

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Southampton has a long and comprehensive history of land use planning that has formed the foundation that this current planning effort builds upon. The hamlets of Speonk-Remsenburg, Eastport and Westhampton (the Study Area) have histories dating back to the very formation of the Town. These hamlet areas, which form the southwestern corner of Southampton Town, act as a gateway to the eastern end of Long Island and the South Fork. This Area-Wide Planning Study marks the first time that a concentrated planning effort has been focused on all of these hamlet areas at once. While each hamlet has its own distinct identity and background, they are tied together by four main roadways – Sunrise Highway, Old Country Road, Montauk Highway and South Country Road (Main Street) – which form scenic corridors linking the hamlet communities.

The southwestern corner of Southampton Town is facing significant development pressures and the challenges of growth. Concerns have been ongoing as reflected in the following excerpt from the 1992 Speonk-Remsenburg Hamlet Study.

*In the past twenty years, the year-round population of Southampton has more than doubled, as has the summer population. This has meant more traffic, more demand on Town services and schools, more water consumed and sewage produced, a decreasing supply of un-subdivided open space, unavailable affordable housing, shifts in commercial development away from historic hamlet centers, and a growing concern for the future character of the Town. (Excerpt from the 1992 Speonk-Remsenburg Hamlet Study.)*

Though other East End towns in Suffolk County and other hamlets in Southampton Town face the same issues, each community is unique. Each hamlet within the Study Area must recognize its attributes and summon collective resources to work in partnership with decision-makers in local government to sustain itself as a community, and to maintain the special character that makes the hamlet desirable for year-round living and attractive for seasonal residents and visitors.

The Study Area's proximity to ocean beaches and countryside ambiance have been factors in the evolution of the economic base from farming to tourism, typically in the form of summer homes and resort accommodations for affluent persons whose primary residence is the New York metropolitan area. This transformation and the related rise in real estate values have endangered the continuation of an attractive rural quality. Today, only one duck farm remains while a few hundred acres of nursery stock and small family farms sprinkle the Old Country Road corridor in the Westhampton, Speonk and Eastport area. Where cow pastures, chicken coops, and duck farm buildings once dominated south of the Montauk Highway throughout the hamlets of Westhampton, Speonk-Remsenburg, and Eastport, there now exist residential subdivisions of single family homes, many palatial, and having individual market values in excess of 1.5 million dollars. Once affordable homes and building lots are now well out of reach of the children and grandchildren of community residents, due primarily to a dramatic appreciation in the market value of the underlying land and the principles of limited supply and substantial demand.

Gentrification has occurred in much of the area along with the shift in the nature of the local economy. No longer is the area's economic base attached to farming and "mom & pop" stores. Instead, local residents commute to employment centers in western Suffolk or Nassau County; work for local agencies (e.g., public schools, Village government, Town government, County government); are employed at Southampton Hospital or elsewhere in the health care professions; or are involved in real estate, construction and related professional services/trades, home improvement or home service industries (e.g., landscaping, cleaning services). Thus, at this time, the economic base of the community remains primarily linked to the continued desirability of the area for summer residents to maintain vacation homes in the Hamptons.

Protecting and enhancing "Community Character" is a central theme that has resonated with area residents with respect to preserving open space, enhancing pedestrian-oriented circulation, and focusing on appropriately scaled development. It is integral to the public health, safety and welfare of the community - in terms of its positive impact on the quality of life of area residents and the economic well being of the township as a whole.

The southwestern-most portion of the Town is a critical gateway to the Town of Southampton, with four important corridors: the Sunrise Highway scenic corridor through the Pine Barrens region; the Old Country Road scenic corridors dotted with agricultural and woodland attributes; and the Montauk Highway and South Country Road corridor dotted with historic heritage and country ambiance. All of these corridors must maintain scenic qualities, rural charm, and attributes central to eco-tourism, agric-tourism, and historic tourism ambiance in the community's best interest.

What can a community do to protect its quality of life, community character, and its natural, scenic, and historic resources? How can a community shape and direct growth, and plan for future needs?

