenue from about Spring Garden Avenue to Wesley Avenue
- Auburn Avenue adjacent to Shelter Island Hardware. Auburn Ave/Sylvan Place adjacent to the Post Office



Crosswalk with rapid flash beacon at Shelter Island Town Hall

**Walking Paths**

There are a number of walking paths and trails in the Mashomack Preserve, ranging from 1.5 miles to 11 miles, that are very popular with Islanders, visitors and guests. 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.

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



Bicycle at the beach (Source: Girl in the Yellow Taxi)

## **Bike Facilities**

The Island is a popular destination for recreational cycling. New York Route 114 is also designated as New York State Bicycle Route 114. It runs north to south on and off island connecting Greenport to East Hampton for a total distance of 15.35 miles. There are no dedicated bicycle lanes or shared-use trails 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 or on the Mashomack trails. There is a bicycle rental business in the Bridge Street area. Improvements to bike and pedestrian accommodations between the North Ferry and First Bridge have been discussed by the Shelter Island Heights Corporation and they are working with the town’s grant writer to identify a source of funding for safety improvements.

## **Truck Access/Delivery Services**

All materials 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. The access from South Ferry is more direct. Route 114 is less congested in the southern part of the Island.

## **Taxi and Ride-Sharing Services**

There are two companies that provide taxi service on Shelter Island. Off-island limousine services also provide options for Islanders for off-Island transportation needs.

## **Public Transportation**

While there is no public or private sector bus or rail transportation on the Island, the Town’s Senior Services Department operates a handicapped accessible bus to transport seniors to various locations on the 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 Rail station, Hampton Jitney motorcoach, and Suffolk County S92 Bus Line. On the South side, Suffolk County Bus 10A stops at the South Ferry Dock on North Haven.

## **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 Pilot’s Association. Shoreline Aviation provides seaplane service to Shelter Island from the 23rd Street Seaplane base in Manhattan, Thursday and



Shelter Island Yacht Club Dock

Friday afternoon, Sunday afternoon and Monday mornings. Seaplanes arrive at Crescent Beach. Several other companies run similar services. Recent restrictions on seaplane access in the Town of East Hampton 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 Moorings

Shelter Island has dozens of boat landings and hundreds of moorings. According to Chapter 90, the Moorings section of the Shelter Island town code, the town has issued 863 mooring permits and recognizes the need to limit moorings beyond the established gridded mooring areas in order to maintain open fairways for navigation and keep water open for recreational use. Moorings are limited to use by town residents, and there is a long waiting list. Non-residents can obtain moorings through the commercial marinas. Waterfront landowners are allowed one riparian mooring in front of their



South Ferry (Source: Chris Tehan)

property. Approval of new stake line and pulley systems requires a permit from the town board.

Town-owned docks at Congdon's Creek and Dering Harbor are regulated according to a new Dock Law adopted in October 2020. Chapter 53, the Dock Law, 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 at the town facilities. For commercial and private docks, the law regulates design and construction and establishes a permitting and review procedure. Design standards control the length, width and depth of docks.

## 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. South Ferry is a privately-owned company. A town

committee, the Ferry Study Group, assists in reviewing ferry services, and in 2019 was involved in establishing 5AM service on the North Ferry to enable better connections to train and bus service in Greenport.

### **North Ferry**

North Ferry operates boats between Shelter Island and Greenport continuously between 5:00am and midnight, seven days per week, 365 days per year. In addition, the ferry provides an average of twenty-two after hour emergency trips per year. In 2019, North Ferry carried:

- 1,451,000 passengers
- 793,100 cars (driver and passengers included above in passengers)
- 46,500 trucks (driver and passengers included above in passengers)

The trip is approximately .9 nautical miles and takes about fifteen minutes. Boats generally arrive for unloading and loading 15-20 minutes apart based on time of day and demand, at three active docking areas on the Shelter Island side and two on the Greenport side.

Greenport vehicles and passengers board at the terminal at the Greenport multi-modal transportation hub, where the company leases the land and associated ferry access roadways from the Village of Greenport and the Long Island Railroad.

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 been becoming more frequent and the North Ferry Company is planning to raise the landing areas and extend the length of the ramps.

The company operates up to five ferry boats. Four are relatively new, with capacity for 25 cars. One older ferry with a capacity of twelve cars is sometimes used during peak demand periods in the summer months or when one of the newer ferries is undergoing maintenance.

North Ferry is one of the largest employers on Shelter Island with approximately fifty employees, including thirty-five active captains that operate the vessels and act as deckhands on a rotation basis, five staff in the office and

three engineers. They also have several pursers who do not operate vessels, as well as seasonal and casual (fill in) staff. The decrease in non-resident use of North Ferry during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a drop in sales of resident ferry passes, has caused significant financial strain.

### **South Ferry**

South Ferry operates boats between Shelter Island and North Haven (close to Sag Harbor) continuously between 5:40 am and 11:50pm, seven days per week, 365 days per year. Hours are extended in the summer and on weekends year-round. The trip is approximately 5 minutes. Boats generally arrive for unloading and loading 15-20 minutes apart based on time of day and demand, at two docking areas on the Shelter Island and North Haven sides. The company leases the land and roadways at the Village of North Haven from the Village. Due to sea level rise, minor flooding has been becoming more frequent and the South Ferry Company is planning to raise the landing areas and extend the length of the ramps. The company operates up to three ferry boats. They are all relatively new, with capacity for 20 cars each. 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. As with the North Ferry, decreasing use of South Ferry during the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major financial impact.



## Findings

- Shelter Island has robust land and water-based transportation systems
- The Town is responsible for the vast majority of the road miles on Shelter Island, though there are also state and county roads
- The town has a small, but significant, number of motor vehicle crashes that result in injury and, rarely, fatality.
- There is a perception among some residents that speeding is a problem and speed limits should be lowered.

## Challenges

- Numerous roads on Shelter Island are subject to flooding. This is likely to increase with climate change.
- While 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 conflicts between bicyclists and motor vehicles, sometimes resulting in crashes.
- 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 North Ferry and South Ferry are Shelter Island's only connections to the mainline. Rising sea levels can impact ferry service—though this is and can continue to by reconfiguring land areas and ramps. Decreases in ferry utilization due to the COVID-19 pandemic has placed a significant financial strain on the Ferries.
- Some roads may not be designed to handle the size or weight of larger trucks.
- Lack of public transportation, other than for seniors, adds to vehicular traffic and forces workers without transportation to walk from the ferries along the shoulder of the road.



# UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

## Water Supply

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. The Lloyd aquifer that underlies the Magothy on Shelter Island is also saline. The Upper Glacial aquifer water quality is challenged in certain areas of the Island, specifically by nitrate levels in the Island’s center and saltwater intrusion on the 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. Ongoing development and landuse change is presumed to reduce recharge through increases in impervious surface, the loss of natural kettleholes and other depressions that promote recharge, planting of plant varieties that require a lot of water, and use of irrigation systems.

A significant issue is contamination of the aquifer with Nitrates and other pollutants, largely due to recharge from individual wastewater systems, including antiquated cesspools lacking septic tanks. There are also areas that are impacted with MTBE and other man-made and natural elements in concentrations that render the aquifer unusable, without treatment.

The engineering department has been working to better understand the aquifer, identify pollution sources and leverage county and federal programs that can aid in the effort. A summer engineering intern continued GIS mapping of wells and septic systems (source for the maps in

this report) and the department has been working with Sylvester Manor to assess farm irrigation. The department has applied for participation in the NYSDEC’s Drinking Water Source Protection Program and continues to participate with the County in the USGS Solute Transport Modeling, as well as participating in discussions with USGS on a pilot project for real-time modeling of the Shelter Island aquifer.

### Private Wells

There are approximately 1,070 private wells on Shelter Island, estimated to meet 87% of the total water demand. These small-capacity well pumps are typically located on private property. They draw supply from the Upper Glacial aquifer. An increasing inability to source

**Table of Shared Water Systems**

| Name                     | Ownership  | Approximate number of users           | Total Water Demand |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Shelter Island Heights   | Owned and operated by the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners’ Corporation) | 160 residential and commercial users  | 27,000,000 gallons |
| West Neck Water District | Town—owned and operated by a Board of volunteers reporting to the Town Board   | 63 residential and 7 commercial users | 4,000,000 gallons  |
| Bridge Street            | Informal Business Co-op  | unknown                               | <1,000,000 gallons |
| Dering Harbor            | Owned by the Village and operated by the Suffolk County Water Authority (SCWA) | 23 residential users                  | 3,000,000 gallons  |

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.

### **Public Water Supply**

Four water supply systems on the Island provide approximately 13% of the estimated total water demand. Their ownership, number of users and their estimated percentage of total demand are described in the table on the previous page. The Town is currently in discussions with Suffolk County Water Authority to explore providing public water to those areas of the island facing water quality challenges.

## **Sanitary Wastewater Disposal**

The level of Nitrate in the environment has become a focus for planning and legislation in Suffolk County since Nitrate has been linked to drinking water issues as well as deterioration of the surface waters surrounding Long Island. 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 discharges.

In October, Suffolk County passed legislation that, as of July 2021, will require all new construction and some expansion/renovation projects to install Innovative/Alternative Onsite Wastewater Treatment System, or I/A OWTS. In 2017, the County launched a septic improvement program that created grants for retrofit of sanitary systems with I/A systems. New York State also provided funds for this program. 83 I/A OWTS have been installed on the

Island since 2018: 5 in 2018; 30 in 2019; and 48 in 2020. In addition to these residential I/A systems, a pilot commercial-scale non-proprietary gravel filter constructed wetland treatment system was installed in 2017 at Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, serving resident staff and public restrooms; this system is the subject of ongoing study by the NYS Center for Clean Water Technology at SUNY Stony Brook, which is developing and installing innovative treatment systems across the County.

### **On-site Systems**

As is the case on much of Long Island, most residential and commercial sanitary wastewater disposal is through the use of privately owned, on-site disposal systems. There are approximately 1050 on-site disposal systems on Shelter Island. System types include cesspools, septic systems (septic tank with leaching pools), or Innovative/advanced wastewater treatment systems. There are several composting systems on the Island as well. While cesspool-only systems were banned in Suffolk County in 1973, many homes built before then likely have cesspools since 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 IA system 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 IA systems.

### **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. The plant has permitted flow rate of approximately 53,000 gallons per day of treated sanitary effluent. Upgrades to the treatment plant, which discharges its effluent to

# Drinking Water and Waste Water Infrastructure

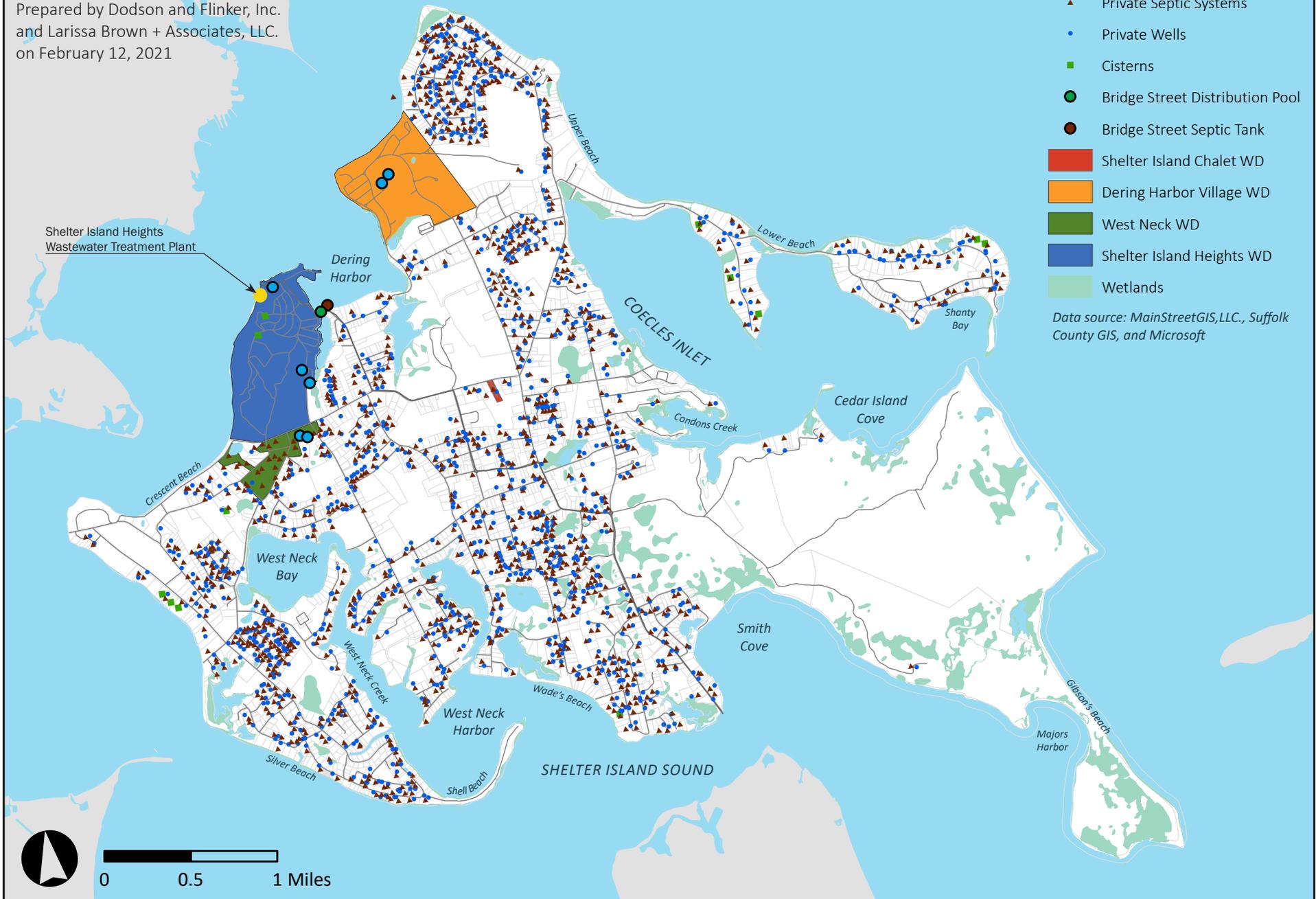
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 12, 2021

### Legend

- Public Wells
- Private Septic Systems
- Private Wells
- Cisterns
- Bridge Street Distribution Pool
- Bridge Street Septic Tank
- Shelter Island Chalet WD
- Dering Harbor Village WD
- West Neck WD
- Shelter Island Heights WD
- Wetlands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



Shelter Island Sound between Shelter Island and Greenport, are being studied – as is the potential for use of the treated effluent to be recycled to irrigate the Shelter Island Country Club golf course.

The town engineering department has studied the possibility of consolidating wastewater treatment for public buildings in the Center and grant funding is in place for a study. In the meantime the Shelter Island School is proceeding with plans to upgrade their oldest septic system independently from the Town, and has hired an engineering firm to draw up the plans. While not forming districts, the three marinas on the island all collect wastewater from resident and transient boaters, disposing of it on site in what essentially become shared wastewater systems. Some boats are serviced through the Village of Greenport's pump-out boat.

### **Irrigation**

Because of the limited water supply on Shelter Island, the town adopted a local law in 2015 that regulates irrigation systems (Chapter 82). All irrigation systems require an annual permit. Grandfathered 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.

## **Stormwater Management**

Most stormwater on Shelter Island is infiltrated into the ground. However, stormwater that falls on impervious surfaces like roads and parking lots can runoff 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 (MS4) 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 MS4 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 MS4 is comprised primarily of over 400 catch basins designed to capture runoff and guide it away from roadways and parking areas (see map, right, showing structures that have been digitized to date). Many of these are leaching catch basins that infiltrate water, but many others still connect to outfalls. Maintenance of catch basins can be a challenge, especially for Rt 114, where NYS Dept. of Transportation does not service them. For example water from 114 runs into Lily Pond because the drains are not serviced and water collected in low points is diverted to the street. The loss of natural low points to development and site improvements has reduced the amount of natural infiltration that is occurring.

As part of its Municipal MS4 compliance program, the town is working to eliminate all outfalls into the Peconic Estuary. This will allow the town to qualify for an exemption to MS4. 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.

