

# Phase 1 Report

## *Community Visioning*



## **Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan**

November 2004

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report summarizes the results of the first phase of work in developing a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Huntington, NY. The purpose of this phase was to articulate a *Vision* for the Town's future based upon the values and aspirations expressed by its citizens. This Vision Statement will be used to guide and motivate a second phase of work, in which a Comprehensive Plan will be developed. As the first step in developing the Comprehensive Plan, the Vision Statement defines citizens' expectations for the future, provides the mandate and direction for the Plan, and establishes the benchmark to measure progress in achieving the future Huntington envisioned by citizens. The Plan will consist of policies and strategies for issues such as land use and development, transportation, and housing, as well as an implementation program that defines specific actions that the Town will take in the short, mid, and long terms to carry out the Plan. In expressing community values and aspirations, the Vision Statement states "*what we intend Huntington to be,*" while the strategies and actions of the Comprehensive Plan to follow will set out in detail "*what we will do to achieve the Vision.*"



*Chapter 1.0* of this report provides an introduction, background, and overview of the community visioning project. *Chapter 2.0* documents the community outreach activities that were conducted to solicit public input and identify areas of community consensus as the basis for the development of the Vision Statement. While there were some clearly defined differences on several specific issues, the overall results of citizen involvement revealed general satisfaction with the Town's quality of life, as well as a high degree of consensus on desired future directions for the Town on such topics as community character, parks, open space preservation, and neighborhood quality.

*Chapter 3.0* of the report summarizes analyses of existing conditions and trends that were conducted concurrently with the development of the Vision Statement. By comparing factual information about conditions and trends with the citizen aspirations expressed in the Vision Statement, the Town and its citizens can identify "course corrections" needed to correct undesirable conditions and trends so as to move in the direction of the Vision. The following topics were addressed in the community assessment:

- Relevant *plans, policies, and regulations* that will contribute to shaping the Town's future
- *Factors for change* (i.e., infrastructure systems such as water and sewer, programmed transportation improvements, major development proposals, or other initiatives that may influence future growth and change)

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- The **community (physical) structure** of the Town, including components such as corridors, neighborhoods, and village centers, as well as the dynamics of growth and change
- Conditions and trends related to the Town's **transportation system** (roadway network, pedestrian network, bicycle network, and transit)
- A baseline **socio-economic assessment** of trends and projections related to demographics and to local markets for housing, retail, office, and industrial development

**Chapter 4.0** presents the results of the community visioning process: a **Vision Statement** expressing citizens' values and expectations, which was reviewed by the public and adopted by the Town Board in September 2004. This Vision Statement describes Huntington as its citizens wish it be in the Year 2025 – a town that protects and enhances its outstanding **quality of life** and **community character** through actions strategically targeted towards four fundamental themes:

- **Community Character:** Maintaining and improving the physical character and beauty of Huntington, including its historic heritage, precious natural resources, scenic open spaces, and high standards for aesthetic quality.
- **Quality of Life:** Supporting livable neighborhoods; excellent schools, parks, and other public facilities and services; arts and cultural activities; quality housing for all groups; and the civic-mindedness and tradition of citizen involvement in the community, all of which contribute to making Huntington a great place to live.
- **Sustainable Community Structure:** Managing new development, redevelopment, and community infrastructure systems to protect and enhance the character of Huntington's neighborhoods, villages, and revitalized commercial corridors, and to preserve environmental resources.
- **Responsive Town Government:** Providing leadership in guiding growth and change in the direction of the Vision; exercising prudent fiscal management while maintaining exceptional facilities and services; promoting constructive involvement by citizens in civic affairs; and encouraging greater coordination among different levels of government.

Based on the priorities identified by citizens through the various means of public involvement, the Vision Statement identifies five **bold strategic initiatives** as priorities for action by Town government:





- ***Reduce traffic congestion*** by working with state and county agencies to ***retrofit the road network*** with state-of-the-art signalization and other targeted improvements to enhance operational efficiency
- ***Expand the inventory of reserved open space*** and improve the protection of sensitive environmental resources
- ***Alleviate substandard housing conditions***, while promoting a more ***diverse housing stock affordable to all*** income groups
- ***“Raise the bar” on development quality*** and sustainability through higher standards tailored to retain and complement the identity of the Town’s diverse neighborhoods, villages, and commercial areas, while addressing environmental, traffic, and other impacts
- ***Improve the appearance and viability of commercial corridors*** through design standards and actions to promote redevelopment of undesirable and obsolete development patterns with appropriate uses

### Next Steps

In addition to presenting the full text of the Vision Statement, Chapter 4.0 establishes a framework for developing the Comprehensive Plan, in which the policies, strategies, and actions that the Town will undertake to achieve the Vision will be identified. This framework defines key issues that will need to be addressed in the next phase of work based upon the components of the Vision Statement and the assessment of community conditions and trends conducted in Phase One. Development of the full Comprehensive Plan will involve two major tasks:

- ***Policy and Concept Development:*** This task will explore in detail the options and choices that are available to the Town to achieve the Vision Statement. The product of this task will be preferred policies and concepts for a series of plan elements (Land Use, Housing and Neighborhoods, Environmental Resources, Transportation, Economic Development, etc.).
- ***Comprehensive Plan Preparation:*** This task will develop the Vision Statement and preferred policies and concepts into the Comprehensive Plan document. The Comprehensive Plan will include an implementation program with timeframes for action and provisions for monitoring, amending, and updating the Plan. It will be prepared in a form suitable to meet the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) as a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS).



Citizen involvement will be encouraged in both tasks. The end result will be a Comprehensive Plan that can be used by town government and the community at large as a guide for deliberate action to achieve the vision of what Huntington can and should be.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**



This report summarizes the results of the first phase of work in developing a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Huntington, NY to replace the Town's 1993 Comprehensive Plan Update. The purpose of this phase was to develop a Vision Statement for the future based upon the expressed values and aspirations of the citizens of Huntington. The Vision Statement describes in general terms what citizens would like Huntington to be in the year 2025, addressing aspects of community life such as the character of neighborhoods and villages, the quality of schools, parks, and other public facilities, and the sustainability of the Town's environment and infrastructure systems. It sets the direction for the more specific goals, strategies, and actions to be developed in Phase 2 of the planning process: preparation of the full Comprehensive Plan. In other words, the Comprehensive Plan will establish the "road map" (actions to be taken in the short, mid, and long terms; policies to guide day-to-day decision-making, etc.) to be followed by Town leaders, allied organizations inside and outside of Town government, and citizens as they work over time to achieve the Vision.



Developing the Vision Statement was a citizen-based process involving public input at several different levels. While there are divergent views on some issues, the extent of the public's participation in the process and the quality of their input make it readily apparent that residents of Huntington care deeply about their Town and its future. The results of public input into developing the Vision Statement are summarized in Chapter 2.0 (Community Outreach). In addition to the summary results contained in this document, separate reports have been prepared that address in more detail the results of two components of the public participation process: the first series of community forums (public workshops held in different parts of the Town) and a citizen survey (a random, statistically valid telephone survey of town residents). The citizen survey was conducted by Hollander Cohen & McBride, a marketing research firm.

In addition to being driven by citizens' values, it is important that the comprehensive planning process incorporate a factual understanding of the existing conditions and trends that are shaping Huntington's future in areas such as land use and development, transportation, and the local economy. By comparing this information to the Vision Statement, the Town and its citizens can identify "course corrections" needed to address undesirable trends and move in the direction of the Vision through implementation of policies and initiatives identified in the Comprehensive Plan. While additional analyses will be conducted in Phase 2 to inform development of the full Comprehensive Plan, the following community

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dynamics and trends were evaluated by the consultant team while the Vision Statement was being developed:

- **Regulatory/Planning Context:** Relevant plans, policies, and regulations that will contribute to shaping the Town's future.
- **Factors for Change:** Planned initiatives that will significantly influence future growth and change, such as programmed transportation/infrastructure improvements and major development proposals.
- **Community Structure:** The physical structure of the Town as expressed in elements such as corridors, neighborhoods, and village centers, as well as the dynamics of growth and change.
- **Transportation System:** Conditions and trends related to different components of the Town's transportation system, including the roadway network, pedestrian network, bicycle network, and transit (by LSA Associates).
- **Baseline Economic Assessment:** Past trends and future projections for demographics, housing, and the office and industrial markets (by Economics Research Associates).
- **Retail Assessment:** A special focus study on trends and projections for Huntington's retail market (by Economics Research Associates).



The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter 3.0 (Community Assessment). Section 3.5 (Economic Assessment) contains summary information drawn from the full Baseline Economic Assessment and Retail Assessment Reports, which have been prepared separately.

Chapter 4.0 (Vision Statement) presents the Vision Statement Report that was reviewed by the public in a series of Community Forums and was subsequently adopted by the Town Board on September 28, 2004. Two additional sections have been added to the original report. The first section summarizes public comments made on the Draft Vision Statement. The second lays out a framework for translating the components of the Vision Statement into policies, strategies, and actions to be developed in the Comprehensive Plan.



## **2.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH**



The following community outreach activities were conducted to solicit citizen input into development of the Vision Statement:

- Stakeholder interviews
- Community forums
- Citizen (telephone) survey

In addition, hundreds of ideas and comments were received via the Town's website, as responses to a written version of the telephone survey, or through other communication. The results of these forms of communication were generally consistent with the results of the three primary forms of input, which are summarized below.

### **2.1 Stakeholder Interviews**

Approximately 150 community stakeholders, representing key civic, business, environmental, and other organizations and interests, were interviewed for their perspectives on the major issues facing the Town.



The views expressed by the stakeholders interviewed are similar to those identified in the subsequent community forums (see Section 2.2 below). Major concerns included environmental degradation, housing, community aesthetics, transportation, the school system, the cost of living, and loss of the quality of life.

Specific environmental concerns expressed by stakeholders included pollution of Long Island Sound and harbors caused by new development as well as runoff from existing development. The loss of open space and remaining farmlands was also identified as an issue, as was the increasing pressure to build on lands with environmental constraints such as steep slopes.

A variety of housing concerns were identified, including:

- Illegal rental housing
- Housing costs that are unaffordable for seniors, singles and young families
- Housing densities that are incompatible with the existing suburban pattern
- The construction of large new homes that are out of scale with most existing housing within the community



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The cost of housing within the community, as well as the lack of sufficient legal rental units, is affecting seniors, singles, and young families, as well as service workers who work in Huntington but are unable to afford to live in the Town. At the same time concerns were expressed regarding the potential impacts of “affordable” housing on existing property values and neighborhoods. Stakeholders also stated that many residents have concerns that new residential development will be too dense and out of scale with the existing community, will increase traffic congestion, and will intensify school overcrowding.



Concerns regarding community aesthetics related primarily to the appearance of Jericho Turnpike and Huntington Station. Stakeholders stated that the opportunities to improve the appearance of Jericho Turnpike should be pursued as the corridor redevelops. They also stated that efforts to revitalize Huntington Station should continue.

Huntington’s transportation system was identified by stakeholders as a major issue. Traffic congestion in particular was cited as a problem, with respect both to movement within Huntington and movement through the Town. Stakeholders noted that pedestrian accessibility within the community is primarily limited to the village centers, with the remainder of the community dependent upon the auto for access. They also stated that the fragmented state, county and local jurisdiction over road improvements makes finding solutions to these issues difficult.

Huntington residents highly value the Town’s school districts, the services that they provide for students, and their commitment to after-hours activities for the entire community. Like many other government entities, the school districts are simultaneously facing increasing demands and financial constraints. Some stakeholders are concerned that additional residential development may overburden the school systems, and that the school districts will not be able to meet the demand due to lack of available land for school expansions and funding constraints.



As previously mentioned, the housing stock in Huntington is continuing to appreciate in value, thus making it difficult for people who are just starting their careers or families, as well as seniors, to live in the community. At the same time that property values are increasing, property taxes are increasing as well. While much of these increases benefit the school systems, property owners are finding the taxes to be an increasing burden.

Finally, stakeholders perceive many of the issues identified above as threats to the generally high quality of life that residents have come to enjoy in Huntington. Many stakeholders acknowledge that a number of these issues are interlinked, and that there are no easy solutions. Maintaining quality of life will require extensive and ongoing outreach



and dialogue with residents, the business and development community, institutions, and government at all levels.

## **2.2 Community Forums**



Five community forums (public workshops) were conducted to receive public input into development of the Vision Statement. The first four forums were held in March 2004 at the Hilton Hotel in Melville, the Huntington Intermediate School in Huntington Station, the East Northport Middle School, and Half Hollow Hills High School East in Dix Hills, respectively. A fifth forum was conducted in May 2004 at the Huntington Town House on Jericho Turnpike to provide the opportunity for persons to participate who had not been able to attend one of the previous four forums. A total of over 500 persons participated in the forums.

Community input at the forums was solicited from discussion groups of 10-15 people, each of which was assigned a facilitator who asked the group to address the following questions in sequence:

### Present Strengths and Weaknesses

- What present characteristics of Huntington can be characterized as strengths (i.e., qualities worth retaining)?
- What characteristics of Huntington could be characterized as weaknesses (i.e., current problems requiring resolution)?

### Future Opportunities and Threats

- What conditions or trends could change Huntington in the future?
  - Which of those conditions or trends can be considered opportunities to be seized to make Huntington better?
  - Which of those conditions or trends can be interpreted as challenges or threats that the community needs to anticipate, prepare for, or avoid?

For each of the above questions, the discussion groups first put forward a list of issues/ideas (recorded on flip charts) and then considered the list to combine similar ideas. The final step was to vote on those issues/ideas that members of the group felt to be most important, thus establishing a sense of group priorities.

Hundreds of individual ideas and comments were recorded and there was some variation in results between the different forums. Nevertheless, evaluation of the combined results of the four forums reveals a clear consensus on the top priority issues for each of the discussion topics (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). This consensus is summarized in Table 2-1 in the form of “issue categories” representing

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groupings of similar issues/ideas. Priorities among the different issue categories was determined based on the number of “weighted votes” from all five forums combined.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2-1. Priority Issue Areas Identified by Community Forum Participants**

<b>Present Strengths</b>
1. Community Character and Aesthetics
2. Education
3. Arts and Culture
4. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
5. Local Economy
6. Natural Features and Resources
<b>Present Weaknesses</b>
1. Transportation, Traffic, Parking & Accessibility
2. Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing Choice / Affordability</li><li>• Housing Density / Illegal Conversions</li></ul>
3. Urbanization and Over-development
4. Cost of Living
5. Government Services
6. Crime and Public Safety
<b>Future Opportunities</b>
1. Parks, Recreation and Open Space
2. Transportation, Traffic, Parking & Accessibility
3. Housing
4. Local Economy
5. Government Services
6. Land Use Planning
<b>Future Threats</b>
1. Urbanization and Over-development
2. Increased Cost of Living
3. Reduced Government Services
4. Degraded Environmental Quality
5. Increased Crime
6. Economic Decline

The full record of comments made at all five forums has been published as a separate report and is also available on the Town’s website.

<sup>1</sup> “Weighted votes” represent the aggregated percentages of votes received for each issue category in the individual forums.

## **2.3 Citizen Survey**



A random, statistically valid telephone survey was administered in coordination with the community forums as a means of reaching a broader cross section of Huntington residents during the planning process. In April 2004, a total of 300 10-minute telephone interviews of residents of different geographic subareas of the Town were conducted by Hollander Cohen & McBride, a market research firm. The survey questions were designed to solicit citizens' views of issues facing the Town's future and to allow for comparison to the results of the community forums. Key findings included:

- Most residents appear satisfied with the overall quality of life in Huntington (82% top two ratings on a five point scale).
- Fifty-three percent of residents said the quality of life in the town hasn't changed over the past five years, while the other half were split on whether it has gotten worse (25%) or better (22%).
- Single family residential neighborhoods (81% top two ratings on a five point scale), historic buildings (75%), downtown village shopping (75%), and public waterfront access (68%) are aspects that residents are most likely to say contribute to the quality of life in the town.
- Convenient stores and amenities (24%), the water or beaches (21%), and the small town or neighborly atmosphere (20%) are aspects of the Town that residents like most.
- Residents least like the traffic congestion (26%) and taxes (25%), followed by the increasing population and development (17%) in the Town of Huntington.
- Residents are most interested in aspects of preservation for the Town of Huntington, including preserving open space and natural resources (90% top two ratings on a five point scale), preserving historic areas (86%), and improving the water and air quality (76%).
- Residents consider preserving open space and natural resources (24% mentioned as most important from a list of attributes that had been previously rated for importance) and improving the water and air quality (23%) the most important priorities for the future of Huntington.
- Residents believed that high taxes (91%), the scarcity of moderately-price housing (82%), and traffic congestion (64%) are the three



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obstacles that residents most agree might discourage residents' children or grandchildren from living in the Town.

In general, the citizen survey results confirmed the results of the community forums. A separate report has been prepared to fully document the results.



### **3.0 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT**



The purpose of the Community Assessment is to understand and characterize key conditions and trends related to growth and change in the Town of Huntington. In particular, it is intended to provide context for the issues and values identified by citizens of Huntington through the community outreach program and for the Vision Statement developed based upon those issues and values. The following topics were addressed in this analysis:

- Planning/Regulatory Context
- Factors for Change
- Community Structure
- Transportation System
- Economic Conditions and Trends

#### **3.1 Planning/Regulatory Context**



The Town Planning Board adopted Huntington's current Comprehensive Plan in 1993 as an update to the 1965 Comprehensive Plan. Since that time the Town has undertaken several other key planning initiatives. Taken together, the Comprehensive Plan, related planning initiatives, and the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations (which determine the pattern and form of new development) provide the planning and regulatory context within which future growth and change in the Town will occur.

##### **1993 Comprehensive Plan**

The 1993 Comprehensive Plan was organized around the following series of topics:

- Demographics
- Transportation
- Environmental Conditions
- Housing
- Economic Development:
  - Retail Development
  - Office and Industrial Development
- Community Facilities
  - Schools
  - Libraries
  - Police and Fire
- Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources

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The Plan explores issues and presents recommendations for each of the above topics with the exception of Demographics (a background section). The recommendations presented for each topic are summarized below. In addition, the Plan included:

1. A Land Use Plan representing the optimal pattern and intensity of development within the Town of Huntington for the foreseeable future
2. A section on implementation

### Transportation

The Transportation Element of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan projected continuing growth in automobile traffic and resulting traffic congestion. At the same time, the Plan noted that “the future vehicular demand within the town must be accommodated by a roadway system essentially unchanged from the one now in place.” Thus the Plan’s transportation recommendations focused on the following strategies to help stabilize traffic conditions:

- Selective roadway improvement projects to relieve those areas experiencing extreme traffic congestion
- Transportation Systems Management (TSM) techniques to reduce future vehicular traffic demands (employer-sponsored car and van pool programs, flexible working hours, public transit incentives, etc.)
- Zoning and land use policies to limit development activities that generate high volumes of traffic adjacent to congested roadways

The Plan identifies problems and recommendations for specific “locations of concern” (Long Island Expressway/Interstate 495, NYS Route 25A, Jericho Turnpike/NYS Route 25, etc.). The recommendations address safety and operational issues related to limited volume capacity, inadequate roadway alignment, the need for traffic signalization improvements, and the lack of adequate parking.

The 1993 Comprehensive Plan did not address bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

### Environmental Conditions

This section of the Plan emphasized the need for enhanced protection of Huntington’s sensitive environmental resources, such as hillside and coastal erosion areas, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and groundwater reserves. Key recommendations included:

- Revise zoning and development controls to better protect sensitive resources such as steep slopes, wetlands, and groundwater resources





- Direct more intensive development to less environmentally sensitive areas with available infrastructure
- Utilize all available conservation tools to permanently protect environmentally sensitive properties as open space and aggressively plan to meet future recreational needs
- Develop and implement a comprehensive aquifer protection plan

### Housing



The Housing section of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan identified a “mismatch” between Huntington’s predominantly single-family housing stock and residents’ need for a wider range of housing options (unit types, tenure options, and greater affordability). Key issues included the limited amount of vacant land available for new construction, the preponderance of single-family detached housing, the high percentage of illegal rentals (estimated at 10% of the Town’s overall housing supply), and the limited supply of housing (particularly rental) affordable to low and moderate income households.

In response to the above issues, the Plan proposed strategies and recommendations intended to promote variety in the type and cost of housing while minimizing impacts on established neighborhoods, development densities, and environmental resources. These recommendations included specific changes to the zoning code to provide more affordable units in certain types of new development, as well as broader strategies such as the establishment of a housing trust fund and a goal that 20% of all new housing units be affordable to low and moderate income households.

### Economic Development



***Retail Development:*** The 1993 Comprehensive Plan noted that about 95% of land zoned for retail uses was already developed, and that projected population trends would not create the demand for excessive additional retail development (or redevelopment). Key issues included the lack of differentiation in the standards of the C-6 zoning district for village and strip retail development; the impacts of retail strip development on traffic congestion; and the poor physical appearance of Jericho Turnpike, Larkfield Road, and Route 110 commercial corridors. Recommendations focused on developing better standards for village and highway business districts, as well as addressing related issues such as parking. Big box retail was not anticipated at that time.

