



SI Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Executive Summary:

Vision statement: To create a strong focus on the ultimate goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the Committee believes it is important to provide a statement of what kind of community Shelter Islanders would like to see in 25 years. We have reviewed the 'vision' and objectives' incorporated into the original plan and offer a current view of the future for the town.

(Summary) Shelter Island is defined by its unique character and quiet 'sense of place', where water and landscapes are critical resources.

The Island affords a sense of privacy, intimacy and scale. It also reflects an interdependent balance of locals, year round and part time residents, working persons and retirees, second home owners, renters and summer visitors.

Continued development towards full build out, the increased costs of living here, and an increasingly litigious society threatens those local resources and the very qualities that are attractive to most Islanders. These Shelter Island qualities are special; and despite the pressures of development and change, they are the qualities the people of Shelter Island wish to protect and preserve.

Goals & Objectives: To achieve the vision, goals and objectives are grouped into four major areas:

1. Preserve Shelter Island's 'rural seaside charm' and unique, intimate island character: Access only by ferry, boat or air; protect the Island's sense of privacy and intimacy and its landscapes, support the viability of local businesses, focus on hamlets, create a light industrial business zone, set a full build-out target, encourage the concept of volunteerism .
2. Protect and enhance the quantity and fragile health of our Natural Resources: Protect marine resources within long term plan, protect and improve our single source aquifer, open space, quality woodlands, 'Landmark' trees, open fields and scenic vistas.
3. Promote balance in our diverse and interdependent community: Foster a balanced community of full time residents (working locally or retired), second home owners and summer renters and visitors giving priority to the interests of the entire community, balancing development and conservation of resources and maintaining an equitable fiscal burden to fund the Island's governmental and service needs.
4. Modernize and adapt our approach to governing by recognizing new and important elements influencing our island and world: Change on Shelter Islander suggests that increased emphasis must be placed on enforcement rather than education and persuasion. Clarify and enforce codes equally for all, use technology to promote transparency and distribute information to the community, and respect sustainability of our resources in decision making.

Overview of major developments over the past 15 years: Refer to full report for details

1. Significant growth in new homes: The growth of new residential homes on Shelter Island increased by 428 units or 25% since 1993 to 2398 units, excluding apartments.

| Housing Units | Actual 1980 | Actual 1990 | Actual 2000 | Actual 2008 |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total | 1,537 | 1,933 | 2,151 | 2,398 |

2. Increase in size of home: Concurrent with this growth has been a constant increase in house size from a five year average of 1550 Square Foot Living Area ('SFLA') in 1948-53 to 2426 SFLA in 1993-7 and 3143 SFLA 2003-7. The number of bathrooms reflects the same 'McMansion effect' increasing from a five year average in 1948-53 of 1.95 baths to 2.98 in 1994-98 and 3.79 in 2003-7. See Tables B & C

| Years | Unit Starts | Ave SFA | Units > 4500 SFA | Ave Baths |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1993-1997 | 84 | 2426 | 3 | 2.83 |
| 1998-2002 | 195 | 2510 | 10 | 3.29 |
| 2003-2007 | 149 | 3143 | 23 | 3.79 |
| Total | 428 | 2693 | 36 | 3.28 |

3. Population: As the last census took place in April 2000 and the next is scheduled for 2010, there are no current meaningful estimates available. As there were by mid 2008 some 493 more homes on Shelter Island than in 1990, there must be more people, although the split of full time persons and part timers is uncertain. In our view, it is likely that the number of property owners, who are here part time has increased significantly as has the number of registered voters. The development of affluence and increased scarcity of waterfront/waterview land in the greater NY area have been major factors driving up property values. Clearly there has been a pronounced decrease in the number of sales and values in 2008-9.
4. The Town's total assessed value (Town, School, Fire, Library, County etc.) has increased from an estimated \$1.5 billion in 2002, (the start of the current market assessment policy) to \$3.3 billion in 2008. This change is an average annual increase over 6 years of 14.2%. The total tax levy moved from an estimated \$8.3 million in 1996 to \$11.1 million in 2002, and to \$16.8 million in 2008, an average annual increase of 7.0 %, reflecting the significant increase in property values over this period.

Protection of Open Space by various means including the passage and implementation of the Community Preservation Act, and Town and County open space bond funding,

5. conservation easements, and subdivision park land and restrictions cover some 184 lots on over 2300 acres of land.
6. Significant expansion and improvement of aquifer and environmental protection in Town codes: Wetlands code, Near Shore Overlay District ('NSOD'), Noise ordinance, Tree Code, Sub-division Code, runoff, Water Management committee and policies.
7. Investment in new/upgraded facilities: New ferries, Town Hall, Assessor's Building, Highway Building, Police Building, Youth Center, Town Medical Building and Senior Center
8. Investment in infrastructure: Landfill, First and Second Bridges, Second Causeway, Shell Beach, Catch Basins, Dredged Harbors/Creeks, SI Heights and West Neck water/sewage systems
9. Attempts to provide affordable or community housing have been difficult. A new set of proposals passed in the Spring of 2008 is now in the process of implementation.

