



## Riverhead Comprehensive Plan Update: Summary of Issues and Opportunities – February 16, 2022

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As part of the Riverhead Comprehensive Plan Update, the Town and the consultant team performed a multi-phased public outreach program that included in-person and virtual meetings, a public survey, and online engagement. The objective of the outreach process was to gather community, stakeholder, and agency input related to the issues, opportunities, and goals to be addressed for the future of the Town of Riverhead. Provided below is a summary of issues and opportunities identified throughout this comprehensive outreach process, which was completed in January 2022. All of the work performed as part of the outreach was also available through a link on the project website at: [TownofRiverheadComprehensivePlanUpdate.com](http://TownofRiverheadComprehensivePlanUpdate.com).

### A. INTERVIEWS WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Beginning in 2020, as one of the first steps in the comprehensive plan update process, the consultant team interviewed 12 Town of Riverhead Departments and 10 other stakeholders (e.g., Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning, Riverhead School District, Riverhead Chamber of Commerce, etc.) to identify the issues and opportunities facing the Town over the next 10-20 years. Topics and questions for each meeting were prepared with the input from the Town. These interviews centered on issues and opportunities such as:

- zoning changes,
- farmland preservation,
- agriculture,
- economic development,
- parks and recreation,
- water resources,
- housing, and community services, and
- transportation and infrastructure.

### B. COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETINGS

#### HAMLET-FOCUSED MEETINGS

To provide the opportunity for community participation in the plan's development, four in-person and online meetings were held in September 2021 to discuss the key townwide and hamlet-specific issues. These meetings were held at the Town of

Riverhead Senior Center and the Town also facilitated public participation via Zoom. The following meetings were held, each focused on a different set of hamlets:

- 1) September 13, 2021-Aquebogue, Northville, Laurel, Jamesport, and South Jamesport;
- 2) September 27, 2021-Wading River and Manorville;
- 3) September 28, 2021-Calverton and Baiting Hollow; and
- 4) September 29, 2021-Riverhead and Downtown.

The comments received covered a comprehensive range of issues and opportunities, but there were some common/shared issues that were focused on:

- hamlet boundaries,
- drinking water quality,
- retaining rural character,
- zoning updates (e.g., to include agritainment uses, tighten special permit and solar requirements, small lot ordinance, and protection of scenic corridors),
- a need for a variety of housing options (e.g., assisted living, veteran housing, and short-term rentals),
- overcrowding in schools,
- needs for Downtown (e.g., historic and safety concerns), flooding, and
- climate change.

### **TOPIC MEETINGS**

Five additional public meetings were held to provide the opportunity for input organized around topics areas that were identified as major concerns for the comprehensive plan update, which were led by subcommittees with the opportunity for general public comment as well. These five topic-oriented meetings were held in late Fall 2021 via Microsoft Teams and also in-person at Town Hall or the Senior Center. The topics for discussion were as follows:

1. November 29, 2021-Transportation
2. November 30, 2021-Environmental Protection and Sustainability
3. December 1, 2021-Downtown/Route 58/Economic Redevelopment
4. December 6, 2021-Housing and Community Services
5. December 13, 2021-Agriculture and Farmland Preservation

For each topic area key participants and technical experts were invited (e.g., Long Island Farm Bureau, Riverhead Water District, Suffolk County Department of Public Works, to name a few) to provide technical input related to these topics. Some of the issues and opportunities identified were:

- solar farms,
- climate change,

- wetlands,
- Downtown revitalization,
- Route 58 retail reuse,
- recreational cannabis sales,
- affordable home ownership needs,
- transfer of development rights, and
- zoning updates.

### C. PUBLIC SURVEY

Another key element in the outreach plan was the public survey. This survey was available online to through a link on the Town's Comprehensive Plan Update website ([TownofRiverheadComprehensivePlanUpdate.com](http://TownofRiverheadComprehensivePlanUpdate.com)) between August 6, 2021 and January 24, 2022. Paper copies were also available at Town Hall and distributed at the public outreach meetings. In total, about 470 surveys were submitted and the results tabulated. This anonymous survey was an important element in data gathering for the Comprehensive Plan Update process where the Town sought opinions on the issues and opportunities that residents and other stakeholders felt important to planning the Town's future. The five most important issues identified for the Comprehensive Plan Update were:

- 1) Farmland and open space preservation;
- 2) Reuse of vacant retail space on Route 58;
- 3) Reduced traffic congestion;
- 4) Downtown revitalization; and
- 5) Natural resources and environmental protection.

Respondents thought that other uses that could complement active uses and reduce vacancies on Route 58 include:

- 1) Entertainment;
- 2) Fee-based indoor/outdoor recreational facilities;
- 3) Professional offices;
- 4) Medical/health care; and
- 5) Personal care services (e.g., salon, dry cleaning, fitness center).

In terms of housing needs, nearly half of the respondents felt that additional multifamily apartments are not needed in the Town.

### D. SOCIAL PINPOINT INTERACTIVE MAP

Another key element in the public outreach process to gather input for the Comprehensive Plan Update was the Social Pinpoint interactive map. Social Pinpoint

is an online community engagement tool that allows location-based participation with opportunities to submit comments (including like/dislike) and identify assets, issues, and opportunities on a map of the Town and its 11 hamlets. This map was open for public comment from August 6, 2021 through January 23, 2022. In total, approximately 110 place-based comments were received identifying a number of issues and opportunities including:

- park and recreational needs,
- problem intersections and parking lots, and
- neighborhood assets.

#### **E. WRITTEN/EMAILED COMMENTS AND COMMENT FORMS**

In addition to the above, the opportunity was provided for the public to submit comment forms and written comments at both the outreach meetings and to the project website. A number of comments were received through these venues and the general focus of the comments was on:

- farmland preservation,
- scenic corridors,
- hamlet boundaries, and
- the need for transportation improvements.

#### **F. NEXT STEPS**

Below is the schedule of next steps.

1. Meet with Central Advisory Committee (CAC) – March 2022
2. Community Topic Meetings – March/April 2022
3. Meet with Town’s Advisory Committee’s to review preliminary goals, policies and recommendations - April 2022
4. Presentation of goals to the public - May/June 2022
5. Present Draft CPU to the Town Board - August/September 2022
6. Prepare GEIS – Fall 2022 \*