***Office and Industrial Development:*** The Economic Development section addressed office and industrial development both inside and outside of the Melville/Route 110 area. With respect to Melville, the Plan noted the need for a more balanced land use plan, particularly in view of increasing levels of traffic congestion. Full build-out of the Melville area was projected to

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result in nearly a doubling of office and industrial space (from 11.5-12 million to as much as 23 million square feet). Key recommendations included:

- Controlling the amount of additional space through floor area ratio (FAR) standards
- Promoting industrial (e.g., research and development and laboratory facilities) over office development, which generates higher traffic volumes
- Expanding housing, retail, and service uses in and around the Melville area
- Establishing strict landscaping, open space, and building design standards to maintain a campus-style image and appearance

Recommendations for office and industrial development outside the Melville area focused on providing suitable and appropriately located space for a variety of small-scale uses, compatible with the existing context (e.g., small-scale offices in village centers). The Plan recommended imposing more stringent landscaping, buffering, and screening requirements for industrial uses located along the Long Island Railroad right-of-way.

### Community Facilities

**Schools:** The primary school-related issue noted by the 1993 Comprehensive Plan was the need to plan for shifting enrollment trends. In contrast to declining enrollments in the 1980s, projections in the early 1990s indicated a significant increase in the number of younger school-age children in that decade, followed by an increase in the number of high school students after 2000. Recommendations included encouraging school districts to lease (rather than sell) surplus and under-utilized facilities, finding school district or community-related uses (e.g., day care) for such facilities, and acquiring sites for new schools as part of the approval process for major subdivisions.

**Libraries:** Acknowledging that library services in the Town of Huntington are provided by autonomous districts, the 1993 Plan established two goals for this topic:

1. Maintain and expand the availability and range of library services throughout the Town, particularly in under-served areas
2. Foster cooperation among the districts in the development and operation of new facilities and programs

Recommendations included using surplus school buildings for needed library facilities where appropriate, acquiring sites for new libraries as part of the approval process for major subdivisions, and setting aside space for





a new Huntington Station branch library within a proposed town-wide cultural arts center.

***Police and Fire:*** The 1993 Comprehensive Plan provided background information on police and fire services in the Town of Huntington. However, the Plan made no recommendations for these services, which are provided by entities independent of the Town (the Second Precinct of the Suffolk County Police Department and 12 volunteer fire districts, respectively).

#### Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources

***Parks:*** With respect to parks, the 1993 Comprehensive Plan built on the recommendations of the Town’s 1988 Parks and Recreation Study. The 1993 Plan identified a town-wide shortfall of passive parks and related open space areas, recreational deficiencies in some older, high density residential areas (particularly Huntington Station, Greenlawn, and East Northport), and a need for more parkland along the waterfront. At the same time, the limited availability of accessible private land was noted as constraining opportunities to significantly increase the Town’s parks inventory. Recommendations to address these issues included providing active recreational facilities within existing parks, securing land and grant funding to develop active recreational facilities in underserved areas such as Greenlawn and Huntington Station, preparing a Passive Parks Acquisition Plan, and providing waterfront recreational opportunities along Cold Spring, Huntington, and Centerport Harbors.



***Open Space:*** One of the key issues identified by the 1993 Comprehensive Plan was the loss of open space as the Town approaches build-out. The Plan noted that many of the privately-owned vacant properties listed on the 1974 Open Space Index for the Town of Huntington had been developed, while a number of the remaining parcels were the subjects of various development proposals. To address this issue, the Plan proposed a multi-pronged approach encompassing regulatory changes, acquisition programs, and voluntary conservation by private landowners. In addition, preparation and implementation of a Strategic Open Space Plan based upon continual updating of the Open Space Index was recommended to guide the Town’s open space preservation activities.



***Historic Resources:*** The 1993 Plan stated the importance of preserving those elements of Huntington’s past that “provide a sense of identity for the town and enhance its cultural and economic well being.” While acknowledging accomplishments such as the work of the Historic Preservation Commission and the historic preservation ordinance, the Plan identified the need to consider additional mechanisms for preserving historic sites and structures that are vulnerable to development pressures. Recommendations included developing more specific historic preservation

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criteria, formally designating remaining historic resources of significance, initiating an aggressive historic preservation public education program, and strengthening review processes for developments affecting historic resources through the Historic Preservation Commission and SEQRA.

#### Implementation

The 1993 Plan identified the Town's Land Use Plan and land use regulations as the primary tools for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use Plan affirmed Huntington's predominantly residential character, designating the majority of the Town for single-family uses. (Low density residential is the predominant land use category within the Town as a whole, with minimum lot sizes ranging from one-half to two acres.) In a departure from the 1965 Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Plan differentiates village/neighborhood centers (e.g., Huntington Village) from highway/strip retail areas (e.g., Jericho Turnpike). The Melville area is designated for a concentration of industry/office with some complementary highway business and high density residential uses. The Plan also identifies significant public open space parcels.



In addition to describing the Land Use Plan as a guide for future development within the Town, the Implementation section calls for a comprehensive revision to the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Objectives for this revision included updating the ordinance to incorporate relevant innovations of recent decades, simplifying its provisions, and providing greater clarity and predictability.

The Town's record over the last 10 years in implementing the Comprehensive Plan is mixed. Perhaps the greatest success has been the establishment of the Environmental Open Space and Park Fund (see below). Some progress has been made in implementing other recommendations, such as the enactment in the Zoning Ordinance of a requirement that 20% of the homes in applicant-initiated zone changes for subdivisions/site plans totaling 10 or more lots be affordable. (A fee payable to the Affordable Housing Trust and Agency Fund can be substituted for half of this requirement.) On the other hand, the Town has not undertaken the comprehensive revision to the Zoning Ordinance recommended in the Implementation section. A number of the recommendations that have not been implemented remain relevant to issues identified by Huntington residents today and should be further considered as the current comprehensive planning process moves forward.



#### **Related Planning Initiatives**

Key planning initiatives undertaken by the Town since the 1993 Comprehensive Plan include:

- Environmental Open Space and Park Fund (1998 and 2003)

- Huntington Harbor Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (2000)
- Huntington Station Area Moratorium (2002)

#### Environmental Open Space and Park Fund



Huntington voters approved establishment of the Environmental Open Space and Park Fund (EOSPA) in 1998 by an overwhelming 72% margin. Administered by the EOSPA Committee, the Fund began as a 10-year, \$15 million program for land acquisition (\$10 million) and park improvements (\$5 million). Criteria developed by the Committee and adopted by the Town Board are used to identify priority projects. In addition, the Open Areas Information System (OASIS), a draft update to the Town's original Open Space Index completed in 1974, identifies priority parcels for protection as open space. (This update is being refined by the Town.) As of September 2004, approximately \$6.8 and \$5.9 million had been committed for land acquisition and park improvements, respectively. In 2003 Huntington voters approved an additional \$30 million bond program for open space acquisition (\$20 million), park improvements (\$7 million), and neighborhood enhancements (\$3 million).

#### Huntington Harbor Local Waterfront Revitalization Program



The Huntington Harbor Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) was prepared in 2000 under New York State's Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act. The LWRP specifies coastal management policies for the Huntington Harbor area that address regional policies defined under the Long Island Sound Coastal Zone Management Program. These policies are designed to protect environmental resources, promote water-dependent and compatible uses, and provide for public access to and recreational use of Huntington Harbor. The LWRP identifies a proposed land use pattern with changes in the use of certain parcels to achieve program goals and objectives (e.g., development of the former Naval Reserve facility as a public park/"Gateway to the Harbor"). The LWRP also recommends a list of capital projects, including improvements to existing town properties, acquisition of additional public lands, and development of currently vacant parcels for purposes consistent with the program goals and objectives. Projects involving revitalization of existing Town-owned recreational facilities in order to increase opportunities for public access to the waterfront are identified as a priority.

Approval of the Huntington Harbor LWRP by the State, which will make the Town eligible to receive funding for implementation of capital projects, is currently pending. Preparation of an LWRP for the remainder of the Town's waterfront is in progress.

#### Huntington Station Area Moratorium

The revitalization of the Huntington Station area has been a long-standing objective of the Town's planning activities. The 1965 Comprehensive Plan



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and the July 1965 *Land Utilization and Marketability Study – Huntington Station* by the Town Office of Urban Renewal both addressed Huntington Station. The latter study resulted in construction of the Gateway Gardens and Whitman Village garden apartment complexes. In 1975 an Urban Renewal Plan was prepared but was not implemented. More recently, the 1989 Huntington Station Revitalization Plan proposed the development of parking structures, residential and commercial uses, and a community cultural center in the vicinity of the railroad station. Two of the parking structures were constructed but the other proposed uses were not pursued. The 1993 Comprehensive Plan Update classified Huntington Station as a Secondary Retail Center and identified the need for revitalization efforts to address the negative impacts on its village character caused by urban renewal. The Comprehensive Plan recommendation to modify the C-6 General Business District zoning to address the differences in form, scale, and character between highway and village business areas applies to Huntington Station.



In November 2002 the Town Board adopted a six-month moratorium for a number of non-contiguous commercial and industrial properties in the Huntington Station area. The purpose of the moratorium was to identify land use and zoning changes that would enhance the market potential of these properties and encourage investment. The Town's Department of Planning & Environment prepared the resulting *Report on the Huntington Station Moratorium Area* for the Huntington Town Board Meeting of May 21, 2003. The report discusses land use and zoning issues for each of the 20 tracts of land affected by the moratorium, and recommends adoption of a new "Huntington Station Overlay District" to address these issues on an area-wide rather than a piecemeal basis. The stated purpose of the overlay district is to create a business district that will accommodate neighborhood shopping, encourage job creation, promote a walkable community, and increase tax ratables. The proposed overlay district provisions identify use regulations, design standards, and other mechanisms to enhance the aesthetics and property values of commercial and industrial parcels in the moratorium area. The overlay district was adopted by the Town Board with modifications in 2004.



### **Regulatory Framework**

The Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations are the primary instruments for regulating new development in Huntington. Figure 1 shows existing zoning designations of lands within the Town. The Zoning Ordinance follows the conventional "Euclidean" zoning model (named after the 1926 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Village of Euclid vs. Ambler Realty Co.*, which legitimized zoning). Euclidean zoning emphasizes strict separation of uses and proscriptive standards for key development attributes such as building setbacks and

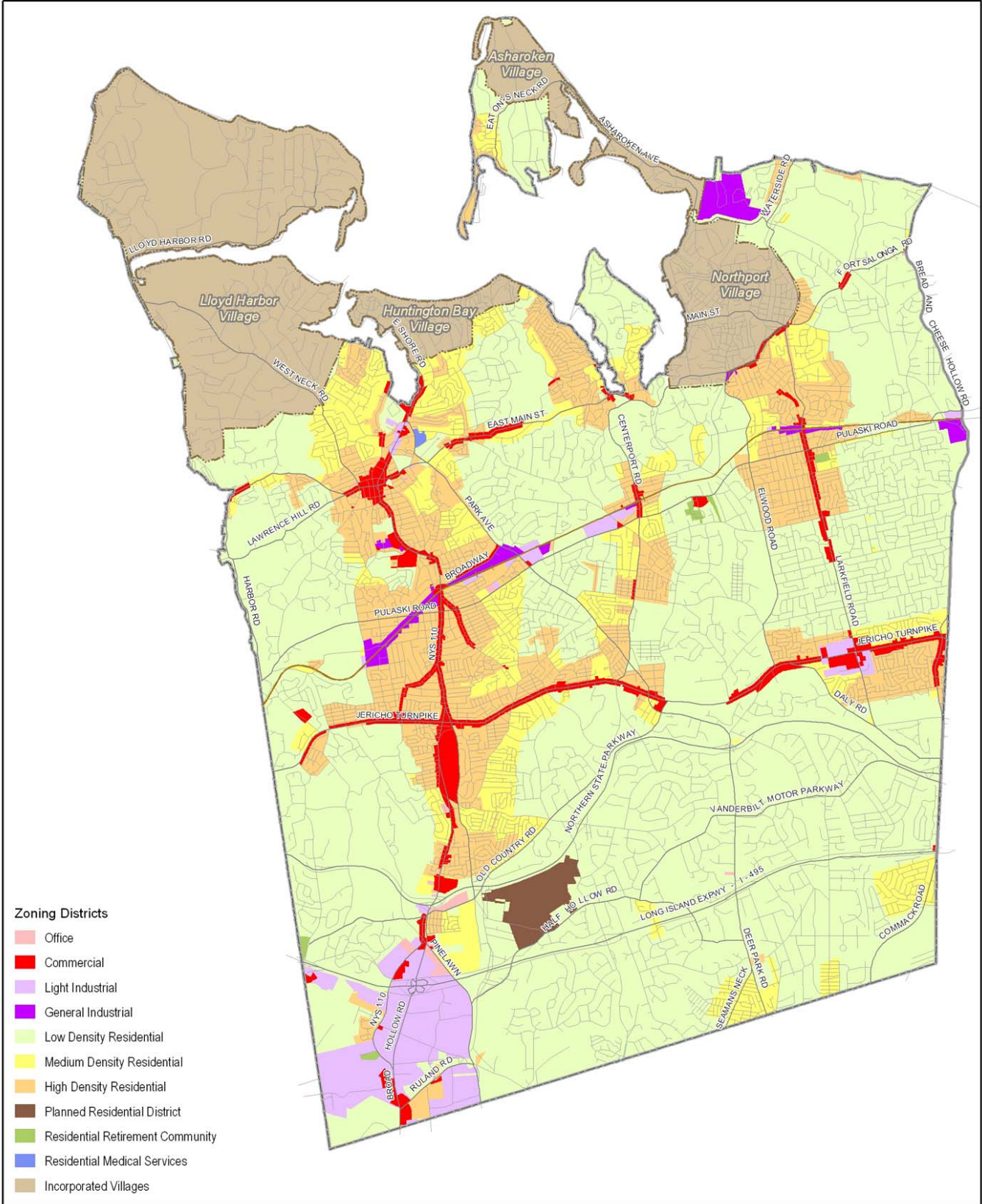


Figure 1: Generalized Existing Zoning

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heights while failing to address the physical form and character of development. Numerous amendments and additions have been made to the Zoning Ordinance over the years, resulting in a document that is lengthy and difficult to use. The Ordinance contains some progressive features, such as the 20% affordable housing requirement for residential zone changes and provision for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). (The TDR provisions have not yet been utilized, but the Town is working on a Transfer of Density Flow Rights Program.) Despite these features, the Zoning Ordinance lacks a number of innovative regulatory approaches commonly used by communities throughout the country, such as options for alternative patterns of development (e.g., conservation development and neotraditional development), design standards to improve the character of commercial development, and natural resource protection standards (other than for steep slopes). Key issues include:

- The Ordinance contains numerous zoning districts, including 11 residential districts, 11 commercial districts, and special districts that apply to specific properties. This contributes to its complexity and difficulty of use.
- The predominant commercial zoning district, C-6 (General Business) does not address the historic character of Huntington's villages, applying the same generic standards to traditional centers (e.g., Huntington Village) and commercial corridors (e.g., Jericho Turnpike).
- There is an unusually high level of Zoning Board of Appeals activity (344 applications in 2002, 340 in 2003) compared to what is typical for other jurisdictions. This reflects the number of conditional uses/special use permits authorized by the Ordinance, as well as the pressures to maximize the use of more marginal properties through variances as the Town approaches build-out. Revising the Zoning Ordinance (as was recommended in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan) to provide greater clarity and predictability through more explicit standards and review procedures could help to address this issue.



Like the Zoning Ordinance, the Subdivision Regulations follow a conventional model that focuses on construction standards for roads and drainage. Many other communities have incorporated specific standards to identify and protect open space and natural resources into their Subdivision Regulations.

### **3.2 Factors for Change**

“Factors for change” are defined as programmed transportation or other infrastructure improvements, major development proposals, and other planned initiatives that will significantly influence future growth and

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change. The following potential factors for change were considered for Huntington:

- Transportation
- Sewer and Water Service
- Pending Developments

### **Transportation**

New roadway construction can be a significant “driver” of growth, particularly in communities where development is occurring at the suburban/rural fringe. Because Huntington has an essentially fixed roadway network serving a largely built-out community, with no significant improvements planned, the impacts of traffic congestion on quality of life are more significant than the potential for roadway improvements to generate new development. A proposed transportation improvement that could influence future growth change in Huntington is the Long Island Railroad’s East Side Access project (see Section 3.4), which will improve the Town’s accessibility for commuters to New York City but could require the development of a regional rail servicing yard.



### **Sewer and Water Service**

Given Huntington’s location within a sole source aquifer that is the only source of the drinking water for the Town, the availability of public sewer (or lack thereof) is a major controlling factor for new development (Figure 2: Sewer Service Area). There are presently two public sewer districts that are limited to relatively small areas within the northern part of the Town: the Huntington Sewer District serves greater Huntington Village, while the Centerport Sewer District encompasses the Mill Pond area. In addition, the Northport Sewage Treatment Plant serves portions of Northport Village, and Suffolk County has permitted some higher density residential and industrial projects in Melville to connect by contract to the Southwest Sewer District (served by a treatment plant in Babylon). No significant expansions of the areas served by the sewer districts are planned, although there is significant demand to expand the Huntington Sewer District to accommodate higher density development on outlying properties. With the exception of some larger developments that have private treatment plants (e.g., Strathmore and the Greens), properties outside of the sewer districts are served by on-site subsurface disposal systems.



Article 6 of the Suffolk County Sanitary Code sets restrictions on new developments relying on on-site wastewater disposal based on the minimum lot size, type of development proposed, and the designated hydrogeologic zone. For Huntington this translates into a minimum 20,000



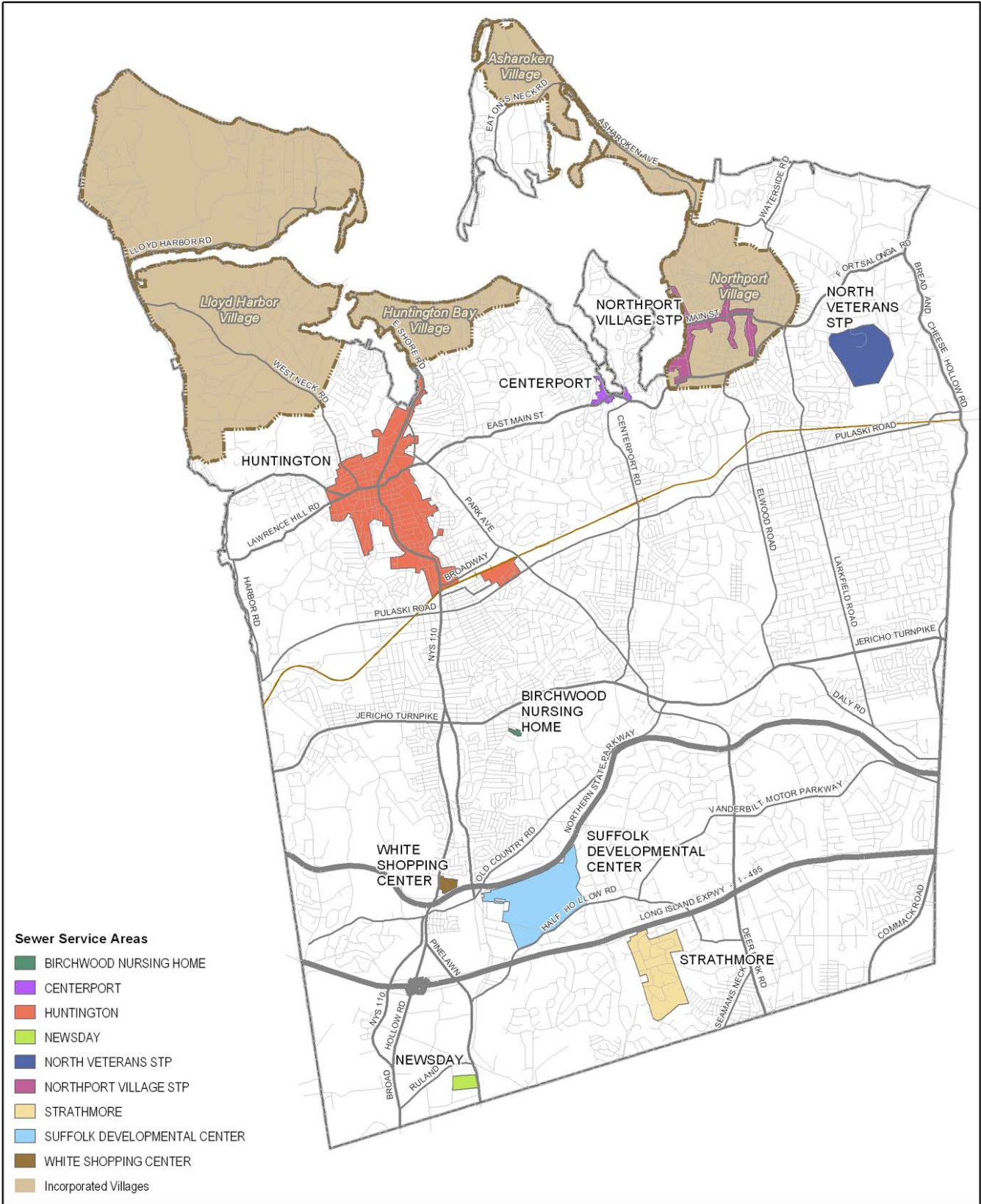


Figure 2: Sewer Service Areas

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square foot residential lot size (even in areas zoned for higher densities) unless equivalent buildable land is dedicated as open space elsewhere in the Town to make up the difference. These regulations limit the density of developments proposed outside of the sewer districts unless served by private treatment plants that are expensive to construct and require ongoing maintenance.

