

# MILLER PLACE

## HAMLET STUDY

Summary Draft

February, 1996

## **Miller Place Civic Association, Hamlet Study Task Force Transportation Committee Report**

The Miller Place Community is served by several main arteries that function as popular North south routes as well as several east - west routes that are areas of major congestion.

As the community has grown through the years, developments have sprung up that have placed demands on several "side streets" as well as adversely impacting pedestrian safety. Many of the streets within the developed northern portion of Miller Place suffer as a result of previous activities occurring without adequate concerns being taken into account to strengthen the ability of local streets to handle increased demands.

The committee has identified several "streets of concern" that they feel require special attention immediately in order to mitigate previous actions that have compromised the integrity of traffic patterns in Miller Place.

### **North Country Road**

Perhaps one of the most charming roads within the hamlet, North Country Road is in many ways the spine of the northern Miller Place community. Flanked on either side by historic structures and comprising the pond area of the hamlet, North Country Road is not only a pleasant tree lined street, but is identified and associated with the Miller Place Historic District. Organizations utilize the location to hold small street fairs peddling arts and crafts and sponsoring weekend activities which draw interested individuals from adjoining communities. In every sense of community life, North Country Road is country, rustic, historic, and threatened. The committee would like to make the following recommendations for management of North Country Road.

- Establishment of a North Country Road Historic Drive, adopting strict guidelines and standards regarding alteration, or addition of curb cuts, walkways speed limits, signalization and signage.
- Strict enforcement of a 30 MPH zone from Pipe Stave Hollow Road through Echo Avenue.
- No Commercial Traffic Zone [excluding local delivery] from Pipe Stave Hollow Road through Rolling Road.
- Prohibit additional curb cuts within the Historic District.
- Paving Stones arranged in "brick patterns" as sidewalks to replace the existing asphalt surface.
- Provide adequate shoulder spaces to serve as parking near such facilities as the pond area and Academy Library.
- Maintenance of storm water runoff where elevations are steep and have caused considerable washouts in the past.
- Establishment of an island by the NCR School hosting low lying destination signs of a quaint "country" nature. The island would be enhanced by low lying plantings that would not obstruct vital motorist sight lines.

## Echo Avenue and NYS Route 25-A

There are no other east - west routes which bear a heavier burden of commercial and through traffic than these two avenues.

Echo Avenue, is the location of the Miller Place Post Office Sylvan Avenue [town] Park and the Miller Place Square. Because of activities associated with these landmarks the area has become also heavily utilized as a direct route to the neighboring hamlet of Sound Beach.

Major concerns regarding the use of this heavily traveled corridor relate primarily to speeding that occurs as vehicles attempt to circumvent congestion on NYS Route 25-A. While the committee recognizes that construction of 25-A will temporarily add to this dilemma, we firmly feel that steps should be taken to establish a speed limit of 30 MPH throughout the entire length of Echo Avenue. Only in this fashion will vehicle and pedestrian safety be enhanced and assured. In addition, continuous side walks with appropriate curbing should be installed and maintained by the Town in order to encourage pedestrian access to the various professional, commercial recreational and public usage activities.

The timing of signals located at North Country Road, Miller Place Road, Sylvan Avenue and Pipe Stave Hollow Road must be synchronized in order to take full advantage of their ability to control the flow of traffic and meet the goals set forth in this report.

NYS Route 25-A has been the subject of debate within the Civic prior to the current proposed modifications which are currently underway by NYSDOT. The committee believes that in order to better enhance the obvious traffic capacity benefits this plan is designed to realize, strict adherence to posted speed limits and compliance with aesthetic enhancements to the project must be adhered too. Previously, the committee met with NYSDOT and arrived at an agreeable planting scheme to soften the effects of recharge basins. Great efforts were also made in enhancing the raised mediums which will be located though much of the project area. Sidewalks of contoured colored material as well as low lying trees that require limited maintenance were also achievements of an effort that was pro-active in nature on the part of the Civic Association.

The Committee welcomes Town efforts in a partnership fashion to insure that the gains made through the planning process are realized both during and following completion of the revitalization project.