# Stormwater Infrastructure and Surface Hydrology

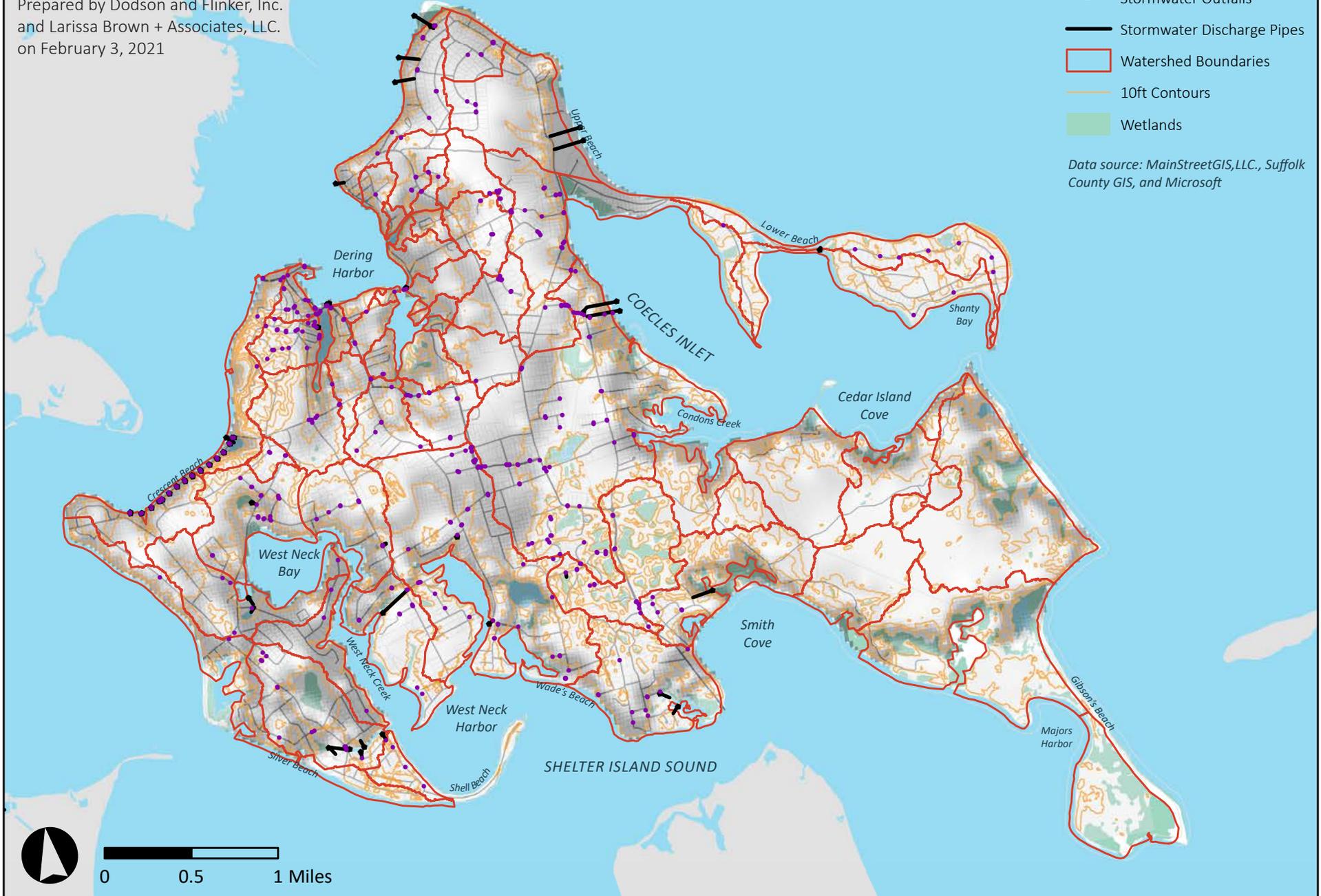
## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021

### Legend

- Stormwater Catch Basins
- Stormwater Outfalls
- Stormwater Discharge Pipes
- ▭ Watershed Boundaries
- 10ft Contours
- ▭ Wetlands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



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.

## Electrical 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 engineering and 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 wiring remains, and all that is needed is generators and switches - providing another

potential option for emergency back-up power.

### Green Energy and Initiatives

- Green energy is a priority for Shelter Island and planning is 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. The Town has two public charging stations located adjacent to Police Headquarters and there is one private charging station at Sunset Beach Hotel.
- Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) for renewable energy purchase is being evaluated by the Green Options Committee. Approved by the NYS Public Service Commission approved in 2016, CCA allows individual communities to aggregate their demand and negotiate a fixed-rate energy supply with multiple vendors. CCAs can lower costs and allow communities to channel their energy dollars towards renewable sources.
- The town was hoping to construct a solar power project at the capped landfill, but necessary modifications to the cap were rejected by NYDEC. The town is currently exploring options for installing solar panels on a new roof at the Recycling Center.
- The state of New York is committed to a transition to 100% carbon free electric grid by 2040 and increasing renewables to 70% of electricity by 2030. Long Island Power Authority has contributed by installing an off-shore wind farm, building New York's three largest utility-scale solar farms, and developing the state's first utility-scale battery project.

# Power and Communication Infrastructure

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 3, 2021

### Legend

- Roads
- Cell Tower
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Fuel Oil & Propane Supply
- Gas Stations
- Wetlands

Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC., Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft



## **Communications**

Island Communications are supplied by Verizon and Optimum. Service is supplied by under water cables from both sides of the island and distributed about the island via a cable network. In addition to traditional land-line telephone service, Verizon offers DSL internet service over the same lines. Cable TV and internet service is provided by Optimum. The Town negotiates a franchise fee for Optimum's service, without any competition, and some residents have found the service to be lackluster. 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 Manhasset Firehouse on Cobbetts Lane. Both cellphone and internet service are said to be slow and uneven on parts of the Island, and expensive.

## **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 and Recharging Service**

There is one active gas station for motor vehicles on the Island: the Piccozzi Mobil Station on Bridge Street. Ellie's Country Store on South Ferry Road still has pumps but does not currently sell gas. The Shell Marina at 63 Menantic Road also provides fuel. Two recharging stations for electric vehicles are located adjacent to Police Headquarters. A Tesla Destination Charger is located at the Sunset Beach Hotel (35 Shore Road).

## 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 from contamination.
- Shelter Island has an adequate drinking water supply system, provide 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, salt water intrusion along the coast, and chemical contamination from old gas stations and other sources.
- Septic systems are contributing nitrogen and other pollutants that are impacting both drinking water and surface water.
- Discharge of stormwater through outfall pipes is affecting water quality in the Peconic Estuary.
- There are a limited number of green energy installations.

## Challenges

- 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 – making changes will take time and diligent effort.
- Changing the suburban pattern encoded in zoning and encouraging revitalization of village centers may require a transition from private wells and wastewater systems to community wells or wastewater treatment in some situations.
- Improving stormwater management to reduce impacts on waterways and to increase aquifer recharge will require consistent effort and funding.
- Reaching the public and educating homeowners on water conservation, wetland protection and the fragile nature of the Island's sole-source aquifer.
- Climate change will likely increase precipitation and extreme storms – taxing stormwater systems, while sea level rise will impact coastal roads, harbors and the ferry terminals.
- Transitioning to more renewable energy will require participation by individuals, institutions and the town.



**SHELTER ISLAND  
TOWN HALL**

# COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

## Education and Lifelong Learning

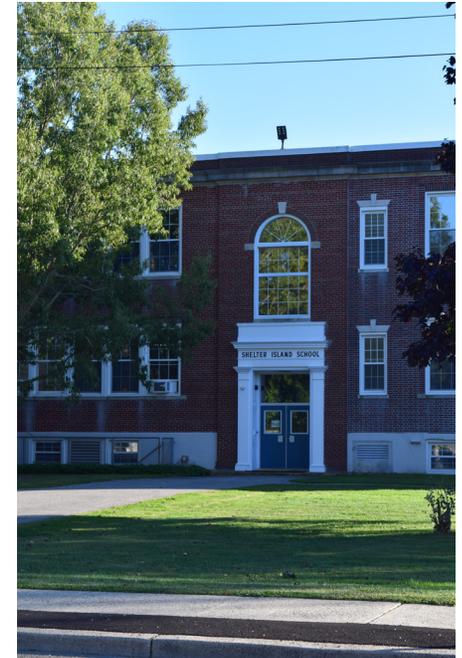
Community life often centers around schools and libraries. In Shelter Island, the Shelter Island School and the Library serve as important community hubs. Other learning opportunities are offered by the Youth Center, the Shelter Island Historical Society, and the Senior Center (see the Public Health and Safety section). The school and the library benefit from associated nonprofit organizations, the Shelter Island Educational Foundation and the Friends of the Shelter Island Public Library.

## Shelter Island Union Free School District

- The Shelter Island Union Free School District offers education in grades pre-K-12 in a single building at 33 North Ferry Road. The district is led by a seven-member elected Board of Education and is not a department of Town government. It is funded by a tax levy of \$2.8214 per \$1000 of taxable assessed value. The 2019-2020 budget was \$11,934,877.21. Approximately 46% of the total Town tax levy goes to the School District.
- The school has an official K-12 enrollment of 199 students in 2020-2021 housed within one building. pre-K enrollments for three- and four-year-olds are not included in official enrollment numbers. Inclusion of pre-K numbers would bring the 2020-2021 enrollment to 225 students. Three students, one elementary and two pre-K are sent to off-island schools. In recent years, there have been approximately 30 students going to off-island private schools. The average class size is 16 with a student-teacher ratio of 8:1.
- Certified by the New York State Board of Regents,

Shelter Island School employs 35 professional staff in addition to five teaching assistants and aides, a guidance counselor, a school nurse, a school psychologist, and a school social worker. Eighty-four percent of all professional staff have graduate degrees. The number of teachers has been stable ranging from 31-36 in the 1998-1999 to the 2017-2018 period and class sizes are typically small.

- The school is rated at the highest level (4) for College, Career and Civic Readiness. The graduation rate for the 2017-2018 school year was at 95%.
- Historically, cost per pupil has been higher than similar districts and significantly above the New York State average. In 2018-2019 cost per pupil was \$46,084 compared to a statewide average of \$22,024. The cost to send special education students off-island depends on the program, but can reach as much as \$100,000.
- Enrollment has declined in the last two decades, from a high of 285 students in 2003-2004 to a low of 192 in 2019-2020. Without the increase in students that occurred in 2020-2021 because of the year-round population increase due to the pandemic, the total enrollment was expected to decline again. This is because graduating classes are larger than younger classes.
- The school population has become more ethnically and economically diverse in the last ten years. The diversity of the student population has been growing steadily since school year 2009-2010. By the 2018-2019 school year, 20% of students identified as Hispanic. In addition, 39% of students were identified as “economically disadvantaged” (eligible for free or reduced lunch). School staff reports that the increase in school enrollment during the 2020-2021 pandemic



Bottom, Source: Shelter Island Union Free School District

year was not the result of an increase in Hispanic or economically disadvantaged students.

- The Shelter Island Educational Foundation was created as a partnership with the school to reach beyond the school district budgetary constraints and geographic isolation by augmenting the resources for individual teachers, students, and community members.
- Day care and pre-school is reportedly in short supply on Shelter Island. The privately-run Shelter Island Early Learning Center that operates in the Presbyterian Church for two- to four -year-olds charges tuition but also depends on fundraisers and donations.

### **Shelter Island Public Library**

- Created in 1885 and located since 1965 at 37 North Ferry Road on 1.27 acres of land, the Shelter Island Library is an “Association Library,” that is, a public library created by a membership association. It is not a department of Town government but does receive tax revenue at 0.1838 per \$1,000 in assessed value, approximately 3% of the tax bill.
- Governed by a Board of Trustees, the library’s focus is on developing educational, cultural, and entertainment programs for all sectors of the community including adults, children, students and seniors as well as those with special needs. The 2018 budget was \$735,000.
- With 13 staff (4 full-time), the library serves 8,000 visitors per month in winter and 13,000 per month in summer.
- Critical resources include adequate space, excellent staff, up-to-date technology and year-round, open access to programs, services, materials, and media.
- The Library is open six days a week and services include free and open access to, and circulation of, books, periodicals, CDs, DVDs, and non-traditional

items. Online databases (e.g. Heritage Quest, Law Depot, Medline, and Flipster) are available at the Library as well as offsite to download materials.

- Circulation of materials in hard copy is declining, while electronic access continues to rise. The Library provides access to materials from the entire Suffolk County Library system. A majority of library technology cost is passed through from the Suffolk Cooperative Library System (SCLS).
- A variety of recurring and one-time programs are provided to serve all age groups. The main floor has six desktop computers available for use by patrons as well as Wi-Fi connectivity for patrons’ personal devices. The lower floor has six laptop computers for use by young patrons.
- The Library property has 1.27 acres and the building is a single-story brick structure, with a total area of 6,000 square feet. All spaces are handicapped accessible/ADA compliant.
- The Community Room in the lower level can be expanded to accommodate up to 125 people for events. The lower level also houses the Children’s Library and a Staff Lunchroom/Kitchen. Outdoor spaces include a plaza area at the main entrance with bench seating, and a patio off the lower level with table seating and a retractable awning.
- The goals of the Library’s 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 improvements to the Library’s property to become greener and more resilient through green energy, state-of-the-art waste disposal, and electric vehicle charging stations.

- The Friends of the Shelter Island Public Library, a non-profit organization, supports the library through fundraising events for cultural and educational programs and for resources and materials not within the annual operating budget.

- Klenawicus Airport Hanger
- Playground Equipment
- Bridge Street Gazebo and Bathroom
- Apartment Building at 40 North Ferry Road next to Town Hall purchased for potential town government use.

## Town Buildings and Other Assets

- The Town owns 25 buildings and nine other facilities valued at \$12 million. The contents of the buildings are valued at an additional \$700,000. Other Town assets include the utility infrastructure of the West Neck Water District, vehicles and equipment valued at \$5.3 million, and boats valued at \$330,000.
- The Town's assets are maintained by the Commissioner of Public Works. The Town's Capital Planning and Grants Committee is developing an Asset Management Plan to guide maintenance, repair and replacement of assets at the end of their economic service life.
- Town-owned buildings include:
  - Police Department
  - Shelter Island Country Club
  - West Neck Water District
  - Town Hall
  - Recycling Center/Transfer Station
  - Highway Building and Salt Sand Building
  - Smith-Taylor Cabin
  - Justice Hall
  - Medical Building
  - Wades Beach Bathhouse and Pavilion
  - Legion Hall/Youth Center
  - Crescent Beach Bathhouse
  - Shelter Island Ambulance

## Highway and Public Works Department

- The Shelter Island Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for building 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 highway and other assets.

## Solid Waste Management

- The Town of Shelter Island is responsible for solid waste management on the island including the Village of Dering Harbor but does not provide curbside collection service. The former landfill has been closed and solid waste management is focused on the transfer station and Recycling Center on Menantic Road, open every day but Wednesday. The Town prepares a required annual update to its Municipal Solid Waste Plan.
- The Town's Highway Department is responsible for operation and maintenance of the Town's solid waste facilities. Six employees maintain and operate the facilities.



Town Hall  
(Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)



Justice Hall

# Public Facilities and Public Land

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 21, 2021

### Legend

- Roads
- Town-Owned Parks
- Town of Shelter Island
- Suffolk County
- New York State
- Dering Village
- ✈ Airport Hanger
- 🏊 Crescent Beach Bathhouse
- 🏠 Fire Station 1
- 🏠 Fire Station 2
- 🏠 Fire Station 3
- 🏢 Highway Building
- ⚖ Justice Hall
- ♻ Recycling Center
- 🏠 Legion Hall- Youth Group
- 🏠 Medical Building
- 👮 Police Department
- 🎵 School Street Recreation Facilities
- 🚑 Ambulance/EMS
- 🏌 Shelter Island Country Club
- 🎓 Shelter Island High School
- 🏃 Skate Park
- 🏠 Smith-Taylor Cabin
- 🏛 Town Hall
- 📖 Town Library
- 🏖 Wade Beach Pavillion



Data source: MainStreetGIS, LLC.,  
Suffolk County GIS, and Microsoft

- To incentivize recycling, since 1992 the Town has used a pay-per-bag system for waste and does not charge for recycling. This system is also intended to fund the cost of waste disposal and has been periodically adjusted to pay for disposal and recycling handling charges. The Town provides information and recycling rules on the Town website about recyclables accepted and how to prepare them as well as hazardous waste and rules for the “Goody” area for reusable items.
- Since 1991, the Town has competitively bid hauling services to transfer waste. The Town markets materials from the separated recyclables to offset operational costs, and is increasing its capacity to bale and haul these materials in-house.
- All waste and recyclables, except yard waste, are transported off-island by a private hauler via ferry and taken to the Brookhaven Town Landfill—which is scheduled to close in 2024. Recyclables are processed and marketed by the Town through a private hauler.
- The global recycling economy was disrupted in 2018 by the decision by China to effectively close its market to waste such as plastics and paper by requiring very low rates of contamination. As a result, reduced prices and markets for recyclables have made municipal recycling programs more costly.
- The Brookhaven landfill, the last one on Long Island, will be closed and capped in 2024. Like other communities, Shelter Island municipal waste remaining after reuse and recycling will have to find another waste facility.
- 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 has an extensive yard waste management program including a yard waste composting operation and a chipping operation for woody materials.
- Recyclables must be separated and those accepted by the Town in late 2020 include newspaper and mixed paper; cardboard; glass bottles and jars; tin and aluminum cans; #1 and #2 plastics.
- Other materials, which are also source separated for management, include construction and demolition (C&D) debris, bulky wastes, and yard 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. Glass is ground and used in road repair
- The Town also accepts e-waste (electronics) and operates a “Goody Area” for reusable items that are clean, in good working order, and ready to be reused. In addition, subject to compliance with “picker” procedures, residents can pick through the C & D, metal, and furniture recycling piles.
- 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 Shelter Island population, the amount of waste produced varies according to the season. The recycling rate for the Shelter Island recycling center is 87.92% compared to the 2013 US EPA national average of 34.3%. The large volume of yard waste contributes to the high recycling rate as does the effective recycling program. Shelter Island’s average daily tonnage is slightly more than half of the US EPA national average daily tonnage.



- Shelter Island characteristics that influence waste generation are the island's high proportion of people over 50 (who typically generate less waste); yard waste is accepted throughout the year; the incentive to dispose of waste locally rather than ferry it off the island; and emphasis on waste reduction practices.
- The Town's waste management system has exceeded the State goals. It is expected to continue to improve in the future with minimal changes to the base system.



