Designing Tomorrow's Communities
The Inaugural Long Island Mayors’ and Supervisors’ Institute on Community Design
Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent, non-profit regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning and advocacy. For more than 80 years, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces and promoting better community design for the region’s continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region’s civic, business and government sectors to take action.

The nation’s most influential independent regional planning organization since 1922, RPA has a storied history but is more relevant than ever in the 21st Century. RPA’s First Plan in 1929 provided the blueprint for the transportation and open space networks that we take for granted today. The Second Plan, completed in 1968, was instrumental in restoring our deteriorated mass transit system, preserving threatened natural resources and revitalizing our urban centers. Released in 1996, RPA’s Third Regional Plan, “A Region at Risk,” warned that new global trends had fundamentally altered New York’s national and global position. The plan called for building a seamless 21st century mass transit system, creating a three-million acre Greensward network of protected natural resource systems, maintaining half the region’s employment in urban centers, and assisting minority and immigrant communities to fully participate in the economic mainstream.

RPA’s current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The inaugural Long Island Mayors’ and Supervisors’ Institute on Community Design is a program organized by RPA to promote and implement better design and planning in communities throughout New Jersey.

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Also, we extend special thanks to the Mayors’ Institute resource team:

Mayors’ Institute Resource Team

Andrew Altman, Lubert Adler Management, former Planning Director for Washington, D.C.
Daniel Serda, Director, Kansas City Design Center
John Shapiro, Principal, Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates
Stephen Whitehouse, Starr Whitehouse Associates
Hugh A. Wilson, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Adelphi University
Jeffrey M. Zupan, Senior Transportation Fellow, RPA
Program Structure

Modeled on the national Mayors’ Institute on City Design, the Long Island Mayors’ and Supervisors’ Institute on Community Design provides a multi-day retreat for six to eight mayors or supervisors and a resource team of design and planning professionals. The elected officials present planning and design issues that each community is facing, and then participate in a wide-ranging discussion. While addressing the specific concerns raised by the mayors, the resource team members also describe in broader terms how they have approached similar problems. Using examples from other communities, the mayors and resource team members learn from each other.

The Mayors’ and Supervisors’ Institute offers public officials the rare opportunity to discuss a planning issue facing their community with a group of peers and some of the most respected designers and planners in the country. The Institute is based on the success of the program throughout the tri-state area. RPA has conducted eight Mayors’ Institutes in the State of New Jersey with assistance from its state Office of Smart Growth and one in Connecticut with assistance from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

The inaugural Long Island Institute focused particular attention on how better design can help implement smart growth techniques in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Each case-study community has a walkable downtown, often transit-accessible; and the Institute examined potential improvements to the public realm, opportunities for redevelopment, and an enhanced quality of life. The towns and villages participating in Long Island’s first Institute represent a broad range of community types from both counties.

2006 L.I. Participants
Hon. Philip J. Cardinale, Supervisor, Town of Riverhead
Hon. William F. Glacken, Mayor, Village of Freeport
Hon. Jack Martins, Mayor, Village of Mineola
Hon. Paul V. Pontieri, Jr., Mayor, Village of Patchogue
Hon. Eugene E. Scarpato, Mayor, Village of Lynbrook
Hon. Victoria Siegel, Mayor, Village of Bayville

Case Studies

The six case studies presented by the mayors and supervisors touched on a range of conditions facing communities across Nassau and Suffolk counties. Several of these posed particularly interesting design challenges and spurred lively discussion and debate:

- creating mixed-use centers;
- rethinking the suburban strip;
- linking land use and transportation; and
- multi-tiered and fragmented government.

The most basic lesson for the mayors is to think beyond the confines of their problem, beyond the boundaries of the individual development sites or problem areas to the larger neighborhood or community planning framework.

Resource Team Presentations

Throughout the course of the Institute, members of the resource team presented best practices in urban design, landscape architecture, redevelopment, and transportation planning that are most applicable to the mayors’ and supervisors’ case studies. These presentations introduced the mayors to the concepts of community design, educated them in the tools employed by professional planners, and frame the subsequent discussion.

Daniel Serda, Director of the Kansas City Design Center, began the Institute with a lecture on the principles of urban design. He emphasized the importance of the public realm and innovative ways to create connectivity between the various private elements of the landscape so that their sum total is greater than each part alone. Mr. Serda identified a process by which design is used to achieve the types of communities we want to live, work, and play in.

Stephen Whitehouse, Principal at Starr Whitehouse Associates, presented methods for reintegrating the settled portions of Long Island with the landscape. He identified best practices in sustainable design that should be used to ensure that future development and revitalization of existing centers occur in a way that improves the natural environment while enhancing the public realm.
John Shapiro, Principal at Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, discussed redevelopment and a market-based approach to the renewal of the Island’s centers. Each community on Long Island has characteristics that make it unique, and Mr. Shapiro taught the elected officials to identify these traits and capitalize on them through marketing and revitalization.

Jeffrey M. Zupan, Senior Transportation Fellow at RPA, demonstrated to the municipal officials the critical mass necessary to support various transit options in their communities.

Keynote Addresses
The keynote address at each Institute, the highlight of the program, is delivered by a distinguished figure in the field of planning and design. Open to the public, it draws a wide audience of elected officials, business leaders, civic activists, experts and the media, in addition to the Institute’s participants and resource team. Its goal is to introduce the mayors to the best community design practices in the world.