There are a variety of tools and techniques that can be marshaled in a community to maintain or enhance environmental resources, manage growth and development, sustain the local economy, provide for community recreation and housing needs, and preserve farmland and open space. Like many other complex land use problems, it is unlikely that only one technique will adequately protect environmental resources or meet the needs of the hamlets of Eastport, Speonk-Remsenburg, and Westhampton. Rather, a combination of techniques should be carefully evaluated and implemented to meet the community planning objectives and policy needs of the particular area.

### **Prior Planning Studies**

This Area-Wide Planning Study builds upon the 1970 Town Master Plan, Master Plan Updates of the 1980s, a prior Hamlet Study for Speonk-Remsenburg (1992) and the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, as well as other related planning studies, including the Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Westhampton Planned Development District Study, and the Suffolk County Smart Growth Policy Plan. It serves as a guiding document developed from an investigation of existing conditions, land use patterns and demographic trends as well as from the vision that local citizens have for their community, as expressed through a comprehensive public involvement process. The underlying purpose of such planning efforts is to guide decision makers concerning land use and zoning for the benefit of the entire community. Once adopted as an update to the Town-wide Comprehensive Plan, this Area-Wide Plan serves as the "blueprint" or basis for all future planning, zoning, and land use decisions.

### **Citizen Participation Process**

The planning process has included significant community input and feedback. Starting with the initial meeting, which was open to the entire community, in May of 2003, the emphasis has been on listening and attempting to address significant community concerns with respect to land use, design, open space, traffic and pedestrian circulation, visual resources, and other factors.

The planning process was aided through the significant efforts provided by Town Council Members Linda Kabot and Steve Kenny. On a number of occasions, these individuals met separately with the various committees formed to provide further input into the planning process. In an effort to expand the community input role and ensure that a broad cross-section of individuals and interest organizations were represented, four focus groups were established:

- Eastport/Speonk/Remsenburg Focus Group;
- Westhampton Focus Group;
- Business/Mixed-Use Areas Focus Group; and
- Recreation/Greenways/Trails/Community Center Focus Group.

The purpose of forming focus groups was to enhance the ability of diverse members of the community to provide meaningful guidance and feedback, which became the basis for eventual planning recommendations for the Area-Wide Study.

Supplementing the community input process was the preparation of an informal questionnaire distributed to members of the focus groups, civic organizations, and the Citizens Advisory Committee for their input. The survey, coupled with the numerous community meetings, was a

valuable tool for identifying critical community planning issues. (See Appendix, Hamlet Study Questionnaire.)

As illustrated in the numerous Photo Exhibits in this report, the Study Area is favored with an abundance of natural beauty from the shores of Moriches Bay to the forests of the Central Pine Barrens. There are, however, significant concerns among community members regarding development pressures affecting the Study Area due to recent proposals and project approvals within the neighboring Town of Brookhaven and elsewhere. In particular, the proliferation of senior housing and multifamily housing developments in up-island locations of Suffolk County and the changes underway on the Moriches Bypass in Brookhaven have been identified by community members as cause for concern due to traffic and other factors. The fact that the western portion of the Town of Southampton is within commuting distance to major employment centers in western Suffolk and eastern Nassau County, and the attractiveness of the hamlets for residents in those areas located east of the Study Area who find themselves effectively priced out of the local housing market in other portions of Southampton Town, contribute to the rise in real estate values as demand exceeds supply.

### **Goals and Objectives Statements**

This Area Study Report attempts to establish preservation priorities, meaningfully address the pressures being applied to the Study Area, outline issues and opportunities, and recommend strategies to protect the community character of this part of the Town, all in an effort to effectively address the concerns raised by area residents and business owners.

The following goal and objective statements provide a guideline for issues relating to the Study Area but may often be more appropriately addressed on a comprehensive Town-Wide basis.

**COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS: Maintain community character and high quality of life. Ensure that new development respects and is compatible with existing residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. The communities' critical environmental resources, such as woodlands, wetlands, waterbodies, greenways, remaining agricultural properties (farms and nurseries), scenic vistas, community gateways and the Old Country Road scenic corridor must be protected from incompatible development. Historic and cultural resources need to be protected. Existing agricultural resources should be retained to the fullest extent practicable. Maintain overall low density and small town setting.**

**Objectives:**

- To prepare, adopt and implement an Area-Wide Plan that seeks to protect these existing qualities and the quiet residential character of the hamlets while providing reasonable areas for growth, economic vitality, and community housing opportunities other than just high-end vacation homes.
- To provide adequate land area that is permanently dedicated for conservation, recreation, and community parkland uses for present and future residents of Eastport, Speonk-Remsenburg, and Westhampton.
- To ensure further expenditure of Community Preservation Fund (CPF) in the south-western portion of the Town to complement the open-space conservation achieved through the Central Pine Barrens Act and to further protect scenic, historic, and agricultural resources of the Eastport, Speonk-Remsenburg, and Westhampton area where regulatory processes recommended by this Area-

Wide Plan may not be able to achieve preservation goals to the degree desired by community members.