## Community Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Town owns and operates the following parks and recreational facilities:

- Youth Center, located on the main floor of the Legion Hall building
- Two Bowling lanes in the basement of the Youth Center (operated by American Legion Henry Martin Mitchell Post 281)
- Skateboard Park (at the Highway Department on Bowditch Road)
- Shelter Island Country Club, a nine-hole golf course with a restaurant and bar, is also known as Goat Hill because of its location. The Club and course is supported by membership fees, the lowest on the East End. Discounts are available for seniors and for first responder volunteers.
- Volunteer Park (Bridge Street)
- A playground (at School Street)
- Airport Hangar (at Klenawicus Airfield)
- Town Beaches (Wades, Crescent, Shell)
- Walking Trails at four Town-owned preserves (see Open Space Map in Land Use section).
- Taylor's Island



Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey

- Menhaden Lane Beach Town Landing
- Crescent Beach Town Landing

The Shelter Island School District owns facilities that are available for use by the community including:

- FIT Tennis Courts, newly resurfaced in 2020
- Basketball Courts, with new backboards and rims in 2020
- Fiske Baseball Field
- The FIT Center, an indoor gym located behind Shelter Island School, has an annual membership fee. Discounted fees are available for EMS volunteers, active military, college students, and youth. The school district owns the building but the Town rents the space and manages the FIT Center. A visiting physical therapist operates out of a small room in the FIT Center.

Semi-public and private community recreational facilities are owned and operated by Sylvester Manor (Manor House, grounds), The Nature Conservancy (Mashomack Preserve Manor House and trails), the Shelter Island Historical Society, the Shelter Island Heights Property Owners Corporation (private beach and cabana), and recreational facilities owned by other homeowner associations.

Other private recreational facilities are available on the island, including Gardiner's Bay Country Club, Shelter Island Yacht Club, and Quinipet Camp .

## Recreation Programs

The Recreation Department organizes programs for adults, youth and children. Programs have modest fees, which are used to pay instructors. Space is limited and more programs and classes could be available if there were more space. After school programs were started a few years ago for K-5 students that typically can accommodate 10-15 students. In 2019 up to 14 or 15 students would participate in any one session. Examples of recent programs include:

- Adult trips to New York City
- Parties and events for families and children
- Yoga, Zumba, and other fitness programs for youth and adults
- Swimming lessons at Wades Beach
- Pre-schooler and after school programs
- Arts and crafts
- Basketball clinic
- Volleyball
- Soccer
- Adult co-ed drop in basketball
- Ballroom and Latin Social Dance
- Senior Yoga, Mah Jong, and Poker
- Tennis
- Summer camps and programs are available at Shelter Island School and the Library, as well as through the Recreation Department. Private recreational programs for adults, children, and youth in the summer are also available, including at Gardiner's Bay Country Club, the Shelter Island Yacht Club, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, and Mashomack Preserve. Quinipet Camp & Retreat Center offers overnight camp and day camp, and sailing programs for children and youth.

## Capital Planning Grant Committee

This committee advises the Town Board on priorities, costs, and funding resources for capital projects. The goals of this committee are:

- Develop and adopt a multi-year Capital Plan consistent with New York State guidance
- Use innovative on-site wastewater treatment where feasible at town facilities
- Research potential town-owned sites and funding opportunities for affordable community housing
- Pursue a Downtown Beautification Program, including future development of 40 North Ferry Road and needs assessment and evaluation of town facilities in the town center
- Participate in planning initiatives to assess climate change risks and vulnerabilities and promote resilience



Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey

## **Town Facility Projects or Initiatives**

Funding for Town facility improvements and initiatives comes from the general fund, state or county grants, and federal funds. The Town applies for \$12-15,000 a year in Community Development Block Grant federal funds which need to be spent to benefit seniors, disabled persons, or people in low- and moderate-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 property
- Water issues: Ground and Surface Water Management Plan, Water Reuse/Fertigation at the Shelter Island Heights Treatment Plant
- ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance: the Town has engaged a consultant to prepare an ADA transition plan for town properties.
- Repairs and improvements to facilities: Legion Hall, Town Hall parking area, Senior Center kitchen and bathroom project, Medical Center roof, Town Hall and Medical Center emergency generators, solar array on the Recycling Center roof, beach restrooms. 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, Municipal Wastewater Treatment for Town Center facilities
- Building a capital reserve fund

## Findings

- The School and the Library are well-funded and perform well. They are both supported by nonprofit groups.
- Neither the school district nor the library are town departments, but receive funding through the tax levy.
- The Town's solid waste management and recycling programs are well-organized and successful.
- The Town lacks a formal facilities master plan and an asset management system to plan, prioritize, and implement improvements.
- Many town assets need improvements according to town staff lists for various facilities.
- Future plans include "green" investments, such as solar panels at the Recycling Center and best practice improvements at the Library building and site.

## Challenges

- Development of a Multi-Year Capital Plan and an asset management system by a volunteer committee
- Developing and implementing an effective Town Center revitalization plan (See the section on economic development)
- Increased cost of municipal solid waste disposal beginning in 2023 due to the scheduled closure of the Brookhaven Landfill
- Creating and maintaining a Capital Reserve Fund
- Maintaining quality education

Source: Andrew Dallos (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. License)



# **PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICES: KEEPING SHELTER ISLAND HEALTHY AND SAFE**

Town staff and volunteers report that Shelter Island is a safe and secure community in many respects, comparable to others with its age and other demographic characteristics and subject to broader social stresses, such as pandemic conditions in 2020.

- There are few public health or public safety risks specific to the Island. Although many northeastern and upper Midwestern counties are considered high risk for tick-borne diseases, including Suffolk County, these diseases are a major issue on Shelter Island, where 60% of year-round and part-time residents have been treated for a tick-borne disease according to a 2017 survey.
- As a small island community, residents also experience some risk because of relative isolation and limited resources, such as the lack of an on-island hospital.
- Conditions during the pandemic year have reportedly resulted in an increase in domestic violence and in mental health issues requiring intervention.
- Some residents have voiced concerns about substance abuse, but available data and reports from police and EMS suggest that it is not a big problem on Shelter Island. Except for a spike in 2016, drug arrests have been declining. DUIs (including drug-related) have no consistent trend, EMS data for 2020 show only one opioid-related call, and the New York State Opioid Dashboard lists only 8 cases as of December 2019, among the lowest in Suffolk County. EMS and Police carry naloxone (Narcan) medication to counter opioid overdose.

In addition to varying levels of Town government financial support for health and safety services and programs, the Fire Department, EMS, and Senior Center are fortunate to receive support from separate nonprofit foundations, similar to nonprofits that support the school and the library.

Severe storms of various types are the greatest natural risks to Shelter Island 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. The plan lists 11 natural hazards with a “frequent” probability of occurrence in the following order:

1. Nor’easter
2. Severe Winter Storm
3. Severe Storm
4. Infestation
5. Flood
6. Hurricane
7. Shallow Groundwater Flooding
8. Drought
9. Wildfire
10. Earthquake and Expansive Soils

## Availability of Public Health Data

- As a small and 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, and New York State. In the Suffolk County Community Health Assessment, 2014-2017, identified health challenges and behavioral/risk factors that may be especially relevant to Shelter Island include obesity, the relative remoteness of the island and volunteer medical staff related to emergency medical transportation, and potential contaminants in water.
- According to census data, almost all Town of Shelter Island residents have health insurance.

## What Medical Services Are Available on the Island?

### Town Medical Center and General Medical Services

- The Town owns the Medical Center located at 44 South Ferry Road and rents space to physician groups to staff it with doctors. The Center is closed on week-ends. As of December 2020, there are two general medicine/family practice doctors providing services and each is part of broader physician groups on Long Island. Dr Peter Kelt, MD, has practiced on Shelter Island for over 37 years and is part of the ProHealth Care system. In addition to his general medicine practice, he specializes in diagnosing and treating patients with Lyme disease. Dr Joshua F. Potter, DO, recently completed his residency in Southampton and began serving Shelter Island, where he lives with his young family, in the summer of 2020. He is a part of the Meeting House Lane Medical Practice affiliated with Stony Brook Southampton Hospital. He is Board Certified in Family Practice and Board Eligible in Neuromusculoskeletal Medicine. The Island's high

percentage of residents over 50 years old means that diseases of older age groups are more prevalent than in communities with a different age composition.

- COVID-19 testing is available at the Medical Center.

### Other Medical Services

- A dental practice, Smilist Dental Shelter Island, operates three days a week at an office on North Ferry Road with two dentists, Dr Frank Kestler, DDS, who has served Shelter Island since 1993, and Dr. Michael Salkin, DDS, who has worked on Shelter Island since 2014.
- Two chiropractors practice on Shelter Island: Dennis Steigerwald, D.C. and the Family Chiropractic Office on North Ferry Road.
- Home nursing care is available from SI Homecare Agency and other homecare groups in the East End.

## What Hospital Services Are Available?

There are no hospitals on Shelter Island. Residents are served by three regional hospitals:

- Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital (70 beds) in Greenport, which includes programs focusing on geriatric care and behavioral outpatient and inpatient services, and a nationally recognized Center for Musculoskeletal Health for orthopedic care.
- Stony Brook Southampton Hospital (124 beds), which is a provisional Level III adult Trauma Center and includes new cancer center.
- Peconic Bay Medical Center (200 beds) in Riverhead, the largest hospital in eastern Suffolk County, which serves the North Fork and east central Long Island. It has an Interventional Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory Suite, a Level III Trauma Center, and state-designated

nated Stroke Center. Peconic Bay Medical Center also operates a 60-bed and 5-star rated skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility.

- The nearest Tertiary Care/Trauma Center Level I (the highest designation) is the Stony Brook University Hospital located at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.
- Patients are transported by ambulance to local hospitals on the East End of Long Island (Eastern Long Island Hospital and Southampton Hospital) by the Shelter Island Emergency Medical Service. 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 on the North or South Forks.

### **Do Island Residents Have Access to Social and Mental Health Services?**

- A Town-funded Licensed Clinical Social Worker is available at no cost to Shelter Island residents for short-term, individual, and family counseling as well as assessment and referral services. The Town Office for Senior Services also provides referrals and assistance for adults 60 years and older as well as their family members and caretakers. The Senior Center Director has assembled a team of mental health professionals who live on-island to assist with mental health issues among seniors.
- The East End Mental Health Awareness initiative is supported by the towns of Southampton and East Hampton. The initiative publishes a provider directory (available online) for the East End which includes mental health hotlines, clinics, case management, ACT Team (Assertive Community Treatment), rehab

programs, mental illness and chemical abuse clinics and services, substance abuse and addiction services, child and adolescent care, hospitals, employment services, housing, counselors, therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed social workers, support groups, and other services.

- The Suffolk County Department of Health Services supports a community-based outpatient mental health clinic in Riverhead which specializes in integrating behavioral health issues and psychosocial issues. It includes special programs for older adults with mental health and/or substance use disorders.

### **County Public Health Programs**

The two general practice physicians in town provide some general public health services, for example, counseling on best practice behaviors and COVID-19 testing. The Senior Center provides some immunizations. The Suffolk County Department of Health Services includes seven sections focused on public health:

- Adult Immunizations
- Arthropod-borne Disease Program
- Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease Control
- Central Pharmacy
- Bureau of Public Health Preparedness
- Bureau of Preventive Services
- Bureau of Public Health Protection



Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey

## Tick Borne Diseases

- Diseases caused by tick-borne pathogens are widespread in Shelter Island and nearby communities. These diseases are a major health concern. Three types of ticks have been found on Shelter Island: deer ticks, dog ticks, and lone star ticks endemic in the South which have become established since the 1990s, possibly aided by climate change.
- 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.

The serious secondary complications of Lyme disease such as arthritis and neurological problems can be avoided by early treatment.

- Eighty percent of respondents to the 2017 Shelter Island Deer and Tick Survey (including both full time and part time residents) said they had found ticks on family and guests, and 60% had been treated for a tick-borne disease.
- Deer and small rodents like the white-footed mouse are the most important hosts of ticks. Managing conditions for rodent populations to survive and grow and deer management are critical to managing the tick population. Like many locations in the US, Shelter Island has overabundant deer populations that cause ecological damage from overbrowsing, public health and safety impacts, and other negative impacts.
- The Shelter Island Deer and Tick Committee, created in 2005, has pursued a three-pronged strategy of deer management, reduction of ticks through application of chemical acaricide at “4-poster” deer feeding stations, and public education. In 2016 the deer population was estimated to be more than 100 per square mile, a level too high to avoid continued negative impacts on native vegetation and human health and safety.
- The Committee’s goal, as stated in their 2019 Deer Management Plan, is to reduce the density of the deer population to less than 50 per square mile by the summer of 2022. According to the Committee, surveys and observation suggest the goal will be achieved.
- Deer Management controls hunting on public and some private properties and is managed by the Police Department. The Nature Conservancy and Sylvester Manor have deer management plans and coordinate with the town programs.
- The New York State Department of Environmental



**631-726-TICK**

# Tick ID Card



**Stony Brook Southampton Hospital**  
Regional Tick-Borne Disease Resource Center

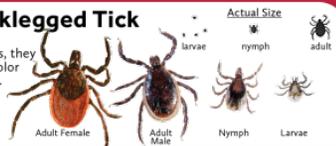
### TICK DISEASE INFORMATION

The East End's danger season for tick-related diseases is April-October although ticks can bite at any time during the year. Learn to recognize the ticks on this card. Ticks can transmit Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Anaplasmosis and other serious diseases. Check for ticks daily, especially on children and pets. Create a “tick-safe” yard by mowing frequently and keeping brush and leaves raked. Pull socks over pant legs and tuck in shirts when outdoors to prevent ticks from climbing under clothing. Insect repellent can be helpful in keeping ticks off the body. Shower as soon as possible after spending time outdoors in a tick danger area. If you, your family, or your pets are outdoors, check for ticks daily, especially on your children and **be aware** of the dangerous ticks illustrated on the chart at left.

**IDENTIFICATION**

**Deer or Blacklegged Tick**  
*Ixodes scapularis*

With no white markings, they are brown to black in color and are very, very small. Both nymph and adult stages can transmit diseases such as Lyme and Babesiosis.



Actual Size

**Lone Star Tick**  
*Amblyomma americanum*

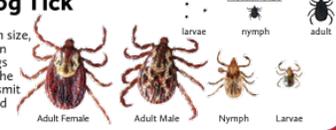
Tannish red. Females are aggressive with a light-colored spot at center on their back. Males have light-colored marks. Their bite can cause Ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and an allergy to red meat.



Actual Size

**American Dog Tick**  
*Dermacentor variabilis*

Larger than the others in size, brown to reddish brown with gray-silver markings on their backs, behind the mouth. Its bite can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Tularemia.



Actual Size

**HOW TO REMOVE AN ATTACHED TICK**

If you find a tick embedded on your body, using fine-tipped tweezers, grab the tick's head and **gently** pull it straight up with a slow and steady motion. If the tick's mouth-parts remain in the skin, don't be alarmed. The diseases are in the body of the tick. Disinfect the bite area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. If you experience a rash, aches, fever or flu-like symptoms, see a physician right away. If at all possible, save the tick in a pill bottle to show to your doctor for identification. For more info visit [www.eastendtickresource.org](http://www.eastendtickresource.org) or call **631-726-TICK**. Every year, thousands of Tick ID Cards are distributed throughout the South and North Forks. All produced with generous support from:





**EAST END**  
EST. 1997  
Tick & Mosquito  
CONTROL  
[tickcontrol.com](http://tickcontrol.com)

Conservation licenses use of 4-Poster feeders. As of March 15, 2020, the Town of Shelter Island suspended its 4-Poster Program because of NYSDEC regulatory changes. The scientific literature, as well as the Committee's observation, strongly indicates that 4-posters decrease the number of ticks if adequately deployed. The Committee is monitoring and will reevaluate 4-Poster use

- The Town-managed deer hunting program is managed by the Police Department and extends from October 1 through March 31. Any person with a valid New York State hunting license can hunt on Shelter Island, regardless of residency or property ownership. To hunt town-controlled properties, hunters must meet eligibility requirements and be vetted by the Shelter Island Police Department. Each deer harvested is logged by the Police Department and can be donated to the Town's Venison Donation Program, processed locally, and the meat is available for free at the Town Recycling Center. There is coordination with food pantries. The Nature Conservancy and Sylvester Manor also have deer management programs that they coordinate with the Police Department.
- The Committee is increasing its public outreach through formation of a public education subcommittee to improve communication on tick reduction techniques via social media and other platforms.

## Senior Services and Programs

The Shelter Island Office for Senior Services is located in the Senior Center on the lower level of the Medical Center at 114 South Ferry Road, open 9 am to 3 pm, 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 undupli-

cated people typically participate in senior programs over the course of a year. Seasonal residents also participate. Program participant numbers listed below are for 2020.

Social and nutritional programs are the foundation of senior programs everywhere. In the last four years, with a new director, the Shelter Island senior services and programs have expanded. A team of volunteer medical and mental health workers works with the Center to provide services, with university affiliations, and case management. New programs include "Caring for the Caregiver" and assistance with hoarding. The pandemic brought Zoom programming and more volunteers. The Center is developing more programs to attract younger, active seniors and more programs for men. Two new buses are available for post-pandemic excursions.

Assistance includes planning for long term care or retirement concerns; hospice referral and co-ordination; counseling on Medicare, Medicaid, and Supplementary Health Insurance; AARP 55 Alive Driver Safety Classes; and a medical equipment borrowing program.