Ensuring the long-term viability of Huntington's water supply and quality are important issues for the Town's future. The Master Water Plan Update Report for the South Huntington Water District and the Master Water Plan for the Greenlawn Water District identify system improvements (including acquisition of two new well sites in the Greenlawn District) needed to meet projected growth in demand over the next several years. In addition, both plans identify the need to monitor the effects of contaminants (VOC's, perchlorate, and nitrates) on water quality as an issue.

### **Pending Developments**



Major developments that are planned, in the approval process, or approved but not yet constructed can be significant factors for future change. As an example, a substantial increase in new housing permits issued by the Town in 2002 (1,170) and 2003 (744) as compared to 2001 (213) was largely driven by several large projects (The Villages, The Greens, Millennium Hills, and the Coves) that were largely built out during that timeframe.<sup>1</sup> As the Town approaches build-out the potential for major new development projects is diminishing. Instead, the focus is likely to shift to smaller scale infill and redevelopment of marginal or obsolete land uses and underutilized properties. While the effects of such projects are likely to be local rather than town-wide in scale, redevelopment or reuse of larger commercial properties could be significant, particularly in terms of the amount of traffic generated. They may also provide opportunities to improve the visual character of roadway corridors (a major concern of residents) through site design and landscaping.

Figure 3 shows developments pending as of October 2004. These include properties classified as vacant, agricultural, and recreational on Figure 4: Existing Land Use, or which are shown with developed uses (primarily residential) and are proposed for subdivision into smaller lots. The combined size of these properties is 376 acres. Reflecting the shift away from large-scale development, 87% of the developments (61 out of 70) are proposed on properties less than ten acres in size. The remaining nine are evenly divided among properties between 10-20, 21-31, and 32-41 acres in size. None of the developments are of sufficient magnitude to be considered significant factors for change at the town-wide level.

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<sup>1</sup> To provide historical context, the number of building permits issued by the Town for new residential construction averaged 276 a year between 1988 and 1997 (Source: *OASIS Draft Staff Study*, September 1998, p. 21).

### 3.3 Community Structure

#### Town-Wide Community Structure

This analysis addresses the physical structure and organizational features of the Town of Huntington and the four incorporated villages of Asharoken, Huntington Bay, Lloyd Harbor, and Northport. The Town of Huntington and the incorporated villages comprise distinct suburban neighborhoods that retain unique identities and are defined by highway corridors and several historic mixed-use village centers. The area's major transportation corridors, including the Long Island Railroad, Jericho Turnpike, Northern State Parkway, Long Island Expressway (I-495), and NYS Route 25A have a strong east-west orientation and provide the primary organizing structure for the residential and commercial components of Huntington. These corridors also create barriers within the community which contribute to a fragmented identity oriented primarily to individual neighborhoods rather than to the Town as a whole. The east/west transportation corridors are supplemented by a secondary north/south roadway network, which includes NYS Route 110 and Larkfield Road. The existing land use and structure of major corridors is illustrated in Figure 4: Existing Land Use.



Huntington's pattern of neighborhoods is a combination of grid (pre-WWII) and curvilinear (post-WWII) street networks supporting predominantly single-family homes. The curvilinear network of streets is generally (though not exclusively) associated with residential properties with larger lot sizes, and can be found in the Huntington neighborhoods of Cold Spring Harbor, West Hills, Melville, South Huntington, Dix Hills, Elwood, East Northport, Fort Salonga, and in the incorporated villages of Asharoken, Lloyd Harbor, Northport, and Huntington Bay. The street framework is most grid-like along Larkfield Road and NYS Route 110, and in portions of the older neighborhoods of Commack, eastern Elwood, East Northport, South Huntington, Huntington Village, Huntington Station, and Cold Spring Harbor.

Commercial nodes of varying sizes and scales are strategically located within the Town of Huntington and the incorporated villages. The major areas of commercial development include the concentration of office/light industrial employment in Melville, the Walt Whitman Mall, and the village/hamlet centers of Huntington and Northport, with smaller centers at Centerport, Cold Spring Harbor, East Northport, and Greenlawn. These historic village and hamlet centers exhibit the small-scale, pedestrian-friendly retail, commercial and streetscape characteristics that are so highly valued by residents. Figure 5: Community Structure, illustrates the location of the village and hamlet centers, as well as the larger commercial centers.





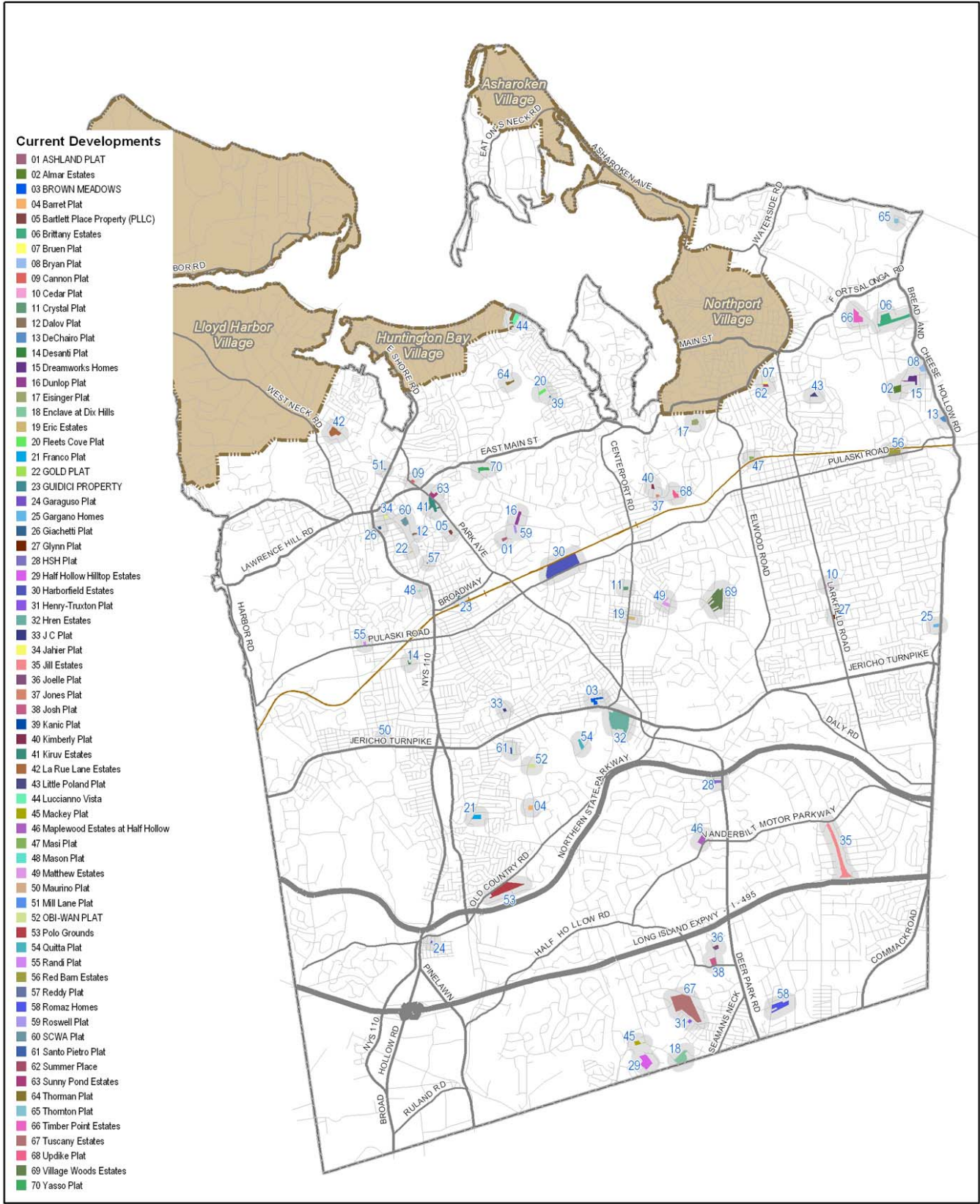


Figure 3: Pending Developments

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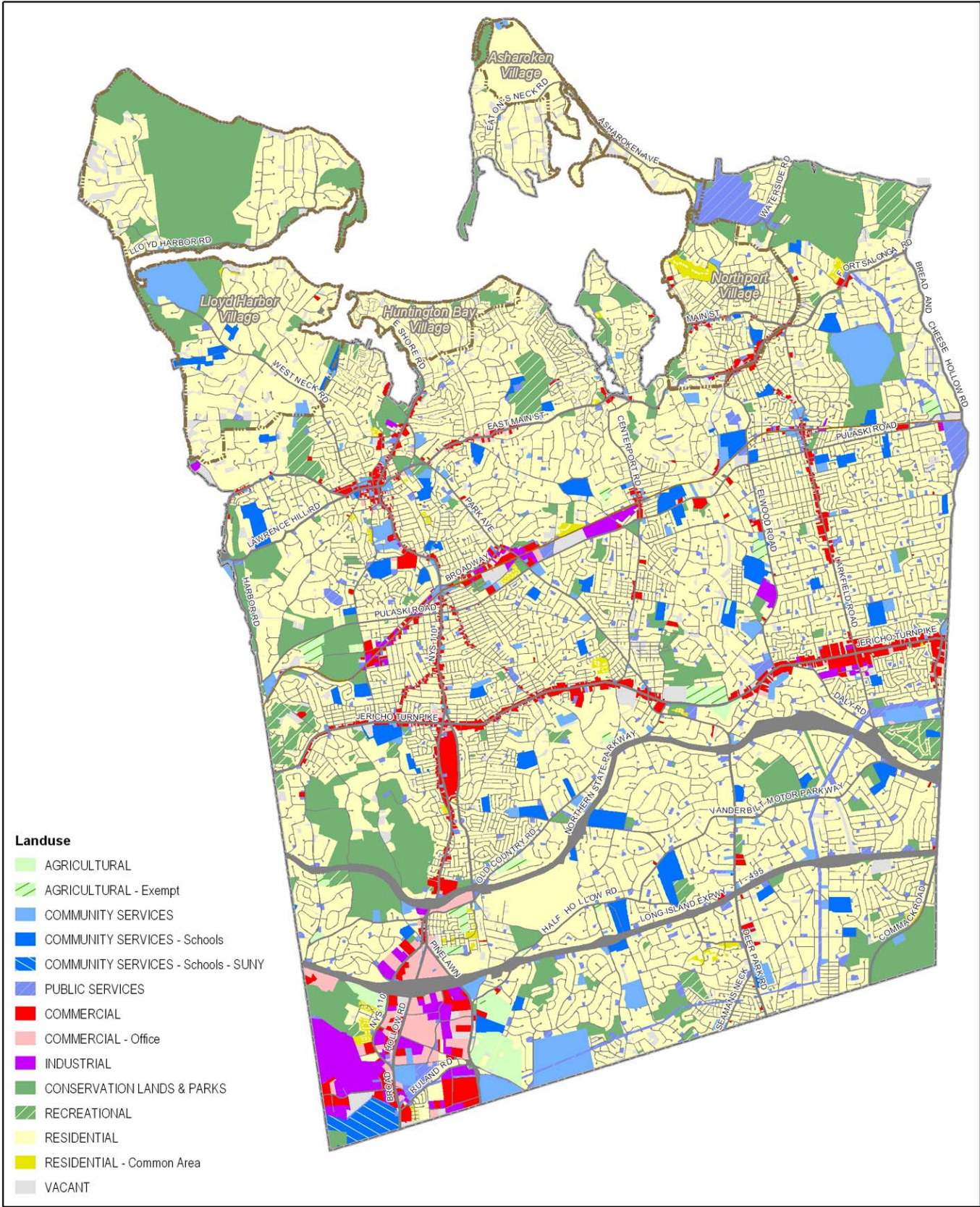


Figure 4: Existing Land Use

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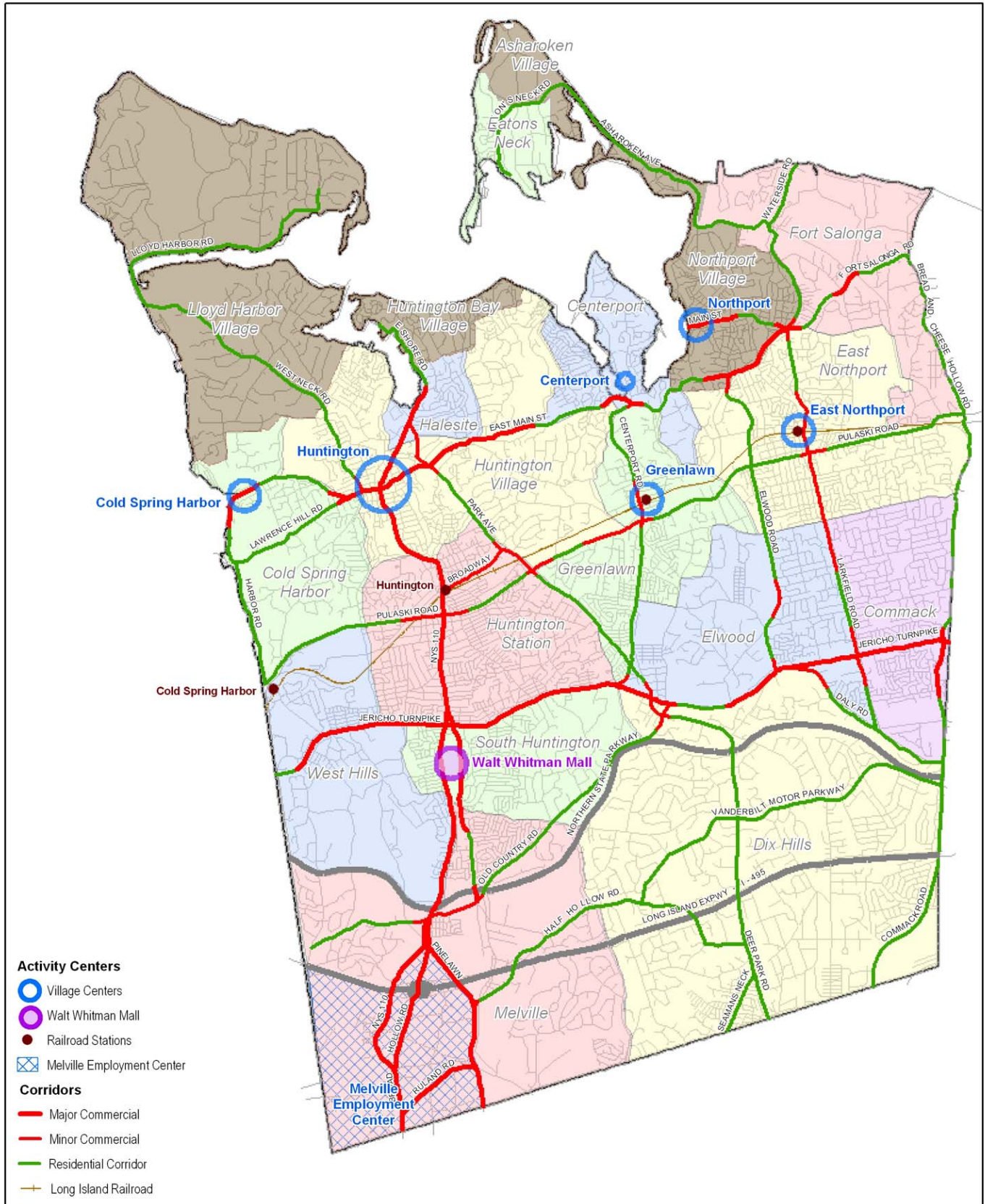


Figure 5: Community Structure

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Two transit-oriented village centers also occur in Huntington – Greenlawn and East Northport. Each center has direct access to a Long Island Railroad station, and exhibits a pedestrian-friendly retail character.



Other commercial areas in the Town occur along major highway corridors as linear (strip) development. These areas can be further subdivided into small-scale and larger scale, more automobile-oriented subcategories. An example of a small-scale linear commercial corridor is the Huntington Station area along NYS Route 110, Depot Road, and West Hills Road. Unlike the automobile-oriented commercial developments described below, small-scale linear commercial areas exhibit some relationship to the street by having smaller-scale buildings nearer to the street. However, similar to auto-oriented commercial developments, these areas generally do not provide an inviting, pedestrian-oriented atmosphere. This type of commercial development also occurs along Larkfield Road, from Cedar Road north to East Northport Station.



Larger scale, automobile-oriented linear commercial development is concentrated in several areas within the community. Jericho Turnpike represents one of the most automobile-oriented commercial corridors within the Town, with commercial development along nearly all of its length within Huntington. Greater levels of development intensity occur where Jericho Turnpike is intersected by Larkfield Road and again at its intersection with NYS Route 110.

NYS Route 110, which includes New York Avenue, Walt Whitman Road, and Broad Hollow Road, is flanked by commercial development along almost its entire length through the Town. The scale of development along this predominantly north-south spine varies, however. At its northern end, the commercial development is a fabric of small-scale linear and pedestrian-oriented commercial, such as in Huntington Village. South of Huntington Village, the NYS Route 110 corridor remains primarily a small-scale linear commercial corridor, but begins to include more automobile-oriented suburban strip commercial development forms, as well as larger scale shopping centers. The small-scale linear commercial development, much of it consisting of marginal uses, continues through Huntington Station to Jericho Turnpike. The former village center in the vicinity of the LIRR Station was removed several decades ago.

The character of NYS Route 110 between Huntington Station and Jericho Turnpike is defined by 1) the configuration of the roadway (typically two travel lanes, a center turning lane, and shoulders used for on-street parking) and 2) the adjoining smaller scale commercial uses (typically with buildings pulled up to the sidewalk at the edge of street right-of-way). At Jericho Turnpike, NYS Route 110 dramatically changes in character, increasing to a four-lane divided roadway with “big box” retail



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and commercial on the east side (centered on the Walt Whitman Mall) and smaller scale, commercial strip development with parking in front on the west side. South of the Northern State Parkway NYS Route 110 enters the Melville employment area, which is characterized by suburban-style office park and industrial developments that are oriented to the automobile.

Combined, NYS Route 110 and Jericho Turnpike represent the primary commercial corridors within the Huntington area, with Larkfield and Fort Salonga Road/East Main Street forming secondary commercial corridors. Generally speaking these primary and secondary commercial corridors are visually cluttered and unattractive, in contrast to the generally high visual quality of the Town's residential corridors and neighborhoods.

### **Neighborhoods**

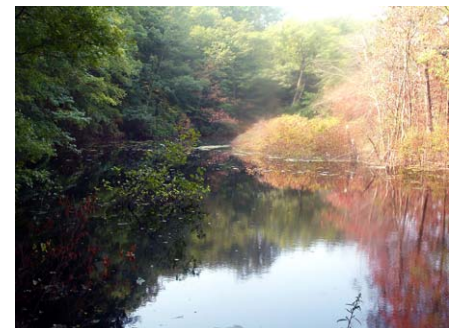
Huntington is a town of neighborhoods which vary in character and density, each with a distinct identity. As previously mentioned, much of the Town is comprised of neighborhoods with residential lots laid out in a grid-like street pattern that is conducive to walking. Neighborhoods containing lot sizes larger than one acre generally tend towards a curvilinear street pattern which, when combined with the greater distance between homes due to the large lots, results in a scenic, though less pedestrian-oriented residential area. Figure 6: Parcel Size Analysis, illustrates the distribution of parcels within the Town and the incorporated villages.



Housing within the neighborhoods of Huntington and the incorporated villages mostly consist of single-family homes. Townhouse, condominium, and apartment developments occur throughout the Town, but are limited in size and scale. The largest concentrations of multi-family development occur where sewers are available in Huntington Village, the Huntington Station area, and in Melville.

### **Environmental/Open Space Framework**

Parks, open space, and environmental resources are key components of Huntington's community structure and scenic character that provide multiple benefits and are highly valued by residents. The Town of Huntington and the incorporated villages, combined, have large areas of open space, both public and private. The majority of existing open spaces are located on the west side of the Town, with several large areas located on the east side. Public conservation and park lands total approximately 6,100 acres (in all jurisdictions), representing about 10% of the land area within the Town and villages (Figure 7: Open Space and Natural Resources). Other open space resources shown on Figure 7 include recharge basins, utility corridors, cemeteries, and private open space areas, as well as recreational and agricultural lands that function as open space but are not permanently protected.