The keynote address at the Inaugural Long Island Institute was delivered by Anthony Flint, author of This Land: The Battle over Sprawl and the Future of America. Mr. Flint was a journalist for twenty years including sixteen years at the Boston Globe covering planning and development, transportation, architecture, and urban design. He was a visiting scholar at the Harvard Design School and research fellow at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. From October 2005 to the summer of 2006, Mr. Flint was the smart growth education director at the Office for Commonwealth Development which coordinates housing, transportation, environment, and energy in Massachusetts. Since leaving state government, Mr. Flint became the Manager of Public Affairs for the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

This Land tells the story of development in America - how the landscape is shaped by a furious clash of political, economic, and cultural forces. It is the story of the burgeoning anti-sprawl movement, a 1960s-style revolution of New Urbanism, smart growth, and green building. And it is the story of landowners fighting back on the basis of property rights, with free-market libertarians, home builders, road pavers, financial institutions, and even the lawn-care industry right alongside them. But with up to 120 million more people in the country by 2050, will the spread-out pattern cave in on itself? Could Americans embrace a new approach to development if it made sense for them?

Mr. Flint presented examples of communities from throughout the nation that have been both successful and unsuccessful in their attempts to combat sprawl and transition towards the next development paradigm. The lessons learned from these case studies served to demonstrate to the communities of Long Island some of the techniques that enable communities to construct mixed-use walkable nodes of transit-oriented development that serve in stark, sustainable contrast to automobile-dependant development that segregates uses over vast expanses of landscape, ensuring high energy consumption and declining quality of life through congestion and loss of open space. Those techniques outlined by Mr. Flint and others are described throughout the body of this report.
CASE STUDIES: COMMON THEMES

Revitalizing Our Centers and Corridors
Changing the way the Island grows was a focal point to all of the case study discussions. There is not enough land, water, or highway capacity left in the two counties to continue the same development patterns that have been prevalent on the Island since the first half of the Twentieth Century. All participants agreed that reinventing the Island’s centers and corridors was the key to the region’s continued success. Single story and two-story commercial uses within walking distance of transit stations is not the best use of land that has such direct access to the largest business district in the country. The Island needs new examples of mixed-use and multi-family development types that are executed with better design and more contextual styling than has typically occurred on the Island. The large swaths of single-family residential land in the two counties will not need to change in order for the Island to adopt a more sustainable development pattern. There are two dozen or more centers and hundreds of aging commercial corridors that have the physical capacity and infrastructure to accommodate future growth.

Linking Transportation and Land Use
One of the most energized conversations at the institute centered on the link between transportation and land use. Particular attention was paid to transit investments that will be coming online in the next quarter century and how these improvements will affect individual communities. East Side Access will extend the reasonable commuting distance an additional twenty miles east into central Suffolk County. Villages such as Patchogue that are currently just outside the commuting threshold will be just over an hour from Midtown following these improvements. This will drastically change the demand profile for the area within walking distance of the station. Similarly, the increasing availability of track space for the reverse commute following the completion of the third track will change the demand for commercial development in centers near transit such as Lynbrook and Mineola. Many of the Mayors perceived a disconnect between transportation and land use planning as is currently done at the municipal, county, and state level. Success of places such as the Nassau Hub is dependent upon the link between land use and mobility and their planning should be consistent.

Government Coordination
A common theme in each of the case studies was the interaction between the various levels of government. Long Island represents an incredibly hierarchical and fragmented system of governance with over seven hundred individual units of government. While most case studies of the institute covered the jurisdiction of Village, Town, and County, planning and taxation of the various special service districts and, importantly, school districts also affect the form of the built environment. Additionally, the Long Island Railroad is a presence in every town and many villages across the Island. Station area planning including parking provisions and place-making must be coordinated between the municipalities and the transit agency. The various elements of the Island’s road network are controlled by municipalities, a county, or the state, necessitating the engagement of many partners when planning for the public realm between buildings. Coordination between levels of government and various agencies will be essential for the successful revitalization of the Island’s centers and preservation of its natural resources. Additionally, the state needs to make available to local municipalities the tools necessary to achieve growth management and smart growth at the town and village scale. The ability to exact impact fees and create tax increment financing districts are two effective tools that will require state enabling legislation for implementation.

Leadership
Each of the Mayors and Supervisors who participated in the inaugural Long Island Institute on Community Design demonstrated the leadership necessary to transition their communities towards the next development paradigm for the Island. Leaders within communities that contain the infrastructure and physical capacity for growth need to champion mixed-use and transit-oriented development patterns as an alternative to suburban sprawl that would jeopardize open space and water quality across the island and sacrifice its communities’ high quality of life. Once exemplary projects are constructed in key communities, such as Mineola, other municipalities can look to these precedents to show their constituents that high quality, walkable places can exist in lieu of the congestion, rising taxes, and loss of open space and affordability that are indicative of business-as-usual development patterns.
Mineola
The Institute demonstrated how preservation and revitalization of the Main Street could be coupled with larger-scale redevelopment to the southeast in a way that transforms the downtown into a more complete community, creates a unique identity for the Village, and helps to bridge the gap between the existing Main Street and the county facilities in Garden City. Located at a primary station along the LIRR mainline, Mineola is poised to take greater advantage of this robust transit infrastructure through medium- and large-scale mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented development in the downtown.

Riverhead
The hamlet center of Riverhead offers a unique urban atmosphere on the North Fork and a rare opportunity to attract a significant share of the area’s growth in a compact, transit-oriented setting. The Peconic Riverfront is the hamlet’s greatest amenity, and the Institute emphasized the necessity to reconnect Main Street with the waterfront and ensure that any future development enhances the public amenities and open feel of this resource. As the river marks the boundary between the towns of Riverhead and Southold, a coordinated planning effort should take place between the two towns in order to best capitalize on this amenity while retaining and enhancing the quality of life.