### Major North South Routes of Concern

The Civic would like to see studies and subsequent improvements implemented for the following North - South streets.

*Miller Place Road, Pipe Stave Hollow and Landing Road[s], Sylvan Avenue, Harrison, Oakland, Parkside and Radio Avenues.*

Use of certain criteria should be emphasized in directing the study focus for the subject streets as indicated below:

**Miller Place Road:** Residential usage, no through commercial traffic with the exception of local delivery from Echo - Avencue northward and NYS Route 25-A Southward.

*Pipe Stave Hollow Road and Landing Road:* Residential usage. STRICT enforcement of 30 MPH speed limit during the summer period when beach is in heavy use.

*Sylvan Avenue :* Residential usage, NO commercial traffic with the exception of local delivery throughout the course of it's length. STRICT enforcement of a 30 MPH speed limit.

*Harrison, Oakland Parkside and Radio Avenues:* Residential usage. NO commercial traffic with the exception of local delivery throughout the course of its length. STRICT enforcement of 30 MPH speed limit.

The Civic requests that ALL roads of concern include the following improvements:

- Adequate drainage with a consciences regard to mitigate storm water run off.
- Lighting, curbing and sidewalks in commercial areas, adequate lighting in residential areas that request such an improvement.
- Enforcement of speed limits with the encouragement of a partnership between the town, law enforcement and the neighborhood.
- Prohibit commercial traffic on residential streets with proper enforcement of such.
- Installation and Maintenance of curbs, particularly along heavily active streets.
- Provide adequate shoulder lines to allow for safe parking along streets particularly near sites that attract significant volumes of cars.

The Civic would also request that the town pursue the State of New York to permit Brookhaven to impose "user surcharge fees" on ALL developmental activities within the town [excluding home owner improvements]. We believe this will not only compel large scale developers to produce projects that will possess the infrastructure required by the town, but will act as a valuable funding mechanism by which the taxpayers of a community will receive a true infrastructure benefit from developmental activities they must ultimately shoulder .

The town should also coordinate with the civic to petition the Suffolk County Department of Transportation, to attract and design bus routes that will best serve the needs of the community for commercial, recreational and committing purposes.

While the safety of every traveled road is of importance and concern to the residents of this hamlet, there are a few roads that should be examined closely due to their unique nature and the circumstances surrounding them. One such road within the realm of this hamlet study is Radio Avenue. The road is home to over 200 families, at nearest estimate -- with a myriad of children, pets, and all the activities that this implies.

Radio Avenue runs north to south from North Country Road, down to Jonah Road (which empties out on to Miller Place-Yaphank Road). The road is approximately 2.2 miles long, and in many ways, exemplifies the essence of a beautiful country road. Unfortunately, the road has been plagued with certain problems of late, largely due to the rapid development south of Route 25A.

Despite the length of the road, there is not one stop sign present over the entire distance. Consequently, many people have gotten used to using this road as a "thru-way" from points north down to Miller Place-Yaphank Road. Excessive speed has been a problem for years -- and the road has been consistently abused in this respect due, in part, to the lack of enforcement and the ease of speedy travel that has been perpetuated by the lack of stop signs. There have been several traffic/speed related deaths on the block in recent years, not even considering the phenomenal amount of pet deaths and accidents.

The traffic problem is now being exacerbated by the development known as "Island Estates". This development of (87) homes is now going up -- and already contributing to the traffic and safety woes of Radio Avenue. (The only inlet and outlet for this entire development at the present time is Radio Avenue.) One of the conditions of the development of Island Estates is the completion of the next block east of Radio, Hunter Avenue, down to Jonah Road, in order to relieve some of the traffic burden from Radio. Conceptually, some traffic from the development would use this as an access into and out of the community via Miller Place-Yaphank Road. While the completion of Hunter Avenue south to Jonah Road is an absolute necessity, it is comparable to "putting a bandaid on a gaping wound". Ideally, Hunter Avenue should be continued north to Route 25A, thereby providing the development their own direct route to both southern and northern points. This, however, has not been considered -- supposedly due to the "environmental sensitivity" of a short stretch of this paper-road, as well as the economics involved in completing this segment. This should, however, eventually be examined more closely for feasibility and more importantly, the safety of the residents of both Island Estates and Radio Avenue.

