



Discussion of the LWRP - the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan.

The Sag Harbor Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) is one of only a handful of plans that have been officially adopted/approved by the New York State Secretary of State and the U.S. Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. The purpose of the LWRP is to identify problems and opportunities, establish local policies responsive to the communities needs and compatible with the broad State policies, develop a generalized land and water use plan, and provide for the management, regulation and project implementation of that plan.

In their letter dated April 12, 1999, the NYS Department of State where they inform the Village of Sag Harbor that their LWRP amendment has been approved, they commend the participants for:

“... advancing a comprehensive management program that promotes the balanced preservation, enhancement and utilization of the valuable resources of the coastal area.”

The purpose of the LWRP is generally summarized in the Declaration of Policy set forth in NY Executive Law, Article 42, which includes:

“To achieve a balance between economic development and preservation that will permit the beneficial use of coastal and inland waterway resources while preventing: the loss of living marine resources and wildlife; diminution of open space areas or public access to the waterfront; shoreline erosion; impairment of scenic beauty; and permanent adverse changes to ecological systems.”

The entirety of the Village is contained within the study area boundaries. In many ways the LWRP provides generalized recommendations for the overall community - not only on the waterfront. It identifies the context within which the commercial district lies - a commercial seaport rich in history. As acknowledged in the other historical studies undertaken by the Village, the commercial district radiates from the Long Wharf, the commercial pier/park at the northern terminus of Main Street.

The officially adopted plan provides an inventory and analysis of the areas within the Village of Sag Harbor, and establishes specific policies related to land and water use for the entirety of the Village. The overall purpose of the 1986 LWRP is defined as follows:

“The Village of Sag Harbor is proud of its long history and many historic buildings that grace its streets. It has retained a small-scale country village and seaport character that is unique. As the following initial objectives indicate it seeks to enhance this character rather than exploit it by maintaining a balance between economic development and the preservation of its environment.

“1. To provide high quality, safe recreational facilities to all local residents based upon their needs and capacities.

“2. To provide recreational opportunities within easy walking and bicycling distance of all Sag Harbor residents, including the young and elderly.

“3. To complement existing privately operated boating facilities and historic attractions in Sag Harbor.

“4. To preserve the local economy.

“5. To preserve significant open space resources in a rapidly developing area for uses compatible with the characteristics of the land.

“6. To strengthen the economic base of a small harbor area by encouraging the development and enhancement of traditional uses and activities.

“7. To manage the waterfront area.

“8. To preserve public recreational facilities along a shoreline that is severely restricted by existing development.”

The December 1998 amendment to the LWRP included some additional provisions to the above-stated purpose:

“To expand the coastal area boundary to encompass the entire Village, in order to comprehensively plan for wise use and development.

“To safeguard the tranquil residential and historic atmosphere of Sag Harbor Village.

“To protect and restore the natural resources of Sag Harbor and ensure that neither commercial nor residential interests impact these resources.

“To provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors appropriate to the historic atmosphere and natural ecology of the Village.

“To develop opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy and learn about the history and natural environment of the Village.

“To survey the commercial, residential and ecological needs of the Village in order to develop a plan that will balance those needs; and

“To identify projects that will implement those objectives.”

Sag Harbor is fortunate to have maintained a mixed palette of commercial interest and a low vacancy level.

While the LWRP did not undertake a detailed/ use specific assessment of the business districts, it did define the general character of the business district as follows:

“Business District Character Areas include retail businesses, public buildings, pedestrian amenities, parking lots and commercial buildings designed for commercial purposes and built as such, or buildings converted to commercial use from another use. These businesses are not maritime in character, but are a mix of “core” businesses such as grocery stores, hardware stores, delicatessens, offices, banks and “specialty stores such as art and craft galleries, clothing stores, and antique shops. Sag Harbor is fortunate to have maintained a mixed palette of commercial interest and a low vacancy level.”

The LWRP goes on further to state that:

“These non-maritime commercial areas are vital to the year-round economy of the Village. Protection to most of the business district is afforded by Chapter 55, Article XV - Historic Preservation and Architectural Review. Non-



architectural elements, such as pavement, curbing, trees, fences, parking lots, street lighting, benches, waste containers and street signage all contribute (or detract from) the character. The design of site amenities should complement the surrounding landscape.”

Those drafting the LWRP clearly understood the small-town character of Sag Harbor and the need to protect this as a resource for the community. On Page II-3, under Policy I, it states:

“Much of the Village was originally developed when Sag Harbor became a prosperous whaling seaport in the late 18th century - early 19th century. The historic character has been maintained and is evidenced by the notable architecture, and a well-defined pattern of streets and land uses. The patterns include waterfront areas, a central business district (Main Street), residential neighborhoods, parks and open lands. Much of the Village, including the central business district and older residential areas, was locally designated as a historic district in 1974, and subsequently listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places.”