- To protect scenic resources, in particular scenic corridors and scenic gateways: The Sunrise Highway scenic corridor through the Pine Barrens region, the Old Country Road scenic corridor with agricultural and woodland attributes, the Montauk Highway corridor dotted with historic charm and hamlet business areas, and the South Country Road corridor replete with historic heritage and country ambiance.
- To recognize and protect historic resources, in particular: the extensive grouping of historic homes along South Country Road (Main Street) in Remsenburg and Montauk Highway (Main Street) in Eastport. Historic resource protection needs to be respectful of individual property rights, not unduly burdensome in terms of regulatory controls, and should consider the provision of incentives to property owners.
- To protect agricultural resources, in particular: the nurseries and small farms along Old Country Road and other areas with prime agricultural soils. Enhance and attract other agric-tourism/eco-tourism attributes.
- To protect environmental resources, in particular: critical recharge areas and aquifer-sensitive areas of the Central Pine Barrens region; wetlands and areas important to the health of the South Shore Estuary; and areas sensitive for wildlife and forest habitat preservation.
- To protect the public's easement rights and right-of-ways under stewardship by the Southampton Town Trustees to access the Town waterways; to enhance enjoyment of the waterfront attributes of the Town in a manner that is both respectful of the environment and the quality of life of adjoining landowners.

**HOUSING GOALS:** Ensure market appeal for seasonal vacation homes and fewer market conversions to year-round single-family homes. Purchase priority lands identified for Community Preservation Fund and utilize zoning tools to ensure new construction is compatible with existing residential neighborhoods. Ensure housing stock diversity in all hamlets and availability within the means of local residents and their offspring, senior citizens, young professionals, and local trades/service workers. Avoid over-saturation of senior housing. Ensure that the scale, design, location, population density, and dispersion of affordable housing and senior housing are appropriate, and consider potential impacts on school, fire and ambulance districts.

#### Objectives:

- Prepare and adopt an Area-Wide Plan that provides opportunities for and makes preliminary recommendations on potential sites for community renewal and housing opportunities within the means of local resident, their offspring, senior citizens, young professionals, and the local workforce.
- Concentrate community workforce housing and commercial rental housing proximate to public transit and traditional hamlet shopping areas.
- Address blight and substandard housing by directing private sector resources (i.e., the development community) and public sector resources (i.e. Community Development/Community Renewal efforts and the Town Housing Authority) to identified sites that present redevelopment opportunities for mixed-income housing

providing community benefits and meeting other community planning objectives.

- Avoid litigation, claims of exclusionary zoning, and court challenges to the Town's Zoning Code by ensuring that elements of the housing stock are available to and within the means of local residents, their offspring, senior citizens, young professionals, and the local workforce and by providing opportunities for future development of affordable community housing.
- As a potential alternative to large, multi-unit housing developments that may be out-of-scale with the surrounding community due to negative impacts on community character, facilitate other zoning solutions to facilitate housing stock diversity and affordable community housing within the means of local residents, their offspring, senior citizens, young professionals, and the local workforce. This may include: accessory apartments, carriage houses, apartments above stores, manorhouses, Hamlet Office and Hamlet Commercial zones where 2-family, 3-family, and 4-family homes are permitted under certain conditions.
- To prepare and adopt an Area-Wide Plan that proposes changes to the Town's Zoning Code concerning various incentive zoning tools and strategies to address affordable housing including, but not limited to, scale, design, density, location, community character concerns, environmental impacts, eligibility and longer term affordability.
- Support not-for-profit and for-profit housing developments of appropriate scale, design, density, location, which appropriately address community character concerns and other community planning needs.