Radio Avenue is a residential road, much the same as Tyler, Oakland, and Harrison. We should greatly discourage the use of Radio Avenue as a north to south through-street. This could be accomplished by several means. The placement of stop signs would not only discourage the impatient traveler from using the road as a through-street, but would also aid in assuring the safety of the children and all of the residents of the street. Stepping up traffic law enforcement would be a great help in curtailing the speeding and illegal vehicle problems, and would also have a positive effect on the safety issue.

Lastly, and most importantly, a viable alternative as a north to south through-way should be encouraged. The logical candidate for this route should be Miller Place-Yaphank Road. This road is not

traveled to its' potential for a number of reasons. Sections of the road are inevitably in poor repair. During the fall and winter months, there is usually a problem with flooding. There is relatively no lighting to speak of on a road that could serve as a main artery from Route 25A in the heart of Miller Place, all the way down to Rocky Point Road to Ridge, Coram, Middle Island and Yaphank and all points travelled from there. Miller Place-Yaphank road is not being utilized to its' best advantage; consequently, a continuously increasing burden is being placed on other north-south roads such as Radio Avenue -- which were never meant for this purpose to begin with.

This situation should be remedied by improvements made to Miller Place-Yaphank Road, as soon as possible. The tremendous boom that is starting to occur in development south of Route 25A will serve only to magnify the need for an acceptable north-south Route. This road is IDEAL for that purpose, and would be more widely used if it were not so dark and desolate, and if the proper care and repairs were instituted to insure the comfort and safety of those who travel on it. This would take much of the burden off other north-south routes -- especially Radio Avenue, and enable them to maintain the quality of life and characteristics of the family-oriented, residential street.

## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

### Goals

- Maximize and improve the quality of the existing parks.
- Designs and management plans for existing and future parks as built.

Currently no plan exists defining long term goals for these parks. This has resulted in incompatible plantings and layout at Miller Place Pond and a lack of organized and defined plantings and uses at Sylvan Ave. Park. This could be undertaken by students in a related College program such as Landscape Architecture or by volunteers.

- Community wide greenway and park system.

Imagine, being able to safely walk form the West side of Sound Beach to almost the West side of Miller Place. No community in Brookhaven has a comprehensive park or trail system easily accessible to most of its residents. In other communities this has increased the quality of life as well as property values. By clustering development, using existing and future open space for multiple uses such as drainage, utility easements or educational facilities, Miller Place could lay claim to a park system assessable to a large number of people at minimal cost.

North of 25A a loop could be created leading approximately from the intersection of Woodhull Landing Rd., Rocky Point Rd. and New York Ave. This would share space with swales, a storm water detention basin and pond to reduce run-off on Woodhull Landing Rd. This would connect also to the Miller Place School campus allowing pedestrian access to the Miller Place Pond Park. These trails predominately would be separated from traffic. Part of the network would utilize property presently in the public domain such as the school campus and the Town Park at Miller Place Pond, making a total of over 5,000 feet of trails. If this network was completed it could use 1,000 feet of sidewalks along North County Road to Link up to the undeveloped Cordwood Landing County Nature Preserve and another 4,300 feet of trails would lead on to Long Island Sound. It would then be possible to loop back along the beach 5,600 feet, walk up 1,600 feet along Woodhull Landing and reach the trail system at the intersection of Lower Rocky Point Road, completing a loop.

South of 25A a larger loop could be created. This could follow the LILCO utility right of way from Sylvan Ave. at least as far East as Oakland Ave. This would provide greater access to the Sylvan Ave. Park and the "Town Center." The intersection at Miller Place Road should then be reconstructed using precast concrete pipe to create a separated grade crossing where a railroad bridge originally existed. When the Delea Sod Farm is developed a leg should be created by clustering leading South to one of the new proposed parks, located adjacent to Oakland Ave. South of 25A. A leg should also go West from this park to a proposed Park located adjacent to Helme Ave. The previous two parks should also have pedestrian access to a larger sized Town park in the former Coram Materials Sand Pit. A connection should lead where feasible to the Miller Place High School or any other nearby future school campuses, using a combination of greenways and sidewalks. A leg of this greenway could lead back to the "Town Center" near the Sylvan Ave. Park completing a loop South of 25A. Separated grade crossings should also be provided at 25A in the form of pedestrian bridges or underpasses.