Bayville
Unlike the other case studies presented at this Institute, Bayville does not contain the transportation, sewage, or water infrastructure necessary to support intensification. As it is not likely an appropriate place for significant amounts of new development, the strategy for the intersection of Bayville Ave. and Ludlam Ave. is one of consolidation and beautification. The commercial district is likely larger than necessary and the periphery properties could more appropriately be used for residential. A greening and streetscape program along both avenues would serve to create an appropriate gateway to the village and a pleasant, pedestrian-oriented atmosphere in the commercial core.
**Lynbrook**
This traditional downtown, located within walking distance of an LIRR station, possesses great redevelopment opportunity that takes advantage of the existing framework of walkable streets and transit infrastructure. Atlantic Avenue is an asset that should be capitalized on by adding additional attractions and residences to the downtown. As parking is already an issue in the downtown, large redevelopment projects should consist of a parking garage wrapped in a mixture of uses. These parking structures could be designed so that they are not visible from the street, provide ample parking for new developments, and add to the reservoir of public parking downtown. The existing surface parking areas could be freed up for such redevelopment projects and additional public spaces in the downtown.

**Patchogue**
The redevelopment of the Annheuser-Busch facility has the opportunity to stitch together the main elements of the Village center into a coherent whole. Located at the junction of the Main Street, train station, riverfront, and Briarcliffe College, the parcel should serve as an extension of the downtown fabric containing an expansion of the existing street grid and comparably scaled development. The riverfront should remain public and serve as an amenity to future development as well as the existing population. A greenway along the riverfront should be integrated back into the village grid, ensuring easy access to the riverfront from the Main Street and residential neighborhoods.

**Freeport**
The North Main Street corridor typifies a condition prevalent across Long Island: the declining commercial strip. The primary recommendation from the Institute was to transition the corridor from a homogeneous commercially zoned strip to a multi-nodal, mixed-use corridor. The establishment of three nodes along the corridor would serve to differentiate each neighborhood, ease transit service, and allow for new opportunities for mixed-use, pedestrian oriented redevelopment. Two right-of-way scenarios were developed that consisted of short-term streetscape improvements that allowed for a long-range transit possibility including light rail or bus rapid transit.
The Village of Mineola is a well-developed, primarily residential suburban community located in central Nassau County. Incorporated in 1906, Mineola has grown into an active community characterized by top-quality parks and recreation amenities, well-maintained homes on compact lots, and good schools. The community is conveniently positioned just 25 miles from midtown Manhattan; the Long Island Railroad and Long Island bus are central to Mineola’s transportation system.

Mineola is facing issues familiar to many suburban communities: a changing commercial base, unattractive corridors, traffic congestion, and a traditional downtown in need of new definition. The presence of the hospital and large private and governmental office centers are assets to the region, but pose particular challenges to the Village. Each of these uses generate significant volumes of traffic and workers during the daytime, but very little pedestrian traffic in the downtown or activity after the business day. The downtown area is further challenged by blight, illegal housing and lack of connectivity to the rest of the village. Mineola seeks to ensure that it can make improvements to its downtown, corridors, and business districts while maintaining the stability of its residential neighborhoods. To this end, the Village formed the Mineola Community Planning Committee a few years ago to prepare a comprehensive plan.

Early in the planning process, it became clear to Mineola residents that the presence of the hospital and office centers—which give the Village importance—could be leveraged to attract outside funding for downtown revitalization projects. In this vein, the Village recently completed a major redevelopment and redesign study for the Long Island Railroad station area and initiated a series of improvements to be made with funding from Nassau County’s Operation Downtown and community development programs. MTA/LIRR has concurrently been planning a new Mineola Intermodal Center, including a downtown parking garage and bus terminal at the train station. Now that Mineola has made progress towards downtown revitalization, the community is refocusing its energies on the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the entire Village.

**RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

The resource team divided downtown Mineola into two distinct, but interconnected, districts—each of which demands very different redevelopment strategies. First is the southeast area adjacent to the County Complex in Garden City, which offers the potential for grand redevelopment schemes and placemaking. Second is the pedestrian- and transit-oriented core, which calls for targeted preservation and infill.

Presently, Old Country Road creates a clear divide between the periphery of the Mineola business district and the Nassau County Complex in Garden City. This area could be redeveloped to provide a smooth transition between the campus-like setting of the County buildings and the pedestrian oriented Village downtown to the northwest. The resource team saw a great opportunity here for higher density residential buildings that, given ample landscaping and green space, would respond appropriately to the County Complex while providing for increased residential uses within walking distance of the main street, train station, and downtown.

The key infrastructure investment necessary to implement this vision would be to reconfigure the intersection of Third Street and Willis Avenue, so that Third Street offered a direct connection between the residential buildings on Birchwood Court and Main Street and Mineola Boulevard. Third Street east of Willis Avenue could even be split into two roads to intersect with Willis Ave., creating a triangular public space that would form the focal point of a new neighborhood. New residential buildings, potentially between seven and ten stories, would respond directly to Third Street but would be set back from Old Country Road by a green buffer, mirroring the County Complex to the south. The new connecting boulevard along Third Street would serve to draw the new residential neighborhood into downtown, form a direct link between Main Street and the existing residential buildings further east, and improve the pedestrian realm between Mineola’s downtown to the County buildings in Garden City. Meanwhile, Old Country Road could be transformed into a boulevard, in order to create more pedestrian opportunities and encourage use of the Mineola LIRR station by county employees.

Mineola’s downtown should be treated in its entirety as a pedestrian priority zone. Main Street, running north-south through the Village center, is the perfect scale to support the retail mix and walkable atmosphere that the Village seeks. The resource team agreed that neither Main Street nor the area immediately surrounding it required the type of large-scale development interventions suggested for the southeast district. The central strategy here would be strategic infill, coupled with creation of a new focal village park near Main and Second, in order to enhance walkability and the sense of place. Meanwhile, by creating a strong pedestrian connection between downtown and the new residential district (as described above) the Village can help to ensure a natural, market-based revitalization of Main Street.

