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## **Memorandum**

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**To:** Jefferson V. Murphree, AICP, Building & Planning Administrator, Town of Riverhead  
**From:** Lorianne DeFalco, AICP, Senior Technical Director  
**Date:** February 3, 2021 (revised)  
**Re:** Town of Riverhead, Comprehensive Master Plan Update – Public Outreach Plan (second revised draft)  
**cc:** Robert White, Stephen Holley, James Rigert (AKRF); Ray DiBiase and Vin Corrado (LKMA)

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### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a “Public Outreach Plan” for engaging the community as part of the Town’s Comprehensive Master Plan Update. To that end, the draft plan below incorporates the essential components of an effective public outreach strategy in preparing a comprehensive plan update for the Town of Riverhead community.

This Public Outreach Plan will be finalized in consultation with Town of Riverhead officials and planning staff. It will serve as a comprehensive outreach strategy that encourages maximum broad-based community participation. The ultimate goal of this public participation in the Comprehensive Master Plan Update process is to identify community priorities, understand how they complement or conflict with the Town government’s priorities and vision, and understand critical needs and input to the planning process.

Essential components of this comprehensive master planning process include: 1) an Advisory Committee comprised of local experts; 2) public outreach and engagement techniques (including interactive community-wide meetings or workshops, and stakeholder/focus group meetings; and 3) developing supporting/reference materials (Maps & Inventories). Greater detail on each of these elements is presented below.

#### ***1) ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND MEETINGS WITH TOWN OFFICIALS***

The Town has formed an Advisory Committee to assist in developing the plan and identifying the critical links between the consultant team and the community. The Advisory Committee consists of 14 members

that represent a cross section of the community and the planning issues, with each member providing local knowledge on a relevant topic or resource area, including:

- Agriculture & Farmland Preservation
- Real Estate/Business Interests (commercial and residential)
- Economic Development
- Education/Schools & Community Facilities
- Healthcare
- Parks and Recreation
- Natural Resources
- Public Safety
- Community Development
- Traffic/Transit (e.g., bus, LIRR, etc.)
- Water Resources & Sewers (groundwater and surface water)

The public outreach process commenced with a meeting of this Advisory Committee on January 11, 2021 to discuss the project work plan, schedule, and inputs sought from the committee. It is envisioned that the Advisory Committee will meet monthly during the development of the Comprehensive Master Plan Update, to ensure that community interests are heard and addressed and to foster consensus, inclusive of participation in the hamlet meetings, GEIS Scoping, meetings on draft recommendations and the GEIS, and final closeout. The AKRF Team will look to the Advisory Committee for local input in synthesizing the community goals and recommendations of the plan.

Just as important, the Advisory Committee can assist in keeping the community informed about the Plan's progress. Even with a robust public engagement process, the Committee can disseminate much of the "news" about the Plan. This feedback loop would ensure the community is kept up to date and that the plan does not get ahead of the community.

#### *Town Board and Planning Board*

As part of the outreach plan, the AKRF Team will meet with Town officials including the Town Board and Planning Board. An introductory meeting was held on September 17, 2020 with both boards. It is important to the process that the Town's decision-making and policy-influencing bodies be updated on the comprehensive plan process. We would take the opportunity to present the vision for, and process to complete, the Comprehensive Master Plan Update to ensure the scope is focused on the Board's goals for the plan.