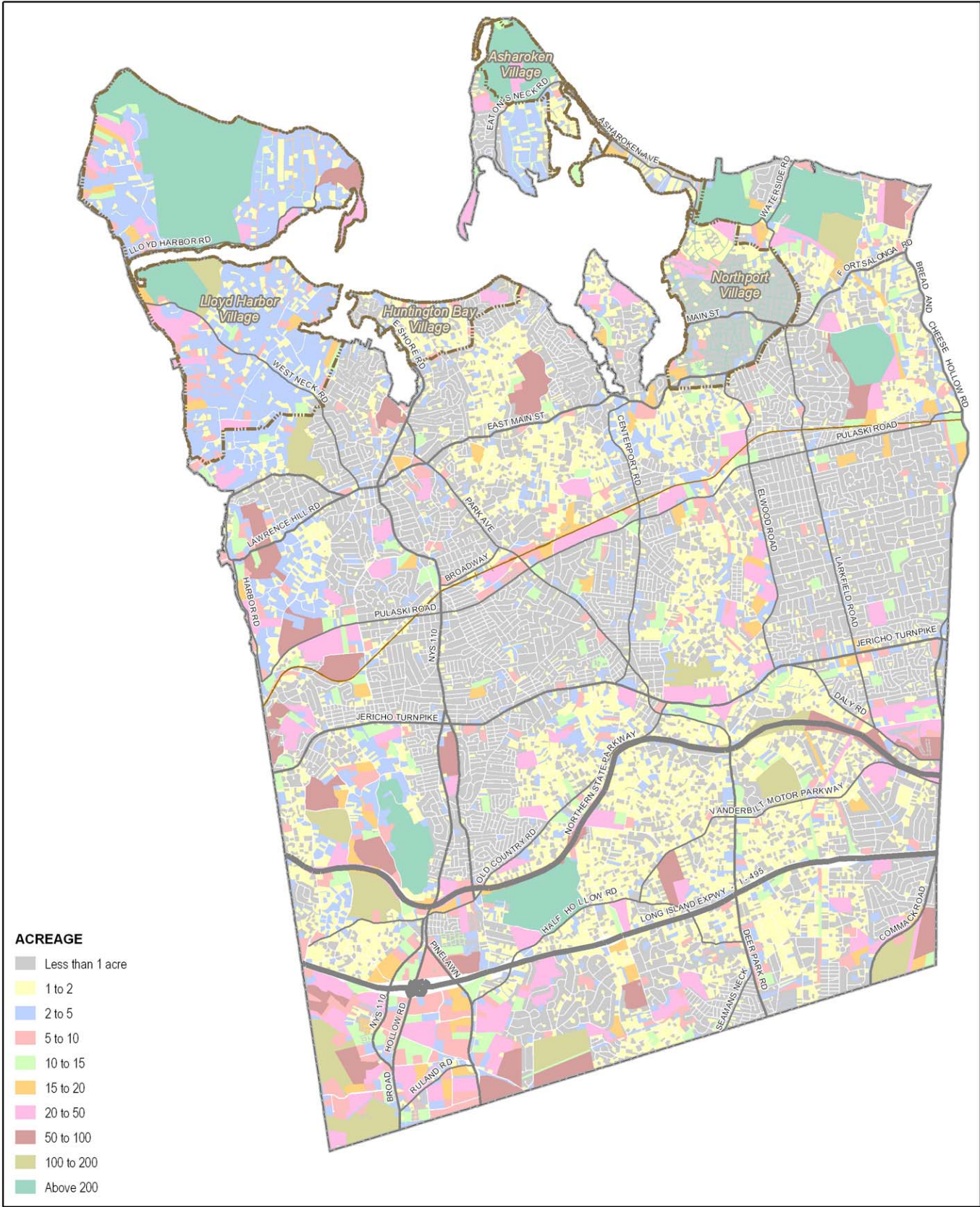


Figure 6: Parcel Size Analysis

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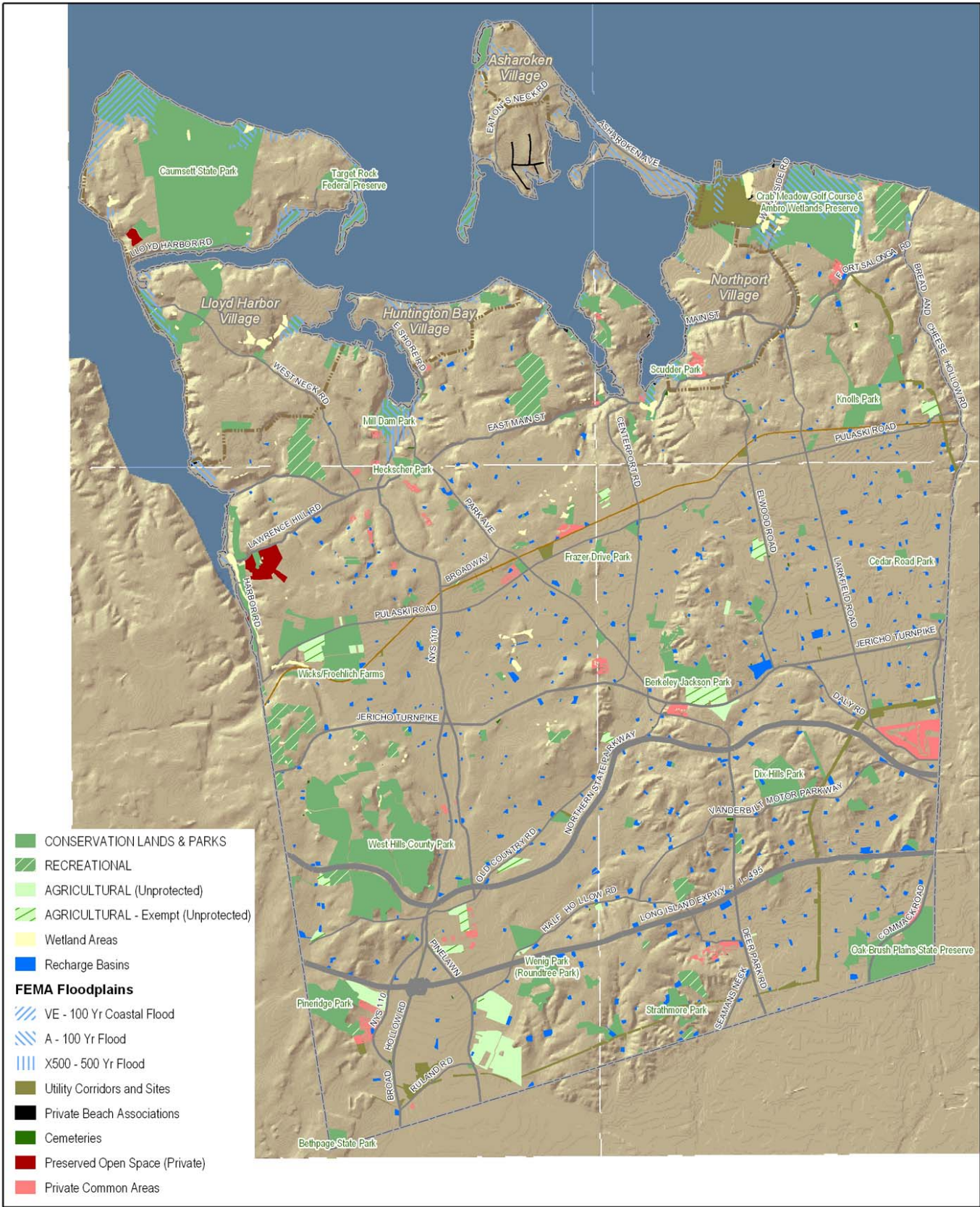


Figure 7: Open Space and Natural Resources





The single largest conservation/parkland holding within the area is the 1,480 acre Caumsett State Park, located in Lloyds Neck. Outside of the incorporated villages, the largest open space facility is the Suffolk County West Hills County Park complex, at 893 acres.

The conservation and park lands within the Huntington area include active and passive parks and protected open space areas. The protected open spaces include riparian habitats, forest environments, and parts of the remaining pine barrens environment. These preserved areas provide a cross-section of natural environments that occur within the Town of Huntington and the incorporated villages.



Most of the wetlands in the Town of Huntington and the incorporated villages are adjacent to the waters of Long Island Sound and its harbors, with relatively few isolated wetlands in the rest of the community. The majority of wetlands are located within or adjacent to the Mill Cove Wildlife Sanctuary, Mill Dam Park, the Betty Allen Twin Ponds Nature Park, Crab Meadow Park/Jerome Ambro Memorial Wetlands Preserve, and the Makamah Nature Preserve.

Floodplains, as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, are limited in extent within the Town of Huntington and the incorporated villages. As depicted in Figure 7, all FEMA-identified floodplains within the study area are adjacent to Long Island Sound and the harbors. The topography of the area, including the rolling hills and bluffs, minimize the areas that are subject to stream and coastal flooding.

### **Growth Dynamics and Susceptibility to Change**

Huntington and the incorporated villages are nearing build-out, as little undeveloped land is available for new construction. A review of the Suffolk County property tax database shows that there are only 36 vacant parcels over five acres in size remaining within Huntington and the incorporated villages, and approximately 150 vacant parcels between one and five acres in size. Sixteen of the 36 parcels over five acres in size have pending development applications (see Section 3.2 above), including the largest remaining vacant parcel (39 acres at the intersection of Pulaski and Lake Road). Most vacant parcels within the community are less than one acre in size, and are primarily distributed evenly north of Jericho Turnpike. It should be noted that there are several large parcels that are underdeveloped for their zoning. In general, underdeveloped parcels (e.g., a single house on a large lot that could be subdivided) are not classified as vacant in the property tax database and could be a significant source of future development.



Because of the extent of the existing development within Huntington, most future developments will consist of infill and redevelopment of

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existing sites within the community. Future development pressures will likely be focused on the following types of properties:

- Existing vacant and underdeveloped parcels
- Agricultural lands that are not protected and are otherwise undeveloped
- Commercial and industrial properties that are determined to be “underutilized” according to market pressures, or that contain marginal or obsolescent uses
- Residential parcels that front primarily commercial corridors, or are impacted by existing commercial and industrial development
- Residential parcels larger than two acres (a size that starts to foster subdivision into smaller lots for new residential construction)

Other factors that influence the development and redevelopment process in Huntington, in addition to the availability of land and parcel size, are regulations such as zoning, proximity to transportation, and citizen responses to proposed developments which are perceived to threaten neighborhood character or quality of life. However, the factors that will most drive future change are market and demographic shifts, including increasing demand for more a diverse housing stock to serve a larger proportion of smaller households, as well as changing patterns of retailing including the shift toward “big box,” and the obsolescence of older commercial strips (see Section 3.5 for further information on demographic and retail trends in the Town).

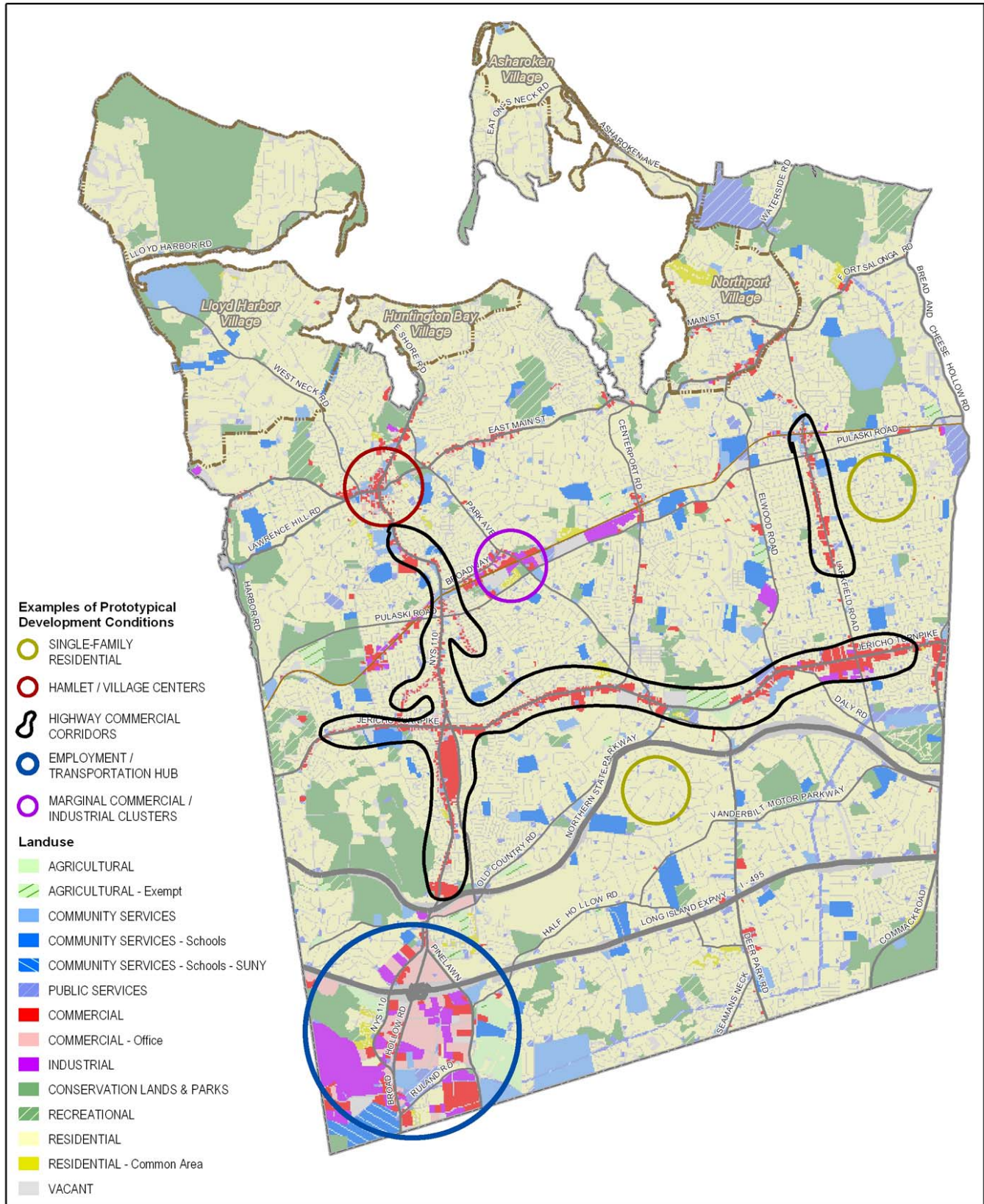
### **Prototypical Development Conditions**

Five prototypical development conditions typify the types of development patterns that occur within the Town. These conditions range from stable areas that should be preserved and strengthened to areas that are likely to change in the future due to age, physical deterioration, questionable prior use (brownfields), or economic obsolescence. The five prototypical development conditions are as follows (see Figure 8):

- Single-Family Residential Neighborhoods
- Hamlet/Village Centers (e.g., Huntington Village Center)
- Highway Commercial Corridors
  - Small-scale linear commercial corridors
  - Automobile-oriented linear commercial corridors
- Employment/Transportation Hub (i.e., Melville Employment Center and NYS Route 110/Long Island Expressway)
- Transitional Commercial/Industrial Clusters (e.g., Park Avenue and Long Island Railroad area)







**Figure 8: Prototypical Development Conditions**

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### Single Family Residential Neighborhoods

The Town of Huntington contains many stable neighborhoods and a few which are transitional in character or otherwise compromised by varying factors. Some of these neighborhoods are very pedestrian-friendly due to the presence of sidewalks, a well connected grid street system, and lot sizes that are under one acre in size. These areas typically possess a small town-like ambiance, as they are often within walking distance to small-scale establishments, such as corner stores, located on nearby roads. Other neighborhoods are composed of larger lots, giving residents more of a suburban to rural living experience, but also being somewhat less accessible for anything other than automotive-based travel (see Figure 9: Residential Neighborhoods).

Preservation of the character of the existing single-family neighborhoods is critically important to maintaining the quality of life in Huntington. In addition, the existing pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods are potentially good models in terms of character and scale for any future residential development within the Town of Huntington.

### Hamlet/Village Centers



Huntington's village and hamlet centers are activity areas where residents gather to shop, dine, mingle with friends, and enjoy evenings of entertainment. These small-scale, mixed-used areas reflect unique architectural and historic character, as well as land use and urban design characteristics of connectivity and pedestrian orientation that can serve as models to guide new development and redevelopment of obsolescent commercial areas within the Town. The Huntington Village Center is a good example of a desirable destination for residents seeking a walkable small town shopping, dining and working experience. As with the pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, the characteristics of existing village and hamlet centers can be used as models to help strengthen and maintain existing centers, as well as to shape new commercial and mixed-use development and redevelopment. By using the existing village and hamlet centers as models for future development, the identity of the community can be enhanced and further defined (Figure 10: Hamlet /Village Centers).

### Highway Commercial Corridors

Multiple highway commercial corridors exist within the Town of Huntington. As previously discussed, while the uses along these corridors meet retail and service market needs they are generally considered to be visually unattractive and often economically obsolete due to building age, condition, and shifts in retail markets towards “mid-box” and “big-box” chain retailers. There are two different types of highway commercial corridors within Huntington, and some roads (such as NYS Route 110) include both types of linear commercial development. The first type of corridor is small-scale, where the buildings are near the road and are not

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surrounded by large surface parking areas. Examples of such commercial corridors include East Main Street, Larkfield Road, Depot Road and West Hills Road (the Huntington Station area), and portions of NYS Route 110 and Jericho Turnpike. These commercial areas are somewhat dated in terms of the current market demand for “box” retail and suburban-style office uses, and as such these areas may experience increased pressure for “marginal” uses and uses that seek lower rents, or specialty retailers that can take advantage of the older structures.



The second type of highway commercial corridor is oriented to the automobile, and is typified by suburban-scale office, strip centers and “big-box” retail, surrounded by large areas of surface parking. Examples of such areas within Huntington include the intersection of Larkfield Road and Jericho Turnpike and the portion of NYS Route 110 adjacent to the Walt Whitman Mall.

The Town should evaluate options regarding how these two types of commercial corridors should change over time, as turnover of businesses and properties along the corridors is likely to occur in a piecemeal fashion. Of specific concern is the likelihood that portions of well-established commercial corridors may remain underutilized and unmarketable for continued commercial use, thus suggesting opportunities for the introduction of a mix of compatible uses, which may include higher density housing in areas where it will not impact established neighborhoods. The existing hamlet and village centers may provide inspiration regarding the mix of businesses and architectural and urban design characteristics that could enhance the corridors, and contribute to the overall character of Huntington (see Figure 11: Highway Commercial Corridors).

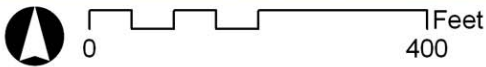


### Employment/Transportation Hub

Melville in the vicinity of NYS Route 110 and the Long Island Expressway is the employment/transportation hub of Huntington. This area reflects the current market for suburban office, “flex” industrial/warehouse development, and supporting commercial service businesses (hotels, restaurants, etc). Its location as an activity center along the Long Island Expressway makes it highly accessible, allowing convenient access for employees from throughout the region, with lesser impacts on or from congested local roads and highways.

Development in the Melville area is a mixture of relatively new residential, office, warehousing and industrial uses. The office and warehousing uses are typified by low-rise buildings with large surface parking areas. Unlike the retail commercial development along NYS Route 110 to the north, the office developments typically have parking located behind and to the sides of the buildings, resulting in a campus-like





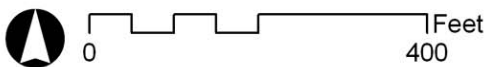
**Figure 9: Residential Neighborhoods**

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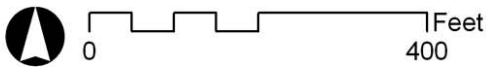
**Figure 10: Hamlet / Village Centers**

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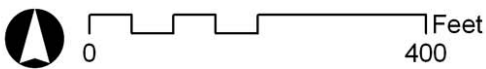
**Figure 11: Highway  
Commercial Corridors**

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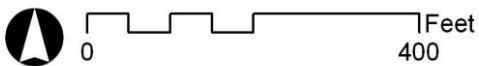
**Figure 12: Employment /  
Transportation Hub**

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**Figure 13: Transitional Commercial / Industrial Clusters**

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view from the roadway. Industrial uses includes a sand mine/clean fill disposal site. Increasing land values may result in some of the industrial uses experiencing pressure for non-industrial redevelopment (see Industrial Market Analysis in Section 3.5). With very little vacant land remaining in Melville, future employment expansion will occur largely through redevelopment of existing uses (see Figure 12: Employment / Transportation Hub).

#### Transitional Commercial/Industrial Clusters

Transitional commercial/industrial clusters, such as the area at the intersection of Park Avenue and the Long Island Railroad (east of Huntington Station), are likely to be subject to redevelopment pressures. Uses located in these areas will likely become less viable due to deterioration and obsolescence, coupled with increasing land values, and may increasingly become nuisance uses as surrounding properties are redeveloped incrementally for “higher and better” uses. These properties are larger than those parcels located along linear commercial corridors, and thus provide greater opportunities for redevelopment (see Figure 13: Transitional Commercial/Industrial Clusters).

### **3.4 Transportation System Assessment**



This section provides an assessment of the Town of Huntington’s transportation system prepared by LSA Associates. It begins with a discussion of overall mobility trends within the Town related to different travel modes based on U.S. Census data, followed by findings and observations regarding the following components of the Town’s transportation system:

- Roadway Network
- Transit
- Bicycle Network
- Pedestrian Network
- Parking
- Development Impacts
- Town of Huntington Transportation Resources

The findings are intended to provide a better understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and issues related to transportation and mobility in the Town of Huntington.