- Programs are funded by the Town of Shelter Island, the NY State Office for the Aging, Suffolk County Office for the Aging, federal Community Development Block Grant funds, program fees and voluntary contributions. A nonprofit organization, the Senior Citizen's Foundation of Shelter Island, provides funding to improve life on the Island for senior citizens, from new buses to contributions toward making the town's beaches more accessible. Some have been temporarily suspended because of the pandemic.
- The Silver Circle social group for the frail elderly afraid of losing their independence meets every Wednesday at the Senior Center. Each meeting costs \$10 and transportation is available. The program includes, games, speakers, crafts, parties, a freshly-prepared

nutritious hot lunch, excursions, and other activities. Bus service is provided if needed. As of January 2021 there were 20 participants.

- An immunization program provided vaccines for flu, shingles, pneumonia, and Tdap to 275 participants in 2020. COVID immunizations will also be offered through the Senior Center.
- The Telephone Reassurance Program provides daily phone calls Monday through Saturday for older adults who might live alone, be sick or homebound, or who might just benefit from a friendly conversation each day. There are 11 participants and 8 volunteer callers.
- The Senior Nutrition Program/Dinner Bell Program provides hot nutritious meals Monday and Friday at the Fellowship Hall in the SI Presbyterian Church with voluntary contributions of \$4.00 per meal. During the pandemic, meals are delivered to participants' homes. Twenty people participate.
- The Home Delivered Meals Program is available to frail, disabled and homebound seniors who cannot participate in the Dinner Bell Program. The "Meals on Wheels" program serves 53 recipients.
- The Residential Repair Program assists seniors with non-emergency, minor household repairs that do not require a licensed contractor. There is no fee for the labor but the client is responsible for materials and supplies. No tipping is allowed.
- Case Management sponsored by the Suffolk County Office for the Aging includes benefit and entitlement counseling, application assistance (Medicare, Medicaid, EPIC prescription program, HEAP-Home Energy Assistance Program), and other services. A senior advocate from the Suffolk County Office for the Aging is available by appointment.
- Senior Transportation /AAA Transportation Programs provide free transportation for medical appointments, food shopping, pharmacy needs, and other errands. Rides are available for on island and off island needs

and must be arranged in advance. Volunteers in 2020 provided 477 rides to 51 unduplicated participants.

- The Handicapped Ramp Loan Program lends a portable handicapped ramp to people in need of temporary handicapped access to their home for up to 90 days, installed and removed free of charge by the Residential Repair Program mechanic.
- The Senior Center has assembled a team of on-island volunteer mental health professionals including 3 social workers (including the Town's half-time LCSW), 1 psychologist, 1 psychiatrist, and 2 nurse practitioners (including the Senior Center Director). This team assists with mental health issues affecting seniors, such as hoarding.
- 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.

## **Public Safety Services: Police, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Management**

### **Shelter Island Police Department**

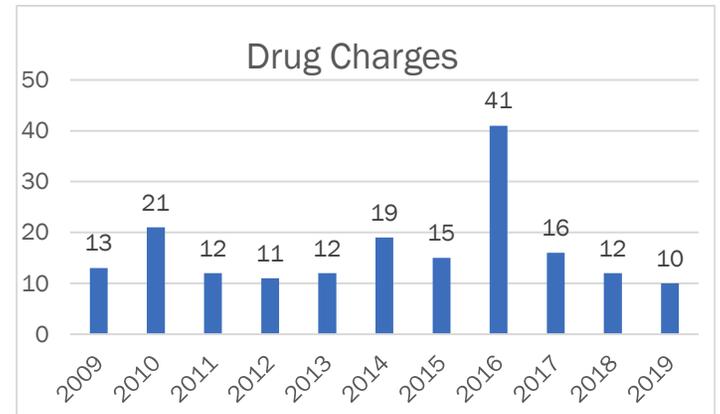
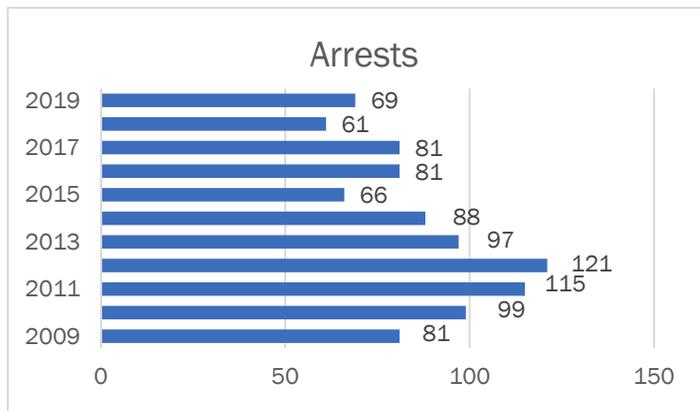
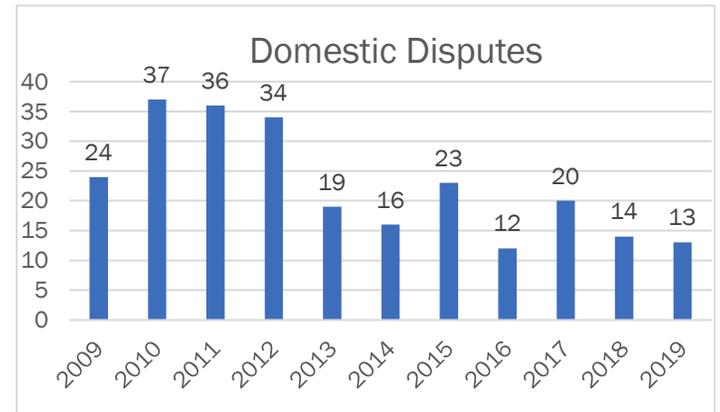
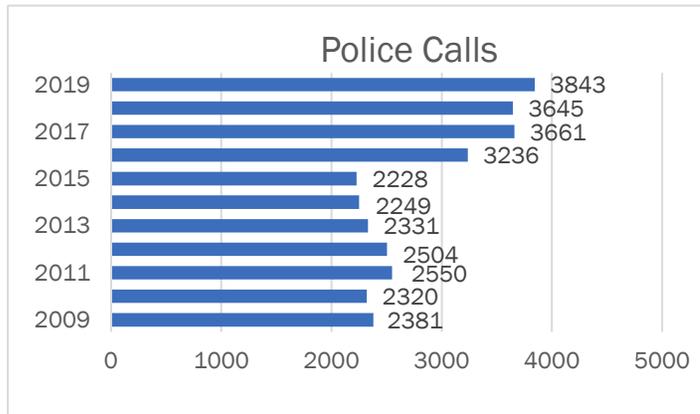
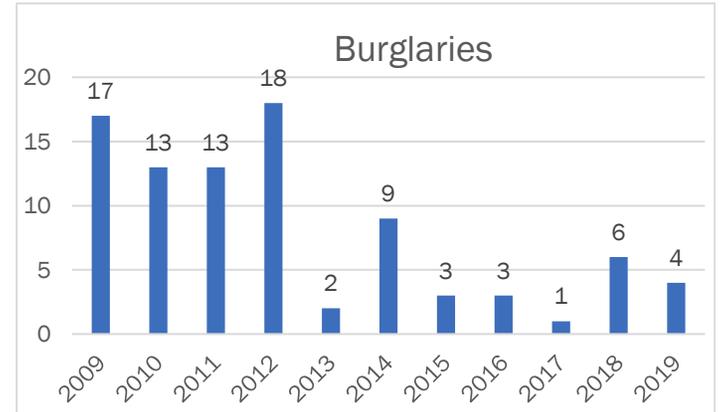
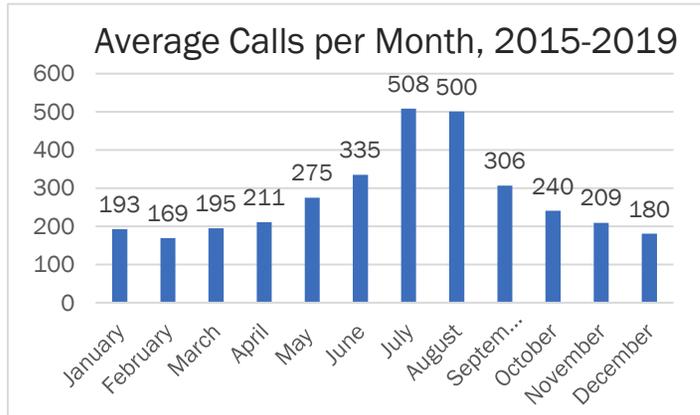
- The SIPD is a New York State Accredited Agency. Only 31% of all police agencies in the state have achieved this status. The NYS Law Enforcement Accreditation Program establishes professional standards, the agency adopts policies and procedures that meet the standards and an independent team of professionals then conducts an on-site assessment to verify successful implementation of the standards. There is an annual review and site inspection every five years.
- The training of all police and law enforcement personnel in the town is provided and coordinated in part by the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD) and the NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services.

- Full-time staff is composed of ten police officers and one police clerk. Part-time positions include police officers, bay constables (4), police clerk, crossing guard, jail matrons, animal control officer, traffic control officers, and 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.
- The 2020 operating budget of the Police Department represented 14.8% of the town budget, lower than any other East End town or village.
- The Police Headquarters in the Town Center also operates as the town's Emergency Operations Center and provides emergency power to the SIPD, Town Hall, Justice Court, and Legion Hall.
- Marine programs include two grant-funded police vessels, boater education, shellfish monitoring, and boat storage on town property, and rescue diving.
- The SIPD operates cameras and plate readers at the ferry terminals.
- Cameras have been added to police cars and body cameras are on the horizon.
- The SIPD is participating in the New York State Police Reform initiative which involves changes to discovery, bail, and Freedom of Information documentation and availability.
- Improved 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.
- Community policing includes speed enforcement education, home assistance to seniors, assisting at special events such as races and July fireworks.
- Data for 2009-2019 indicate the following:
- Seasonality of calls: the average number of calls ranged from 169 in February to 508 in July and 500 in August. (The absolute numbers are affected by

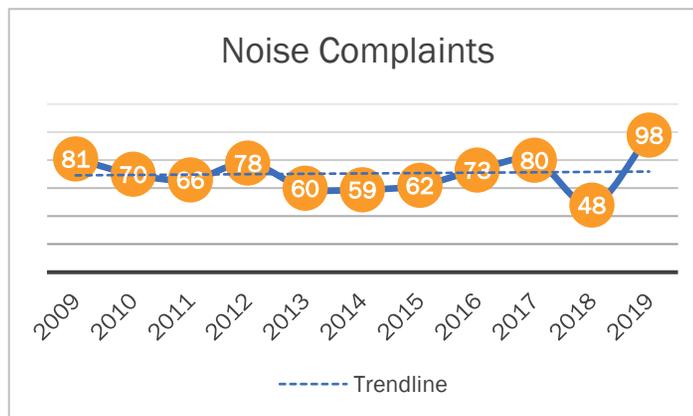
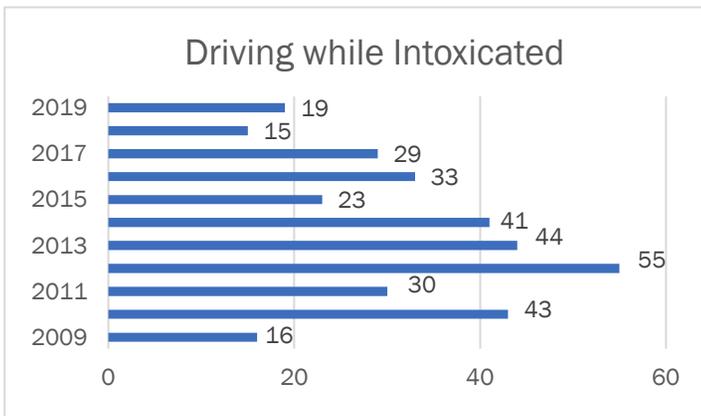
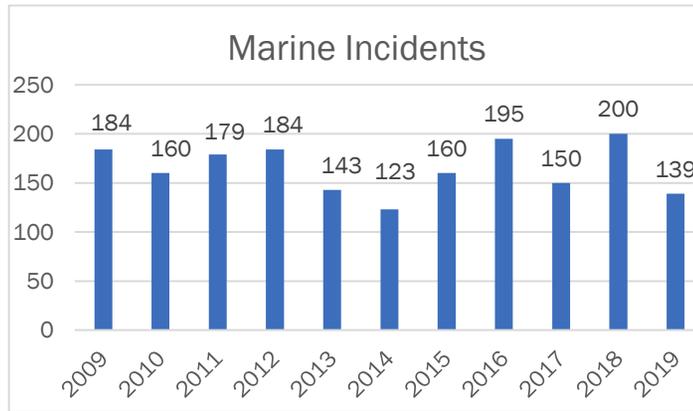
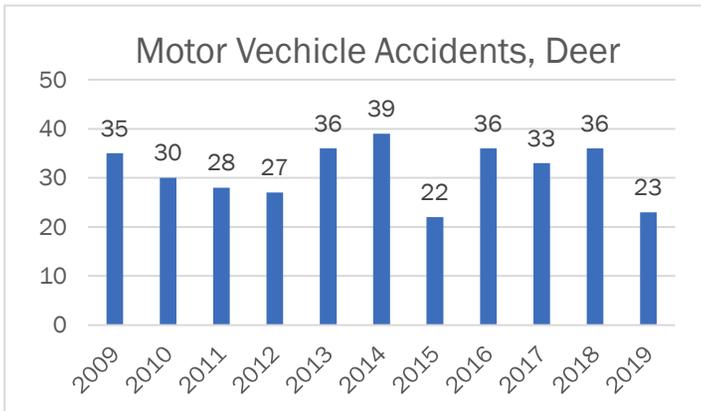
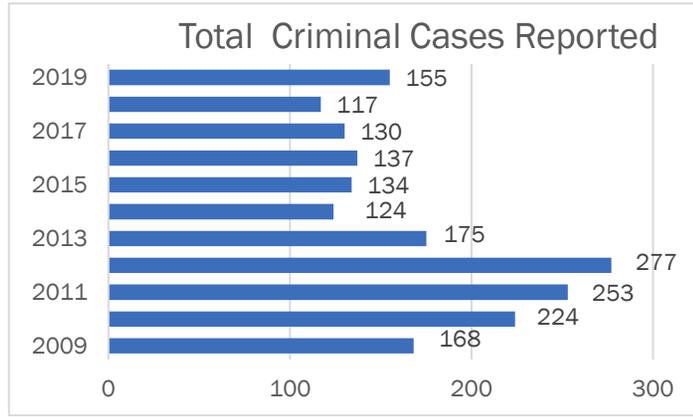
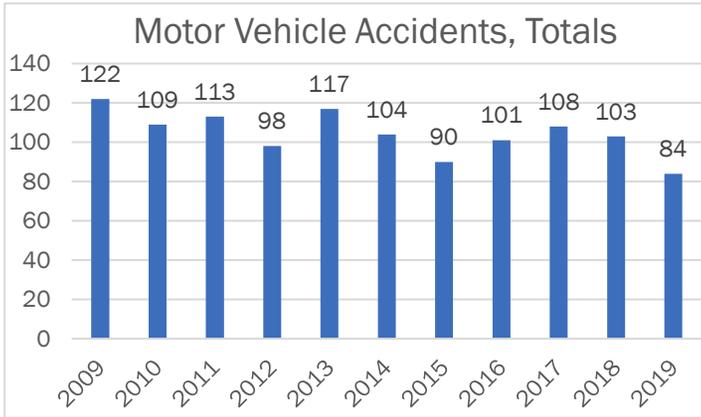
changes in record-keeping starting in 2016 but the overall seasonal nature of calls remains.)