#### *Department Heads*

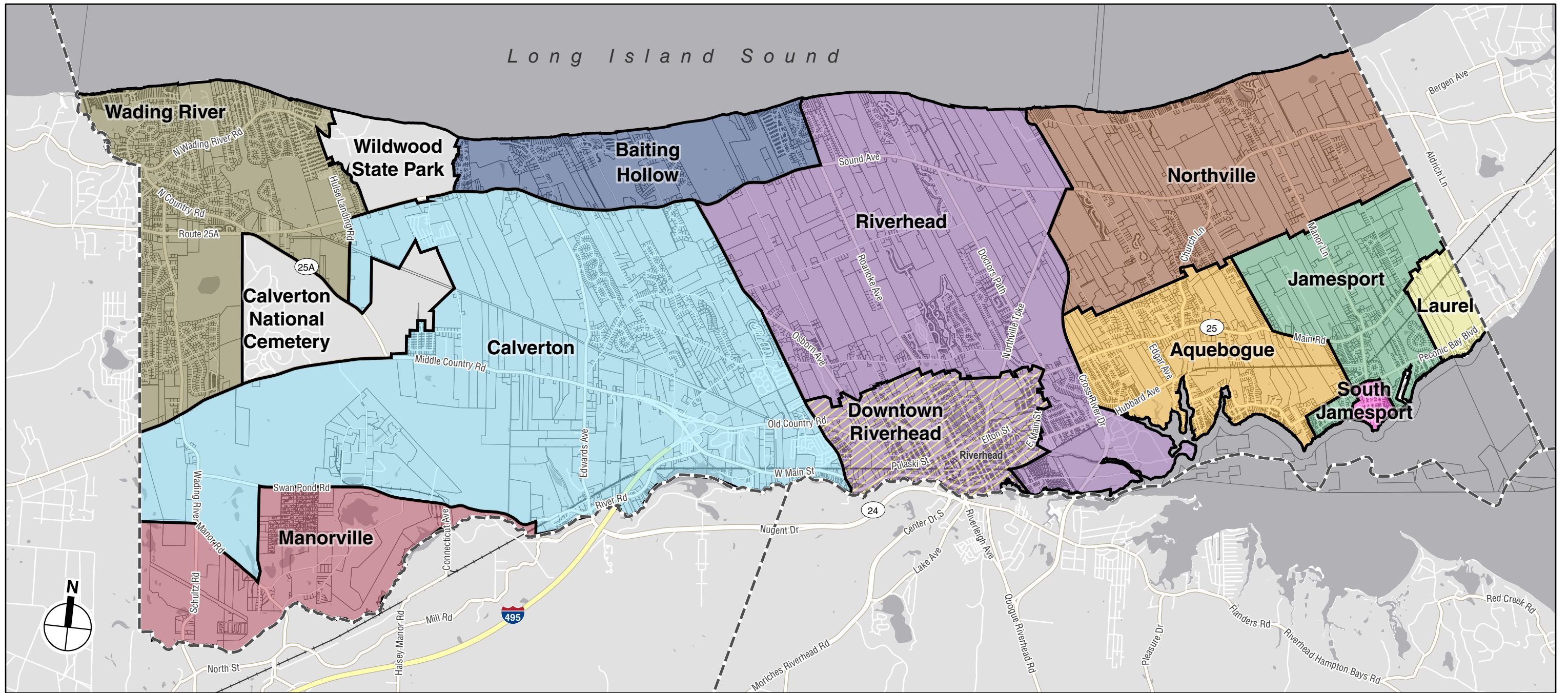
Early in the outreach process, the AKRF Team will conduct (phone) interviews with key town department representatives. These interviews will focus on understanding the goals, issues and opportunities, and both the short and long-term future of the Town. As of February 1, 2021, AKRF and LKMA have completed interviews with nine key Town Departments (i.e., Accounting, Community Development, Engineering, Highway, IDA, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Water and Sewer Districts) and eight other stakeholder representatives (e.g., BID, Chamber of Commerce, LIRR, Northwell Health, NYSDOT, Riverhead School District, SCDPW, and Suffolk County Economic Development and Planning).

## **2) PUBLIC OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

The public outreach and engagement process will include outreach to all of the Town's hamlets, as follows (see **Figure 1**, Draft Hamlet Boundary Map):

- Aquebogue

Data sources: Town of Riverhead and AKRF, 2020



### Town of Riverhead: Map of Hamlet Areas



- Baiting Hollow
- Calverton
- Downtown Riverhead
- Jamesport
- Laurel
- Manorville
- Northville
- Riverhead (outside Downtown)
- South Jamesport
- Wading River

Integral to the success of the community and stakeholder meetings is the public outreach approach, including identifying the key stakeholders, organizations (e.g., civic associations), and agencies in the community and in consultation with the Town. Effective communication will engage and involve members of the community and facilitate input. Members of the community, including residents and business owners, are the most knowledgeable about their neighborhoods and ultimately are most affected by future policy decisions. As such, the team will work to educate citizens and business owners about the process and let them know their feedback is essential to the success of the plan. Initially, the outreach materials will likely include e-mail and/or postal mailings, as well as posters and save-the-date cards. Formal letters can also be sent to a select group of community leaders (board members, civic leaders, religious leaders, social service leaders, etc.) to inform them about forthcoming public workshops and other methods of becoming involved in the Comprehensive Master Plan Update. The AKRF Team will also work with Town officials to facilitate presentations to civic organizations and other focus groups to raise plan awareness and invite participation. Following the (phone) interviews with key town department representation, the AKRF Team will hold similar interviews with key stakeholder groups throughout the town.