Major challenges:

The Committee identified major current and potential challenges, threats, and issues to achieving the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. The projected continued increased cost of living on Shelter Island and shift in demographics, whereby the "balanced community" envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan would be lost as full time residents with local employment and often children in Island schools become a smaller percentage of the total population relative to second homeowners and retirees.
2. Increased house size:
 - a. Continued development of large or very large homes, particularly in areas with fragile groundwater quality and quantity.
 - b. The trend of "knock-downs", whereby an estimated 614 smaller, older houses, many of which are in the NSOD, might be replaced by much larger new ones
3. Increased population and housing density in aquifer sensitive areas 'NSOD' due to the estimated 225 smaller nonconforming lots, which in some cases with certain variances and special permits, are buildable.
4. An increased tendency to challenge Town codes. The spirit of 25 years ago in which people worked within the codes respecting the greater good of the community has changed.
5. Incomplete and ambiguous sections of our local codes, negatively impact time and costs of adjudicating the codes by Town authorities and resulting in inconsistent enforcement.
6. Lack of a master plan for the Town's tidal waters and larger freshwater ponds invites development and activity in places where they should not occur.
7. Having a single undifferentiated business zone creates two significant disadvantages:

- a. Failure to provide businesses with more discernable negative impacts on their surroundings, with a place to locate.
 - b. An unnecessarily large business zone geographical area relative to projected demand at full build-out, stretched along Route 114 invites strip zoning development. This situation creates an economically inefficient distribution of shops compared to hamlet concentration.
8. While home businesses are to be encouraged, the current code is confusing and does not cover every circumstance. Negative and unacceptable impacts need to be better defined and enforced, as well as alternative locations for growing businesses.
 9. A potential future decline of local businesses providing goods and services, due to the high costs of land, the seasonality of business and heavy reliance on the construction industry. The loss of these local services increasingly forces Islanders to shop off island and hire off-island tradesmen and other service providers.
 10. The absence of a permitting process for all new businesses enables random development, which may not be consistent the CompPlan goals and the best interests of neighboring businesses and the Shelter Island community.
 11. Risks to the aquifer including the lack of effective control over the use of pesticides, fertilizers, swimming pool maintenance, the creation and maintenance of large 'green lawns', run off and exceptional house size in aquifer sensitive areas.
 12. Limited mechanisms (except for CPF 2% protections) to protect scenic views and valuable fields, woodlands and trees, the latter enhancing recharge, and all being important to the 'feel' of Shelter Island.
 13. No effective code or policy for controlling invasive plant species and the gradual destruction of our fields and woodlands.

Major new or renewed initiatives:

To meet the goals of the Mission Statement and the Plan objectives, a number of vital initiatives were identified. Note the committee has only identified and suggested broad objectives for each initiative, following our charge, thus relying on Town government to engage the public; and outside experts to develop specific legislation and policy to deal with the issues raised. Note the color code refers to the Action Point list in the main report:

Marine Waters:

1. Conduct scoping study for long term plan for Town tidal waters and larger fresh water ponds, perhaps via Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.
2. Update criteria and standards for 'mitigation' plantings and the removal of invasives, allowing for root removal with replanting within 14 days.
3. Consider expansion of new Town Docks,

4. Review and determine a policy for requiring dock owners to provide transit access along the beach below the high water mark
5. Consider a combination of code and policy to discourage replacement bulkheads on inland waters, where the risk to existing structure due to erosion is slight and beaches and wetlands could be reestablished.
6. Investigate the economics and risk profile of entering a cooperative agreement with neighboring town(s) to share the costs and management of a local dredging capacity.
7. Review use of beaches by off road vehicles to protect the beach environment, allow fishermen access, but to discourage pure recreational riding on beaches where the natural resources are endangered.

Aquifer Waters:

8. Initiate open and regular discussion about the home use of pesticides and fertilizers to bring about voluntary change from homeowners. Develop requirement for professional applicators to obtain revocable license to apply pesticides and fertilizers on Shelter Island. Reconcile the use of permithrin with tick control.
9. Mitigate runoff and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems ('MS4'): Update and complete the list of all Islands catch basins and configurations and establish a 5 year maintenance schedule for all units.
10. Ensure all pools have up-to- date filtration systems and catch basins to receive discharged pool water by a specified date, say in 18 months.
11. Update codes, policy and permitting language to comply with MS4 ensuring that runoff from private land to a wetland, road or an adjacent parcel is mitigated.
12. Consider a clearance site permit for properties over a specified acreage, with clear criteria protecting mature woodlands and trees, but allowing reasonable plans and flexibility for development of a property, using replacement by native vegetation and larger trees to enhance recharge, retain privacy and the special quality of Shelter Island

Cultural Resources & Education:

13. Develop a centralized data base for environmental information on Shelter Island.
14. Expand the use of Channel 22 to include environmental and educational programs about Shelter Island.
15. Support the efforts of the SI Historical Society as the keeper of Town history and historical documents, including periodic publications.