#### **Mobility Trends**

The residents of the Town of Huntington rely on the automobile. Based on the 2000 Census, 83.5% of all residents travel to work via the automobile.

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Of the remaining 16.5%, 10.6% take public transportation (9.7% rail and 0.9% bus), 1.3% walk, 0.1% bike, and the remainder work at home or get to work by some other means. A significant portion of those who use the train drive to and from the stations.

Many communities throughout the United States have sought to provide alternatives to the automobile (e.g., transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities) in order to relieve congestion. Whereas the automobile remains the dominant form of transportation in Huntington, a comparison of 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data for mode to work indicates a slight decrease in automobile use (from 84.6% to 83.5%) and a slight increase in public transportation use (from 9.9% to 10.6%) (see Table 3-1).

### **Roadway Network**

The Town of Huntington's roadways can be classified and evaluated in many different ways, including ownership, type of facility, traffic volumes, and level of congestion. The following text addresses current conditions related to the Town's roadway network.

#### Existing Roadway Network

The existing roadway network within the Town of Huntington is shown in Figure 14. Roadways are classified as Interstate, Parkway, Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, Collectors, and Local Streets.



- **Interstate:** I-495 (the Long Island Expressway) traverses Huntington from east to west and provides regional connections to Nassau County to the west and eastern Suffolk County. This multi-lane, high-speed facility has controlled access and serves regional travel within the area.
- **Parkway:** Similar to Interstates, parkways are limited access facilities that serve regional travel patterns. However, they typically are designed for slightly lower travel speeds and traffic volumes and serve slightly shorter trip lengths. The Town of Huntington roadway system includes one parkway: the Northern State Parkway. This facility is located north of I-495 and provides an east-west, high-speed facility as an alternative to I-495.
- **Principal Arterials:** Principal arterials serve the major activity centers and experience the highest traffic volumes of roadways without controlled access. They are used for trips entering and leaving the Town of Huntington, as well as by vehicles passing entirely through the Town. In addition to automobile and truck traffic, principal arterials convey regional bus routes. Therefore, when the principal arterial street system experiences congestion and delays, transit is similarly impacted.



Table 3-1. Mode to Work (1990/2000 Census)

	Huntington, New York				Suffolk County, New York			
	1990		2000		1990		2000	
	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>191,430</b>		<b>195,289</b>		<b>1,321,864</b>		<b>1,419,369</b>	
<b>Total Workers</b>	<b>98,542</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>93,665</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>652,989</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>670,406</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Car, truck, or van:</i>	83,408	84.6%	78,183	83.5%	576,730	88.3%	590,445	88.1%
Drove alone	75,680	76.8%	71,453	76.3%	507,767	77.8%	523,534	78.1%
Carpooled	7,728	7.8%	6,730	7.2%	68,963	10.6%	66,911	10.0%
<i>Public transportation:</i>	9,738	9.9%	9,951	10.6%	44,768	6.9%	45,808	6.8%
Bus or trolley bus	713	0.7%	763	0.8%	6,211	1.0%	6,689	1.0%
Streetcar or trolley car	4	0.0%	18	0.0%	94	0.0%	159	0.0%
Subway or elevated	215	0.2%	170	0.2%	1,476	0.2%	1,308	0.2%
Railroad	8,626	8.8%	8,886	9.5%	35,207	5.4%	35,506	5.3%
Ferryboat	9	0.0%	16	0.0%	209	0.0%	194	0.0%
Taxicab	171	0.2%	98	0.1%	1,571	0.2%	1,952	0.3%
Motorcycle	26	0.0%	34	0.0%	350	0.1%	208	0.0%
Bicycle	87	0.1%	98	0.1%	1,520	0.2%	1,457	0.2%
Walked	1,749	1.8%	1,236	1.3%	13,624	2.1%	11,081	1.7%
Other means	339	0.3%	350	0.4%	3,203	0.5%	3,606	0.5%
Worked at home	3,195	3.2%	3,813	4.1%	12,794	2.0%	17,801	2.7%

	New York State				United States			
	1990		2000		1990		2000	
	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>17,990,455</b>		<b>18,976,457</b>		<b>248,709,873</b>		<b>281,421,906</b>	
<b>Total Workers</b>	<b>8,220,613</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,211,916</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>115,070,274</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>128,279,228</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Car, truck, or van:</i>	5,321,945	64.7%	5,377,096	65.5%	99,592,932	86.5%	112,736,101	87.9%
Drove alone	4,460,757	54.3%	4,620,178	56.3%	84,215,298	73.2%	97,102,050	75.7%
Carpooled	861,188	10.5%	756,918	9.2%	15,377,634	13.4%	15,634,051	12.2%
<i>Public transportation:</i>	2,042,488	24.8%	2,006,194	24.4%	6,069,589	5.3%	6,067,703	4.7%
Bus or trolley bus	535,422	6.5%	475,389	5.8%	3,445,000	3.0%	3,206,682	2.5%
Streetcar or trolley car	8,689	0.1%	6,058	0.1%	78,130	0.1%	72,713	0.1%
Subway or elevated	1,186,784	14.4%	1,217,009	14.8%	1,755,476	1.5%	1,885,961	1.5%
Railroad	231,824	2.8%	228,215	2.8%	574,052	0.5%	658,097	0.5%
Ferryboat	17,070	0.2%	11,626	0.1%	37,497	0.0%	44,106	0.0%
Taxicab	62,699	0.8%	67,897	0.8%	179,434	0.2%	200,144	0.2%
Motorcycle	5,083	0.1%	3,625	0.0%	237,404	0.2%	142,424	0.1%
Bicycle	20,159	0.2%	25,036	0.3%	466,856	0.4%	488,497	0.4%
Walked	575,089	7.0%	511,721	6.2%	4,488,886	3.9%	3,758,982	2.9%
Other means	42,627	0.5%	40,375	0.5%	808,582	0.7%	901,298	0.7%
Worked at home	213,222	2.6%	247,869	3.0%	3,406,025	3.0%	4,184,223	3.3%

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000 Census of Population and Housing

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- **Minor Arterials:** These facilities interconnect and augment the principal arterial street system. Compared to principal arterials, they typically are used for trips of moderate length, typically emphasizing access to adjacent land uses rather than accommodation of through traffic.
- **Collector Streets:** Collector streets are designed to provide local land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. They distribute trips from the arterials to their ultimate destination.
- **Local Streets:** This category includes all components of the roadway system that do not fall under one of the higher classifications. Local streets permit direct access to abutting properties and provide connections to collectors and arterials. They offer the lowest level of mobility and the highest level of access to local land uses.



### Jurisdictional Ownership

Jurisdictional ownership is one of the most critical factors necessary to maintain, plan for, and improve the community's transportation system. If a roadway falls under the jurisdiction of the local community, then it can control the impacts to adjacent land uses that may result from improving or changing the facility. However, if the facility is under the jurisdiction of the federal, state, or county government, then the funding, prioritization, selection, and design of improvements are outside the control of the Town.

Figure 15 shows the governmental entities responsible for the interstate, parkway, principal arterials, minor arterials, and collector streets. As illustrated by this figure, virtually all of the important transportation corridors are controlled by jurisdictions other than the Town. This situation has a profound impact on the feasibility of making meaningful changes to the Town's roadway circulation system.



Jurisdictional ownership also impacts the feasibility of better coordinating traffic signal timing operations in Huntington. Because signals are owned and operated by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), Suffolk County, and the Town of Huntington, they are maintained and operated in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, it is difficult to implement a comprehensive, well coordinated traffic signal system. Lack of coordination in signal timing between jurisdictions results in added delays to an already congested network.

Based on traffic signal system upgrades that have been implemented elsewhere in the country, integrating state, county, and town signals might



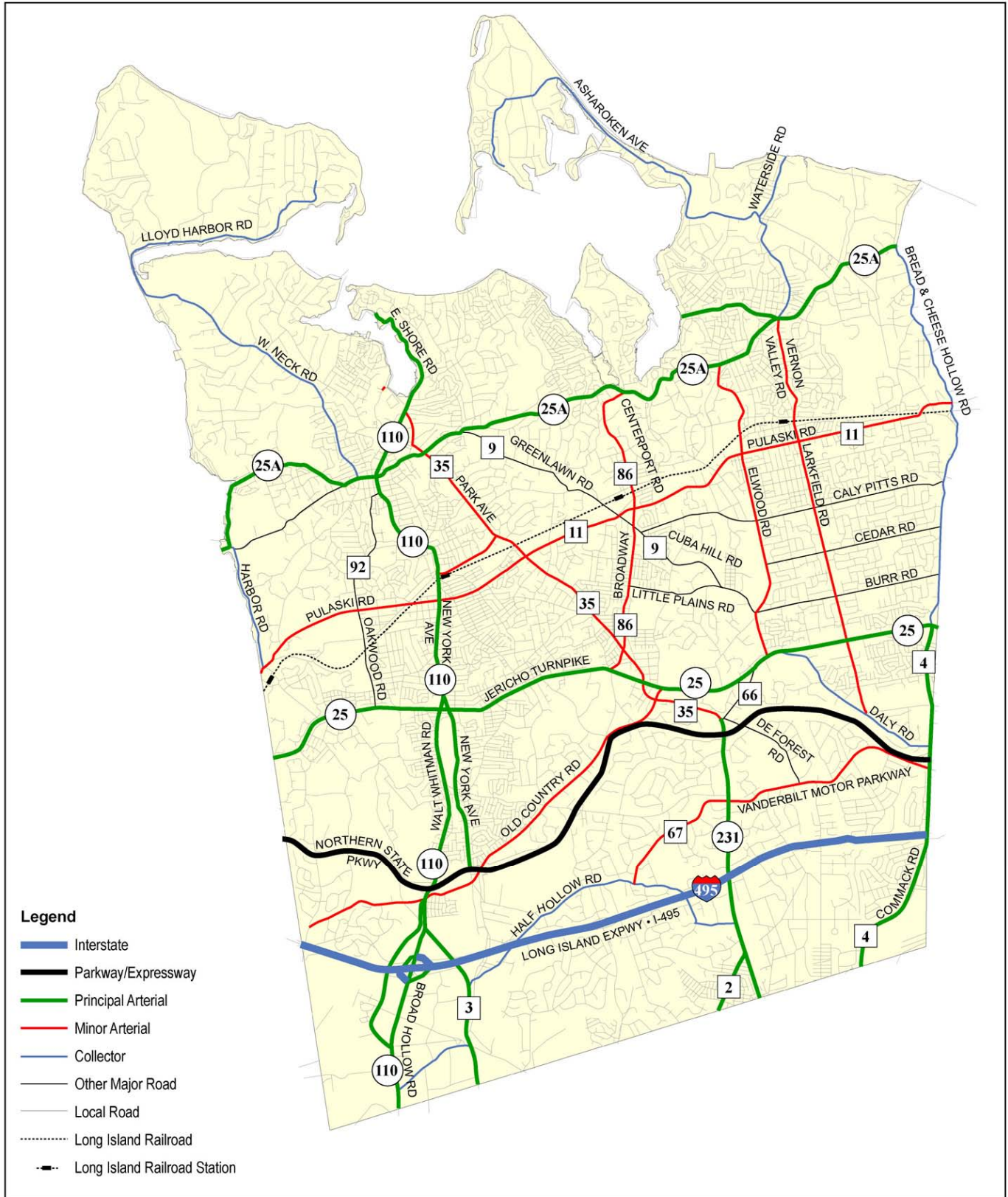


Figure 14: Existing Roadway Network

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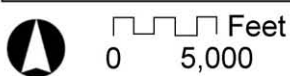
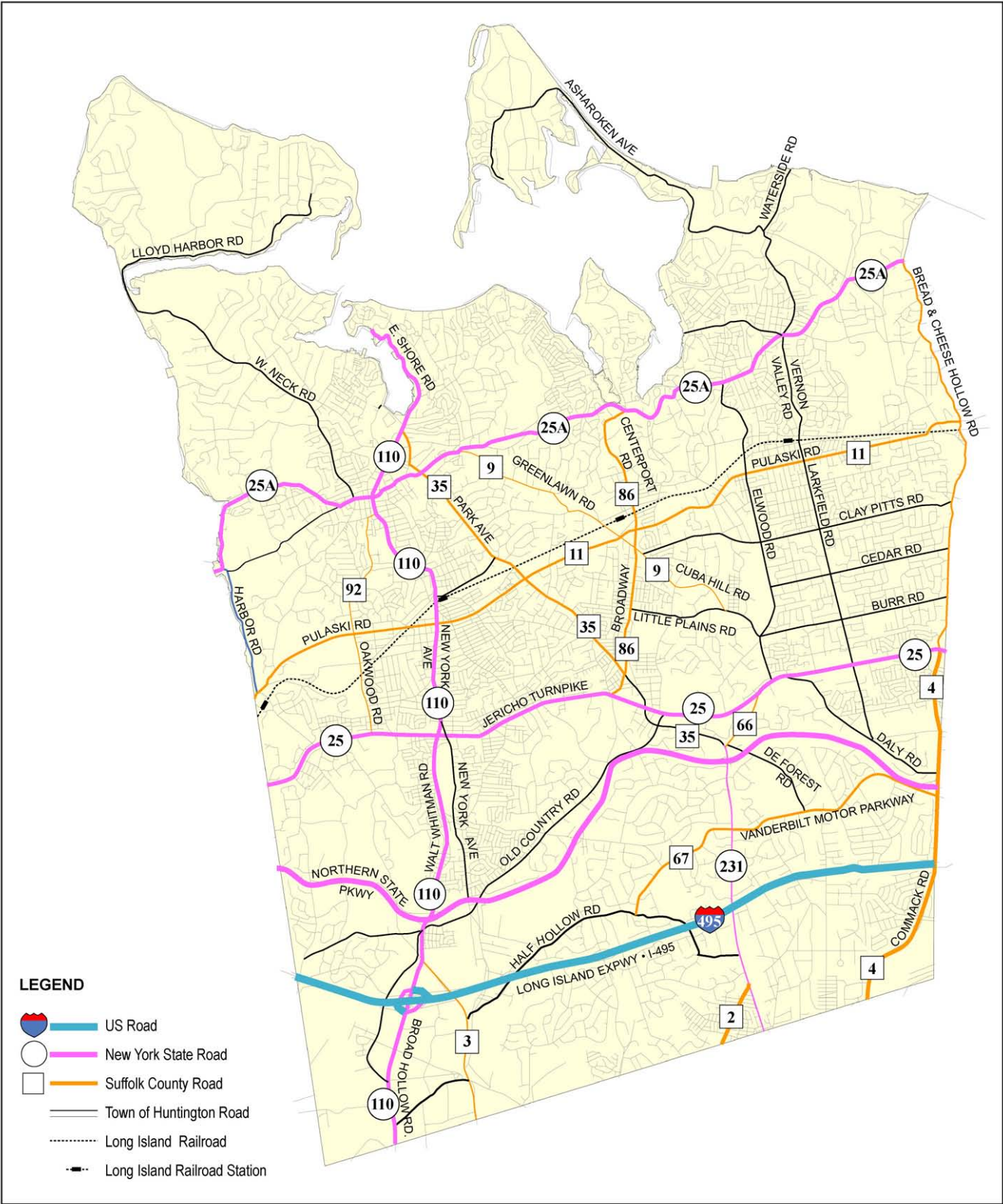


Figure 15: Jurisdictional Ownership



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improve the overall travel time by as much as 20 to 30 percent. Costs for implementing a complete upgrade to the master signal system, including a new central system, cabinets, controllers, and fiber optic interconnect, would likely range between \$10 and \$15 million and would require partnerships between all three jurisdictions.

#### Existing Average Daily Traffic Volumes

The Town of Huntington recorded traffic counts in the late 1980s and early 1990s but does not currently maintain an on-going traffic count program. NYSDOT and Suffolk County do, however, have a count program that documents daily traffic counts along state and county roads on a rotating basis over three years. Current data from this program are presented in Figure 16. Daily traffic counts for Town roadways are based on applying state and county trends to the historic traffic counts.



In general, daily traffic counts have not significantly changed over the past 10 to 15 years. Several factors may have affected this trend. First, the Town and Suffolk County are relatively built out (the population only increased by 3% between 1990 and 2000). Second, the total number of workers in the Town actually decreased by 5% during this period, due in part to the change in demographics to an older population (see Section 3.5). Finally, drivers may be choosing to travel alternative routes to avoid arterial congestion, some of these being town roadways within residential areas.

#### Level of Service

Level of Service is a term used in transportation planning and traffic engineering to describe how well an arterial or intersection operates in regard to congestion, delay, and travel time. The methodology for determining a facility's level of service is typically a function of the peak hour or daily traffic volumes compared to the type and design of the facility.



Figure 17 provides an overall assessment of the degree of congestion on the Town's arterial roadway network. This figure was developed by updating data contained in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan based upon comparison of daily traffic volumes. Whereas Level of Service designations can be quite detailed, the classification used in this assessment is simply defined as good (uncongested), fair (congesting), and poor (congested).

As can be seen in the figure, congestion occurs throughout the Town, primarily along state and also county routes. The town-owned local streets tend to operate at higher Levels of Service. However, these routes tend to serve a smaller portion of total traffic. It should also be noted that the attractiveness of better Levels of Service along local streets creates cut-

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through traffic as vehicles divert from the higher volume and congested arterials. An example of this phenomenon is seen along Daly Road between Jericho Turnpike and Commack Road.

#### Access Control

The capacity of a roadway is directly related to the number of intersecting streets and driveways along that roadway. With increased access, conflict is created along the corridor by vehicles seeking to make turns to and from streets and driveways, affecting operating speed and safety. Roadways with poor access control, such as Jericho Turnpike and NYS Route 110, can experience a one-third reduction in capacity as compared to a roadway with good access control. Therefore, as redevelopment occurs along such roadways, consolidation and control of access should take place to increase capacity and improve level of service.



#### Programmed Improvements

In addition to capital improvement funding provided by the Town of Huntington, partial funding for improvements to town roads is provided by the New York State Department of Transportation Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS). This program was established by the Legislature in 1982. Between April 1, 1982 and March 31, 1991 all CHIPS funds were distributed on a direct grant quarterly allocation basis. In 1991, State Legislation restructured CHIPS into two separate and distinct components. One was the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) direct grant component, funded from the State's General Fund, and the other was the Capital reimbursement component, funded from the sale of New York State Thruway Authority bonds. While the Statewide CHIPS

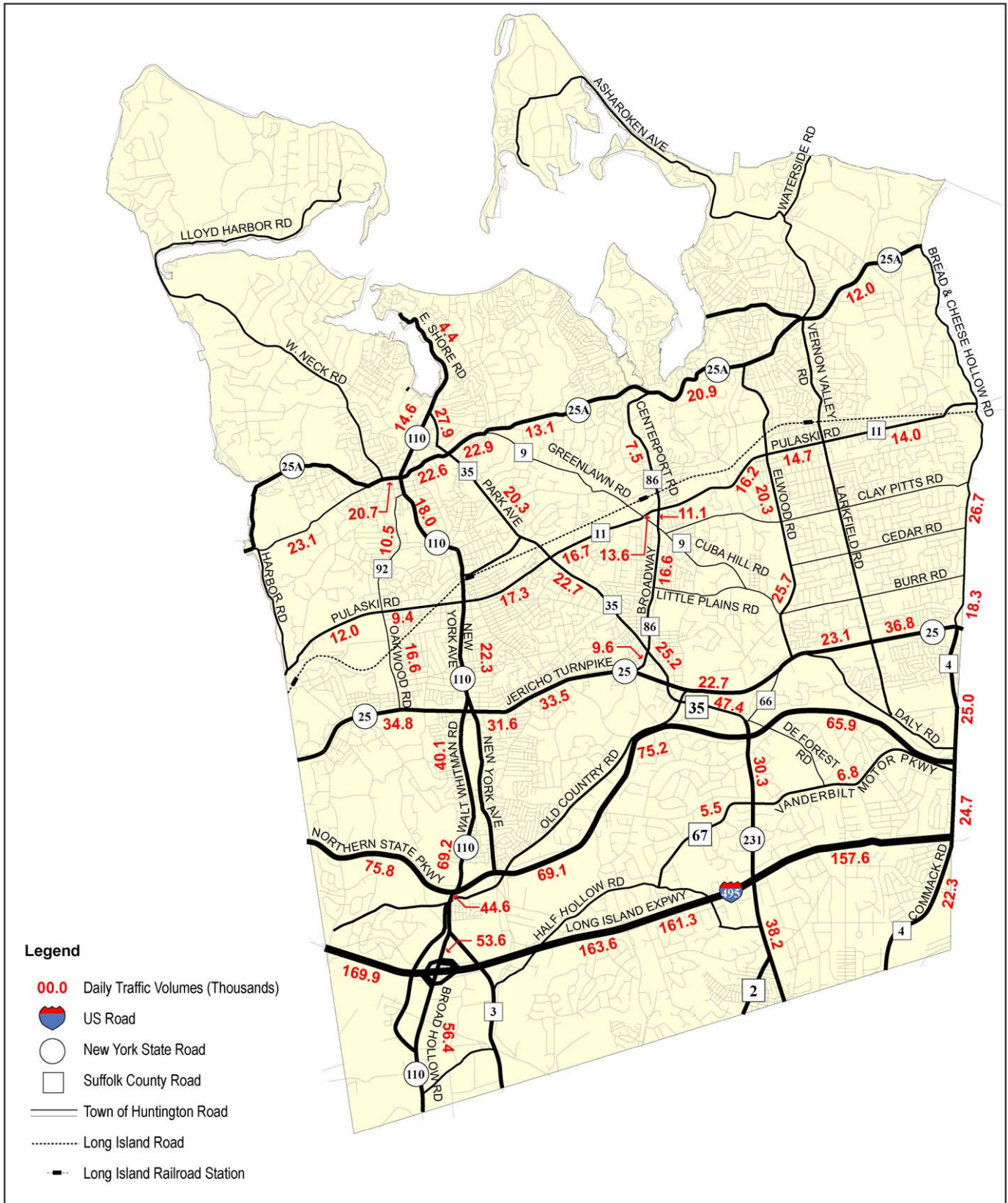
Capital appropriation increased in both the SFY 02-03 and 03-04 Budgets, no CHIPS O&M funding was included in these two budgets.