The LWRP inventoried many issues, including: existing land and water uses; the water resources and their classification; Village infrastructure (water supply, sanitary waste disposal, the Village sewage treatment plant, traffic and parking, public transportation services); fish and wildlife and the importance of their habitats; flooding, erosion; as well as the historic resources of the Village and its overall visual quality.

The LWRP developed eleven (11) specific policies which addressed development, the coastal environment, the public, and the general environment. Many of the policies are relevant to waterfront/shorefront development and uses. Several concern the Village in a larger scope. These policies are discussed below.

Policy No. 1: Foster a pattern of development in the Village of Sag Harbor that makes beneficial use of its coastal location, enhances community character, preserves open space, makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and minimizes adverse effects of development. The examination of this policy recommends:

Sustaining the pattern of existing land use which defines Sag Harbor as an existing port. It recommends that the central business district (along Main Street) be improved as a destination for users of the waterfront, by

continuing to make it more attractive and improving physical linkages to the waterfront.

Protecting and enhance residential areas. To protect the overall quality of life in the Village, it recommends promoting an architectural character in residential neighborhoods which is compatible with existing residences and reflects the Village's historic character.

Maintain and enhance natural areas, open space and recreational lands. It recommends protecting the natural resources (i.e. marshes and wetlands), along with the protection of public recreational lands.

Ensure development and uses make beneficial use of Sag Harbor's coastal location. It recommends that site design enhance visual and physical access to the coast, locating non-water-dependent accessory uses away from the water, and expanding waterfront amenities for public use and enjoyment.

Minimize adverse impacts of new development and redevelopment. It recommends avoiding alteration of the natural shoreline, and promoting designs that are consistent with the maritime heritage character of the village, in terms of mass, distribution of structures, scale, materials, intensity of use and architectural style.

Policy No. 8: Preserve Historic Resources of the Village of Sag Harbor. This policy identifies the importance of the history of the settlement and growth of the Village along with the establishment of historic districts and nomination of structures to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. It states that

“(T)he intent of this historic preservation policy is to preserve Sag Harbor’s historic, cultural and archaeological resources. Concern extends not only to the protection of specific sites or resources, but to protection of areas adjacent to those resources - and to the Village’s historic district and waterfront area as a whole.”

The policy goes on to recommend:

Maximize preservation and retention of historic structures. This policy recommendation charges the Board of Historic Preservation and

Architectural Review be diligent in maintaining records of historic structures, and consideration of rigorous standards to preserve the historic character of the community.

Protect and preserve archaeological resources. Where appropriate, require archaeological evaluations prior to site disturbance, to ensure that any resources are not lost with development.

Protect and enhance resources that are significant to the coastal culture of Sag Harbor and the Peconic Bay area. Preserve and enhance the maritime character of the Village through the implementation of appropriate land use regulations which preserves the traditional land use pattern along the waterfront.

While the LWRP indicates that although little of the original waterfront remains from the 18th and 19th century, the grid street system which is oriented toward the waterfront, along with the historic and architecturally significant homes, the religious institutions, commercial and industrial structures and the seasonal tourist homes are all remnants of the Village's past. The Village should emphasize the preservation of the district's whaling/shipping/resort character as a while, as displayed in the building exteriors - the style, materials, massing, line, color and detail of the structures, as well as through the development scale, street pattern, landscaping and waterfront accessibility.

The LWRP recommends specifically that the Village do the following:

“Design new development or redevelopment of such size, scale, proportions, massing, spaces and spatial relationships so as to create harmonious composition of the new or altered building or structure to existing buildings or structures as already exist, and the environs in which they are set.”

In sum, it recommends ensuring that development respect the Village's sense of place, by ensuring that future development is harmonious with what exists. It is believed that the recommendations that are contained in the sections that follow are faithful to this theme, and are based upon fact-specific assessment of the existing conditions.

In the development of a future land use plan and regulations that affect development, the overall objectives of the LWRP that are applicable should be

incorporated therein. While all of the LWRP provides important guidance for actions taken by the Village, the following are important to this study:

- < Tightening up architectural/design guidelines which will help the Board of Historic Preservation and Architectural Review maintain the historic character of the Village.
- < Creation of wetlands regulations which include setbacks and buffer requirements, to protect important natural resources of the Village.
- < Establish appropriate regulations that will maintain a pattern of development that will support and sustain the Village commercial district as it currently exists.