#### Expansion of Sylvan Ave. Park

This is consistent with the goal of creating a "Town Center" <sup>Hamlet</sup> This should be expanded to the West and South through acquisition and the clustering of Multifamily Housing, ~~to Create a town center.~~

Arrange with LILCO for conversion of the Power Line right of way to a linear park or greenway with a paved path.

This would provide greater access to the Sylvan Ave. Park from other parts of the community. Shoreham has a park like this that is very

popular that could serve as a model. This would also help to provide pedestrian access to the "Town Center".

Create two or three new parks South of 25A for new neighborhoods as they are built out.

These should be located on the edges or corners of new and existing neighborhoods so as many people as possible may have easy access to them and so no one landowner or builder is unduly burdened. These could be created through clustering future subdivisions and be located adjacent to the middle of Oakland Ave. and the middle of Helme Ave. These parks should be neighborhood type parks of 5 to 8 acres similar to Rocket Ship Park on Hallock Landing in Rocky Point with playgrounds, and possible simple ball and soccer fields for daytime use. Trees should be transplanted or planted at the time of construction. The Coram Materials Sand Pit should also be converted to a larger park for active recreation when that is mined out. Because of the disturbed landscape, extensive grading would have minimal impact on the environment and ponds or lakes could be easily created because the aquifer is so close to the surface. Depending on where this park is located at the sand pit site, this could also serve as an access point to the former RCA State Conservation Area.

Initiation of a street tree planting, replacement and monitoring program. Appropriate street trees such as Black locust, Norway Maple, Silver Maple or Sugar Maple for the historic district should be replanted to maintain the character of the neighborhood. If trees are removed or die they should be replaced. Areas that have recent street tree plantings should be monitored and appropriate species replace trees that have died. New shade tree plantings should be encouraged on existing roads that do not have them. If a consistent tree planting is established the image of the community can be greatly enhanced.

## LAND USE / ZONING

### I. HISTORIC DISTRICT

- A. (Camp Barstow - aka Cordwood Landing Preserve)  
This site was originally intended for low usage as an educational site with limited access when it was acquired by the County. There is presently a caretaker(s) on the property, which should be continued as a matter of necessity. Several small buildings are present that could be removed in the interest of discouraging vandalism and loitering. One of the buildings could be utilized as an educational center for science, environmental and history studies. In order to maintain this 67-acre property as a natural preserve, school districts would need to arrange, in advance, for day tours. Overnight camping should not be permitted.
- B. (Vassalaros Property)  
In the historic district, on the east side of North Country Road, approximately 200' north of Heather Lane is a very large tract that goes back to Woodhull Landing Road. In the community, it is known as "Vassalaro's property". It has a stately mansion with apple orchards and other fruit plantings, as well as land in it's natural state. It may be wishful thinking, but ideally, this site should remain as one parcel. In order to protect the historic nature of the site, low density zoning should be implemented, at the very least. Presently, it is an A1 (one acre) zone. This should be changed to 5-acres, and perhaps developed under a 281 cluster zoning, as to preserve the hilly terrain and natural growth.
- C. (North Country Road)  
Every effort should be made to limit commercial expansion along North Country Road. Residential construction should be considered and limited; i.e. Bed & Breakfast, which is a good combination of residential and commercial, and is well-suited for the vacant parcel at the northeast corner of North Country Road and Landing Road. Additionally, the establishment of new stores within the historic district should be prohibited.
- D. 281 Cluster zoning was implemented on the southwest side of the Miller Place Pond in order to maintain a rim of natural growth and a quiet, passive rest area. This site is distant from what may be the larger populated and rapidly expanding area of the community. The enjoyment of this type of setting encourages us to look for something of the same nature, with a similar function, for the area south of Route 25A and east of Miller Place Road.