Counties, cities, towns and villages that report local road mileage under their local jurisdiction are eligible for CHIPS funding. The annual CHIPS apportionments to municipalities are based on the number of lane-miles of roadway under local jurisdiction that municipalities report annually to NYSDOT. The municipality is responsible for selecting projects and, for eligibility, must certify that the project is expected to have a useful service life of at least ten years. Eligible project types include highway resurfacing, highway reconstruction, signs/signals, bridge rehabilitation, and bridge replacement.



The Town of Huntington's CHIPS funding currently amounts to approximately \$925,000 a year.



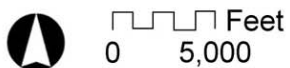


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**Figure 17: Level of Service**



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As costs for materials and labor continue to climb and costs per improvement increase, there will be an increasing burden on local municipalities to supplement limited state spending on infrastructure improvements.

### **Transit**

Whereas current and anticipated levels of congestion have prompted an increased interest in mass transit as an alternative mode of transportation, transit ridership as a percent of total trips remained at between 10% and 11% of all work trips between 1990 and 2000. The highest transit use is via the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) to and from New York City. Four LIRR stations are located within the Town of Huntington (Cold Spring Harbor, Huntington Station, Greenlawn, and Northport). Commuter parking facilities are available at all four stations and are operated and maintained by the Town. These facilities experience high occupancy rates, indicative of the considerable public demand for commuter train service.



Two Long Island Rail Road improvements have been proposed that will affect mobility to and from the Town of Huntington and the Town's LIRR stations. The first proposal is for extending electrification of trains east of Huntington Station. During peak hours, electrified trains operate at between 10 and 15 minute headways, making these trains frequent and convenient. East of Huntington Station, where electrification currently ends, service consists of diesel trains, which are significantly less frequent at one to two trains per hour during the peak periods. If electrification were extended east of Huntington Station and frequency to the Greenlawn and Northport stations were increased, then increased use of these stations would occur. Whereas this shift would potentially reduce the parking demand at the Huntington Station, parking demand would increase at the Greenlawn and Northport stations.



The second proposal that would affect Huntington railroad access is the proposed LIRR East Side Access (ESA) project. The ESA project would provide increased capacity for the LIRR, and direct access between suburban Long Island and Queens and a new passenger terminal at Grand Central Terminal in east Midtown Manhattan. (The current connection to Penn Station, located in west Midtown Manhattan, will continue.) The ESA connection and increased LIRR capacity would be achieved by constructing a 4,600-foot tunnel from the LIRR Main Line in Sunnyside, Queens to the existing tunnel under the East River at 63rd Street. LIRR trains would use the lower level of the bi-level structure. A second 5,000-foot tunnel would carry LIRR trains from the 63rd Street tunnel under Park Avenue into a proposed new LIRR terminal in the lower level of Grand Central Terminal. Ten new tracks and five platforms would be constructed for LIRR trains at Grand Central Terminal. In addition, a new LIRR station would be constructed at Sunnyside Yard (Queens) to

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improve transit access between Long Island City and Penn Station. The net effect of these improvements will be to enhance Huntington's desirability as a location for commuters due to improved accessibility to New York City.

Two independent public bus systems provide mass transit service within the Town. The first is the Huntington Area Rapid Transit (HART) operated by the Town of Huntington. The second is the Suffolk County Transit Services operated by Suffolk County.

HART provides three fixed routes Monday through Saturday as illustrated on Figure 18. Buses will stop at any intersection along the route at which it is safe to do so; however, all three routes have designated stops with signs, benches, and/or shelters. The one-way, single-ride fare is \$1.25 for adults, \$0.75 for students, and \$0.50 for seniors. HART also accepts HART passes and transfers; Suffolk County Transit tickets, tokens, and transfers; MTA Long Island Bus transfers; LIRR/HART monthly UniTickets; and Suffolk County DSS tokens. Transfers to connecting routes are \$0.10. HART also offers 10-trip ticket books at \$10.00 (Seniors \$4.00) and monthly passes at \$28.00 (Seniors \$28.00).

HART buses feature front-end kneelers, wheelchair lifts, and other equipment that make them accessible to disabled persons. Wheelchair lifts are also available to passengers using walkers, canes, braces, or who are otherwise mobility impaired.

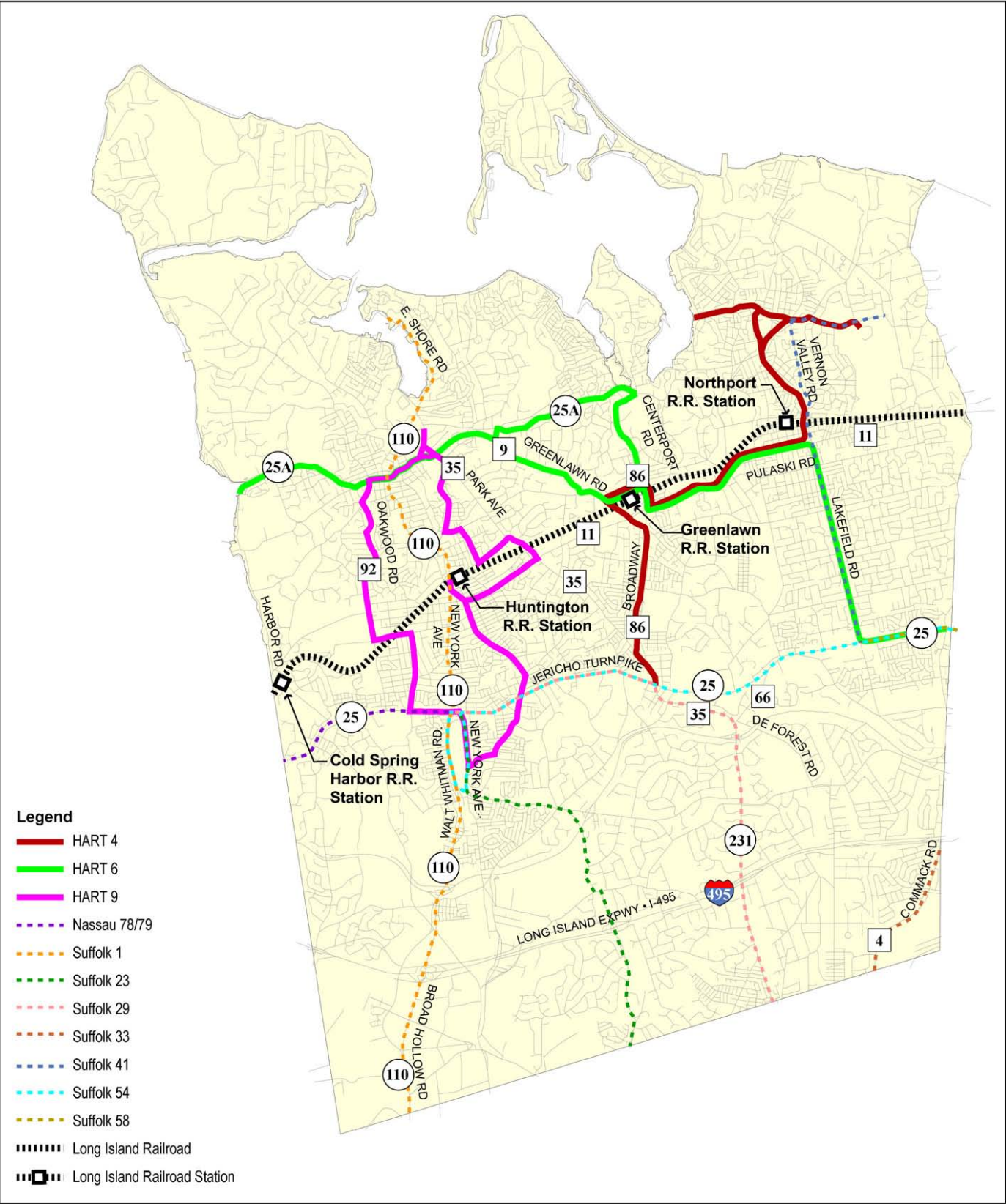
HART also operates a special paratransit program that provides basic mobility within the Town of Huntington for persons who cannot use the regularly scheduled, fixed-route buses due to disability. HART's paratransit program is operated in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is a shared-ride, advance-request, curb-to-curb transportation program that is available only to eligible persons and their traveling companions.

The Town has submitted a multi-year, multi-million dollar federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) application to begin replacing the oldest vehicles in the diesel fueled fleet with modern hybrid-electric vehicles (HEVs). Hybrid vehicles save on fuel costs and run cleaner than conventional engines, which will help the region meet stiffer new federal air quality mandates. Part of the program also calls for the introduction of smaller paratransit HEV vans and minibuses, replacing the existing full size fleet. In addition to being more energy efficient, the newer buses will be more nimble and offer more effective transportation alternatives.



*Suffolk County Transit – Partial System Map*





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Photo Courtesy of Bruce Presner of the  
Suffolk Bicycle Riders Association

### Bicycle Network

Bicycling is a growing travel mode throughout the United States and provides an alternative choice to the automobile for shorter trips. Because of the lack of bicycle facilities within the Town, bicycling remains an underutilized transportation mode. The 2000 Census confirms this relationship between bicycle system availability and use of bicycles. Bicycle commuting currently accounts for only 0.01% of all work trips.

Efforts are being made by NYSDOT to improve bicycle mobility along state routes, including those within the Town of Huntington. As shown on Figure 19, NYSDOT has suggested on-road bike routes on a number of state facilities within the Town of Huntington. The Town of Huntington has identified additional potential bicycle route corridors that have been added to the map. The Town has also recently improved some roadways for bicycle travel through narrower vehicular lane striping, thus allowing bike lanes to be added. Other efforts to improve bicycle mobility include adding bike racks on the HART buses and bike lockers at the Huntington LIRR Station.

Implementing the on-road bike routes suggested by NYSDOT and adding bike lanes by narrowing through lanes where appropriate are the beginning steps to implement a more complete, town-wide bicycle system.

### Pedestrian Network

Pedestrian travel is a function of the proximity of trip origins and destinations to the pedestrian network. Pedestrian trips tend to be of short duration (typically ¼ mile or less). Given the developed nature of the Town of Huntington, coupled with the land use mix, there definitely appears to be a potential demand for pedestrian travel if a pedestrian network were available to accommodate those trips. However, census data reveal that walking to work actually decreased from 1.8% of total work trips in 1990 to 1.3% of total work trips in 2000.

Based on pedestrian needs, there are basically five factors necessary to provide a pedestrian-friendly environment. These are:

- **Directness:** Does the network provide the shortest possible route?  
The directness measure represents the actual pedestrian distance from trip origin to destination. Since pedestrian trips are highly dependent on trip length, the pedestrian infrastructure's ability to provide the shortest and most direct route is critical. The ideal pedestrian network is the grid system, since curvilinear street patterns add distance to the potential trip.





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- **Continuity:** Is the network free from gaps and barriers?  
Continuity measures the completeness of the pedestrian system. A continuous sidewalk system not only allows a pedestrian to make an uninterrupted trip, it may also be required for a stroller or wheelchair user to utilize the sidewalks. Gaps in continuity can come in the form of missing segments, broken or overgrown vegetation, or physical barriers such as highways, rivers, or fences.
- **Street Crossings:** Can the pedestrian safely cross streets?

Major arterial roadways can significantly impact a pedestrian's safety in crossing a street. The ability to safely cross a street is a function of the following:

- The number and width of lanes to cross
- The presence of a raised median or refuge island
- The presence of a crosswalk
- Use of a pedestrian actuated signal or dedicated pedestrian phase for crossing
- Clear sight lines from motorists to pedestrians
- Directional corner ramps
- Street lighting

- **Visual Interest and Amenities:** Is the environment attractive and comfortable?

This measure of the pedestrian system's attractiveness and appeal is the most difficult to quantify and compare, and the most likely to change as the area matures. Included are elements such as shade trees, street lighting, and benches that may be particularly important to pedestrians with mobility or visual impairments. Other elements that contribute to visual interest include landscaping, planter boxes, trash receptacles, public art, etc.

- **Security:** Is the environment secure and well lighted with a good line of sight to see the pedestrian?

The pedestrian environment must feel like a safe place for people to walk. The key element is whether the pedestrian is clearly visible to other pedestrians or activities. Street lighting and the ability to see and be seen is important to the pedestrian.

In review of the five pedestrian criteria, Huntington Village's downtown is a good example of a pedestrian-friendly environment. The presence (or absence) of pedestrians is the ultimate test to determine a good pedestrian environment. The high pedestrian activity in the Village confirms that the area typifies a positive pedestrian environment.



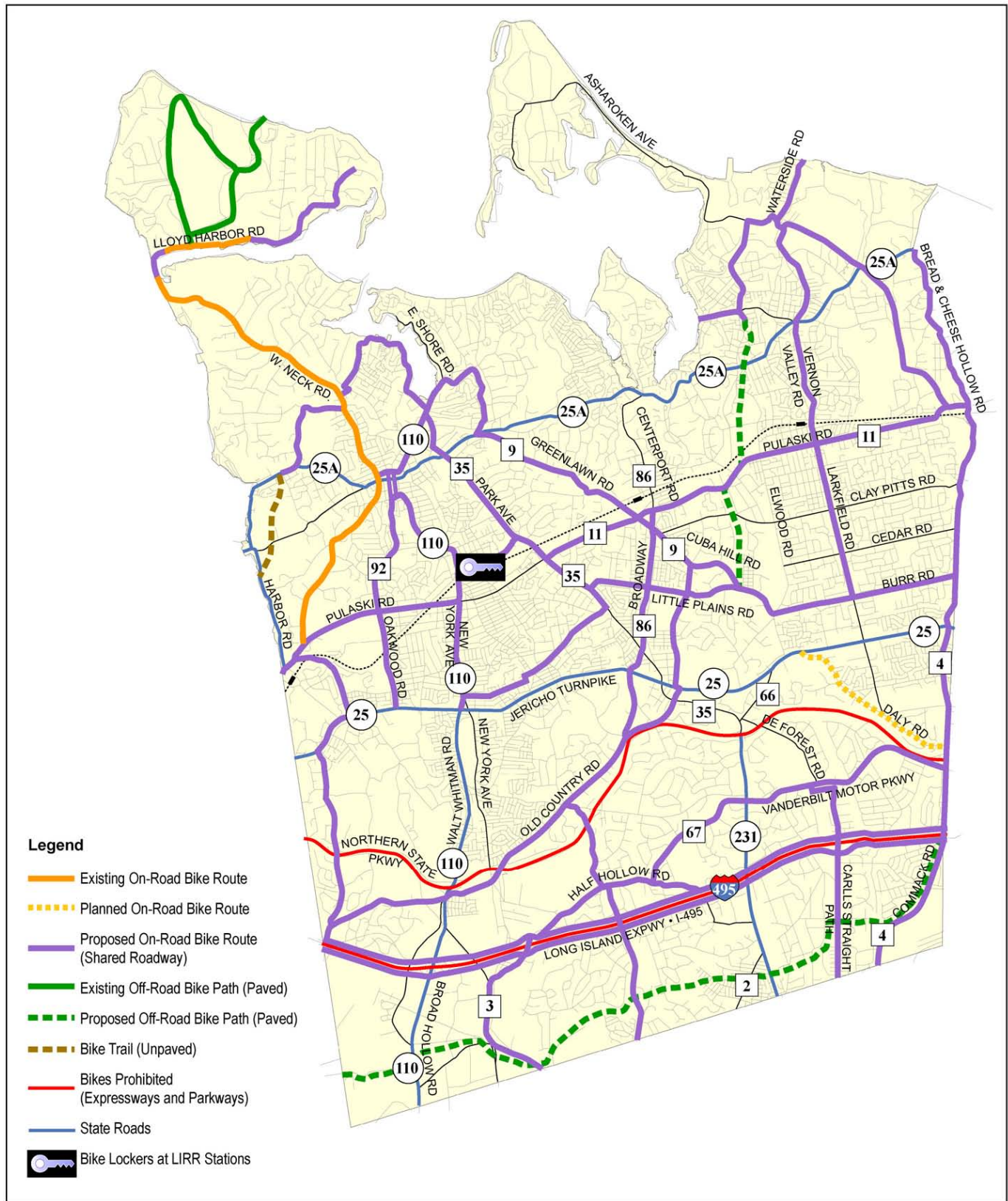


Figure 19: Bikeways

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Building on these pedestrian factors in other commercial and mixed-use areas can make a significant difference in making the Town of Huntington more pedestrian friendly.

### **Parking**

Parking has been identified as a concern in Huntington Village and at the LIRR station locations. One issue that has been cited is the amount of available parking. In review of the parking demand compared to supply at the LIRR stations, residual parking is available (except at Cold Spring Harbor) and there are typically available parking spaces. The issue tends to be more the distance between these spaces and the boarding locations, particularly at Huntington Station. Often rushed to catch a train, patrons might not find a nearby parking space and must walk a greater distance to the station. It should be noted that although there is a sufficient supply of parking at the Huntington Train Station to accommodate current demand, implementation of the Long Island Railroad East Side Access project would significantly improve accessibility between Huntington Station and New York City, thus increasing parking demand. The electrification of the Long Island Railroad east of Huntington Station would potentially redistribute the parking demand from Huntington Station to Greenlawn and Northport.



A second issue is the idea of structured parking in Huntington Village, which tends to be opposed by residents who associate it with urban and city environments. This relates to the issue as to how to increase parking within proximity of destinations in order to meet demand while maintaining the quaintness and character of the village.

### **Development Impacts**

Although the Town of Huntington is relatively built out, major redevelopment projects will continue to result in increased intensity and additional impacts to the transportation system. Areas of intensification that will likely occur in the near future include the Pilgrim State Hospital site.



Pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), a lead agency may require all major developments to conduct a transportation impact study to determine if impacts from the proposed development will be significant and if so, what mitigations should be considered to offset these impacts.

The methodology and procedures for conducting traffic impact studies and the mitigation requirements to offset those impacts are not specifically defined. As such, developments that occur within the Town typically do not have mitigation requirements that offset their true traffic impacts. Therefore, additional developments occur over time and the cumulative

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impacts of these developments continue to impact and degrade the roadway system. Establishing a more rigorous methodology for conducting traffic impact studies within the Town could address the lack of specificity in the current SEQR requirements.

Another development review issue is that the Town does not have a comprehensive long-term transportation plan that sets forth improvements and costs, as well as a legal nexus or basis for determining what is necessary to mitigate current deficiencies versus what is necessary to accommodate future development needs. Many communities have established transportation fee programs in which future developments contribute to these long-term needs through a per dwelling unit or square foot cost.



### 3.5 Demographic and Economic Analysis

As part of the Community Assessment, Economics Research Associates (ERA) performed an analysis of demographic and economic conditions and trends that will influence the Town of Huntington's future. Specifically, ERA evaluated past trends and future projections in the following areas: demographics, housing, office market, industrial market, and retail market. The retail market analysis included a field survey of the Town's retail districts as a basis for evaluating their commercial character, including the existing retail mix, vacancy, and ambiance. Key findings of these analyses are provided below.<sup>2</sup>



#### Demographic Analysis

##### Population and Households

- After a period of decline (from 201,512 in 1980 to 191,474 in 1990) the population of the Town of Huntington has stabilized. As of 2002, there were 196,789 people living in the Town. This represents 14 percent of the population of Suffolk County and a density of 2,093 persons per square mile.
- The number of households in the town grew by 5 percent from 1990-2000, bringing the total to 65,917, or 14 percent of all households in Suffolk County. The average household size has decreased over the last forty years, from 3.59 persons to 2.96 persons, a trend which is not expected to continue in the future.

<sup>2</sup> The complete analysis is provided in two separate reports by ERA: *Demographic and Economic Analysis for Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan Update* and *Retail Market Analysis for Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan Update*.



- Although there was a net population growth of 3,815 from 1990-2000, almost 8,900 people migrated out of the Town.
- By 2030, it is expected that the population of the Town will reach 217,290, an increase of approximately 22,000 people from the 2000 Census.
- The population of the Town is getting older. Median age increased from 30 years in 1960 to 39 years in 2000.