There are additional steps the Village could take to make the downtown area a more inviting place for people to stroll, shop, dine, and spend leisure time. Wherever possible, surface parking lots should be replaced by mixed use developments. These mixed use developments, in turn, should make use of existing parking facilities, support new, underground parking, or be...
developed as parking decks wrapped in buildings. The current preponderance of unattractive parking decks with no ground level uses discourages walking and enjoyment of the downtown streetscape. The gateways from the south should also be enhanced, in order to spread pedestrian activity to both the new residential neighborhood and the County Complex. The point where Main Street crosses the LIRR should be redesigned to make the intersection as pedestrian friendly as possible.

Finally, there was consensus among all those involved in the Institute that Mineola should more clearly differentiate itself from the County facilities. Most people assume that these facilities are within the Village when, in fact, they are part of Garden City. Some of this differentiation will occur naturally, as Mineola builds a unique, pedestrian-oriented downtown with a thriving Main Street. However, signage at the Village gateways could help to reinforce the distinction. Specifically, the Village should develop attractive signage for the Mineola Boulevard Bridge heading northbound, in order to indicate that travelers are entering the Village of Mineola. This would be a fantastic way to emphasize the uniqueness of Mineola to the many people who enter and leave the County facilities each and every day.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a new open space in the heart of downtown.
Preserve the scale and historic character of Main Street.
Transform 3rd Street into a new boulevard with a focal public space.
New large-scale residential development relating to East neighborhoods and County Complex.

Develop connections to neighborhood further East.
KEY QUESTIONS

What is the appropriate scale of redevelopment necessary to revitalize the hamlet center?

How can Main Street become better integrated with the waterfront amenities?

What design measures can help the town capture more spillover energy from the regional destinations within and near the hamlet center?

How should parking be managed as the hamlet center is intensified?

PROBLEM STATEMENT Assess the Town’s recent zoning changes for bulk, parking, and historic preservation issues. Specifically, review the recent development proposal for a Cineplex, grocery store, hotel, and residences to determine whether it helps the Town become more pedestrian friendly and capture spillover from the existing regional destinations.

BACKGROUND Early in Riverhead’s history, farming was the core family occupation, but residents in the Town also produced shoes, harnesses, cigars, and coffins. Some were carpenters and a shipbuilding industry eventually developed in the Town. Around 1846, the Long Island Railroad arrived, significantly spurring the farm economy and resulting in a dense and compact hamlet on the Peconic River.

Downtown Riverhead experienced a decline from the 1960s-1990s, as convenience- and brand name apparel-stores moved from the downtown to shopping centers along Route 58. The substantial growth in western and central Suffolk County in the 1950s and 60s also spurred the construction of the new county center and county jail in the slightly more accessible adjacent Southampton Town. Although Riverhead remains the county seat, a number of county offices have since moved further west to Hauppauge, towards the county’s population centers.

In an attempt to bring energy back to the downtown, Riverhead created an urban renewal district in the 1990s. A new Downtown Revitalization plan has helped to spur redevelopment proposals for the area. The major aim is to build on the successes of the regional draws of the aquarium and Tanger Outlet Mall and create spillover to the downtown. The Plan outlines three steps toward this revitalization. First, encourage a shift from convenience shopping to entertainment and cultural activities in downtown, attracting new businesses to the area. Second, transform downtown into a pedestrian friendly, unified experience. Lastly, the town should market for a mix of shops and restaurants that appeal to both tourists and residents while avoiding gimmicky “tourist traps.”

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS The team suggested that Riverhead must begin by prioritizing the armature of its public spaces—establish the framework of roads and open spaces around which future development will be organized. One of the most important elements of the downtown’s redevelopment is the relationship between Main Street and the Peconic riverfront. It is crucial that a visual connection between the two be established. The resource team did not see the need for automobile roads running north-south between the waterfront and Main Street; instead, a series of pedestrian walkways should be developed to take advantage of the wonderful views of the waterfront from the alleys off Main Street (and the Town should use zoning to ensure that these views remain open and featured). As the downtown becomes more vital, these alleys will evolve into retail frontage between Main Street and the amenities of the waterfront. The historic park should be expanded south to meet the waterfront park, thereby creating one of the primary connecting routes. The river road can still cross the park, but the pedestrian connection between Main Street and the river through the park should be prioritized.

The overall character of the river road is very important to the area between downtown and the river. The Town should determine if they see this road as a second route with commercial frontage parallelling Main Street, or as a road whose character is determined by the River. If the retail option is preferred, development parcels may have to be raised so that the occupied building space is over the floodplain. If no retail frontage is desired along the river road, the garages under individual structures in this area can front the road with a variety of berms and landscaping.

Since there is currently a development proposal for this area, the resource team evaluated its fit with the desired armature of roads and public spaces. The team agreed that the current configuration of the proposed residential building on the waterfront was unacceptable. Ideally, the residential component of the project should be located in two buildings with their primary axis perpendicular to Main Street, fronting the current north-south access road connecting Main Street with the river road. This section of Main Street would function as a “T,” drawing energy and street life south towards the River. If this reconfiguration is not possible, it is very important that the river road remain between the residential building(s) and the River. By relocating the road to the north side of the residential development, the current plan essentially converts a long stretch of the riverfront into a de facto front lawn, privatizing the riverfront and making it feel less like a public park. Through its placement, moreover, the building orients itself to the River and turns its back to downtown, using the road as a buffer. At a very minimum, the lighthouse should be removed or offset from the ground floor opening in the residential building, and the opening should be made more grand. The building must not be allowed to create a wall separating downtown from the River.

The current development proposal also calls for a hotel, grocery store and Cineplex on the north side of Main Street, with a parking garage to the rear. The resource team agreed that—while these are appropriate uses for the downtown environment—the bulk and massing of the building should be modified, so as to not overwhelm the rest of downtown. More important, however, is how the building relates to the street on the ground floor. Here the team was concerned about the parking garage frontage along East Avenue. The ground
Landscaped frontage along river road to mask decked parking.

Second retail frontage along river road mirroring Main Street.

The planning effort should include Southampton, treating both sides of the river as a unified district.