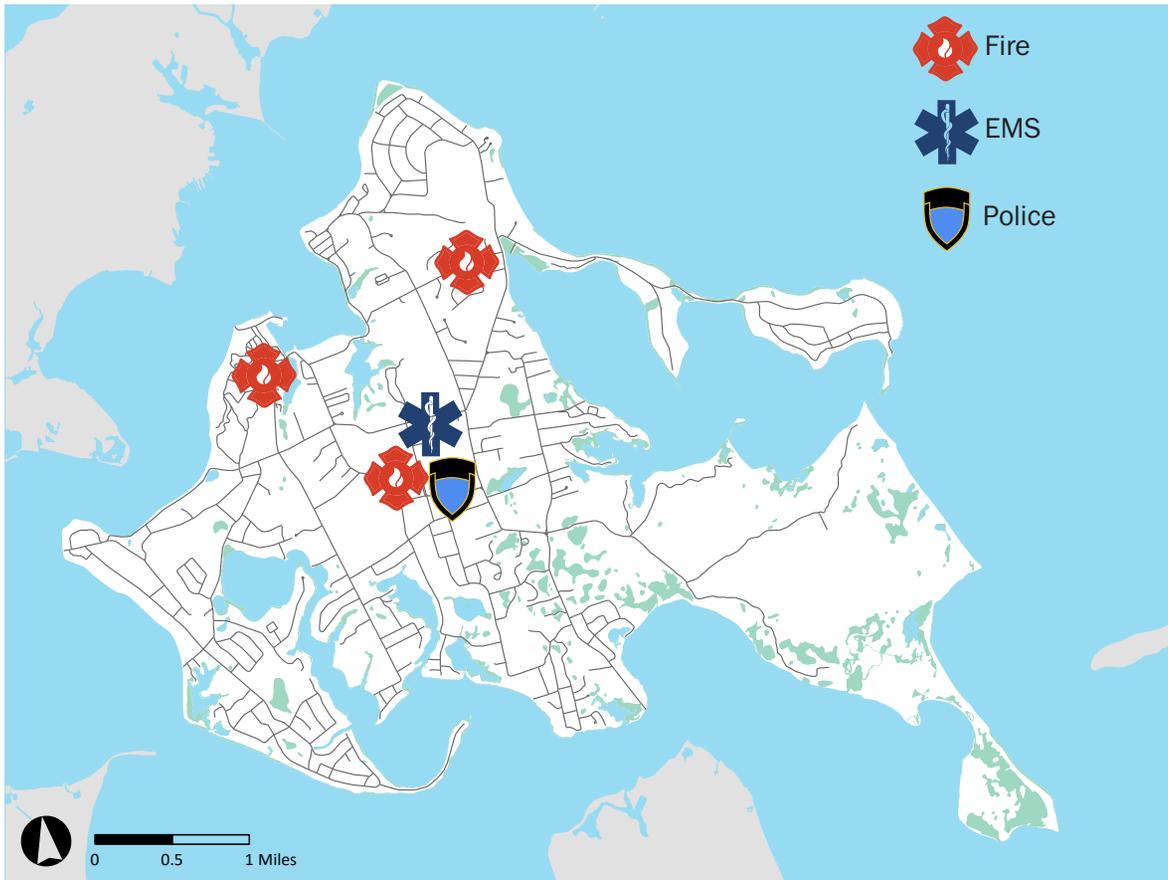
- While the number of police calls have gone up (partially due to a change in record keeping in 2016 to include stops even if no ticket or other action was taken), in many categories the number of offenses has gone down. For a few years after the Great Recession (2007-2009) there were spikes in overall arrests, property crimes, domestic disputes, and more ambiguously, driving while intoxicated, which includes drug intoxication. There was one 2016 spike in drug cases but otherwise the number is relatively low and with no obvious trend. In contrast to the trend showing declines in criminal cases, other types of complaints and incidents over the 2009-2019 period show no discernible trend or increases in the number of calls, probably reflecting an increase in people on the island as well as expectations of town services.
- Deer collisions account for approximately a quarter to a third of motor vehicle accidents (MVA).
- Shelter Island, like all communities, occasionally has an extreme crime, like a home invasion/murder in 2018, but on the whole it is quite safe.
- Changes that affect the broader society also affect Shelter Island—for example, the police are seeing internet crimes affecting all age groups.
- In general, demands on the Police Department have been increasing in the last ten years, ranging from changes to the law and requirements for documentation to a greater demand for services from the population. The Police Department is the only full time 24/7 town service and receives calls for a wide array of reasons. When full 2020 data affected by the pandemic are available, there are indications that domestic disputes will show an increase, but other categories may be lower than in a non-pandemic year because of less activity in the summer, such as marine incidents for example.





Source: Graphs, this page and next, Shelter Island Police Department





Locations of Public Safety Facilities

### Shelter Island Fire Department

- Fire protection on Shelter Island is entirely provided by volunteers in one fire department that operates under and is governed by an area fire district, a local form of government created pursuant to state statutes. The fire district cannot be superseded in authority by a village, town, county or the state government.
- The fire district is run by five (5) publicly elected unpaid officials 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 approximately 77 volunteer firefighters on Shelter Island that operate a combined 14 pieces of firefighting equipment. This equipment ranges from the typical engine, ladder truck and rescue vehicle to more specialized vehicles used for off-road fighting of brush fires, performing technical rescue services, marine search and rescue and shoreline travel on beaches.
- The Shelter Island Fire Department (SIFD) maintains three department locations in the Town to house equipment and enhance fire protection and response.
- Basic and advanced firefighting training is offered through the Suffolk County Fire Academy operated by the Vocational Education and Extension Board under contract with the Suffolk County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services. The training takes the form of year-round classroom instruction at fire stations and the Fire Academy in Yaphank. Live fire training is also conducted at the academy operated training center, also in Yaphank, which operates nearly every weekday evening and on weekends from April 1 through November 30.
- Fire protection also includes a Fire Inspector from Shelter Island Town and Fire Marshals from the County, who have broad responsibilities across their jurisdictions. The SIFD relies upon the SCPD Arson Squad for suspicious fire and arson investigations.
- Alarm receipt and dispatch is handled by a call to Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) at Southold PD and self-dispatch capabilities. The SIFD utilizes tone alert pagers and radios in the low and high band radio spectrums. Neighboring fire departments share each other's operating frequencies for interoperability purposes. Additionally, the SIFD has at least one portable radio that can operate on Suffolk County's 800 MHz trunked radio system for use during local and regional events, emergencies and disasters.
- Fire alarm calls are handled by SIFD. These initial responses to alarms also include incidents involving

hazardous materials. Mutual aid agreements exist on the state, county and local levels to provide for additional resources should SIFD need assistance. In some instances, mutual aid is automatically provided by prior agreements for structure fires during certain time frames or for high risk facilities.

areas classified as rural (under 2500 population) like Shelter Island, the average response time is more than 14 minutes. (<https://medicalnewsbulletin.com/response-time-emergency-medical-services/>)

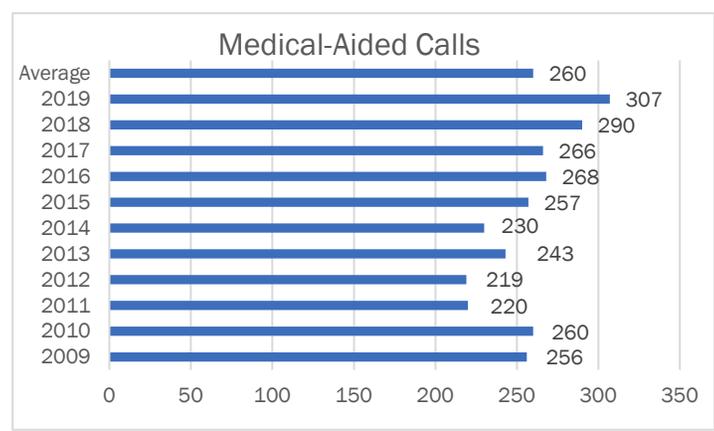


Shelter Island Fire Department (Source: SIFD Facebook page)

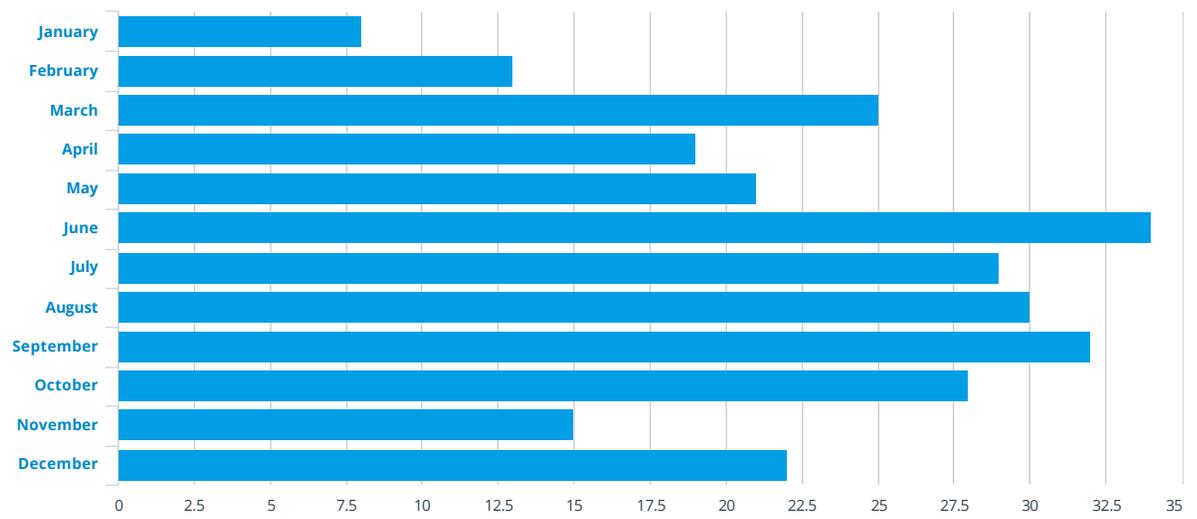
**Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

- The Police Department provided 2009 – 2019 data on total medical-aided calls, which means calls for ambulances or police calls (such as an accident) that resulted in the need for an ambulance.

- *Volume by time of day:* The majority of calls occurred between 8 am and 3 pm.
- *Seasonality:* There were more calls from June through September. However, since this data is for 2020, the seasonality may be affected by changes in the number of people on the island due to the pandemic.



Source: Shelter Island Police Department



Source: Shelter Island EMS Department

- The EMS Department provided data on 2020 calls and performance:
- *Total 2020 calls:* 275. Of these 84% (230) were transported by ambulance and the remainder did not require transport for a number of reasons ranging from cancellation to evaluation on scene and no treatment required.
- *Average response time:* 10:32 minutes with 32% of calls at 8 minutes or less. A review of 2015 EMS records from around the country found that the average national response time is 7 minutes. However,

- *Transports by destination:*
  - Eastern Long Island Hospital – 205 (74%)
  - Southampton Hospital – 24
  - Stony Brook University Hospital – 2
  - None – 45
- *Primary impressions:* EMTs initial observations of patients cover a variety of conditions and injuries.



Source: shelterislandtown.us

Injuries of various types make up the biggest category (approximately 38%) but the conditions range from “generalized weakness” and non-traumatic pain to respiratory disorders and dizziness.

- Shelter Island EMS is provided by a volunteer ambulance company that is a department of Town government. Ambulance services were provided by the Red Cross until 2012, when the Town took over the ambulance company. The EMS Ambulance Company has responsibility for emergency medical services within the Town and works in conjunction with other ambulance companies, fire departments and police as necessary to ensure that the appropriate resources are directed where and when they are needed.
- The Shelter Island EMS Advisory Board supports the EMS program and the nonprofit Shelter Island Ambulance Foundation raises money to purchase ambulances and equipment and to fund continuing education programs for EMTs.
- 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 ten volunteers aged 22 or younger as of early 2021.
- The emergency medical service functions on Shelter Island include both Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) capabilities. The advanced life support capability entails specialized training in the administration of medications and the performance of life saving measures in the field.
- If needed, patients are primarily taken to hospitals in Greenport and Southampton, according to which hospital is most appropriate for the patients’ condition.

- The Suffolk County Division of Emergency Medical Services within the Department of Health 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.

### **Emergency Management**

- The 2020 Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, prepared in accordance with federal guidance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), guides emergency response in Shelter Island. The Chief of Police is assigned as the Town’s Emergency Manager and operates the Emergency Management program, with direction from the Town Supervisor.
- Located in the Police Department, the Shelter Island Town Emergency Operations Center (SI EOC) is maintained by the Police Department and staffed by Town personnel and the Town’s pre-identified partners during emergencies. Activity at the SI EOC includes resource and information coordination.
- The Shelter Island Town Police work hand in hand with the Emergency Response Teams from the Shelter Island EMS and Shelter Island Fire Department. A “tier” level response approach has been developed that involves coordinated efforts between key essential organizations for the purposes of shelter, care for the elderly, care for pets, food and water as well as transportation and ferriage.
- The American Red Cross works with Shelter Island EOC for the sheltering, feeding, and general mass care of the population during a disaster situation. The primary shelter is the Shelter Island School, with

the Shelter Island Senior and Youth Centers used as secondary shelters. The Senior Center also functions as a special needs shelter.

- The Town Supervisor is the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Town, in charge of communications to the people of Shelter Island through all available communications media before, during, and after an emergency or disaster in any location of the Town in support of Town response/recovery operations.
- 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.
- The primary public safety radio communications for Shelter Island are provided through the Southold Police Department and the Suffolk County Fire Rescue Communications Bureau. Shelter Island Emergency Management is also assisted by amateur radio operators who maintain a communications center at the Town’s EOC.
- There is a Shelter Island Hazard Mitigation Plan as part of the County’s plan.

## **Safety Committee**

The Safety Committee listed on the Town website is a committee required by the Town’s insurer and deals with general workplace safety issues, protections, and training. Committee members are Town staff, with the Town Attorney as chair and safety officer for the purposes of the insurance carrier. Its functions are purely internal without the need for volunteers.

## Findings

- Physicians and dentists are available on-island.
- A town-funded Licensed Social Worker is available at no cost to residents.
- Additional medical services are off-island in three hospitals and many practitioners.
- The Office of Senior Services has multiple programs to assist and serve seniors.[add bullet]
- The Police Department is among the one-third of police departments that has achieved accreditation by the New York Law Enforcement Association. Residents depend on the police one of the few Town departments that operates 24/7.
- Volunteers staff the Fire District and EMS Ambulance.
- Nonprofit foundations provide support for the Senior Center, the Fire Department, and the EMS Department.
- The Town has an up to date Hazard Mitigation Plan and Emergency Management Plan.
- Tick-borne illnesses are very widespread on Shelter Island and the Town has developed and implemented deer and tick management plans.

## Challenges

- Continued management of deer and ticks to reduce populations and infections.
- An aging population, including many seniors living independently, may create more demand for senior services and need for volunteers to assist seniors.
- The Town depends on volunteers for essential safety service, especially new cohorts of young volunteers. Lack of affordable housing and employment on the Island may reduce the pool of volunteers for fire and EMS services and affect recruitment of full time police officers, who must live on the Island.

# COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS & QUALITY OF LIFE

## What Organizations and Events Support Community Life?

### Shelter Island School District

The Shelter Island School District provides education for grades pre-K through 12th, as well as supporting community life through a broad range of services. Regular events bring families and friends together for concerts and other events. The Shelter Island School Drama Club's annual spring musicals are award-winning productions that bring the community together and attract off-season residents back for the show, which is usually held in April.

The high school athletic department runs sports programs under the umbrella of the NY State Public High School Athletic Association. School athletic events bring residents together and are a valued source of entertainment and sense of community - especially in the winter. The cross country, volleyball and men's basketball team's extended seasons into playoffs and state championships have encouraged celebratory parades from the ferry late at night—building team spirit and connections across the island community and school community.

While these and other sports continue, including golf, winter track, baseball and softball, there is a downward trend in the number of sports offered at the school. Many sports, historically combined with neighboring schools, such as football, lacrosse, tennis, wrestling, etc. are no longer offered for various reasons.

### The Shelter Island Public Library

The Shelter Island Library was created 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.” From its 1965 building in Shelter Island Center, the library provides traditional library services along with a wide variety of educational, cultural and entertainment programs.

Outreach services include book selection and home delivery for homebound islanders. The library provides community meeting spaces, provides support for students and life-long learning, and delivers technology access and support services. It also offers remote, electronic access to books, movies, videos, periodical, programming, educational resources and databases. The use of these services has grown exponentially, from all segments of the population, since the start of the pandemic.

As stated in its recent strategic plan, the Library also strives to be a model for sustainability. In 2020 it was awarded certification by the Green Business Partnership in recognition of its efforts to reduce waste, conserve water and energy, implement green purchasing, and make an organizational commitment to sustainability.

### American Legion

Founded after World War I as American Legion Mitchell Post 281, in the 1930s the Post took over a building constructed earlier as “the Community Club.” Its non-partisan 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 the active duty and



Shelter Island School



Shelter Island Public Library



American Legion (Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)

veteran community, and hosts annual remembrances including events on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. The post also provides support at the national and local community levels through various donations, scholarships, and volunteering efforts. Members and guests also gather for meals and social events throughout the year. The lower level is a Legion-run social club and a small bowling facility that is open to community leagues.

### Youth Center

The town bought the building American Legion building (for one dollar) in 2008 and established a youth a recreation center, with the Legion continuing to operate the downstairs bowling alley, bar and kitchen. The town recreation department runs numerous programs out of the building from pre-k to seniors, including craft classes, yoga, meditation, exercise classes, and seasonally-themed after-school programs.

### Shelter Island Fire Department

The Shelter Island Fire Department is a volunteer organization that provides emergency fire response for the Island from two stations in the Center and the Heights. A third station at Manhasset holds the department's collection of antique apparatus and other equipment. The Fire Department's fundraisers bring the community together for a Steak Dinner in early spring, an early summer antique car show with the Shelter Island Historical Society, an August Chicken Barbecue, and an annual Halloween Parade. The Fire houses provide places for residents to host celebrations and gatherings



Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey

### Lions Club

The Shelter Island Lions Club, chartered in 1950, is “a non-political, non-religious organization, pleased to welcome all adults who are committed to community service and the high ideals of Lionism.” Approximately 90 current members pursue these ideals by hosting a long list of community events and providing behind-the-scenes support of families and children through programs in fuel assistance, eye care, school activities, and this year, direct support for those affected by the pandemic. Annual events include a Cornhole Tournament in August, County Snapper Derby in September, a Scallop Dinner in October, and running a refreshment stand at home games of the Shelter Island Bucks baseball team.

