

1.3 Previous Hamlet Center Studies

Water Mill's position in the hierarchy of retail and community services, centered on local small-scale hamlet center uses, was recognized and accepted as Town policy through the Comprehensive Plan Update (approved by the Town Board in April 1999), and forms the basis for current planning approaches and reviews. This Plan allows for maintenance of Water Mill as a modestly-scaled, pedestrian-related center appropriate to the surrounding community (see adjacent tables).

As Town policy, this is a continuation of previous policies, based on a number of previous planning studies prepared over the last fifteen years. In addition to the 1999 Comprehensive Plan Update (and its predecessor 1970 Master Plan), these public sector sponsored Water Mill hamlet center plans include the following:

- the *Water Mill Hamlet Study*, a plan prepared by Szepatowski Associates in January 1991 and adopted by the Town Board as a partial update to the then-current *1970 Master Plan*.

The study included short and long term recommendations for the hamlet center area, including proposals for 'Village Business' retail development. The study recommended consideration of 'light retail development', fitting within the tradition of historic small-shop hamlet

retail, as an alternative to more highway-oriented larger scale shopping centers. These recommendations were later refined in 1992 into adopted *Town-wide zoning regulations* for more limited size 'hamlet retail centers' as a special exception use within village business districts.

Another recommendation of the study was consideration of multi-family senior citizen housing as a desirable and compatible land use within or adjacent to the Water Mill hamlet center. However, the plan did not locate a specific site, but encouraged private landowners to present the Town with a suitable proposal.

The study also included short and long term recommendations for circulation improvements in the hamlet center. Such improvements included a 'northerly parking lot connector', secondary access parallel to Montauk Highway connecting Water Mill Shops and Nowadonah Avenue.

- the 1998 *Water Mill Transportation Study*, prepared by L. K. McLean Associates, refining and updating the above recommendations. The plan, with public input from the Community Advisory Committee and local landowners, examined a number of circulation options.

Its final recommendations, proposed following

feedback from the community and property owners, were for a parallel access way connecting parking lots north of Montauk Highway (similar to the 'northerly parking lot connector' described above) that would link sites along a central route from Deerfield Road to Station Road, then adjacent to the rail line to Water Mill Square and the Post Office. This route also included an internal pedestrian way connecting Water Mill Square and Station Road. An alternative roadway adjacent to the rail tracks between Deerfield and Station Road was also examined; initial concerns over possible impact on adjacent ballfields were cited as reasons to indicate preference for the central route, although many felt there was little difference between the two routes and that fencing could protect the ballfields. These routes were proposed as two lane access easements with adjacent parking, privately held by individual landowners rather than town rights-of-way.

The study also recommended locations for a new traffic light at Station Road and Montauk Highway (potentially to be moved to the east, dependent on location and magnitude of future development). This recommendation has been implemented, although the others are pending results of this Water Mill Strategy. As this study was a transportation study only, it did not take into consideration detailed potential land uses (although it assumed possible development on the Water Mill Village or other sites as allowed by current zoning).

- In addition, specific studies were prepared in support of private development proposals. They include *impact analyses* prepared in 1988 for the Water Mill Village proposal and in 1996 for the ultimately approved Water Mill Shops proposal. These studies, while not public policy, were reviewed in the approvals process for these specific projects and contain useful information.
- The *1999 Comprehensive Plan Update* (approved by the Town Board 3/12/99) stressed hamlet character. Its recommendations discourage destination retail and promote housing and mixed uses, potential expansion of the Community Club open space, synchronized traffic lights on Montauk Highway, cross access agreements for parking and circulation, small scale historic building types. It defines business uses north of Montauk Highway, concentrating VB (Village Business) zoning from Water Mill Square to midway between Station Road and Nowedonah Avenue, ringing the VB district with (from west to east) residential, open space and Hamlet Office/ Residential (HO) zones. A Planned Development District (PDD) is proposed to define the hamlet center. Future Heritage Area designation will help preserve the Center's historic ambiance.

In turn, this current Water Mill Hamlet Center Strategy refines or updates these recommendations with respect to more up to date conditions, objectives and opportunities.

Retail Hierarchy, Town of Southampton
 (from 1999 Comprehensive Plan Update, p. 300)

Center	West Part of Town*	East Part of Town*	Purposes
Major Village/Town Business Centers	(Westhampton Beach) (Riverhead)	(Southampton Village) (Sag Harbor)	These four traditional downtowns are central places of the town; they should continue to emphasize specialty shopping and a pedestrian-friendly environment.
Major Hamlet Centers	Hampton Bays	Bridgehampton	These two centers combine (1) a hamlet center like but smaller than the village/town centers, with (2) shopping centers and retail corridors. These centers should combine convenience, destination and specialty shopping - serving large portions of the town.
Small Hamlet and Village Centers	Speonk Riverside/Flanders East Quogue(Quogue)	Water Mill North Sea Noyack	These small centers are smaller versions of the village/ town centers, with an emphasis on meeting the daily shopping and service needs of hamlet/village residents, and on serving as the civic and historic centers of their hamlets.
Commercial corridor		County Road 39	County Road 39 is conceived as the town's only stand-alone commercial corridor, serving the needs of passing travelers as well as residents. The emphasis is on places, signage, building design and landscape upgrades, so as to improve business, safety and appearance.

**Note: Centers in incorporated villages and neighboring municipalities are parenthesized.*