Development should form a ‘T’ with Main Street, drawing pedestrian activity towards the river.

Extend the Historic Park to meet the riverfront, with the road crossing the park and prioritizing the pedestrian.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a series of pedestrian walkways linking Main Street with the riverfront.

The floor of the deck should be wrapped with retail frontage in order to activate the pedestrian realm.

As is typical of modern borders, the boundary between Riverhead and Southampton is located along the center of the Peconic River. The success of this area is dependent on what occurs on both shores, and the two Towns should coordinate their planning efforts to treat this as one zone. There is the potential for the head of the Peconic to become a regional destination as a truly integrated, single downtown. A series of pedestrian linkages across the River would be integral to such a vision. The resource team recommends creating a formal relationship between the two towns to manage planning of this shared resource.
How can the gateway to the village from the Bayville Bridge be greened and made more inviting?

How could the small commercial district at Ludlam Ave. and Bayville Ave. be made more rational and walkable?

What limited redevelopment could occur without sacrificing the small-scale of the village center?

**PROBLEM STATEMENT** Examine ways of beautifying the gateway, building upon efforts already completed by the Village including the replacement of an abandoned gas station with public parking and a square.

**Background** The area of Oak Neck and Pine Island—the land mass of present-day Bayville and Centre Island—was purchased in 1658 from Native Americans who had inhabited the region since at least 1500. For the next century, the land was used primarily for grazing (an ideal arrangement, since the animals could not escape from the peninsula). In 1745 the first road, Main Street (now Bayville Avenue), was completed, connecting the mainland to Centre Island. In 1859, the Village of Oak Neck was officially renamed Bayville.

By the mid-19th Century there were still fewer than 100 inhabitants in the community, most of them New Englanders who migrated to the area and made a living by growing asparagus and harvesting shellfish from the bay. Development pressures did not begin to reach the village until the late 1860’s, when the LIRR was extended to Locust Valley. Shortly thereafter, Henry Clay Weeks, based on experiments he performed in Bayville, developed new methods for controlling mosquito populations and thereby helped to make the waterfront properties of the Village habitable in the summer. The completion of the first drawbridge to the mainland in 1898 provided for a quicker trip to Oyster Bay and further opened the Village for development.

The Village was incorporated in 1919, and the population continued to grow as automobile ownership became widespread. Rather than a residential center, the Village developed into a beloved summer resort, serviced by a ferry from Rye, New York. The ferry closed in 1937, and the Village transitioned from a summer resort to a year-round community after WWII. Bayville is presently an upscale, sleepy beachfront community composed primarily of residential uses along the spectacular coastline of the peninsula.

People traveling to Bayville generally enter the Village from the south, after crossing historic Bayville Bridge. The gateway to the community is located just north of the bridge, where Ludlam Road intersects Bayville Avenue, the artery leading into town from the west. This is the primary commercial district on the peninsula and serves the surrounding community for its daily needs.

**Resource Team Recommendations** The resource team began with a basic question: what does Bayville want to become? The Village could work to establish itself as a specialized destination by maximizing the commercial zone at the intersection of Bayville and Ludlam Avenues. In this scenario, activity on the average weekend might reach that of a typical Memorial Day. Alternately, the Village could preserve its profile as a quiet beach town. The Mayor suggested that the residents of the Village would prefer the latter option and that the commercial zone should primarily serve the needs of residents, rather than draw additional tourists.

The resource team’s recommendations, then, all worked towards downsizing and consolidating the present commercial zone. There is more land zoned commercial in this area than could possibly be supported by the Village population, given the presence of larger commercial districts further west. The properties on the periphery of the commercial district could be converted to residential parcels. While any present uses would be grandfathered in, a variety of incentives could be provided to slowly transform the fringe zone to residential, concentrating the commercial zone in the properties closest to the intersection and running south to Bayville Bridge.

Any future residential development would have to be at the prevailing low-density and should be in keeping with the Village’s existing character and architectural style. Since this area does not support municipal sewer service (nor can it—due to the high water table) there are ecological and infrastructural limits to density. The area will inevitably stay small. Regulations should be put in place, however, to ensure that whatever development does ensue will be in keeping with the area’s character.

By implementing design guidelines that address building setbacks, front yard requirements, and architectural style, the Village could ensure that future development accords with Bayville’s existing look and feel. Design guidelines should cover building types and materials as well as the location of parking and access points. Wherever feasible, parking should be located to the side or rear of commercial buildings, and curb cuts should be limited as much as possible, in order to minimize conflicts between the automobile and pedestrian realms. Design regulations should also deal with signage in the village center, leading towards a unified design language that fits with the character of Bayville.

One thing that struck the resource team is that there is little connection to nature at the intersection of Ludlam and Bayville, despite the fact that the Village center is located on a narrow peninsula between Long Island Sound and West Harbor. A primary goal for Bayville should be to green the Village’s heart, in order to emphasize and connect to the area’s magnificent natural setting. The first step would be to create pedestrian paths between Bayville Ave. and both bodies of water. Although the majority of the roads leading north and south off Bayville Ave. are private, opportunities for pedestrian access do exist and should be identified. A second step would be to clean up and green the roads and sidewalks. Third, there should be an overall effort to create more inviting and walkable street systems. At present, it is often unclear where the roadways end and the pedestrian realm begins. By using new paving or marking techniques to differentiate between the roadways and walkways, a more rational network will emerge. Finally, the Village should work toward replacing the utility wires with underground lines. As individual properties are redeveloped or redesigned, owners could be required to replace the utility wires with underground lines. Although it might seem odd to have individual properties with underground lines rising to poles at the property line, this is a cost effective
way to incrementally depress utilities. After several years of progress in this fashion, the Village may be able to obtain a more limited grant to underground the remaining lines.

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

Implement robust design guidelines to ensure that all new development has a form and style that is consistent with the existing village character.