### 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.

- Our Lady of the Isle Roman Catholic Church – provides year-round religious services and religious education, supports CYO basketball and Little League, and hosts the Shelter Island All-Faith Youth Group. The church supports islanders in need with confidential assistance through the Out-



Dog at Memorial Day Parade (Source: Mary Ellen McGayhey)

# Community Institutions & Quality of Life

## Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update

Prepared by Dodson and Flinker, Inc.  
and Larissa Brown + Associates, LLC.  
on February 12, 2021

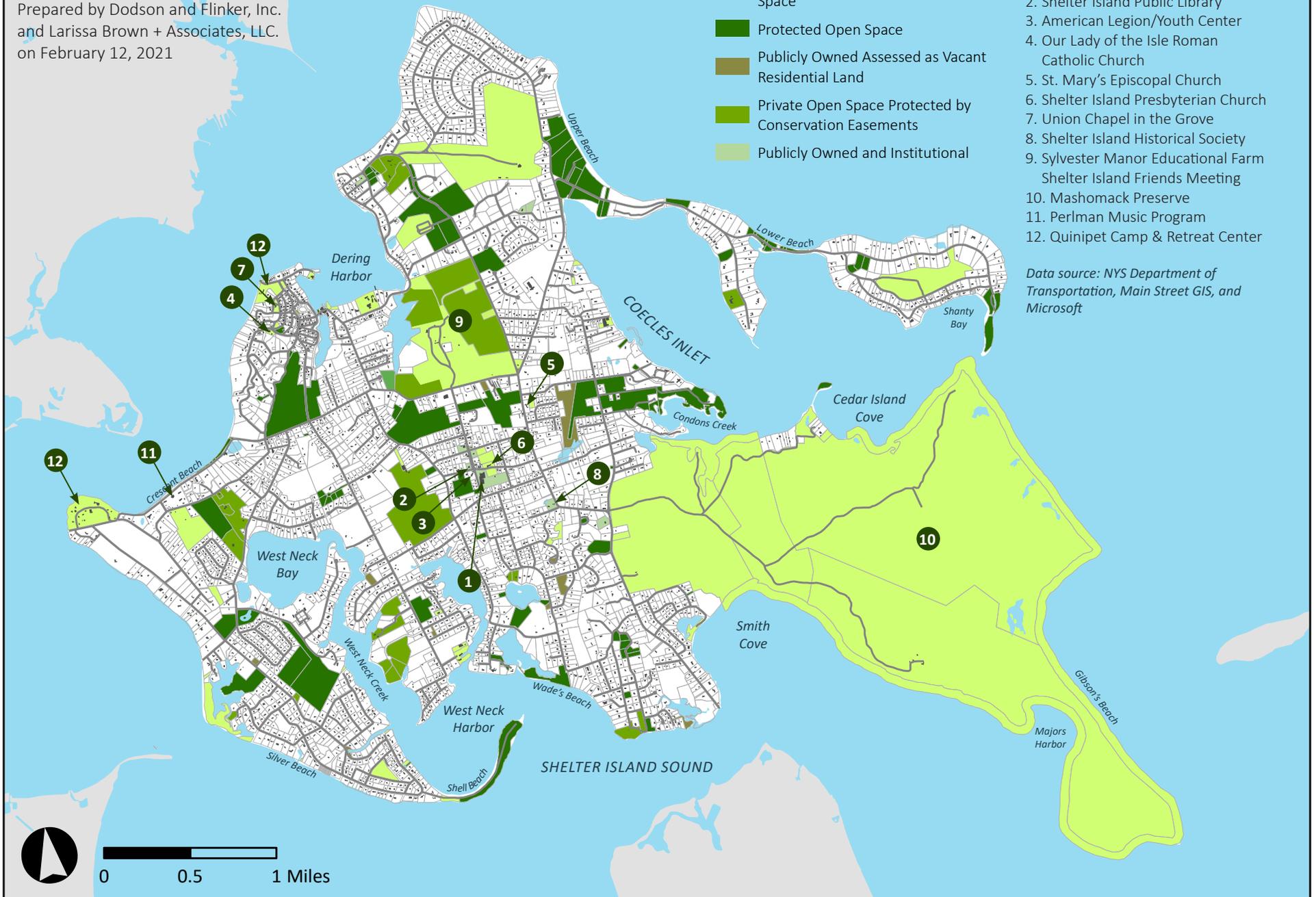
### Legend

-  Unprotected, Privately Owned Open Space
-  Protected Open Space
-  Publicly Owned Assessed as Vacant Residential Land
-  Private Open Space Protected by Conservation Easements
-  Publicly Owned and Institutional

### Key

1. Shelter Island School District
2. Shelter Island Public Library
3. American Legion/Youth Center
4. Our Lady of the Isle Roman Catholic Church
5. St. Mary's Episcopal Church
6. Shelter Island Presbyterian Church
7. Union Chapel in the Grove
8. Shelter Island Historical Society
9. Sylvester Manor Educational Farm Shelter Island Friends Meeting
10. Mashomack Preserve
11. Perlman Music Program
12. Quinipet Camp & Retreat Center

Data source: NYS Department of Transportation, Main Street GIS, and Microsoft



reach Apostolate.

- St. Mary's Episcopal Church – provides year-round religious services, and offers space for AA and Al-Anon meetings, yoga and dance classes. Also hosts meetings of the Shelter Island Association and Hay Beach Association, the All-Faith Youth Group Pancake Supper and the Election Eve Ham Dinner, as well as offering an annual “Friday Night Grub” meal series for the month of March.
- Shelter Island Presbyterian Church offers year-round services and host the Island's food pantry, community choir and scout meetings. The church provides space for the Town's congregational meals for seniors, hosts the local pre-school, and hosts an Election Day Luncheon and a Community Thanksgiving Dinner.
- Society of Friends – hold a weekly Friends Meeting, from May to October at the Quaker Memorial at Sylvester Manor and during the winter months at the Shelter Island Historical Society's Havens House.
- Union Chapel in the Grove – hosts interfaith summer services featuring guest speakers/clergy. Several Sundays each summer are dedicated to various Island institutions such as the Yacht Club, Garden Club, etc.

### **Shelter Island Historical Society**

Founded in 1922, the Shelter Island Historical Society was reinvigorated in 1966 and was recognized as a non-profit in 1969. Chartered as an educational institution by the NY State Board of Regents, the Society's mission is “to collect, research, preserve and share local history. The Society interprets Shelter Island's past through historical material and through its people; from the first Native American inhabitants, settlers, and town fathers, to those who have made it a caring and unique community through the years. The Society strives to preserve the island's heritage for future generations.”

The society's headquarters is the Havens House, a State and National Register property they acquired in 1971. The house was renovated and expanded to create the Shelter Island History Center, which has spaces for exhibits, offices, meetings and educational programs. The Society hosts many cultural and community events throughout the year, as well as on-going efforts such as the Living History Project. From the center the Historical Society provides programming for schoolchildren through The Shelter Island History Project; runs a week-long summer “Time Travelers Youth Program” for ages 6-12; sponsored research by Nancy Jaicks, PH.D on “Race, Ethnicity & Class on

Shelter Island 1652-2013”; and produces a video “Voices from the Vault” series. The Havens Store offers Island and history-themed products and many hand-crafted items by Island artisans.

### **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 bring sustainable agricultural practices back to Shelter Island. Their mission is “to preserve, cultivate and share historic Sylvester Manor to ensure that food and art remain connected to community and the land.” They offer diverse programs aligned with this mission, including:

- Field trips for K-12 students from across the East End.
- Archaeological digs run by a team from UMass, Boston
- Community Supported Agriculture Farm and farm stand.
- The Plain Sight Project, which works to explore and interpret the history of slavery on Long Island.
- Summer Youth and Family Programs, bringing school children and families to experience the farm.
- Many miles of public hiking trails across the Manor's 235 Acres.

### **Mashomack Preserve**

In addition to maintaining 2,039 acres of open space, the Nature Conservancy supports the community with recreational opportunities, education and outreach. This includes:

- 11 miles of hiking trails, supported by parking, restrooms and benches.
- Designated areas for kayaking and cross-country skiing
- The Harman Hawkins Visitor Center..
- Volunteer opportunities at the Visitor Center, the Nest Box Project and the stewardship team.
- Nature programs and guided hikes, including Summer Environmental Education Programs; Young Naturalists activities; Family Fun programs; after school programs for Shelter Island students; guided hikes, kayak and canoe trips for adults; and field trips for K-12 students from Montauk to Manhattan.

## Annual Community Events

A series of annual events - many of them organized by the institutions described above - bring the community together and add to the quality of life on the island. These include:

- Fireworks Celebration at Crescent Beach
- 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-October)
- Shelter Island Historical Society Antique Car Show (Summer)
- Shelter Island Fire Department Annual Chicken Barbecue (August)
- Shelter Island Chamber of Commerce Arts & Crafts Fair (August)
- Cricket Match to benefit Ambulance Corp. (August)
- Shelter Island Oyster Festival (October)

## What Arts and Cultural Institutions and Events are There on the Island?

### Shelter Island Friends of Music

The Shelter Island Friends of Music (SIFM) was founded in 1977 and incorporated as non-profit in 1979. Their mission has been to present both world-renowned artists and rising stars of concert music to music lovers on the East End of Long Island. Their repertory ranges from the Baroque, Classic and Romantic to Contemporary periods. SIFM presents five concerts annually, generally three in spring and two in autumn. All are held at the Shelter Island Presbyterian Church, followed by a reception. All concerts are open to the public for no admission, supported by annual contributions and donations at the door.

### Perlman Music Program

Founded by Toby Perlman in 1994, the Perlman Music Center (PMP) runs a summer program for young string players at its campus on Shore Road. Each summer 40 12-18 year old musicians come from around the world for a seven-week residency. The PMP's world-class faculty, led by acclaimed violinist Itzhak Perlman, oversee a curriculum of solo, chamber music, and orchestral repertoire at the highest level. Admissions are based solely on talent. No student is turned away due to an inability to pay. "Littles" are invited

back to camp every summer through age 18. In 2012 the Program 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 put on in collaboration with the Shelter Island Public Library.

### Sylvester Manor Educational Farm

Sylvester Manor has made music an important part of its programs, including a "music in the fields" program, "Music at the Manor", which runs a Summer Creekside Concert series, and a Bluegrass Festival held at the high school, as well as other events.

### Studios and Galleries

Shelter Island has numerous artist and artisans, some of whom open their studios to the public, and a dynamic line-up of galleries, some seasonal, others year-round, including the Handwerklab Art Gallery, Robert Waife Gallery, the Shelter Island Gazette Gallery and the Havens Store at the Shelter Island Historical Society. An annual open studio is organized by Artists of Shelter Island (ARTSI). Participants in 2020 included:

- Ermst Neizvestny Studio and Sculpture Park
- Sally Jacobs Baker, sculptor
- Janet Culbertson, painter
- Kathryn a. Cunningham, painter
- Rox Dimon, multi-media artist
- Melora Griffis, painter
- Megan Hergueter, potter
- Katherine Hammond, painter
- Karen Kiaer, painter/ceramicist
- Diana Malcolmson, painter
- Jacky Pullman, painter
- Linda J. Puls, painter
- Joe Reilly, painter
- Jana Sheinker, painter
- Susan Schrott, textiles
- Peter Waldner, painter
- Mike Zisser, painter

Many artists draw inspiration from the beauty and history of the island. Local artist John Pagliaro's Falling Arrows Project uses historical artifacts themselves to create art that "intends to focus long-overdue attention on the vanished Manhasset tribe of Native Americans, formerly of Shelter Island." At the core of the project is a collection of some 600 quartz arrowheads and stone tools collected on Island beaches. Sales of related artwork help fund research and writing of a book that will "...ensure that the Manhasset tribe is given its rightful place in regional New York history."

## **What Are Some Challenges to Quality of Life on the Island?**

Continued growth and change on the Island impacts quality of life in ways both subtle and overt. Depending on your point of view, an increase in activity can be seen as supporting local businesses, arts and culture, or spoiling the tranquility of the Island. Some of the quality of life issues that have been raised so far include increasing traffic, larger vehicles and conflicts with bicycles and pedestrians; increased noise from boats, vehicles and outdoor entertainment; and a decline in the darkness of the nighttime sky. Harder perhaps to deal with are the larger social and economic trends that increasingly make it hard for young people, working families, and retirees of modest means to remain on the island year-round – resulting in a loss of the youth, commitment and volunteer energy that helps community life grow and thrive.

## **How Can We Describe and Protect Community Character and Sense of Place?**

Most Shelter Island residents have a strong attraction to the visual beauty of the Island's natural and built environment, and a deep appreciation of the community; its history and authenticity as a working, small town community with traditional values and events. It is not just a resort community. The fact that it is physically an island connected only by ferries also adds a unique character that most Islanders feel adds to that special sense of place. Describing and mapping out community character and sense of place will

continue as the Comprehensive Plan Update moves forward. Some aspects that have already been identified include:

- **Natural Environment:** Mashomack and other areas offer access to a rich natural landscape, beaches and the sea.
- **History:** embodied in buildings, landscapes and families that retain the story of the island.
- **Community:** supported by a close year-round population and multiple generations—whether full- or part-time—that call the island home.
- **Island Lifestyle:** ranging from the ability to still live off of the earth through farming, hunting and fishing, to being able to visit a peaceful place with less traffic, no chain stores, and a very quiet off-season.



Peaceful places are one element of Shelter Island's sense of place

## Findings

- Volunteer organizations and non-profit institutions create a strong sense of community.
- The island setting and natural landscape provides rich opportunities for recreation within a unique landscape.
- Whether full or part-time residents, many people have multi-generational connection to the Island – it's home.
- The amount of conservation land and limited access keeps the island feeling uncrowded.

## Challenges

- Social and demographic change makes it harder to maintain volunteer organizations.
- The constraints of living on an island without 24-hour ferry service.
- Limited availability of goods and services is a significant challenge to the quality of life for residents, especially for the elderly population.
- The negative aspects of growth – traffic, noise, light pollution, and potential impacts on the water supply erode the quality of life for many residents.
- Growth in the number of summer visitors has led to overcrowding of beaches, increased littering and a reduced level of safety for all.
- Small-town traditions of neighborliness and shared purpose are changing as the island grows and becomes more like the Hamptons.
- Balancing diverse needs across the demographic and economic spectrum is increasingly challenging as property values rise.



# GOVERNANCE

## Administration, Management, and Elections

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.

## Town Government Officers and Functions

- The Shelter Island Town Board is the governing board of the town. The town approves additions, deletions, and modifications of provisions of the Town Code. The Shelter Island Town Board also acts as the Police Commission. The Town Board, among other functions, approves certain permit applications; fills vacancies in town offices, elective or appointive; selects the town attorney and town engineer; appoints bay constables and police officers; and provides for the hiring of other employees as necessary for the conduct of the town’s business. Certain highway employees are hired by the highway superintendent, but within appropriations authorized by the Town Board. 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 (chairs) at Town Board meetings, legislates as a member of the

**Town of Shelter Island Officials**

| Position               | Number | Elected | Appointed | Term    |
|------------------------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Town Supervisor        | 1      | ●       |           | 2 years |
| Deputy Supervisor      | 1      |         | ●         | 1 year  |
| Town Councilperson     | 4*     | ●       |           | 4 years |
| Town Clerk             | 1      | ●       |           | 4 years |
| Receiver of Taxes      | 1      | ●       |           | 4 years |
| Assessor               | 3      | ●       |           | 4 years |
| Justice of the Peace   | 2      | ●       |           | 4 years |
| Highway Superintendent | 1      | ●       |           | 2 years |
| Town Attorney          | 1      |         | ●         |         |
| Town Engineer          | 1      |         | ●         |         |
| Chief of Police        | 1      |         | ●         |         |

\* Including Deputy Supervisor

- Town Board, implements Town Board decisions, acts as treasurer and fiscal officer and serves as budget officer in charge of preparing the draft annual budget.
- The Deputy Supervisor is appointed by the supervisor, or by the Town Board if the Supervisor fails to do so within five days after a vacancy occurs in the office. Any person, including a town officer, official or employee, may be appointed Deputy Supervisor, provided that the person appointed shall possess the same qualifications as an elective town officer. In Shelter Island, the Deputy Supervisor has traditionally been a

town board member and currently takes on an important role in oversight of the budget process.

- The Town Clerk is also clerk of the Town Board but has no vote. The clerk is in charge of most town records, issues certain licenses and permits, files reports with County and State agencies as required, posts legal notices, and is, in many ways, a hub of town government.
- Town Justices have jurisdiction in criminal and civil matters, and in special proceedings, as conferred by law.
- The Town Superintendent of Highways is primarily responsible for the maintenance and repair of town highways and bridges and the removal of obstructions caused by brush and snow. The Highways Department also includes public works and municipal solid waste management and recycling.
- The Board of Assessors is responsible for assessing the value of real property in the town for the purposes of taxation. They determine the value of all 3,500 properties in the Town of Shelter Island. Since 1999, every property is revalued each year at 100% of market value. The Board also administers property tax exemptions for senior citizens, veterans, clergy, disabled property owners, volunteer fire fighters and EMTs, non-profit and educational entities, conservation organizations, and agricultural businesses.
- The Receiver of Taxes is responsible for collecting town, county and special district taxes, including school taxes, and taxes for the Shelter Island fire district and library. The taxes collected are turned over to the proper agencies.