### II. ECHO AVENUE

- A. The area north of Echo Avenue is home to extensive residential development with scattered vacant lots that may be improved with single family homes.

- B. Echo Avenue has a small commercial center adjacent to the Sylvan Avenue park. It is one of the oldest collections of stores at one site in Miller Place. Across from this site is a parcel of 4+ acres which was originally zoned B1, then changed to J4 (office) and then again to J2 & J4. The community sees Route 25A as it's main-shopping road, not Echo Avenue. This site does not stand up as a place to be developed as J2 - considering that Echo Avenue remains predominantly residential. J4, with the building design compatible to the residential nature of Echo Ave. and the immediate surrounding structures, is preferable.
- C. The southeast corner of Echo Avenue and Miller Place Road is presently zoned J1, and is surrounded by residential homes. This has been operated as a neighborhood farm stand for many years. However, the property should be re-zoned residential to facilitate it's conformity with surrounding parcels; with present use as the exception. This would ensure our protection in years ahead against any owner erecting a business pursuant to J1, i.e. fast food, auto repair shop, or any business uncharacteristic with the adjacent sites (Miller Place Road and Echo Ave.).

### III. ROUTE 25A

- A. Unfortunately, Route 25A itself is a fiasco in the area of design. One need only look at Southold, East Hampton and Southampton Townships to see that planning was aesthetically considered. Be that as it is, how can we fix the "ugly duckling"??
- B. (Architectural Integrity)  
It was the desire to preserve the character of Miller Place that resulted in a change to the Code of the Town of Brookhaven. Dismayed to see commercial development exploding on the landscape lacking in style or taste, the residents lobbied the Town of Brookhaven to amend the building code to require new construction to be in harmony with the area. This means to us to be compatible with a New England look and sensitive to the colonial history of the area. Indeed, Article I, Section 85-45B requires an applicant to "demonstrate that the architectural and aesthetical features of the proposed structures will conform to and enhance the architectural features of the neighborhood."

We believe that the Planning Board and Building Department need to assure that the erosion of the character of Miller Place through construction of buildings with little architectural style be halted. Much can be done with creative buildings that enhance the area.

- C. The 12-15 acre parcel on the northeast corner of Sylvan Avenue and Route 25A is presently used as a nursery. PRC zoning is recommended on this parcel, in consideration of the need for senior housing. This would serve as an ideal location for this purpose due to it's proximity to shopping, offices and the park.

- D. Existing J2 & J3 centers have high vacancy rates: i.e. North Country Plaza, North Shore Mall. The community cannot support additional stores. Therefore, existing vacant J2 & J3 parcels should be re-zoned to J4 -- encouraging medical and professional personnel into the area.
- E. The northeast corner of Route 25A and Miller Place Road (approximately 14 acres) is in the planning stage of being improved as a shopping center with a supermarket, Stop & Shop, as the anchor store. It is hoped that the corner can be set aside (one acre) for a setting with a gazebo, park benches and plantings. (Something similar to Yaphank Commons would be appropriate.)
- F. Wherever possible, unimproved/undeveloped lands on the south side of Route 25A should set aside approximately 100' in depth as a natural buffer zone. Unfortunately, there is very little undeveloped land on the north side of Route 25A.
- G. (Parking Lots)  
In order to beautify the "blacktop seas" there should be parallel plantings of trees and shrubs. Alternate one-way direction should be implemented as to avoid the hazard of diagonal passage of cars across parking lots.
- Wherever possible, connecting parking lots should be encouraged. This would eliminate the need to go back on to Route 25A to go into an adjacent shopping center.
- A & P shopping center is nearly a quarter century old, and is in desperate need of extensive renovation & remodeling of both the building and the parking lot. Additional plantings throughout the parking lot should also be encouraged here. This would help the process of beautification, and at the same time, would discourage the dangerous diagonal driving that occurs in this lot every day.
- H. (Signage)  
The town should implement a signage ordinance that prohibits both portable signs, and any signs above 10 ft. in height. Compatibility of signs in each shopping center would contribute to aesthetics. No advertising should be permitted on park benches. Even with existing ordinances, enforcement on the part of the Town has been an ongoing problem.