Open Space:

16. Continue the Open Space programs but review the current CPF priorities examining the possibility of redirecting some investment towards small lots,

which could become pocket open space areas protecting the aquifer in sensitive shoreline areas.

17. Consider creation of a leveraged small lot preservation program with conservation easements and investment by neighboring owners.
18. Continue to promote an effective stewardship program for CPF properties and all Town and other government owned lands.

Zoning

19. Consider establishing a 'Light Industrial Zone' for 'impact' businesses in the area of the current Recycling Center and southwards, whereby warehousing, workshops, storage or garaging facilities can be shared in units, with reasonable operating guidelines and codes.
20. Coincident with the new Light Industrial Zone, reduce the geographical size of the current B zone, converting both sides of Manwaring Rd and the southern part of S Ferry Rd.
21. Consider converting those marine businesses in the spot B zones, to a new zone 'Business - Marine'; with a new set of operating and development guidelines.
22. Home businesses: Review and update the list of qualifying businesses in residential zones, using the grid system focusing on potential and real impacts (noise, smell, visual, traffic) inappropriate for a residential zone.
23. Reconsider B1 zone special requirements to allow development of the Hamlet concept.
24. Develop a program to limit the development of pre-existing non conforming small lots in sensitive shoreline areas via a mix of initiatives
25. Consider size, footprint, lot coverage, set backs and height restrictions and the definition of SFLA, to establish tighter limits for house size. Include criteria for judging variances to the limit.
26. Establish a limit on size of a knock down house linking footprint to lot size and the size of house being removed or the relative size of neighboring houses
27. Develop permit grids for all zones showing type of lot size, setbacks, building height, permitted businesses, businesses requiring special permit etc. Use Standard Industrial Codes for type of business.
28. Consider expanding the Noise ordinance to limit early morning, evening and Sunday noise.
29. Conduct a review of Town codes, interviewing and soliciting Boards and committee members, lawyers, applicants, and citizens to identify areas of Code that cause confusion, create delay, and/or are ineffective. Consider utilizing outside specialized counsel to review and redraft local code in coordination with the Town Attorney. Consider the cost/benefit of increasing the strictness and completeness of enforcement.

Housing:

30. Closely monitor the progress of the Community Housing Committee and Plan and ensure quarterly reports are made available to the public.
31. Encourage the use of apartments over businesses to provide housing and assist local business by augmenting year round cash flow.
32. Consider enacting a "clustering" code as part of the Zoning code.

Economic Development

33. Encourage hamlet shopping areas, develop a light industrial zone and reduce the size of B zone.
34. Explore the establishment of a "buy local" program for local government and residents linked to focused service.

Transportation

35. Adopt a highway policy to maintain a rural environment,
36. Consider a limited but flexible service local small bus operation for island transport, involving the Town, school and seniors.

Community Facilities

37. Conduct a priority review of an upgraded SI Heights sewage system linked to Bridge Street businesses, meeting new SCDoh and DEC standards and recycling 'clean effluent' to Goat Hill for recharge.
38. Install two or three sets of public bathroom facilities on the Island, with clear public notice as to locations.
39. Develop Town wide integrated data base for all Town properties and resources.

Action Point Review for 1993 Plan In our review of the 1993 Plan, we identified 76 'Action Points' in the Plan, some suggesting multiple actions, thus giving 83 in all. The 1993 AP are listed in the main report with a summarized statement of each, a performance rating as to successful completion and a ranking as to future priority.

- a. Degree of completion on a scale from '1 to 5', with 1 being done and done well, 5 being incomplete or not really addressed.
- b. Future importance on a scale of 'A to E', A being of the highest priority and importance and E being of the lowest priority. 'X' means the AP has been completed or is no longer necessary.

| Performance Rank | No | | Future Priority | No |
|------------------|----|--|-----------------|----|
| 1 | 5 | | A | 20 |
| 2 | 34 | | B | 12 |
| 3 | 28 | | C | 15 |
| 4 | 14 | | D | 13 |
| 5 | 2 | | E | 16 |
| | | | X | 7 |
| Total | 83 | | Total | 83 |

The full report should be consulted for details.

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