Constrict the commercially zoned land, allowing low-density residential uses to occur on the periphery of the village center.

Implement streetscape improvements and parking rationalization throughout the study area.

Clean and green the gateway to the village center from the bridge.

Create pedestrian linkages between the neighborhoods and the commercial core and the waterfront.
**KEY QUESTIONS**

How can parking be accommodated in a more rational way, while creating a pedestrian-friendly downtown?

What is the most appropriate mixture of uses in the village center?

How should the five-corners be treated in a way that is most walkable?

What redevelopment schemes would capitalize most on the existing village center and transit infrastructure?

How can design be used to make the primary crossings of Sunrise Highway more pedestrian friendly?

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

1) Address the Village’s parking needs. 2) Assess the redevelopment proposal for a Marriot Hotel and parking garage to replace a surface lot located on the eastern edge of downtown.

**BACKGROUND**

Lynbrook, with a population of nearly 20,000, is a lively, family-oriented community located in Nassau County. In the late 19th century, a number of Brooklyn residents began to resettle in what was then the Village of Pearsalls, twenty miles east of midtown Manhattan. Believing that the Village’s name lacked pizzazz, they transposed the syllables of “Brooklyn” and renamed the village “Lynbrook.”

Water hydrants, a trolley line, telephones and the first bank all made their appearance in Lynbrook in the early 20th century, and a period of rapid development was ushered in with the 1901 formation of the Lynbrook Land Company and the incorporation of the Village on March 11, 1911. The Village has since evolved into a popular suburban community, boasting a number of theatres (The Arcade, Lyceum and Plaza, as well as the Bates Opera House) and numerous houses of worship.

The Village of Lynbrook is essentially built out, with more continuous development and fewer surface parking lots around the downtown and train station areas than is typical of Long Island village centers. Save for a few lots in the downtown area, the only redevelopment opportunities are for developers to consolidate several contiguous properties and tear down existing buildings. However, as described in the case study below—due to design and placement issues—the limited surface parking available does not even meet the village’s current needs.

**RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

More than any of the other challenges examined at this year’s Institute, the development challenge facing downtown Lynbrook calls for a large-scale public planning process, including a visioning exercise, charrette, and/or other type of public workshop. By engaging the public in the planning process, the Village will broaden the constituency for downtown planning issues and may foster an alternative dialogue to the present NIMBYism and anti-change rhetoric that dominates development discourse. Residents tend to react negatively to individual proposals because they do not see how each proposal fits into a larger vision for the Village and the future of its downtown. By bringing the broad range of stakeholders together to develop a vision for the Village’s future, residents can take ownership of development plans and provide the political base needed for the municipality to implement those plans.

The first thing that the resource team noticed when looking at the aerial base maps was that there is actually an abundance of surface parking in the downtown area. Yet the perception is one of inadequate supply. This is most likely the combination of several factors: poor signage, shoppers’ not wanting to walk, and a preponderance of private commercial lots. There are certain immediate actions that could enhance the amount and use of municipal parking for the Village’s downtown.

First, better signage indicating the presence of municipal lots would encourage greater use of existing facilities, as would the creation of a shuttle from the farther lots to the train station. The Village should also work with commercial property owners to arrange for shared parking opportunities when private owners are not serving peak demand. Broadway could be widened slightly to accommodate on-street, diagonal parking located nicely to serve both downtown and commuter needs. Additionally, the Village should consider purchasing the property adjacent to the bank on Merrick Road between Columbus and Broadway. This large surface of asphalt is currently underutilized and would represent a real boon to the downtown’s public parking supply. (As discussed below, ownership of this parcel would also serve the Village well in any future downtown revitalization efforts.)

But simply providing adequate parking does not turn a Village into a destination. The Village could really move to draw people downtown by replacing much of the surface parking with public spaces, and by creating structured parking wrapped with retail, office, and residential uses. Although the park on the west side of Village Hall is attractive, it is not ideally located to serve as a major open space amenity for downtown. Lynbrook needs a signature ‘village green,’ and there are several potential sites for development of one. The current Village Hall parking lot represents a good location in the western portion of downtown; it might even be possible to swap uses with the park located to the west of Village Hall. An even better location in the heart of downtown would be the current bank at the intersection of Broadway and Merrick Road, across the street from the theatre. Intersections such as this one—where multiple streets come together at unique angles—are always interesting spaces. The resource team likened the area’s potential to Harvard Square in Cambridge.

The resource team agreed that the block bounded by Broadway, Merrick Road, Langdon, and Columbus represents an enormous opportunity for the activation of the downtown. The team sees the southeast portion of this block, at the corner of Langdon and Broadway, as a more attractive site for the Marriott than the one currently proposed, further east at St. James Place and Earle Ave. (Condo development or Avalon-style housing might be more appropriate for the eastern site on St. James Place.) The hotel could serve as a focal point for the community. Replacing surface parking with structured parking would further unlock development potential in this area. A structured parking lot could be constructed in the center of the block, wrapped by the hotel development. In sum, this is not a use that should be “offsided”: it has the potential to re-energize and revitalize the Village center.
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Any additional parking (in association with a hotel or not) should be decked and incorporated into a larger development that could be an anchor to the downtown.

Create a new focal public space in front of Village Hall and/or at the 5 corners.

While a parking deck and associated development could be appropriate for this site, the energy generated by such a development should be harnessed closer to the downtown core.

Traffic calming should be utilized to ease pedestrian crossings of Sunrise Highway.

Traffic calming should be utilized to ease pedestrian crossings of Sunrise Highway.

Streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities should continue south along Atlantic Avenue under the LIRR and across Sunrise Highway.

Merrick Road

Transit
Stop

Atlantic Ave.
**KEY QUESTIONS**

What is the most appropriate mixture of uses for the former Anheuser-Busch facility?

How can this redevelopment be used to stitch together the downtown, LIRR station, and riverfront?