**HAMLET CENTER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS:** Concentrate retail/commercial development at existing and traditional hamlet business areas. Integrate mixed uses, including residential, for economic vitality, enhanced security, and provision of affordable housing, in keeping with Smart Growth principles. Incorporate pedestrian-friendly amenities for a walkable hamlet business center. Minimize adverse traffic and circulation impacts of out-of-scale business (i.e., big box retail) and residential development. Diminish commercial sprawl along the Montauk Highway arterial. Provide for adequate industrial zoning and tax-ratable commercial development in appropriate locations. Consider resort development concepts for a more sustainable community that would be compatible with community character, provide recreational opportunities, and diminish suburban sprawl. Protect small-town character and accentuate hamlet heritage areas within the community. Build on historic attributes of hamlet centers, including existing buildings, structures, landscapes, and new designs that emulate historic small-town character, as well as enhancing eco-tourism attractions and agri-tourism venues and vistas.

**Objectives:**

- To prepare, adopt and implement an Area-Wide Plan that seeks to protect the Study Area’s existing qualities and provides reasonable area for expansion of desirable hamlet center uses, including commercial development to serve the hamlets, without detracting from traditional shopping and business centers. Such a plan should emphasize goods, services, and job opportunities

for local residents, as opposed to highway or strip commercial-oriented retail development strung out on Montauk Highway, or big-box retailers.

- Consider the implementation of the Central Pine Barrens Plan for potential recreational and resort-tourism concepts for properties currently designated as-of-right Residential Receiving Area Districts (RRADs) or Receiving Zones for Pine Barrens Credits (PBCs). This concept should extend to adjoining disturbed lands and other properties located in the compatible growth area, whereby potentially greater open space, recreational or other community benefits can be achieved including eco-tourism/agric-tourism amenities, transfers of development rights, transportation improvements, and community housing opportunities. Consider revisiting the goals and alternatives to residential development suggested by the Draft Western Generic Environmental Impact Statement (Western GEIS) prepared by the Town in the early 1990s, which would require use of innovative incentive zoning strategies with stringent controls (e.g., site-specific Planned Development Districts (PDDs).)
- Use Smart Growth principles including providing for a range of housing types, with denser development to be concentrated closer to hamlet centers where services exist and there is access to public transit. Encourage mixed-uses in hamlet centers and transition zones.
- Encourage redevelopment of disturbed sites, rather than new development, disturbance, and extensive clearing of wooded land tracts.

**GROUNDWATER PROTECTION GOALS:** Maintain or enhance existing levels of groundwater quality in the Study Area. Prevent excessive usage of groundwater and drawdown on watertable. The Central Pine Barrens Act has protected vast expanses of land important to groundwater resources for public drinking water supply. The compatible growth area is primarily low density, however certain RRADs have been designated to accommodate TDRs/PBCs from other more sensitive lands as an integral component of Pine Barrens Plan implementation. In addition, the use of Residential PDDs as “floating zones” for incentive zoning purposes other than receiving areas for transfers of development rights presents the possibility in the Compatible Growth Area with little benefit to the environment and the community. The goal is to curtail the growth-inducing aspects on Old Country Road and negative impacts to the groundwater sensitive areas in the Pine Barrens region.

**Objectives:**

- To improve existing groundwater quality in areas where pollution sources have contaminated it.
- To provide public water resources in developed areas where existing private well water is no longer potable due to contamination or salt-water intrusion.
- To prepare and adopt an Area-Wide Plan that emphasizes that proposed sewage treatment plant mitigation may not necessarily address community concerns for impacts to groundwater resources within the Compatible Growth Area of the Central Pine Barrens and surface water/bay

bottom resources of Moriches Bay and the South Shore Estuary.

- To prepare and adopt an Area-Wide Plan that further restricts development in groundwater-sensitive areas in the Compatible Growth Area of the Central Pine Barrens to primarily low density uses with minimal sewage impact and clearing impact. Development to be restricted unless determined to be necessary by the approving board at the local level under the applicable regulations related to the Central Pine Barrens Plan or related to other critical community planning goals and objectives identified in the 1999 Comprehensive Plan and this Area-Wide Planning Study.
- To prepare and adopt an Area-Wide Plan that allows the use of incentive zoning to facilitate phase-out and clean-up of disturbed property with a pre-existing, non-conforming land use which presents a clear threat to groundwater resources and other environmental resources and the proposed adaptive re-use is found by the approving board at the local level to have a substantially better environmental impact than the prior land use following a thorough investigation via the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) review/public involvement process.

**RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS:** Expand recreational resources in the hamlet areas. Protect existing open space. Encourage the use of Community Preservation Funds for the preservation of significant open spaces in the hamlet areas.

**Objectives:**

- To establish priorities of parcel acquisition in the Study Area for open space and recreational use consistent with

the Town’s current considerations as reflected in the Town-Wide Recreation Plan.

- To fill in gaps and expand the existing community-wide trail system, so as to connect existing and proposed resources, such as neighborhood schools, recreation areas, community centers and open space components.
- To increase public and private recreational opportunities for local and seasonal residents and provide recreational uses that will contribute to the tax base.
- To enhance coordination with the schools for use of recreational facilities.
- To provide dedicated bicycle lanes and routes in the hamlet areas, with appropriate signage.
- To upgrade the Westhampton Community Center to provide for more multi-generational functions and serve the community’s growing needs.
- To promote active recreation at selected sites such as sand mine sites, the “Water Hole,” former “Fish Hatchery,” and adjoining town-owned property designated for park use.
- To locate large-scale recreational uses (such as a golf course, ATV trails, equestrian trails, etc.) on already cleared sites, such as sand mines or nursery properties.
- To enhance public access areas to waterways (including Cook’s Pond).
- To protect and preserve the established character and country ambiance of the hamlet areas.

**TRANSPORTATION GOALS: Address the growing traffic demands on local roads and main thoroughfares such as Old Country Road and Montauk Highway with traffic calming and access management strategies. Address pedestrian safety issues throughout the Study Area. Encourage intermodal connections, use of public transit and bicycle travel routes.**

**Objectives:**

- To pursue a direct interchange between Sunrise Highway and Speonk-Riverhead Road, so as to provide existing and future commercial/industrial traffic with an alternate means of accessing the Study Area, rather than through residential neighborhoods and along Old Country Road.
- To pursue an extension of the existing Sunrise Highway service road at Speonk-Riverhead Road in Speonk, so as to provide an alternative route for truck traffic to access properties north of Old Country Road, rather than sharing Old Country Road with local traffic.
- To provide additional transit service for seniors, beachgoers, and students and better coordinate multi-modal use of the Study Area train stations.
- As a measure to improve the overall quality of life for area residents, institute a series of traffic calming measures such as speed limit reductions, the elimination of passing zones, installation of roundabouts, neckdowns, bump outs, etc.
- To encourage designated bicycle travel routes, facilities (e.g., racks, lockers) and “Share the Road” signage.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE GOALS:** For community services such as fire districts and ambulance districts, determine community needs for additional or improved services or facilities and appropriate locations to meet growing community needs.

**Objectives:**

- To consider new substation sites for the Eastport and Westhampton Beach Fire Districts, so as to address growing needs, enhance response time within each District and provide for emergency equipment storage needs.
- To provide an opportunity for improvements/expansion of the Westhampton Community Center to accommodate intergenerational uses and provide a positive focal point for the greater Westhampton community.
- To consider impacts to emergency medical services/ ambulance service in the Study Area, due to growing needs, changing demographics and increased population density in an expansive service area.

**ENERGY GOAL:** Consider energy trends and needs with future development projects.

**Objective:**

- To consider the use of energy saving devices and techniques for new construction.

**DESIGN GOALS:** Implement appropriate design standards for individual hamlet center and commercial/mixed use core areas. Utilize existing historically significant precedents as guidelines for appropriate design, scale and materials. Consider “streetscape” features such as lighting and street trees to enhance a “sense of place” for hamlet centers.

**Objective:**

- To reach consensus within individual hamlet areas on appropriate design-related issues, such as design treatments for commercial, residential and mixed-use development/redevelopment within and proximate to the hamlet core areas. Additional design related items for consideration would include decorative lighting, sidewalk treatments, street furniture (e.g., benches, clocks, planters and trash cans) and pedestrian crosswalks in an effort to create more intimate, pedestrian-oriented hamlet center (commercial/mixed-use core) areas, such as in Speonk at the intersection of Montauk Highway and North Phillips Avenue.