As the process moves forward, public service announcements and public-access programming can help maintain the community's awareness of the plan and remind them of ways they can be involved. Finally, the AKRF Team will provide materials for and attend larger community events (up to a total of 20 community meetings and/or stakeholder workshops). Engaging an otherwise captive audience and meeting the community where they live and recreate is often critical to the long-term success of the public engagement process. These outreach locations could be held in conjunction with other widely-attended community events. In light of the current pandemic, it is possible that some meetings will be via Zoom or other virtual community engagement platform.

#### *Public and Stakeholder Meetings and Workshops*

Our anticipated public meetings and workshops will be led by the AKRF Team and, unless otherwise specified by Town officials, are proposed for weeknight evenings. (The AKRF team will work with Town officials to evaluate whether weekend meetings would encourage or discourage public participation.) Staff from AKRF and LKMA will actively participate in these workshops by leading technical working groups and providing the linkages between the plan's various goals and strategies. As each workshop meeting is held, proposed plan concepts will be refined to reflect the goals and objectives gathered from public input.

For community-wide meetings and workshops with the civics, we have divided the town into four hamlet groups according to geographic area and interests: 1) Wading River and Manorville; 2) Calverton and Baiting Hollow; 3) Riverhead and Downtown; and 4) Aquebogue, Northville, Laurel, Jamesport, and South Jamesport. These four hamlet groups will allow us to effectively and efficiently communicate with each community and cover the interests and priorities both locally and town-wide. Each meeting will focus on

both town-wide interests and interests specific to the hamlets. After each public and stakeholder meeting, AKRF will summarize the spoken and written public comments for submission to the Town into a summary. This summary may also be posted on the Town's website for future reference and circulated to all participant e-mails as listed on the sign-in sheets.

*Townwide Topic-oriented Breakout Meetings*

It is also envisioned that the outreach process will include up to five townwide topic-oriented breakout groups, including:

- 1) Route 58/Economic Redevelopment (to address vacant retail/commercial space);
- 2) Farmland Preservation (including TDR and other farmland preservation tools);
- 3) Environmental Protection/Sustainability (e.g., Peconic River/Bay, wetlands, habitat protection, groundwater/water quality, sea level rise, resiliency, global warming/climate change, renewable energy, and solar farms);
- 4) Housing and Community Facilities (including social justice and social equity issues); and
- 5) Transportation.

*Public Attitudinal Surveys/Online Engagement*

The AKRF Team will work collaboratively with Town staff to prepare a public attitudinal survey designed to identify town-wide land use policy issues as perceived by Town residents and community organizations. AKRF will develop the survey after having consultation meetings with the Town and the Advisory Committee. The AKRF Team will administer the survey in 2021, working with the Advisory Committee and other key stakeholders to spread awareness of the survey. The survey will be set up using SurveyMonkey and AKRF will provide the Town and the Advisory Committee with the opportunity to comment on the survey's content. The survey will be administered via the Town's website (and paper copies may also be made available, if needed). After approximately one month of response collection, AKRF will collect the survey responses. AKRF will organize and standardize the survey results for evaluation. The survey results will then be analyzed and described statistically, and apportioned to the larger community based on the demographics of the responding population, to estimate attitudinal responses for the entire community.

*3) SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS (MAPS AND INVENTORIES)*

AKRF will also prepare a Hamlet Map and the following inventories (as outlined in our contract) to support the public outreach process and existing conditions sections of the Plan Update (employing a combination of field surveys, available GIS data, regulatory databases, and/or online searches):

- a. Existing land use
- b. Natural features
- c. Scenic, historic and cultural features
- d. Land and surface water resources
- e. Population characteristics and dynamics
- f. Economic analysis and characteristics based on land use, population, and employment projections
- g. Transportation networks and circulation patterns
- h. Infrastructure and utilities
- i. Agricultural lands
- j. Critical open space areas
- k. Parks and Recreation/Community Facilities
- l. Capital Improvement Program (CIP)