What can be done to take most advantage of the presence of the College, transit infrastructure, and ferry to Fire Island?

How can any future redevelopment be made to feel as an extension of the existing village fabric?

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

 Redevelop the 11-acre Anheuser-Busch distribution facility on Clare Rose Boulevard in a way that serves to reconnect the downtown, riverfront, and the train station area.

**BACKGROUND**

Although located just 50 miles east of Manhattan, Patchogue has leveraged its riverfront and spectacular natural harbor in order to become a modern and largely self-contained community.

Patchogue’s recorded history dates from 1664, when John Winthrop, the Younger, Governor of Connecticut, purchased “nine necks of land” extending inland from Great South Bay. A portion of these lands was called Patchogue for the Indian tribe who lived in the vicinity. Settlers and shipping entrepreneurs flocked to the area over the next century, attracted by its waterpower. The area soon gained the nickname “Milltown” because of the many mills -- gristmills, sawmills, paper, wool, cotton mills -- that operated on its waterways. (Most of the mills shut down in the 1940s and ’50s, as a result of foreign competition and cheaper labor in the south.) In 1890, three years before the Village’s incorporation, the Army Corps of Engineers dredged the Patchogue River, making it the only deep-water port on Long Island’s South Shore. Until 1922, Patchogue was a U.S. port of entry with a customs house.

The Long Island Rail Road reached Patchogue in 1869, allowing thousands of visitors from NYC to access Patchogue’s cool southwest breezes. Soon the Village became a summer colony, with hotels accommodating as many as 1,600 guests. However, visitors gradually declined after 1920, as the automobile carried tourists to farther destinations.

Presently the Village hopes to revive the tourist industry, if not the mills. They have restored the 1858 one-room schoolhouse and have reopened the elegant Patchogue movie house of the ’20s to host concerts and community events.

Plans are also in the works to bring new life to the Patchogue River. The village, working with the Fire Island National Seashore—which has headquarters and a ferry terminal on the river—wants to develop a year-round commercial recreation area and visitors’ center. The river is where Patchogue began and where it will begin its revitalization.

**RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

The redevelopment of the 11-acre Anheuser-Bush distribution facility on Clare Rose Boulevard will have a profound impact on the Village center. This property sits at the intersection of four major community assets: the downtown, the LIRR station, the Patchogue River, and Briarcliffe College. The present facility acts as a barrier to stitch together the downtown, riverfront, and the train station area.

Before any development takes place, a framework of public spaces, including streets and open space, should be planned to inform future private investment. The best way for the site’s redevelopment to join seamlessly with the Village is to begin by integrating it into the surrounding street grid. By bringing Gerard Street and Church Street west into the site, rational blocks for development would be created between Railroad Ave and West Ave. A north-south road connecting these new road segments to South Street, Hammond Street, or Veterans Boulevard would connect the site to the Village center and create manageable block sizes to accommodate autos, bikes, and pedestrians, while leaving room to the west for a greenway along the river. This connectivity could be continued westward by creating a pedestrian and bike bridge where the extended Church Street meets the new riverfront roadway. This would link the new neighborhood to the community further west and provide the older community with safe and easy access to downtown, the rail station, and the riverfront greenway.

The resource team agreed that it will be very important to set in place easement regulations for the future greenway. Setting aside the space for a linear park along the riverfront with pedestrian and bike access is not enough, however. The park’s stewardship—how it is managed, maintained, and programmed—will be equally important. The resource team recommended a series of varied attractions along its length. One perfect site for a focal park element is the point where Division Street and the railroad cross the river. If the MTA operations could be relocated from that site, this area would activate the river-walk between the ferry and amenities further north, while providing a sight line to the river from the train station. Further north, where there is more land available, the resource team felt that an interim museum, skate park, outdoor movie or other programmed activity would attract people to the waterfront and serve as an amenity to young professionals and students at Briarcliffe College.

In addition to creating a cultural component for the riverfront park, the Village should make the majority of development parcels available for residential buildings. Currently, the Village is composed of 54% rental properties. This would be a perfect opportunity to spur the development of market-rate condominiums and townhouses within walking distance to downtown and the train station. There may also be an opportunity to use a portion of the site for Briarcliffe dormitories. This would activate the surrounding area and help to draw some of the energy of the college into the downtown.

Looking beyond the 11-acre site, there are additional opportunities for residential construction on the parking lots directly adjacent to the train station. The Village should pursue collaboration with the MTA to construct structured parking for commuters, freeing up land for residential options that, coupled with the vibrant downtown and new riverfront amenity, should attract young professionals who seek an alternative to the centers further...
west, but still want the possibility to commute into the city.

There is also latent potential in the large surface parking lots surrounding the College. These lots isolate the student population from the riverfront and the downtown and do not serve as an adequate gateway to the Village center. Creating structured parking would allow for several development parcels to emerge along the Veterans Boulevard frontage. Retail development, potentially with dorms above, would continue the downtown street wall seamlessly to the east and serve as a western gateway to the Village.

Patchogue may need to examine incorporating a special zoning district as part of a specific implementation strategy. LIRR/MTA should be engaged in the planning and implementation processes, in order to help promote a transit village environment, not just a place where people live, but a place where people live and work. The community should be engaged in the development of an area-wide and site-specific master plan that includes the placement of new streets, open spaces, and development parcels.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

**Pedestrian-scale retail along West Main Street, oriented towards the College.**

Each development along the river should incrementally implement a continuous greenway. Additional activities should be located in the riverfront parks.

**A new street and block pattern should be created within the development site and a mixture of uses oriented along these streets.**

The greenway should be brought into the new and existing communities and linked to the LIRR station.