### Age

- Persons aged 65 and over are a rapidly growing segment of the Town's population. In 2000, there were 25,510 persons in this age group, comprising 13 percent of the overall population, an increase of 25 percent over 1990.
- Baby Boomers, aged between 38 and 57, represent approximately 33 percent of the Town's population. These people will be considered senior citizens in another 20 years.
- The Town of Huntington has not been able to attract and/or retain people between the ages of 25 to 34. The number of people in these combined age groups declined from 30,097 in 1990 to 23,442 in 2000, with the greatest decrease in the 25-29 year age group.

### Ethnicity



- Hispanics are the largest and fastest-growing minority group in the Town, numbering 12,844 or 6.6 percent of the population in 2000 (as opposed to 7,771 or 4.1% in 1990 and 4,773 or 2.4% in 1980).
- Ethnic groups within the Town have gravitated toward a few communities. Huntington Station, East Northport and Greenlawn have the largest number of non-Whites as a percentage of their total population.
- Huntington Station and Greenlawn have the largest concentration of those ethnic groups with the lowest household incomes.

### Income

- The 2000 median income for the Town of Huntington was \$82,528, the highest median household income in all of Suffolk County.
- All non-White groups had a median household income of over \$50,000. Hispanics had the lowest median household incomes, while Asians had the highest.



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- While all communities in the Town experienced increases in median household income from 1990 to 2000, Greenlawn, Melville and West Hills did not show real growth after inflation was taken into consideration.

#### Places of Employment for Residents

- Over one-third of the Town's residents who work outside the home have jobs in the Town of Huntington. This can be attributed to the large number of office employers that are located in Melville as well as to the large number of jobs in the retail sector.
- Over 44 percent work in other Suffolk County communities or in Nassau County. Eighteen percent work in New York City.

#### **Housing Market Analysis**

##### Overall Characteristics

- The number of housing units built in the Town has declined steadily over the years from a high of 24,184 during the 1940-1959 period to 3,978 units from 1990-2000. Significant decreases were also experienced during the 1980-1989 period, which saw 4,110 housing units built, over 50 percent less than in the preceding decade.
- Most of the zoning for residential use in the Town is for low density development, predominantly single-family housing.
- In 2000 there were 65,917 occupied housing units in the Town, the vast majority being single-family detached houses.
- The Town of Huntington has the fewest number of multi-family units compared with Oyster Bay, Islip, Smithtown and Babylon. Only 2.5 percent of these units were found in structures containing 5 or more units, reflecting the low-density zoning within the Town.
- Owner-occupied housing units represent 85 percent of the total in the Town, while renter-occupied units represent 15 percent.
- The majority of owner-occupied multi-family housing can be found in Huntington Station, Melville and Huntington, with just over 60 percent of the total located in Melville.
- Together, Huntington Station, Huntington, East Northport and Greenlawn contain approximately 70 percent of all rental units. Huntington Station provides the largest rental inventory (9,720 units).



- People between the ages of 25 to 34 represent the largest rental group while people between the ages of 35 to 44 represent the largest ownership group.

#### Housing Values



- The median housing value in the Town of Huntington in 2000 was \$277,900, significantly more than Suffolk County's median house value of \$185,200 (and just under that of East Hampton and Shelter Island). It is estimated that these figures have risen to \$490,000 and \$329,000 respectively through February 2004.
- The Town of Huntington has the highest Median Property Tax in Suffolk County at \$6,171.
- Rates for rental housing are just slightly higher than the Suffolk County average for all unit types.

#### Vacancy Status and Demand for New Housing

- The housing market in the Town of Huntington is extremely tight. As of the 2000 Census, three percent of the total housing units within the Town were vacant, of which 1.1 percent was either for sale or rent.
- Based on trends in building permits, anticipated household size, and limited availability of land, the Suffolk County Department of Planning projects that there will be 70,545 households in the Town by 2030, representing demand for an additional 3,473 units between 2005 and 2030.

#### Affordable and Senior Housing



- According to the 2000 US Census, there were 2,671 households in the Town with incomes below the poverty level, an increase of 658 households from 1990.
- Approximately 66 percent of these households were located in Huntington Station, Huntington, Greenlawn, and Northport, with the largest concentration living in Huntington Station.
- Based on a fair share analysis, there could be as many as 2,800 households in the Town of Huntington with incomes below the poverty level in 2025. Nearly half of these households are expected to be located in Huntington and Huntington Station.
- Over the next 20 years, approximately 46,000 residents will be over the age of 65. While not all of them can be expected to survive or choose to remain in the Town, there will be pressure to build adequate housing to accommodate the needs of this group.

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### Office Market Analysis

- The Huntington office market is comprised of 9.7 million square feet, located in 185 buildings.
- Ninety-five percent of the office space is located in Melville, which benefits from proximity to major roadways including the Long Island Expressway, Northern State Parkway and Jericho Turnpike.
- At the end of the fourth quarter of 2003, office vacancy stood at 1.1 million square feet or 11.7 percent, close to the historical vacancy average of 11.3 percent.
- Finance, insurance and real estate industries (FIRE) as a sector employed the largest number of people, although firms specializing in communications and utilities registered the largest percentage gain in employment.
- County-wide, job growth is projected to increase by 1.18 percent a year, bringing the total of anticipated new employees to 35,832 from 2004 to 2025. Based on an industry standard of 200 square feet per employee, it is expected that there will be need for approximately 7 million additional square feet of office space by 2025 in Suffolk County.
- Based on Huntington retaining its current share of the office market (40%), it is expected that Huntington could capture 2.86 million square feet of the County's total demand from 2004-2025.
- Given that the Town is close to its vacancy equilibrium of 11.3 percent, it is anticipated that once the economy picks up there will be demand for new office product in the near future.
- The availability of public sewer is an issue should the Town desire to expand its office base. According to local real estate brokers, this has been a problem in attracting certain tenant sectors to the Town. Suffolk County has permitted some developments in Melville to connect to its sewer system on a limited, contract basis.



### Industrial Market Analysis

- The Town of Huntington contains 6.3 million square feet of industrial space in 149 buildings. As with office space, the vast majority (95 percent) is located in Melville.





- Vacancy rates are approximately 3.1 percent, indicating a tight market.
- While speculative industrial buildings have not been constructed over the past 5 years, a number of build-to-suit industrial buildings have been erected.
- Trends for industrial use show a decrease in the amount of manufacturing jobs and an increase in the number of employees working in wholesale trade, and warehousing. This is consistent with those companies that have build-to-suit facilities.
- Rental rates and per square foot sales prices for industrial space are significantly less than for office space. To that end, there have been a number of conversions of industrial buildings to office space.
- As is the case for office expansion, the availability of public sewer is an issue should the Town wish to encourage more industrial users.

### **Retail Market Analysis**

#### Retail Character



- Retail offerings in the Town of Huntington cater to the needs of a wide customer base of residents and non-residents, and include merchandise of varying price-points sold through stores ranging from “Mom and Pop” operators to national retailers.
- Retail districts encompass pedestrian-oriented downtown areas as well as automobile-oriented shopping centers of varying sizes.
- Low vacancy rates in both downtown areas and shopping strips attest to the strength of the Town of Huntington as a retail market.
- The quality and character of the retail mix varies within each community. In most areas, many of the older properties have suffered from a lack of reinvestment.
- The Route 110/New York Avenue corridor in Huntington Station has a strategic location between the Walt Whitman Mall and Huntington Village that has not been fully exploited.
- Non-retail uses, such as automotive repair shops and professional services, threaten the retail character of some areas.
- Lack of parking and traffic congestion are problems which need to be addressed.

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Based on these observations, the following are key recommendations to ensure the continued vitality of retailing in the Town of Huntington:

- Reinforce the retail character of downtown districts as destinations by encouraging a mix of national, regional, and local tenants as well as cultural uses
- Amend current zoning to reflect the different characters of the Town's retail districts
- Ensure that infill building and redevelopment support the retail environment, by mandating retail uses on the ground floor
- Encourage reinvestment in older properties by offering financial assistance and design guidance



### Retail Demand

- The residents of the Town of Huntington currently represent \$1.5 billion in retail expenditure potential.
- By 2025, retail expenditure potential is projected to rise to \$1.9 billion. Based on the Consumer Expenditure Survey, the highest percentage will be spent on food (at home and dining out), apparel and accessories, and household furnishings.
- Residents of nearby communities represent a significant market for the Town's retailers. Estimates for 2000 indicate \$251 million in retail expenditure potential growing to \$315 million by 2025.
- Non-resident private sector office workers in the Town spent over \$44.1 million on retail goods and services in 2000. This is expected to increase to \$68.1 million by 2025.
- By estimating how much of the retail expenditure potential of the Town's residents, residents of nearby communities, and non-resident private-sector office workers would be captured by shops and services in the Town of Huntington, it is estimated that up to 816,200 square feet of additional retail space can be supported by 2025.
- Most of the support for additional space will occur by 2010, reflecting a slowdown of household growth rates.
- It is estimated that of the total projected additional space approximately 401,200 square feet will be for GAFO merchandise (general merchandise including apparel, household furnishings, jewelry, cameras, stationers, crafts, pet supplies, etc.), 231,200 square feet for grocery and convenience uses, and 183,800 square feet for restaurants and bars.



It should be noted that retail demand will be affected by developments in adjacent communities, such as the proposed Tanger Mall in Babylon Township.

The future demand projections suggest the following:



- Due to lack of development sites, the Town of Huntington may not be able to capture the potential market demand.
- The demand for GAFO goods will put pressure to redevelop existing under-performing shopping centers, the design of which should be dictated by guidelines put in place by the Town.
- Redevelopment and upscaling of under performing retail space may accommodate this demand.
- A portion of the increase in supportable space for grocery and convenience goods will be met by new GAFO space, particularly warehouse clubs, leaving weaker supermarkets and small convenience stores vulnerable.
- Food away from home is a significant revenue and activity generator, suggesting that these uses should be encouraged where appropriate.



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## **4.0 VISION STATEMENT**



This chapter presents the Vision Statement that was developed to reflect the input received from citizens of Huntington during the planning process. The complete text of the Vision Statement Report reviewed by the public and subsequently adopted by the Town Board is presented in Section 4.1. Public comments received on the Vision Statement Report are summarized in Section 4.2. Section 4.3 lays out an “Implementation Framework” for translating the components of the Vision Statement into policies, strategies, and actions to be developed in the Comprehensive Plan.

### **4.1 Vision Statement Report**

#### **Introduction**

The Town of Huntington has embarked on a mission to create a Vision for its future to be used to guide the preparation of a new Comprehensive Plan. It is doing so at an important milestone in our history – a time of transition and change, accompanied by new challenges and opportunities, rising citizen expectations, and lively debate on key issues. Over the past decade Huntington has experienced moderate growth in its rapidly diversifying population. While new development continues to occur, the Town is gradually approaching "build-out." While continued change is a virtual certainty, considerable uncertainty exists about how the future may unfold for Huntington and what the Town may be like in 5, 10 and 20 years. A primary motivation in creating a Vision for the future is to identify those values that most citizens share for the quality of life and community character of Huntington, now and for our children's future. This Vision will be our shared "destination" – what we aspire to achieve through the policies and strategies to be framed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan to follow. Taken together, the Vision and the Comprehensive Plan will be the means by which the citizens of Huntington will retain and enhance our community's character, define its identity, and ensure a sustainable future.



In addition to addressing the opportunities and challenges of the future, the Vision and the Comprehensive Plan must also address our present shortcomings. While public input reveals that overall, citizens are very satisfied with the character and quality of life of the Town, there exist several serious concerns on which almost everyone agrees, such as congested traffic and the need to protect open space. There are also several areas of concern on which there is a divergence of opinion. Some citizens emphasize concerns about the impact of new development and redevelopment on neighborhoods, schools and quality of life. Conversely,

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others focus on the need for new investment to address economically obsolete uses, physical decline, and substandard and illegal housing. A related concern is that, without an expanded supply of moderately-priced housing, rising costs of living will make it difficult for all but the wealthy to live here in the future.

While Huntington continues to be a community that cares, we have work to do in fully embracing our diversity and reconciling divergent attitudes. While we have strong leaders in government, business, and local institutions, we have not always agreed on priorities, nor found ways to achieve consensus on our most challenging issues. By beginning the process by highlighting those values and aspirations which we all share, the Vision will lead the way toward a unity of shared direction which will allow us to face the future with confidence and optimism. Our community's future and that of all of its citizens will be profoundly influenced by the degree to which we succeed in this mission. To more fully appreciate the significance of the challenge, we start by considering what a comprehensive plan is and how we will use it.

### **Huntington's Comprehensive Plan will be:**

#### *A reflection of our values, aspirations and our shared vision...*

Just as one would not begin a journey without first identifying a destination, we begin the planning process by defining the kind of place we want Huntington to be. Hundreds of citizens have expressed candid views about Huntington; its present strengths and weaknesses, as well as future opportunities and threats. In listening to what citizens say, broad areas of consensus have emerged concerning the kind of community we want to become, while there are several issues on which attitudes are more divergent. These expressed community values and aspirations provide the "raw material" for a shared vision of Huntington's future. This **Vision Statement** defines our expectations and directions for the future, frames the mandate for the Comprehensive Plan, and provides the benchmark to measure our progress.

#### *A guide for the management of change...*

If our Vision for Huntington's future is to be realized, the Comprehensive Plan must positively and deliberately influence growth and change. To exert this influence in managing change, the Plan must be actively applied as a framework through which we make decisions, establish priorities, and take actions that advance us toward the Vision. While Town government will take a leadership role in this effort, the Plan will call on citizens, civic organizations, institutions, and businesses to coordinate their efforts with a shared sense of direction and a renewed spirit of partnership.







### *The foundation for policies, strategies and actions...*

Huntington's Comprehensive Plan will examine all Town policies and strategies for land use, transportation, housing, and the protection of open space and natural resources; for investments in utilities, roadways, and other public services and facilities; and for coordination with the State, Suffolk County, and neighboring communities. Following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, we can expect potentially significant adjustments to Town policies, regulations, and investment priorities.

### *Huntington's 20-year "To Do" list...*

The Comprehensive Plan's influence on Huntington's future will be a product of the motivating power of our shared vision, and the effectiveness of actions taken to realize the vision. The vision will not be achieved simply because we agree with the sentiments it expresses. Rather, it will be realized by steady progress in adhering to a well-defined "game plan" that sets priorities for effective short and long-term actions.



### **The Perspective of the Vision**

It is important to understand the perspective of the Vision Statement and its context and use in the creation of the Comprehensive Plan. Huntington's Vision Statement expresses our aspirations for the future of our community as it will exist in the Year 2025. As such, it should be clearly distinguished from the full Comprehensive Plan that will be prepared following the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement expresses our values and motivations – "*what we intend to be*" – while the strategies and actions laid out in the Comprehensive Plan will set out in detail "*what we must do to achieve the vision.*"

As we read the Vision Statement and imagine Huntington as we wish it to be in 2025, we will naturally make comparisons with the Town as it is now, or as it was in the past. We will distinguish ways in which Huntington has changed a great deal from ways in which it seems hardly changed at all. Because the Comprehensive Plan will be used to manage change, consider how the Vision Statement proactively addresses change; balancing vigilance in protecting that which we cherish about Huntington as it is, coupled with an activism in promoting change that will address our deficiencies and accelerate our forward progress.

### **Citizen Input/Areas of Community Consensus**

The level of citizen involvement in providing the input needed to craft this **Vision Statement** has been extraordinary. Different means of input have included the following:

- Approximately 150 community stakeholders, representing key civic, business, environmental, and other organizations and interests, were interviewed for their perspectives on the major issues facing the Town.

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- Over 500 citizens participated in five community forums at which they identified present strengths, present weaknesses, future opportunities, and future threats facing the Town of Huntington in small group discussions. Table 1 provides a listing of the priority issue areas in each of these categories identified by forum participants.
- A random, statistically accurate telephone survey of over 300 citizens throughout the Town was conducted as a further gauge of public opinion.
- As of May 2004, approximately 650 additional citizens provided input via the Town's website, written survey, or other communication.



**Table 4-1. Priority Issue Areas Identified by Community Forum Participants**

<b>Present Strengths</b>
1. Community Character and Aesthetics
2. Education
3. Arts and Culture
4. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
5. Local Economy
6. Natural Features and Resources
<b>Present Weaknesses</b>
1. Transportation, Traffic, Parking & Accessibility
2. Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing Choice / Affordability</li><li>• Housing Density / Illegal Conversions</li></ul>
3. Urbanization and Over-development
4. Cost of Living
5. Government Services
6. Crime and Public Safety
<b>Future Opportunities</b>
1. Parks, Recreation and Open Space
2. Transportation, Traffic, Parking & Accessibility
3. Housing
4. Local Economy
5. Government Services
6. Land Use Planning
<b>Future Threats</b>
1. Urbanization and Over-development
2. Increased Cost of Living
3. Reduced Government Services
4. Degraded Environmental Quality
5. Increased Crime
6. Economic Decline

From the areas of community consensus identified through the citizen involvement process, several key themes emerged to be articulated in the **Vision Statement**. These themes are:

- **Community Character:** maintain and enhance the physical character and beauty of Huntington by protecting our historic heritage, precious natural resources, parks, and scenic open spaces, and by setting high standards for quality.
- **Quality of Life:** provide the social, cultural, and other “elements of community” that help make Huntington such a great place to live. These include livable neighborhoods; excellent schools and other public facilities and services; exceptional shopping, recreation, and arts and cultural activities; quality housing for all segments of the community; and our civic-mindedness and tradition of community involvement.
- **Sustainable Community Structure:** ensure that future development and redevelopment meets high standards of quality, compatible with the Town's character and its scenic natural resources; and that necessary interventions take place to prevent decline, reverse obsolescence, and enhance the functional efficiency of the Town's transportation and infrastructure systems.
- **Responsive Town Government:** exercise bold leadership and introduce new initiatives as necessary to realize the Vision and to achieve citizen consensus and support.



These themes acknowledge as a fundamental principle the need to maintain and build on the strengths that make Huntington the exceptional community it is today. At the same time they recognize the need to address key challenges if these strengths are to be maintained, weaknesses overcome, and the future desired by citizens achieved.

### The Vision Statement

In our **Vision of Huntington in the Year 2025**, the Town's outstanding **quality of life** and **community character** are preserved and enhanced for present and future generations. It is these key attributes of the place that is Huntington, and our connectedness to it and to each other, which define our **shared identity** and unite us in civic pride.



The Town's exceptional livability and distinctive character have been achieved and maintained by preserving and building on our strengths, by addressing our shortcomings, and by making steady progress with a constant eye toward our shared vision for the future. Our success is the



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result of citizens, government, businesses, and institutions coming together in deliberate action to realize our collective vision of what Huntington can and should be. These actions have been strategically targeted towards four themes of the vision:

- **Community Character**
- **Quality of Life**
- **Sustainable Community Structure**
- **Responsive Town Government**

### Community Character

- We carefully protect and maintain our **small-town, suburban character**: the diverse tapestry of **livable neighborhoods** and scenic, walkable **villages and hamlets** connected to parks, schools, and a variety of community activities.
- We honor our **rich heritage** by protecting and restoring our historic buildings, districts, and landmarks; and by interpreting Huntington's history for present and future generations.
- We preserve and enhance the Town's unique **aesthetic character and identity** by **setting high standards** for quality, by **protecting our neighborhoods and villages** from incompatible influences, and by continually enhancing our scenic corridors, open space network, public access to the waterfront, and civic facilities and landmarks.
- We practice responsible **stewardship of our natural environment**, safeguarding our beaches, marine and freshwater habitats, tree canopy, water and air quality, and other irreplaceable resources.



### Quality Of Life

- Our schools, and the outstanding **quality of education** they offer, reflect the importance we place on nurturing our most important resources, our **children and youth**.
- Our vibrant **arts and cultural life** – museums, libraries, arts and cultural institutions, activities, and events – is a source of pride and shared experience for our diverse population.
- Our **parks and recreation** facilities and programs provide high quality leisure activities for residents of all ages, abilities, and interests.





- **Quality housing**, including a broader array of housing choices, is accessible to and affordable for households of different ages, lifestyles and economic means.
- Effective application and **enforcement of codes** and regulations has **eliminated problems of housing deterioration and overcrowding**.
- Increasing in **diversity**, Huntington is a **welcoming community** that invites newcomers of all cultures and backgrounds to participate in the civic life and economic prosperity of the community.
- We retain our tradition of **citizen involvement and volunteerism** with active participation in a variety of neighborhood, arts and cultural, public safety, faith-based, and other community organizations, united by a commitment to enrich the lives of all citizens.

### Sustainable Community Structure



- **New development and redevelopment** throughout Huntington is carefully managed to protect the character of neighborhoods, villages, and other established land use patterns; preserve open space; and set **high standards for aesthetic quality**.
- **Revitalized commercial corridors** support a more diversified mix of complementary, community-serving uses to replace commercial strips and other undesired, underutilized, or obsolete development patterns, reflecting **high standards of quality** in architecture, site design, and landscaping.
- **Village and neighborhood commercial areas** serve as centers of community activity, retaining their pedestrian scale and character while incorporating carefully integrated shared parking to support a lively mix of shops and services.
- Our high quality of life, strategic location, and educated workforce attract a **diverse employment base** – ranging from quality large corporations to smaller locally-owned businesses and entrepreneurs – thus expanding the availability of well-paying jobs and strengthening the non-residential tax base.
- Our **accessible, well integrated transportation system** consists of:
  - a roadway network with a high degree of **connectivity and convenience** and **reduced congestion** due to improved operational efficiency; and

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- convenient **transit** (bus and rail), **bicycling**, and **pedestrian alternatives** to reliance on the automobile.
- Sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater **infrastructure systems** meet community needs while safeguarding **environmental quality** and the quality of our drinking water supply.