## Special Purpose Districts and Their Officials

Special purpose districts are unique public entities that are not departments of town government but play an important role in community life:

- Fire District Board of Commissioners: five elected commissioners for five-year terms
- Shelter Island School District Board of Education: 7 elected members for three-year terms
- Shelter Island Public Library: 13-member board of trustees elected by the members of the Shelter Island Public Library Society, a nonprofit

organization

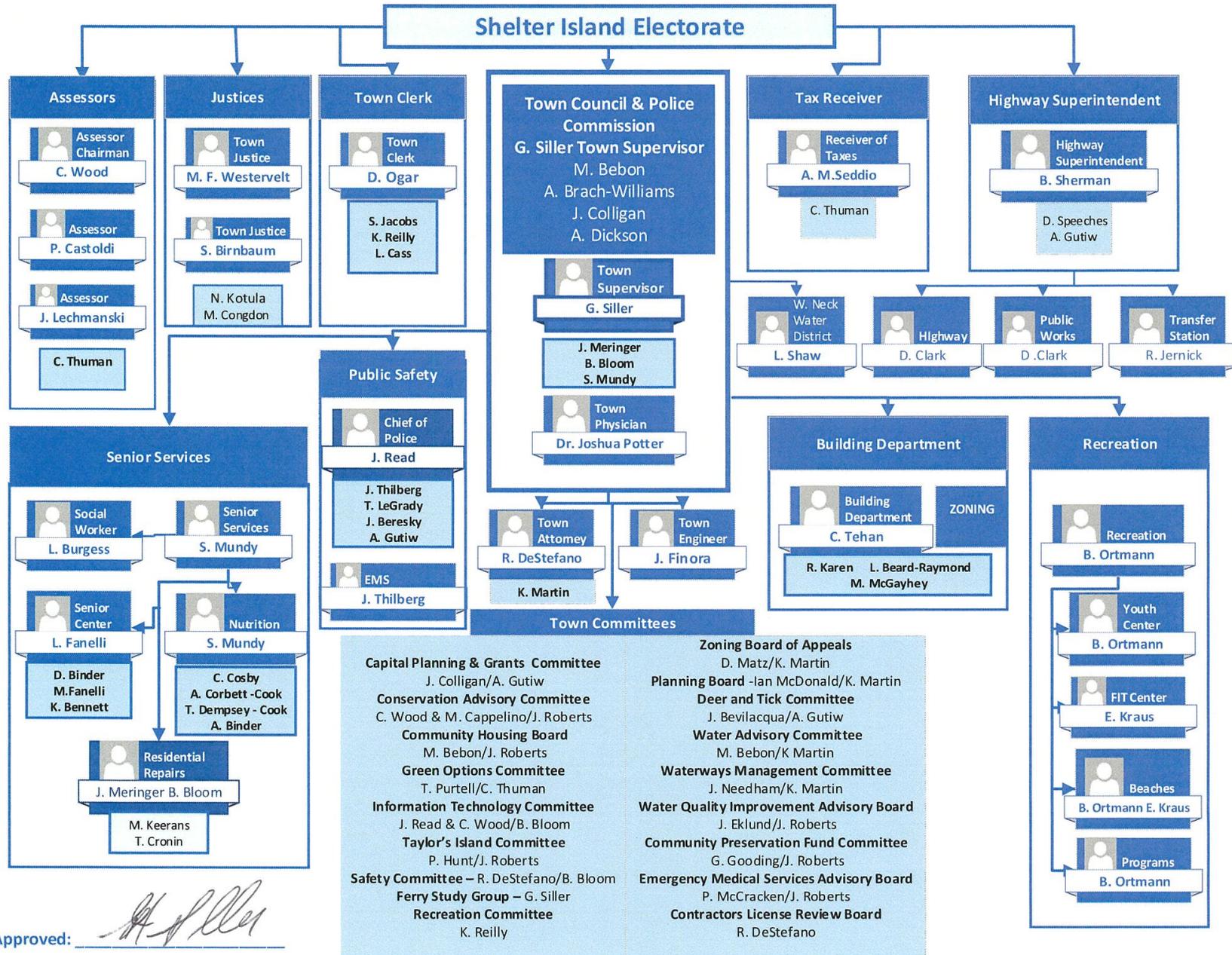
- West Neck Water District Water Board: 5 elected members. The water district is owned by the Town but operated by the board and a paid system operator. The Town Supervisor is the Town liaison to the Water District Board.

## Town Departments and Offices

Shelter Island town operations are carried out by several departments and offices including Police, Highway, Building, Senior Services, and Recreation. All town employees are required to be full-time residents of the Town, with some exceptions.

- Public Safety: Police, EMS, Animal Control
- Highway Department: Highway, Public Works, Recycling Center,
- Building Department: Permitting, Licensing, Code Enforcement (including Building, Zoning, Wetlands). Because of staff limitations, code enforcement typically occurs when a complaint is filed.
- Office of Senior Services: Services, Social Worker, Senior Center, Nutrition, Residential Repairs
- Recreation: Youth Center, FIT Center, Beaches, Programming
- Justice Court: These courts hear both civil and criminal matters, including vehicle and traffic matters, small claims, evictions, civil matters and criminal offenses. On the civil side, the Town Courts hear actions seeking monetary awards up to \$3,000 and small claims proceedings for awards up to \$3,000. On the criminal side, these courts are authorized to handle matters involving the prosecution of misdemeanors and violations and arraignments and preliminary hearings in felony matters. In cases involving domestic violence, the judges are also authorized to issue orders of protection.
- Public Information: The Supervisor is the Public Information Officer. The town has a website ([www.shelterislandtown.us](http://www.shelterislandtown.us)) and a television channel (Channel 22 – Media Department) that produces and posts videos of Town Board Meetings on the Town web site. Town social media includes an Instagram channel and a Facebook informational page.

# Shelter Island Town Government Organizational Chart



Approved:   
 V 14 1-19-21

Source: Town of Shelter Island

## Technical Capacity of Town Government

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, Building Inspectors, and a Grant Writer. Geographic Information Services (GIS) are provided on contract by an outside company, as are services to track and analyze Short Term Rentals. 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 transparency, records, and data. The Town is implementing a digital conversion strategy in many areas and using file sharing and management software.

## Volunteer Committees

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 Board liaisons to these groups. The Town also appoints temporary task forces and committees to address specific projects and issues. Current examples include the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and the Shoreline Access Task Force.

- 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 appear to be primarily advisory. In many cases there is a mix of functions. Most of these committees have a presence on the Town website, though a few do not. The amount of information and documentation of committee activities that is available to the public through the website is highly variable.
- Capital Planning & Grants Committee
- Community Housing Board

- Community Preservation Fund Committee
- Conservation Advisory Committee
- Contracts License Review Board
- Deer and Tick Committee
- Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board
- Ferry Study Group
- Green Options Committee
- Information Technology Committee
- Planning Board
- Recreation Committee
- Safety Committee
- Taylor's Island Preservation and Management Committee
- Water Advisory Committee
- Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board
- Waterways Management Committee
- Zoning Board of Appeals

- 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 only which limits their ability to participate in town government though there are some part-time residents who serve on town committees. Most committees meet monthly year-round and in person (until COVID social distancing requirements). 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.

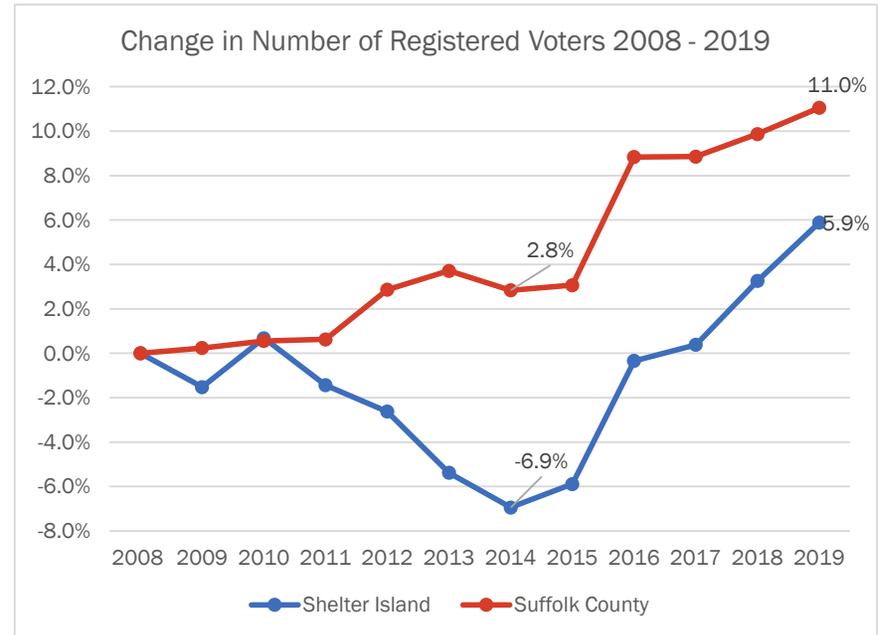
## Town Elections: How Many Registered Voters Are There and What's the Turnout?

The Shelter Island voter rolls between 2008 and 2019 fluctuated from 2,198 at the lowest to 2,501 at the highest. With few exceptions, turnout has been over 50%, sometimes substantially so, and greater than Suffolk County overall. The Suffolk County Board of Elections reports 2,757 registered voters in Shelter Island in 2020—some 250 more than in 2019. The County Board of Elections has not reported Shelter Island voting numbers for 2020 and does not report voting by Town for national elections. However, the *New York Times* precinct-based data shows 2,155 Shelter Island voters in the presidential election, 78% of the 2757 registered voters, similar to the 74% turnout for councilman in 2016.

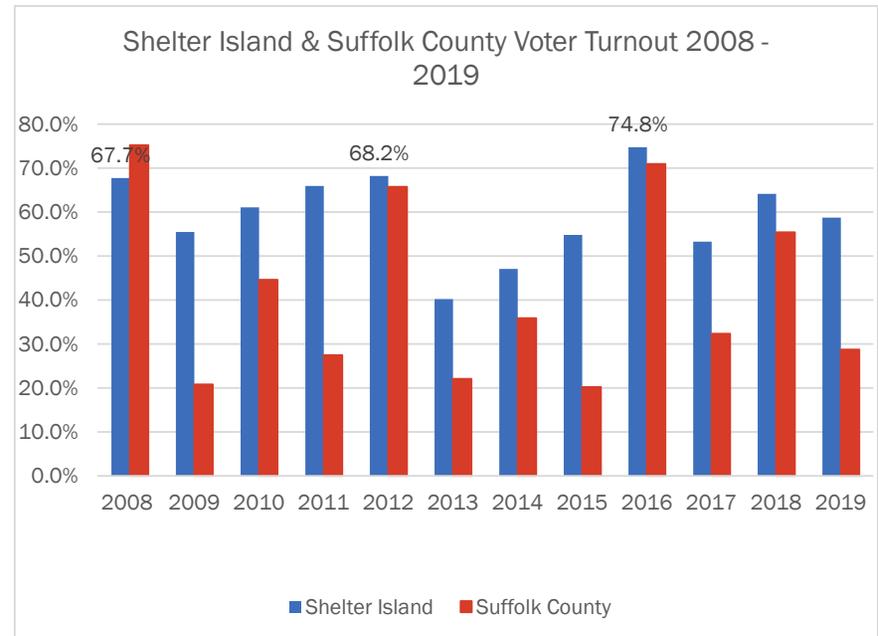
### Shelter Island Registered Voters and Local Electoral Race with Highest Turnout, 2008-2019

|                     | Registered Voters | Voted | Percent Voted |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------|
| 2008 - Town Justice | 2362              | 1600  | 67.7%         |
| 2009 - Supervisor   | 2326              | 1290  | 55.5%         |
| 2010 - Town Justice | 2378              | 1452  | 61.1%         |
| 2011 - Supervisor   | 2328              | 1535  | 65.9%         |
| 2012 - Town Justice | 2300              | 1568  | 68.2%         |
| 2013 - Town Council | 2235              | 898   | 40.2%         |
| 2014 - Town Justice | 2198              | 1034  | 47.0%         |
| 2015 - Supervisor   | 2223              | 1218  | 54.8%         |
| 2016 - Councilman   | 2354              | 1760  | 74.8%         |
| 2017 - Supervisor   | 2371              | 1263  | 53.3%         |
| 2018 - Town Justice | 2439              | 1565  | 64.2%         |
| 2019 - Supervisor   | 2501              | 1469  | 58.7%         |

Source: Suffolk County Board of Elections



Source: Suffolk County Board of Elections



Source: Suffolk County Board of Elections

In the 2010 election year, the number of registered voters was only 38 below the enumerated population in the 2010 Census, which suggests that some adults with an Island voting address were not counted in the April enumeration and may have been living elsewhere in April. This may also prove to be the case in 2020.

## General Planning

The Town does not have in-house, ongoing general planning capacity for land use, housing, and the economy and how they are related to natural resources, water, transportation, social services, and so on. However, functional or special plans for technical purposes, particularly when required by county, state, or federal government are prepared by Town staff or consultants, for example, the Municipal Solid Waste Plan. Some Town committees have prepared plans related to their scope. Examples include the Ground and Surface Water Management Plan and the Deer Management Plan.

## Comprehensive Planning

- The Town of Shelter Island created a Comprehensive Plan in a community process starting in 1991. The plan was adopted in early 1994.
- During 2008-2009, the Town established a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to analyze the Town's progress in implementing the 1994 Comprehensive Plan and make recommendations. This group created a Vision Statement and a set of goals consistent with the 1994 plan and then identified priorities among the Action Points in the earlier plan, focusing particularly on water resource quality and protecting sensitive environments, zoning and development regulation, and affordable housing development.
- The overall goals in the 1994 plan, confirmed by the 2008-2009 committee were:
  - “Preserve Shelter Island’s “rural seaside charm” and unique, intimate island character.
  - Protect and enhance the variety and health of our Natural Resources.
  - Reconfirm and promote a balance in our diverse and interdependent community.
  - Modernize and adopt our approach to governing to recognize new and

important elements influencing our island and our world.”

- The 2008-9 planning process did not result in an adopted update to the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. However, today, more than a decade later, some of the best practices and improvements advocated in the 1994 and 2009 documents have been adopted and are being implemented. Other goals have not yet been advanced or achieved.

## Asset Management and Capital Planning

- Current capital planning and asset management occur through the budget process, and the activities of Town departments and committees.
- The volunteer Capital Planning and Grants Committee has been working on the creation of a Multi-Year Capital Plan and an asset management system for at least two years. There is no modern GIS-linked asset management system.

## Legislation – the Town Code

- Town laws were last codified in 1981, with new articles and sections added as needed. New articles and sections added after adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan sometimes explicitly mention implementation of the plan goals (for example, Chapter 51 – Community Housing). The 592-page code is also available more conveniently online through the Town website. It is common for all communities to find that codes can become unwieldy after decades of adding and subtracting laws and regulations over time. Many communities revise their codes after completion of a new Comprehensive Plan to make local laws and regulation consistent with achieving the desired town vision and goals.

## Tax Levy

- Property is assessed annually at 100% of market value. Total 2020 taxable assessed value: \$3,767,928,475.
- The 2020-2021 combined tax rate including all property taxes, per \$1000 of assessed value was \$6.2036.
- The state tax cap law establishes a limit on the annual growth of property taxes levied by local governments and school districts to two percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. Towns that want to raise taxes above the tax cap may do so subject to voter approval.
- The Tax Levy is made up of Town taxes, County taxes, and taxes for the school district, the library, and the fire district. (The NYS MTA Tax is a metropolitan commuter mobility tax and the “Erroneous” category, according to the State, refers to “Excess levies that are collected due to calculations that are inconsistent with the statute are required to be placed in reserve.”)
- According to the Empire Center’s Benchmarking project, in 2019 Shelter Island was listed as among the 20 municipalities with the lowest effective tax rates on Long Island, which were among the lowest in the state. Localities in Southampton, East Hampton, and Fire Island were the only towns that had tax rates lower than Shelter Island.

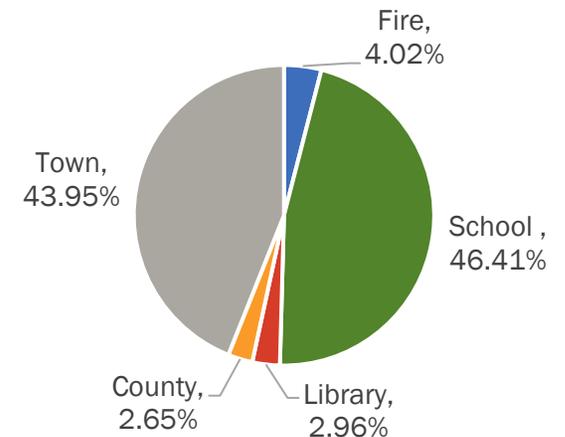
## Town of Shelter Island 2020-2021 Tax Rate Schedule

|                     | Tax Levy               | Net Levy (less prorata tax) | Taxable Assessed Value | Tax/\$1000      |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| School*             | 10,777,960.00          | 10,774,829.29               | 3,762,153,668.00       | 2.8641          |
| Library             | 687,166.00             | 686,962.51                  | 3,762,153,668.00       | 0.1826          |
| County General Fund | 595,588.27             | 595,241.58                  | 3,744,046,755.00       | 0.159           |
| Erroneous           | 0.00                   | 0.00                        | 3,744,046,755.00       | 0.00            |
| NYS MTA Tax         | 20,726.53              | 20,563.40                   | 3,744,046,755.00       | 0.0055          |
| General Town Wide   | 7,618,194.00           | 7,614,132.05                | 3,744,046,755.00       | 2.0337          |
| Highway Town Wide   | 1,674,556.00           | 1,673,856.13                | 3,744,046,755.00       | 0.4471          |
| General Part Town   | 544,708.00             | 544,469.66                  | 3,591,545,898.00       | 0.1516          |
| Highway Part Town   | 368,587.00             | 368,386.35                  | 3,591,545,898.00       | 0.1026          |
| SI Fire District    | 934,601.00             | 934,601.00                  | 3,632,058,449.00       | 0.2574          |
|                     | <b>\$23,222,086.80</b> | <b>\$23,213,041.97</b>      |                        | <b>\$6.2036</b> |
|                     |                        |                             | Equalization Rate:     | 100%            |

\* Note 1. New York State, through the Star Program, pays this amount of the School Levy: \$93,299.25

\* Note 2. Net Levy reflects ProRata tax collections against prior year taxes, i.e.: -\$9,044.83

Source for table and graph: Shelter Island Receiver of Taxes



## Budgets

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. The 2020-2021 budgets provide an example of the balance in these budgets between tax revenues and other sources of income.