**A new park should be created adjacent to the railroad along Division Street, opening up views from the LIRR station to the river.**
PROBLEM STATEMENT The North Main Street corridor running from the LIRR station to the Village’s northern border is presently dominated by one and two story commercial buildings, many of which lack storefronts. The lots are typically shallow and abut single family residences to the rear. There is a possibility, but not a probability, of a county light rail linking the south shore to the Hub running along North Main Street. The Institute will examine the potential to rezone the corridor for higher density, mixed use development, making it more attractive, more walkable, and an amenity for surrounding neighborhoods.

BACKGROUND The Village of Freeport was incorporated in 1892. The southern part of the village is penetrated by several canals that offer passage to salt marshes opening into the Atlantic Ocean. In its early years Freeport was a tourist and sportsman’s destination, and the Village boasts extensive small boat facilities and a resident fishing fleet, as well as charter and open fishing boats. After WWII, however, the Village developed into a bedroom community for New York City. The fire that destroyed the Freeport Hotel in the late 1950’s represents a symbolic and economic boundary between the two eras. Freeport remains a tourist destination for daytrippers. During the summer, folks from across Long Island and New York City flock to Freeport’s Nautical Mile, with its thriving seafood restaurants, bars and eclectic boutiques. The yearly Freeport Nautical Festival attracts nearly 100,000 visitors there each June. Freeport is also a gateway to Jones Beach, one of the largest state beaches in the State of New York.

One of the most visible changes over the last decades of Freeport’s history has been the influx of immigrants from a range of Latin American nations, including Colombia, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic. There are three Latin American themed supermarkets in the village, and restaurants dotting Merrick Road and Main Street offer Caribbean food, Central American food, and South American food. As a result, it is possible to move through Freeport and experience the diverse cuisines and wares of Latin America.

Following decades of decline, downtown Freeport is facing a resurgence of development. This has been spurred on by the establishment of the first New York State Empire Zone in Nassau County, stretching from Freeport to Hempstead along North Main Street, and by a series of public realm improvements in the downtown initiated by the Village. No improvements or development plans have yet been proposed or initiated for the North Main Street Corridor.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS The conditions present on North Main Street are typical of so many commercial corridors across Long Island. The amount of land zoned for commercial strip development far outstretches the demand, and many of the shops along North Main are closed. The industrial enterprises along the corridor have very little presence on the roadway, and the street is almost entirely geared towards the throughput of the automobile at the expense of the pedestrian realm. North Main Street, in particular, is far wider than it needs to be given the volume of traffic that it handles; much of it is ripe to be redesigned for pedestrian and transit uses.

The resource team emphasized that any plan for a corridor cannot be confined to the road itself, but must extend into the adjacent neighborhoods. The two are completely interrelated. While at some points along the corridor the study area may only be as wide as the building parcels that line the right-of-way, along other segments the study area may spread quite far into the adjacent residential areas. As the ideas discussed at this institute are advanced, the study area must be more fully defined and examined by the Village.

The resource team first examined how to configure the actual right-of-way – how to divide up the space between buildings for automobiles, pedestrians, and transit. It is possible that a light rail will eventually connect the south shore to the Nassau Hub along this corridor. The resource team felt it was necessary to develop two alternative scenarios so that this possibility could be accommodated, but not relied upon for the success of a vision for North Main. The first scenario (without light rail) consists primarily of ceding some roadway to the pedestrian realm. By widening the sidewalks and planting street trees, the walking experience along the corridor could be made safer and more aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, since the sidewalks are currently under the Village’s control, it would be possible to move forward rapidly with this plan. The second scenario is more dramatic. The sidewalks on both sides of the roadway would be somewhat widened; additionally, a green median would be developed between the north and southbound travel lanes. Eventually, a light rail transit corridor could be constructed within the green median. In both scenarios, corridor-wide improvements would include signage and facade regulations and incentive programs to encourage a more unified and rational design for the district.

The team agreed that, for a corridor this long, several nodes should be identified for more intensive mixed-use development, while the spaces in between should be kept at a lower intensity. This would work well with any additional transit investments; promoting a higher density of uses at potential stop locations would increase the success of a future line.

The southernmost node of the North Main corridor, at the LIRR station, represents a perfect location for a mixed-use hub, given the large municipally and agency owned surface parking lots and proximity to the train to Manhattan. Such a mixed use hub would serve simultaneously as a northern extension of downtown and a southern anchor for the North Main corridor. A long range plan may relocate the church to a site further north along North Main, where church parking would be less likely to disrupt the walkability and pedestrian prior-
ity zone created in the area closest to the station. The central node of the corridor comprises the current bus parking lot and industrial area around East Seaman Ave. The bus lot offers one of the strongest mixed-use redevelopment opportunities along the corridor. This industrial area has a great deal of character that can be retained, even as the site is transformed into a 21st century industrial park.

The northernmost node should act as the gateway between Pleasant and Prince Avenues. The area could be more residential in feel, with limited commercial and retail on the ground floors. This way, the northern node would serve as a transition between the commercial corridor and the neighborhoods, while providing a visual statement to motorists from the north that they are entering Freeport.

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

The depth available for redevelopment at the bus parking lot and the industrial area allow for mixed-use opportunities. A residential node is most appropriate near the Village’s northern border, adjacent to the existing residential areas. The southern node represents an unsurpassed opportunity for higher intensity, transit-oriented development within walking distance of the LIRR station.

**Traditional corridor planning** (on left) focuses on the parcels directly fronting the roadway.

**A more comprehensive approach** to corridor planning (on right) acknowledges that the parcels and neighborhoods that affect the roadway spread outward from the roadway along primary intersecting corridors and into contiguous, significant properties.

**Alternative 1:** Sidewalks are generously widened on both sides with a robust streetscape program.

**Alternative 2:** Sidewalks are slightly widened on both sides and a large, landscaped median is formed.

This alternative has the potential for a future light rail or other transit alternative.
Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county, New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region’s continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region’s civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

RPA’s current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing. For more information about Regional Plan Association, please visit our website, www.rpa.org.

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