### Responsive Town Government

- Town government retains its reputation for prudent **fiscal management**, while providing an array of **exceptional public services, programs and facilities** to meet the needs of citizens for public safety, recreation, transportation, and cultural enrichment.
- Town government provides **leadership in managing growth and change** through wise investments and effective application and **enforcement of codes and development regulations** that are clear, consistent, and which set high standards.
- Town government supports and coordinates with local school districts to ensure continued efficiency and outstanding **quality of local schools**.
- The constructive dialog practiced by Town and community leadership is a model for **civil discourse** by citizens to achieve consensus on challenging issues.
- Town government is **responsive** to citizen concerns and encourages citizens to become well-informed and involved by affording a wide variety of opportunities for **active participation in civic affairs**.
- The Town has taken a leadership role in promoting greater **intergovernmental coordination** with federal, state, and county governments, adjacent towns, and our four villages.



### Realizing the Vision: Strategic Initiatives

The Vision Statement provides the mandate and direction for a broad array of initiatives that must be identified in the Comprehensive Plan and implemented over the next 10 to 20 year period if the future desired by Huntington's citizens is to be achieved. Priorities will need to be set and the Town's resources carefully allocated over time in this effort. An implementation plan with a schedule of actions to be taken in the short, mid, and long terms will be laid out in the Comprehensive Plan. To set the stage for defining in the Comprehensive Plan how the Vision Statement



will be turned into reality, a series of **bold strategic initiatives** are suggested as priorities for action by Town government. These initiatives respond directly to the priorities identified by citizens through the various means of public involvement:

- Work with state and county agencies to **retrofit the road network** with state-of-the-art signalization and other targeted improvements to enhance operational efficiency and **reduce traffic congestion**.
- Continue to expand the network of permanently **reserved open space** and improve the protection of sensitive environmental resources, such as groundwater supply.
- **Alleviate substandard housing conditions**, while promoting a more **diverse housing stock affordable to all** income groups.
- **“Raise the bar” on development quality** and sustainability through standards tailored to retain and complement the unique identity of the Town’s diverse neighborhoods, villages, and commercial areas, while addressing environmental, traffic, and other impacts.
- Improve the **aesthetic character and viability of commercial corridors** through design standards and actions to promote revitalization and redevelopment of undesirable and obsolete development patterns with appropriate uses.



### 4.2 Public Comments on the Draft Vision Statement



Four meetings to receive public comments on the Draft Vision Statement were conducted in June 2004 at the Hilton Hotel in Melville, the Huntington Intermediate School in Huntington Station, the East Northport Middle School, and Half Hollow Hills High School East in Dix Hills. In addition, the comment period on the draft remained open throughout the summer of 2004 to allow members of the public to submit additional comments.

In general, the comments received confirm that the Vision Statement reflects citizens’ values and aspirations for the future of the Town of Huntington. The most substantive comments dealt with ways in which the Vision can be realized through specific strategies to be explored in developing the full Comprehensive Plan. Examples of these comments include:

- Implement traffic calming measures to address vehicular cut-through traffic in neighborhoods

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- Institute an architectural review board/standards
- Set priorities for action in the Comprehensive Plan

A limited number of comments dealt with substantive changes to the Vision Statement itself. These comments did not propose major changes and again can largely be addressed in developing the full Comprehensive Plan. Two examples include:

- Improve accessibility for persons with disabilities (accessibility is mentioned twice in the Vision Statement; strategies for increasing accessibility can be fleshed out in the Comprehensive Plan)
- Address traffic/pedestrian safety (safety for vehicles and pedestrians is implied in the Vision Statement in the context of an “accessible, well integrated transportation system”; strategies can be fleshed out in the Comprehensive Plan)

All comments received on the Vision Statement have been recorded and will be taken into consideration by the Town in developing the policies, strategies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

### 4.3 Implementation Framework

The immediate challenge facing the Town is to translate the broad directions set by the Vision Statement into concrete policies and strategies for action in the full Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement Report provides initial guidance for this effort by identifying five strategic initiatives as priorities:

- Implement targeted roadway improvements, including state-of-the-art signalization, to enhance operational efficiency and reduce traffic congestion
- Expand the Town’s open space network/protection of sensitive environmental resources
- Alleviate substandard housing conditions/promote a more diverse housing stock
- “Raise the bar” on development quality through the enactment of improved standards in the Town’s Zoning Ordinance
- Improve the aesthetic character and viability of commercial corridors through regulatory and investment strategies

Specific strategies and actions to be undertaken by the Town to accomplish these initiatives, including timeframes for phased implementation, should be established in the Comprehensive Plan. Strategies, actions, and priorities to accomplish components of the Vision Statement not addressed by the strategic initiatives will also need to be





developed in the Comprehensive Plan. This final section of Community Visioning Report recommends a framework for developing strategies and actions in the next phase of work for the new Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan. The framework has two major components that correspond to steps needed to fully develop the Comprehensive Plan:

1. Translate the general directions set by the Vision Statement and Strategic Initiatives into topical elements for the development of more specific policies and actions to be pursued by the Town.
2. Synthesize the policies and actions laid out in the plan elements into an implementation program that clearly defines the steps that the Town will take to carry out the Comprehensive Plan and achieve the Vision Statement.

Each of these components is discussed in further detail below.

### **Comprehensive Plan Elements**

The 1993 Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan was organized around the following elements:

- Demographics (required background information)
- Transportation
- Environmental Conditions
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities
- Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources
- Implementation (including the Land Use Plan, a map of the desired future pattern of land uses in the community)

These elements generally coincide with the suggested content of municipal comprehensive plans set out in New York State planning law. It is recommended that the new Comprehensive Plan be structured around these same elements, with the potential addition of three new ones:

1. A new “Community Appearance” element could be added to address a major concern identified by citizens during the visioning process: the visual character of Huntington, particularly the Town’s major roadway corridors. Alternatively, this topic could be combined with Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources in a “Community Character” element.
2. A Land Use Element (separate from Implementation) could be included to present the Land Use Plan and accompanying strategies to achieve the desired pattern of future land uses.



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3. A Governance Element could be added to develop policies and strategies related to the “Responsive Town Government” component of the Vision Statement.

The following text identifies initial issues that should be considered in developing policies and strategies for each element (implementation is discussed separately below). This analysis is based upon the results of the Phase 1 community visioning process as framed by the Vision Statement and Strategic Initiatives. Policy development for each element should begin with an assessment of progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan (see Section 3.1).

### Demographics

The demographic analysis conducted as part of the Phase 1 report by Economics Research Associates provides the necessary background information regarding conditions, trends, and projections related to Huntington’s population (see Section 3.5 for a summary). In developing the full Comprehensive Plan some additional analysis may be necessary to address specific issues, such as future public school enrollment trends and the implications of population projections for future development in the Town (and vice versa).

### Transportation

The Vision Statement describes a future transportation system in Huntington characterized by a “high degree of connectivity,” “convenience,” “reduced congestion,” and “convenient transit, bicycling, and pedestrian alternatives to reliance on the automobile.” Responding to public input that identified traffic congestion as a major issue, Strategic Initiative #1 proposes that the Town’s road network be “retrofitted” with “state-of-the-art signalization and other targeted improvements to enhance operational efficiency” and traffic flow. In accordance with these directives, efforts to develop transportation policies and strategies should concentrate in two areas:

1. Identification of steps to be taken to improve the operational efficiency of the road network, including priority “hot spots” for improvements and a strategy for coordinating and funding signalization improvements among the three jurisdictions (State, County, and Town) responsible for Huntington’s roads.
2. Exploration of ways to make Huntington a more multi-modal community by expanding opportunities for residents to walk, ride bicycles, and use transit. While significantly decreasing the degree of automobile dependency in the community will be difficult, strategies can be developed to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit usage



incrementally over time while addressing citizen concerns such as safety and accessibility for the handicapped.

Section 3.4 of this report identifies other issues to be addressed in the Transportation Element, including parking issues (particularly in Huntington Village), improving traffic impact requirements for new development proposals, and evaluating the resources committed by the Town to transportation.

### Environmental Conditions

The Vision Statement calls for “responsible stewardship of our natural environment,” including “beaches, marine and freshwater habitats, tree canopy, water and air quality, and other irreplaceable resources.” “Sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure systems” are identified as “safeguard(ing) environmental quality and the quality of our drinking water supply.” In addition, Strategic Initiative #2 calls for improved “protection of sensitive environmental resources, such as groundwater supply.”



Huntington’s rich natural resources are key to the Town’s attractiveness as a place to live and provide environmental benefits such as drinking water supply, flood abatement, and wildlife habitat. This element of the Comprehensive Plan should describe a broad-based strategy to protect the Town’s environmental resources. Potential components of this strategy include land acquisition in coordination with the Town’s Environmental Open Space and Park Fund program, improved regulatory protection, and more in-depth planning to address critical issues, such as formulation and adoption of a comprehensive aquifer protection plan (identified as a major priority by the 1993 Comprehensive Plan). One area that needs to be addressed is the relationship between groundwater supply, on-site wastewater disposal (including Suffolk County regulations), public sewer districts, and land use/development options.

### Housing

The Vision Statement identifies “quality housing, including a broader array of housing choices,” that is “accessible to and affordable for households of different ages, lifestyles, and economic means” as a key component of Quality of Life in Huntington. It also refers to the “effective application and enforcement of codes and regulations” to eliminate “problems of housing deterioration and overcrowding.” Strategic Initiative #3 proposes a two-pronged approach to achieving these goals:

- Alleviate existing substandard, overcrowded, and illegal housing; and
- Provide a more diverse housing stock with housing opportunities affordable to all income groups and household types.



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Housing will be one of the most challenging elements to develop and build community consensus given escalating home values and the concerns of some citizens regarding the perceived impacts of affordable housing on existing neighborhoods, schools, etc. The key will be to develop a comprehensive approach that identifies “win-win” solutions for all segments of the community. This approach should:

- Document current levels of need (the housing market analysis completed by Economics Research Associates provides a good information base for this task – see Section 3.5)
- Identify strategies to incrementally eliminate illegal units over time while providing more diverse housing types in locations that do not impact established neighborhoods (e.g., by redeveloping obsolete commercial uses along highway corridors in need of redevelopment)
- Address the perception that “affordable” housing has been concentrated in certain parts of the Town
- Include an objective evaluation of the impacts of new housing on schools and other community resources, taking into account projected demographic and public school enrollment trends

### Economic Development

A “diverse employment base” that provides “well-paying jobs” and strengthens the “non-residential tax base” is part of the “Sustainable Community Structure” component of the Vision Statement. The Economic Development Element of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan was divided into two sections addressing Retail and Office/Industrial Development. These chapters focused primarily on physical/land use issues (e.g., the need for development standards to match the character of different retail areas in the Town; recommended floor area ratio (FAR) standards for office/industrial uses). The Economic Development element of the new Comprehensive Plan should address retail, office, and industrial development in the context of a broader strategy that defines the characteristics of and ways to achieve a healthy, diverse, and sustainable economy for Huntington’s future. The current initiative to transform the NYS Route 110 corridor in Melville and Babylon into a biotechnology hub is an example of an issue that could be addressed as part of this strategy. Another suggestion made by a citizen in a public meeting on the Vision Statement is to develop park, recreation, and open space resources (e.g., bike trails) as part of a “tourism economy.”

The Economic Development Element should also explore the interrelationships between a sustainable economy, quality of life, and community character. For example, businesses and the workforce on which they depend are both drawn to Huntington by the Town’s high quality of life and the quality of community resources such as schools, parks, and cultural institutions. Escalating housing prices are a growing





problem for companies in need of a stable workforce to draw on, particularly with regard to young persons who are forced to leave the area because they cannot afford the cost of housing. The implications for employment growth of an overburdened roadway network that is experiencing significant levels of congestion suggests the need for creative transportation strategies to help sustain Huntington's future economy.



The analyses of Huntington's office, retail, and industrial markets by Economics Research Associates provide baseline information for use in developing the Economic Development Element (see Section 3.5). They also identify several key issues that should be addressed by the policies and strategies for this element, for example:

- The need for revisions to the commercial district regulations in the Zoning Ordinance to address the widely differing characters of the Town's retail areas (village centers, highway commercial strips, community and region-serving shopping centers, etc.)
- The need for a strategy to guide the redevelopment of underperforming and obsolete commercial areas, including appropriate new uses and site design guidelines to achieve goals such as improving the visual character of roadway corridors
- The need for additional sanitary sewer capacity if the Town's office and industrial base are to expand in accordance with projected market demand

### Community Facilities

Community facilities addressed by the 1993 Comprehensive Plan included schools, libraries, police, and fire protection. Recommendations were provided for schools and libraries only. Reflecting citizen input during the Community Forums, the Vision Statement identifies schools, and "the outstanding quality of education they offer," as a key to the Town's high quality of life. Libraries are addressed as part of the community's "cultural life", which also includes museums, the arts, and cultural activities and events and is identified as another major contributor to quality of life for residents.



Because schools, libraries, police, and fire protection are the responsibility of autonomous entities separate from the Town of Huntington, the Comprehensive Plan cannot prescribe policies and strategies for these facilities and services. However, the Plan can provide guidance for planning to meet future needs in a cost effective manner that maintains the high quality of service that residents have come to expect (e.g., by setting objective level of service standards to guide capital improvement programming). Schools will be a particular focus given stresses on the school districts that have resulted from past downsizing and enrollment increases over the last decade, which have contributed to the rising school



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taxes identified as a major issue by citizens. It will be difficult for the Comprehensive Plan to engage issues related to the fiscal condition of schools other than indirectly (e.g., through economic development strategies to increase the nonresidential tax base available to the school districts). The Plan can, however, develop policies and strategies for land use as it relates to school facilities, in the context of projected enrollment trends and future enhancement of ratables. The Plan could also explore innovative approaches to community facility provision, such as joint or shared use facilities, that have been successfully used in other parts of the country to save costs and improve service. Coordination should be undertaken with the entities responsible for schools, libraries, police, and fire protection as the Community Facilities policies and strategies are developed.

### Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources

The Vision Statement calls for maintaining high quality parks and recreation facilities; preserving open space; and protecting, restoring, and interpreting historic resources. In addition, Strategic Initiative #2 proposes continued expansion of the “network of permanently reserved open space.”

The parks and recreation component of the Comprehensive Plan should focus on determining existing and projected needs and deficiencies, along with policies and strategies to meet identified needs. Because the 1988 Parks and Recreation Study is out-of-date, the Town may want to consider preparation of a separate Parks and Recreation Master Plan. If so, the policies and strategies established in the Comprehensive Plan would provide the framework for development of the Master Plan.

Public access to and use of the waterfront is an issue related to parks and recreation that was raised by citizens in comments on the Draft Vision Statement. The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program for Huntington Harbor provides a starting point for addressing this issue in the Comprehensive Plan. Similarly, the recommendations of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan can be used as a starting point for developing policies and strategies related to historic resources. In addition to preservation, these policies could address interpretation of these resources as a way to increase public awareness and pride and as part of a broader heritage tourism/economic development strategy.

Open space policies and strategies should build on the Town’s current acquisition initiative (the Environmental Open Space and Park Fund) while exploring other ways to preserve open space (e.g., conservation easements, conservation development options). Given the relatively few large vacant land parcels remaining in the Town, opportunities to preserve open space at smaller scales, including “retrofitting” open space in



redevelopment projects, should be explored. Another issue that should be addressed relates to the future of institutional open space holdings that could be subject to development. Open space preservation should be linked to policies and strategies for the protection of natural resources (e.g., groundwater supply) in the Environmental Conditions element.

### Community Appearance

Improving the visual character of Huntington, particularly its commercial corridors, was identified as a major issue by citizens during the visioning process. The Vision Statement addresses this issue through the preservation and enhancement of the Town’s “unique aesthetic character and identity,” as well as “high standards of quality in architecture, site design, and landscaping” along “revitalized commercial corridors.” Strategic Initiatives #4 and #5 also address community appearance:

- Strategic Initiative #4 calls for “raising the bar” on the quality of physical development through improved standards.
- Strategic Initiative #5 calls for improving the aesthetic character and viability of commercial corridors” through improved design standards and actions to promote revitalization.



As a recommended new component of the Comprehensive Plan, the Community Appearance Element will provide guidance for revising the Zoning Ordinance to move away from “one size fits all” commercial zoning toward the enactment of design standards tailored to the varying character of Huntington’s different types of retail areas. Standards for village centers, for example, should be designed to preserve the established character of places such as Huntington Village and Cold Spring Harbor and prevent incompatible development. Standards for commercial corridors such as Jericho Turnpike and NYS Route 110, on the other hand, should be designed to promote improved visual character as uses are redeveloped over time. Recommendations for standards to improve the appearance of big box development could be included, as was suggested by citizens in several meetings.



In addition to regulatory controls, the Community Appearance element could include strategies for public investment to improve the visual appearance of roadway corridors, gateway entrances to Huntington (e.g., Long Island Expressway and Northern State Parkway interchanges), and public places. The plans developed by the Town in conjunction with the Economic Development Corporation for visual improvements to the NYS 110 corridor in Huntington Station provide an example of the types of actions that are possible. Improvements to corridors such as NYS 110 and Jericho Turnpike will require coordination with the New York State Department of Transportation.

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As noted above, Community Appearance could be combined with Parks, Open Space, and Historic Resources in a new “Community Character” element.

#### Land Use

As noted above, it is recommended that a separate Land Use Element be included in the Comprehensive Plan to describe and graphically portray the desired pattern of future land uses in Huntington (Land Use Plan map), along with policies and strategies to achieve this pattern. The land use map, policies, and strategies should be used in combination to guide decision-making on land use matters such as proposed rezonings.

Because Huntington is a largely developed community, the land use policies and strategies will be designed to achieve two basic goals:

1. Maintain the viability and character of stable land use patterns, particularly neighborhoods and villages that define Huntington’s community character
2. Promote revitalization and redevelopment of “underserved, underutilized, or obsolete development patterns” in accordance with the Vision Statement

In addition to detailing regulatory, investment, and other approaches to achieving these two goals, the Land Use Element will synthesize and describe the geographic application of the policies and strategies presented in the other Comprehensive Plan elements. For example, references are made above in the discussions of the Economic Development and Community Appearance elements to the need for improved development standards. The Land Use Element will integrate these and similar recommendations by providing guidance for a comprehensive revision to the Zoning Ordinance to address a range of issues. In another example, policies and strategies related to roadways, transit, and other components of Huntington’s transportation system should be designed to complement and support the desired land use pattern.

The Land Use Element also provides the opportunity to explore how strategies drawn from different elements can be applied in combination to achieve stated objectives for particular geographic areas within the Town (e.g., revitalization of Huntington Station)

#### Governance

An entire section of the Vision Statement is devoted to “Responsive Town Government.” This section addresses the following issues:

- “Prudent fiscal management” coupled with continued provision of quality services, programs, and facilities





- “Effective application and enforcement of codes and development regulations”
- Coordination with school districts to “ensure the continued efficiency and outstanding quality of local schools”
- “Constructive dialog” and “civil discourse” by the Town and its citizens on “challenging issues”
- Citizen participation in civic affairs
- Coordination with other levels of government



The Vision Statement also identifies related aspects of community – “diversity,” a “welcoming community,” and “citizen involvement and volunteerism” – as important characteristics of Huntington’s quality of life.

A number of communities across the country are addressing the topic of governance in their comprehensive plans. A Governance section of the Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan would develop more detailed policies to address the issues identified by the Vision Statement, providing guidance for decision-making by town government. Policies related to intergovernmental coordination would meet the requirement of New York State planning law for the content of municipal comprehensive plans to consider “regional needs and the official plans of other government units and agencies within the region.” Governance policies should be developed in close coordination with the section on plan implementation, and could be incorporated into that element.

### **Implementation**

Perhaps the most important section of the Comprehensive Plan is a program that clearly defines an implementation agenda to be followed by the Town, with priority actions, a monitoring process, and measures of success to mark progress. While the policies contained in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan were generally sound and well thought out, the Plan did not include a program describing how the recommendations were to be implemented. In the community forums, a number of citizens expressed concerns that the new Comprehensive Plan would not be carried out by the Town, either in the form of discrete actions or in decision-making on rezonings or other development applications.



It is recommended that an Implementation Element be included in the Comprehensive Plan to help ensure its effective application. This element should synthesize and prioritize the recommendations of the other Comprehensive Plan elements while establishing principles for the application of plan policies in town operations, programming, and decision-making. The Implementation Element should include a schedule of actions to be taken in the short, mid, and long terms (e.g., 0-2, 2-5, and 5+ years) to implement the plan recommendations. This Action Plan

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should identify responsible parties and also address the fiscal implications of the actions and policies. Another important component of this element is a process to be followed by the Town in monitoring progress made in implementing the Plan. This process should provide for periodic (annual) review of the action program based upon progress made to date, indicators or measures of success, and emerging issues and circumstances.