#### IV. SOUTH of ROUTE 25A

- A. Existing residential construction consists of both subdivisions and individual site development. Most of the construction has occurred over the last 20 years.

South of 25A has the largest areas of unimproved property, mostly in the form of sod and nursery farms. The owners of these parcels have submitted subdivision maps for approval as A1 residential lots. Considering that these lots are in the hydrogeologic ~~PAIS~~ zone, we III would recommend that they be rezoned as 2-acre sites.

There are a few large nursery enterprises such as DeLea Sod Farm & Imperial Nurseries. They should be encouraged to continue their operation in the interest of preserving farmland and the business climate of the Town and hamlet.

- B. Any subdivision South of Route 25A should provide for a playground and park area. (As mentioned previously, there is already a great need for a park/recreational area south of 25A. Consequently, the approval of any subdivision should require that a parcel be set aside to accommodate this need.
- C. When the development of the farms occur, land must be set aside for a firehouse substation on Miller Place-Yaphank Road. This should be viewed as an absolute necessity to ensure the safety of the increased populace south of Route 25A. When considering the physical location of the new subdivisions, it is obvious that Miller Place-Yaphank Road would be an ideal location for this substation.
- D. MF1 (Multiple Family) zoning exists on approximately 25 acres of land on the south side of Route 25A between Ging's Nursery and Sylvan Avenue. This parcel was rezoned from single family to multi family in the late 1980's. To date, the owners have not started construction. The same owner has set aside 6 acres for J3 development on the south side of 25A. The community cannot support additional stores when there are so many vacant stores already along this roadway. The 6 acres should be rezoned to MF1. Residential housing would then exist from Pipe Stave Hollow Road to approximately 1000 ft. west of Miller Place Road.
- E. When there is cluster zoning, i.e. Section 281, in some cases undeveloped land becomes an eyesore. We believe that the residents in the subdivision should hold the undeveloped parcel in common to prevent dumping, loitering, etc.. The Town cannot possibly maintain all these dedicated lots through it's park system.

## V. INDUSTRIAL

### A. (Sand Mined Land)

Near the southern end of Miller Place, there is an area that is zoned industrial and surrounded by A1 zoned residential land. (This L zoned property may be part of the existing sand mined area.) This parcel should be rezoned to A1 to conform with the surrounding area.

Since a few hundred acres are involved, this would be a good site for a major Town or County park, with a golf course, ball field etc... However, considering that this is a superfund site, development is many years away.

- B. There is another L1 site that runs from Route 25A south to Miller Place-Yaphank Road in a narrow strip. There is housing west of this parcel and consideration should be given as to just what kind of industry will be in their backyard. An incomplete two story building is presently on the site.

\*\*\*\*\*

## OBSERVATIONS

### - GROUP HOME PLACEMENT -

The placement of group homes for the mentally disabled is one issue that needs to be examined not only within the realm of the hamlet study, but in the Town of Brookhaven, as a whole. The latest figures show that an alarming percentage of these homes are located within Brookhaven Town. There is a recognized need for these facilities brought on by the elimination of institutional settings, however, the placement of these homes and their proximity to one another within the community should be closely evaluated. Also, the issue of saturation, which is addressed in the body of legislation State governing this issue is not so clearly pronounced as to provide definitive parameters for individual townships and hamlets to operate under. (The absence of a true definition of saturation has left the door open for placement decisions being made as a matter of an individual's judgement call.) Consequently, a close watch should be kept to ensure the equitable placement of these homes within both the hamlet and the township -- in relation to the area, population and location of existing homes. To date, there are (8) licensed facilities in existence within the realm of this study. The number of unlicensed facilities is not documented.

### - INCONSISTENT BOUNDARY LINES IN MILLER PLACE -

The postal district, school district and fire district have different boundary lines. Radio Avenue is a perfect example where residents have an identity crisis. The entire length of Radio Avenue is in Miller Place postal district. Radio Avenue is in the Rocky Point school district. There is a problem, however, with the fire district line. Some residents call Miller Place, not realizing that they may be in the Rocky Point Fire District, and at the southern most part, the Middle Island Fire District.

We should at least have some conformity if we are to have an identity.