- The adopted school district budget for 2020-2021 is \$12.5 million, an increase that will require a 2.14% tax levy increase, which is below the state cap. The district includes a few students who attend off-island special needs school. The proposed tax levy will provide the majority of revenue, \$10,777,960. State aid anticipated is \$657,319, and \$714,978 of unspent funds from the appropriated fund balance (also known as the tax levy offset) will be added to the budget.
- The Shelter Island Library did not ask for an increase in the tax levy for 2021 because of the pandemic. The budget was \$848,420 in 2020, with \$687,166 from taxes and \$115,150 expected from contributions and fundraising events, though the pandemic may have reduced their ability to have fundraising events.
- The Shelter Island Fire District budget for 2021 was adopted at \$954,389, with \$914,589 from taxes and the balance to come from interest and other income.
- The adopted Town Budget for 2021 is \$13,105,581, of which \$10,200,149 will be from the tax levy. In addition to the tax levy, the Town receives a modest amount of State and Federal funds, and has other sources of income such as fees, town property sales, fines and forfeitures, licenses and permits, interest, penalties, rents, intergovernmental charges, and others. The tax cap was “pierced” for the 2021 budget.
- The Town does not have existing debt, though it sometimes goes into debt for large projects, such as the construction of the Highway Barn (now paid off).

### Town of Shelter Island 2021 Budget

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 2020 Amount raised by tax  | \$9,843,355  |
| 2021 Tentative appropriations                                      | \$13,105,581 |
| 2021 Tentative revenues  | \$2,265,115  |
| Transfers from other funds and capital projects                    | \$234,632    |
| Less fund balance & appropriation reserves                         | \$405,685    |
| 2021 Amount to be raised by tax                                    | \$10,200,149 |
| Percent change from 2020   | 3.6%         |
| Excluded: Community Preservation Fund and West Neck Water District |              |

Source: Town of Shelter Island



The Town Center on a snowy day (Source: Chris Tehan)

## Findings

- The Town of Shelter Island is run by a combination of elected officials, professional staff, support staff, and many community volunteers.
- The many volunteer committees often combine regulatory, management and advisory functions.
- Town government does not include planning, housing, or economic development functions.
- There is no modern multi-year capital budget or asset management system.
- Records management needs upgrading.
- The Town Code was last revised 40 years ago.
- The resident population has a high proportion of registered voters and active participation in elections.

## Challenges

- How to create and maintain an effective short- and long-term planning and implementation management capacity inclusive of economic development.
- How best to ensure an integrated approach to policy-making and implementation among various departments and committees.
- Creating modern systems of capital planning, asset management, records management, and regulation that is effective but efficient.



# ADDENDUM ON DATA SOURCES AND ESTIMATES

## SHELTER ISLAND 2020 PROFILE

This Addendum to Shelter Island 2020, the existing conditions report for the Shelter Island Comprehensive Plan Update, discusses data sources and issues (as of early 2021) for the data and estimates presented primarily in three sections of the report: People of Shelter Island (demographics), How do we live? (housing), and How do we make a living? (economy). There are two parts to the Addendum: 1. Data sources and issues; 2. Development of “best estimate” numbers.

When available, the 2020 Census results will be incorporated into the Shelter Island 2020 Profile. However, as noted below, the 2020 census results will provide counts based on resident responses to a limited number of questions. Housing and income characteristics will remain dependent on estimates that tend to be unreliable for Shelter Island because of its small year-round population. In the next phase of the Comprehensive Planning Process, the planning team will do further research on key data issues of importance to planning issues that emerge from surveys and workshops and to the development of the Comprehensive Plan Update..

### 1. Data Sources and Issues

#### Census Data ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))

In most planning projects, the US Census Bureau is the primary source of demographic, social, housing, and economic data. The complex population dynamics of Shelter Island make certain types of census data problematic.

US Census Bureau datasets for the Town of Shelter Island are organized in two “Census Designated Places”

(CDP)—Shelter Island CDP and Shelter Island Heights CDP. In addition, the Village of Dering Harbor, which has its own separate municipal government covering a small area in the north of the island, is a separate CDP with 37 properties and a small number of year-round residents. Note that the Shelter Island Heights CDP covers more of the northern and western part of the island than the Shelter Island historic neighborhood that most people think of as Shelter Island Heights. The Comprehensive Plan Update is for the Town of Shelter Island, so the profile focuses on data for the Town, which has the power to act for the Town.

There are two types of census data, the decennial census of the entire population and the American Community Survey (ACS), and the differences are significant for communities with seasonal population dynamics like Shelter Island. Census 2020 data were not yet available when the Shelter Island 2020 Profile was prepared. When these data become available, they will be integrated into the existing conditions report.

- The decennial census is a count of population based on the idea of “usual residence” on April 1, with congressional districting as the primary purpose. Before 2010, the decennial census was taken using a “Short Form” with a limited number of questions and a “Long Form” sent to a sample of the population with questions on social, housing, and economic characteristics. Since the 2010 census, there is no Long Form in the decennial census. All households receive a short questionnaire to fill out for all members of the household. The questions on the 2020

census form asked for name, gender, race, ethnicity, date of birth (for age), housing tenure (own or rent), relationship to the person filling in the form for the household, and whether a person in the household “usually lives” somewhere else (including a seasonal or second home). The results of the 2020 census will be the only census data based on an attempt at an actual count of residents as of April 1, 2020.

- The ACS is a continuous monthly survey collected since 2005 and designed to measure changing demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the population, replacing the old Long Form surveys. The Census Bureau mails questionnaires about these characteristics to approximately 300,000 addresses across the country every month, a sample designed for good geographic coverage. The sample sizes are smaller than the old Census Long Form samples.
- Unlike the April 1 count in the decennial census, the ACS uses a “current residence” rule in which people interviewed for the survey expect to be at the sample housing unit for at least two months. Results from the ACS are issued annually and in three-year and five-year compilations. For communities with small populations, the ACS samples mean that many data values are imputed from households in other communities.
- Because Shelter Island is a small population community with seasonal population dynamics, ACS estimates have significant margins of error. The Census Bureau advises small communities to use Five-Year ACS data but recognizes the unreliability of much of the data. In the case of Shelter Island, the 2014-2019 ACS Five-Year Estimates should be viewed with caution, because in some data categories they show numbers that are not supported by non-census data.
- Because of these issues, the Comprehensive Plan Update consultants evaluated the ACS Five-Year Estimates for 2010-2014 and 2015-2019 by using other data such as school enrollments. As a result, the consultants avoided use of ACS data without support from more reliable data sources such as school enrollments and assessor’s data.

### **Suffolk County Economic Development and Planning Department, Research and Statistics**

The county provides analysis for all county communities based on census and other available data. (<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Economic-Development-and-Planning/Planning-and-Environment/Research-and-Statistics/Statistics>)

### **School Enrollment Data**

The Shelter Island Free Union School District is required annually to report data on school enrollment and student characteristics to the New York State Department of Education. For comparability, school enrollment and student characteristics for grades K-12 are reported as of a specific date in October, known as BEDS (Basic Educational Data System) day. These data are available for Shelter Island since the 1998-1999 school year. (<https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?instid=800000036928>)

### **Voter Registration Data**

Voter registration is useful for trends in year-round population but also raises questions about reliability. Shelter Island voters register with the Suffolk County Board of Elections. The County reports the number of registered voters and the results of local elections. State and national election results are reported on the County level. This data and trends in registration give insight into the number of persons over 18 who may consider themselves domiciled on Shelter Island. However, there are indications that there are people registered to vote in Shelter Island who are not residing there during the decennial census and who are not counted as such in the census as year-round residents. For example, in 2010, the census showed a population of 2395, but the number of registered voters was 2378 (with 1,452 votes cast in a town justice election)—only 17 less than the total population—and the 2009-2010 school enrollment was 262, certainly almost all under voting age. In 2020, voter registration numbers increased by 256 over the previous year, showing a strong trend, but also may imply a larger adult year-round population than actually exists. These issues in voter registration numbers may be the result of a census undercount, lags in up-to-date maintenance of voter rolls, or perhaps because Shelter Island residents who are snowbirds (and therefore not counted for an April 1 census) or others maintain voter status on the Island. (<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/BOE>)

### **Assessor’s Data**

The Town assessor maintains a database of land parcels and buildings on Shelter Island and associated information, such as amenities and dependent residences, and real estate data used as comparables to set valuations. Data for single family house properties, which constitute the majority of parcels, is most accurate. Assessor’s data gives insight into population; number and type of housing units; value and cost of housing; number, val-

ue, and cost of commercial real estate; and number, value, and cost of land parcels (residential and commercial). Tax-bill addresses can serve as proxies for identifying property owners who are year-round or seasonal residents.

### **PSEG Utility Accounts**

PSEG provided the number of residential and commercial electric utility accounts in January 2021. These numbers provide contextual information for the number of housing units but are not dispositive because there may be multiple accounts related to a single household or housing unit. It also cannot be assumed that an active utility account in the winter indicates year-round residency.

### **Building Permit Data**

The Shelter Island Building Department issues permits for new construction, demolitions, renovations and improvements such as pools, irrigation, and so on. Permits for new construction and demolition of single-family houses over time give insight into net new single family housing units.

### **Comparative Property Tax Data**

The Empire Center Benchmarking Project and the associated website, See Through NY, provide comparative data on property taxes of cities, towns, and villages throughout New York State. (<https://www.empirecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Property-Tax-Benchmarking-2019.pdf>; <https://see-throughny.net/> )

### **ESRI Business Analyst**

ESRI provides business and employment data including census data and proprietary databases, including Infogroup and SafeGraph. Infogroup data is based on a comprehensive list of more than 13 million US 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 US locations where consumers can spend money or time, including places like restaurants, grocery stores, parks, and cultural venues.

### **Categories of Information for Which There Is No Available Data**

There are a number of statistical categories important to Shelter Islanders for which there is little or no direct data:

- *Relationship to Shelter Island.* There is no data for the different kinds of relationships to the island that are important to people on the island, such as: repeated, long-term visitor; summer season use property owner and/or weekend use property owner; multigenerational visitor; multi-generational resident; property owner on the island in the summer and warm place resident in the winter. The decennial census provides the number of year-round (April 1) residents, but there is no data between censuses.
- *Year-round rental properties and year-round renters.* The decennial census provides the number of renter-occupied units and population in those units as of April 1, which are generally categorized as “year-round” renters, though some may lose their housing during the summer high season. No direct data is available for non-census years.
- *Seasonal renters.* Numbers for certain kinds of seasonal renters may become available if the Rental Registry becomes effective. However, the law currently provides for exceptions so there will be no precise understanding of these numbers.
- *Short Term Rental visitors.* The STR law, Rental Registry, and compliance contract provide some data but will not identify all STR visitors.
- *Day visitors.* Ferry data and police plate reader data can provide insight into this question, but that data will also include commuters and travelers across the island to the South Shore who would not be considered day visitors.
- *Employment and retirement categories.* All detailed employment data, if available, comes from the ACS estimates, which must be viewed with caution because of high margins of error. Categories of interest include self-employment, work from home, and retirement.
- *Income and income distribution.* All detailed data on income distribution comes from the ACS estimates, which must be viewed with caution because of high margins of error.

### **Possible New Sources of Data**

- Anonymized mobile device data can provide information over time and space about some categories of residents and visitors and has been used by communities such as Nantucket to better understand their population dynamics. The Town would have to engage one of the companies that provide this kind of data.
- The Town may decide, as part of this comprehensive planning process,

to develop some simple data collection systems, such as an annual town census, to provide more information between the decennial census years and to better understand the Town's population dynamics for planning purposes.

## 2. Development of “Best Estimate” numbers

Because the ACS Five-Year Estimates are unreliable for the reasons mentioned above, the Shelter Island 2020 profile includes some “best estimates” developed by the consultants to provide an initial framework for the Comprehensive Plan Update. As the planning process proceeds, more information will become available to understand current conditions in Shelter Island and potential changes in the future.

### A. Year-round Population

#### Best Estimate 2020 Population Without the Pandemic: 2,463

- This estimate assumes a conservative growth rate of 2% between 2010 and 2020, adding 71 people to the year-round population, a decline in K-12 school enrollment to below 190 students, and that Shelter Island is moving towards buildout under current zoning.
- The growth rate is based on estimated decennial population growth in nearby communities with larger populations: East Hampton (2.74%), South Hampton (3.17%), and Southold (1.21%). The growth rate on these East End towns has slowed considerably compared to the 1990-2000 and 2000-2010 decades. For example, compare the 2000-2010 growth rates for East Hampton (8.8%), Southampton (4%), and Southold (6.6%). While the 2010-2020 estimated growth rates for other East End towns are based on ACS estimates that are problematic for the small population of Shelter Island, these nearby communities have much larger populations than Shelter Island, making their estimates more reliable. (Shelter Island's population actually declined slightly 1990-2000 and grew by 7.4% in the 2000-2010 decade). The conservative growth estimate for Shelter Island was chosen to reflect a limited amount of land for new construction.
- The school district reports that K-12 enrollment was expected to continue to decline from the 192 students enrolled in 2019-2020 because graduating classes were larger than the classes of younger students.

- Building permit data for 2010-2020 indicate a net increase of 38 single family homes, and there is no way to know if any of these were built for year-round occupation.

#### Best Estimate 2020 Pandemic Year Population: 2,745

- The pandemic year saw an increase in the number of people and households living year-round on Shelter Island. With the non-pandemic estimate above of 2,463 in year-round population as a base, indicators of the pandemic year increase in population include an additional 26 students (Pre-K to 12) in the school district rather than an expected decrease in enrollment and an increase of 256 registered voters. The pandemic estimate adds 282 people to the population as year-round residents and may be an undercount. As the comprehensive planning process proceeds, more information may become available for a more precise estimate and 2020 Census counts will eventually be released. Part-time residents who typically used their Shelter Island homes only in the summer or on weekends and have been spending more time on the Island may have reported themselves on the census as domiciled elsewhere, or as residents of Shelter Island.

### B. Best Estimate Sex Composition: 49% Male and 51% Female.

- While the ACS Five-Year Estimate for 2015-2019 suggests that there is now a preponderance of men over women it seems unlikely given that the majority of the population is over 50 years old. Data from previous years found a close balance between men and women, with a slightly higher percentage of women, and there is no contextual data to suggest that this has changed.

### C. Best Estimate Median Age: 50-52

- As with sex composition, the ACS Five-Year Estimate for 2015-2019 estimated a median age of 43, much below the previous median age data around age 50. There is no contextual data (such as school enrollments or housing more available to younger adults) to suggest that there has been a large increase in younger age groups in Shelter Island. Data from previous census years, which showed median age approximately at 50 or slightly above, is more likely.

**D. Best Estimate Part-time and Seasonal (Non-year-round) Population: 7,300**

- Suffolk County in 2018 estimated annual seasonal population for Shelter Island and other towns in the County.
- The same assumptions about guest and occupancy factors were used to produce an estimate of seasonal population in 2020.
- In 2020, the assessor’s database shows 2,459 single family homes, of which 1404 have off-island tax bill addresses, suggesting that they are not occupied year-round. Using a 4-person occupancy factor, the 1,404 seasonal homes would result in a population of 5,616.
- The 1,055 year-round homes, with a 0.5 “guest factor,” would result in 528 guests.
- The County identified the lodging population (hotels/inns/motels) in 2018 as 662. Adding this lodging population of 662 to the previous numbers results in a seasonal population of 6,806.
- STRs and day visitors may contribute another 500 people for a seasonal estimate of 7,300. Fewer STR and day visitors appear to have visited the island during the pandemic year of 2020. With more data on STRs and day visitors and a return to normal summer activities, a more precise and likely greater number of people will be in this category.
- Combining this population with the best estimate of 2,463 pre-pandemic year-round residents results in a total population for the island’s high season of 9,763.

**E. Best Estimate of Total Residential Units: 3,000**

- The assessor’s database includes 2,457 parcels with dwellings on them. In addition to the primary single-family residences on 98% of these parcels, there are 214 “dependent residences,” and a handful of other residence types, resulting in an overall 2,677 housing units. It is not known how many of the 214 dependent residences function as guest and family accommodations.
- PSEG listed a total of 3111 residential utility accounts in January 2021, including inactive and vacant accounts. It is not known how many residences may have more than one utility account.
- There are reports of an unknown number of illegal housing units.
- There are typically more housing units than households because there are always some units that are for sale, for rent, or otherwise vacant.

- The estimate of 3,000 housing units reflects the uncertainties at the margin in the Town’s housing stock.

**F. Best Estimate of Full-time Renters: 20% of the Year-round Occupied Units**

- Census-year reports show an increasing percentage of renter households in year-round occupied units between 1990 and 2010. By the 2010 census, 21% of households reported that they were renting their housing.
- Contextual data such as the increase in the number of economically disadvantaged students in the school system, reported difficulties for Town staff and similar workers in finding housing they can afford, and the increasing cost of ownership housing, suggest that the 20% percentage of year-round occupied units (not of all housing units), is a reasonable estimate.

**G. Best Estimate for Housing Units Occupied Seasonally: 1404 Units**

- The assessor’s list includes 1,404 units with off-island tax addresses. This serves as a proxy for housing units that are part-time, seasonal units. Since dependent units are not included, this may undercount seasonal units.

DRAFT

<https://www.shelterislandtown.us/comprehensive-plan-update>

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