TOWN OF BROOKHAVEN

GREATER BELLPORT COMMUNITY NICHE MARKET AND BRANDING PLAN

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Greater Bellport Community
Niche Market and Branding Plan

Town of Brookhaven
Suffolk County, Long Island, New York

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 What is a Niche Market and Branding Plan?

Several planning initiatives have already been completed within the Greater Bellport neighborhood, including the most recent Sustainable Community Plan, and a Retail Market Study in 2009. Nelson, Pope & Voorhis (NP&V) is working with the Town of Brookhaven to take these initiatives a step further with the crafting of a niche market and branding plan for the core of the North Bellport community. The focus of this plan is to formulate a set of recommendations that outline the necessary steps that members in the Greater Bellport community can take in order to successfully create a sense of place, community pride and positive perceptions through a more niche-oriented position in the local market.

For the purpose of this plan, the “study area” is centered at the intersection of Montauk Highway and Station Road. As seen in Figure 1: Study Area, the boundary extends as far west as Bourdois Avenue, including the Lighthouse Mission. The boundary continues north up Bourdois Avenue, east on Atlantic Avenue to the Boys and Girls Club, and passes through the wooded area until reaching the Patchogue Area, north of Robert Rowly Park. The study area boundary extends east along Patchogue Avenue and north along Station Road to the former Polymag building. The boundary then continues east of Station Road, and includes all properties along the thoroughfare between the Polymag building and Spicy’s Restaurant. From Spicy’s Restaurant, the boundary extends east for one block down Atlantic Avenue, and then south, crossing over Beaver Dam Road. The boundary then crosses over Station Road and includes the Bellport train station and property south of the station, as well as all properties between the train tracks and Montauk Highway until it meets Bourdois Avenue.

A community cannot be all things to all people. Rather, a community emerges from something unique that allows it to stand out from other places in a given region. A niche market is just this – it is a market that has been identified as having a special attribute, unique from others, that stands out from the competition, and thus becomes a place that is able to be marketed to residents, new business prospectors and visitors alike. Branding is a collection of perceptions generated by what people believe something to be - it is what people see, feel, and sense about a place. A niche market and branding plan seeks to marry the two initiatives by exploring those elements that make a community unique and marketable, creating a place where people want to be and are comfortable, and a place that people remember and come back to. The niche market and branding plan strives to promote the community’s niche market to existing and new residents, visitors and economic development opportunities, offering a community the opportunity to develop a theme that they want to be known for.

The first step in the preparation of a niche market and branding plan for the Greater Bellport community is to identify their market niche. In determining the niche market, it was necessary to examine several factors. These include the positive aspects that already exist in the Greater Bellport community – places and events that are already attracting people to the area, factors that
make the community unique and stand out from its neighbors, the community’s own internal identify of itself, the community’s characteristics and demographics, the issues and obstacles facing residents and businesses, and what outsiders perceive Greater Bellport to be.

1.2 Demographics

A brief examination of North Bellport’s demographic makeup reveals critical information pertaining to the residents, housing stock and business climate within the community. This inventory will allow the community to take steps in planning for its future, through the evolving demographic makeup of its residents, the type of development or opportunities that the community may demand to adapt to future change, and the nature of the market that would support the local economy.

North Bellport’s (See Figure 2: Census Designated Places for a map of the Census-defined area) population has grown tremendously over the past decade. In 2000, the population was just over 9,000 residents. It is estimated that the community has grown by nearly 1,400 residents, or by 16% between 2000 and 2009. The latest population estimate for North Bellport is placed at 10,452 residents.1

An analysis of age groups is an important component in determining the demographic profile of the community. Various age groups have different needs, changing over time as the population ages. The North Bellport community boasts a relatively young population, with over 29% of the population under the age of eighteen years old. This has resulted in a median age of 32.1 years among North Bellport residents – significantly lower than both the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County averages.

North Bellport is far from homogenous, with the race and ethnicity of its residents being quite diverse. As of 2009, roughly 29.8% of the community was black/African American, and 2.6% of the population was Asian. Approximately 51.4% of the population was white or Caucasian. Of these residents, there was a substantial Italian, German, Irish and West Indian (non-Hispanic) population, comprising 17.3%, 7.5%, 7.2% and 2.9% of the community, respectively. Nearly a quarter of the community’s population was Hispanic; of this, 12.6% of the residents were Puerto Rican, and an additional 10.5% reported to be “other Hispanic”, which includes those with Haitian, Jamaican and Trinidadian ethnicities. An additional 16.2% of North Bellport residents were deemed “other”.2 The 2009 data represent the most current information available on the demographic characteristics of North Bellport.

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1 2009 data illustrates estimates for North Bellport Census Designated Place from Nielsen Claritas, which is comprised of both the study area as well as the surrounding community. See Figure 2: North Bellport Census Designated Place Boundary for a map of the area.
2 It is important to note that these figures may not add up to 100%, as the Hispanic population may be included in other races.
The average household size in the community is 3.68 persons. This is considered to be quite high, especially when compared to surrounding areas and Suffolk County as a whole. While this household size can be partially attributed to the relatively younger population and the cultural and traditional influences of extended families residing together, other factors are likely increasing the household size. Issues such as housing affordability, poverty, and unemployment would play a role in the relatively high number of persons residing in a given household in the Greater Bellport community.

Estimates from 2009 indicate that approximately 24.4% of the population aged 25 years or older had not completed high school. While the percentage of persons who have earned a high school diploma has increased over the years, the non-completion rate remains high and continued efforts should be made to promote and facilitate higher education in the community.
2.0 Existing Conditions

2.1 Community Realities

While the Greater Bellport community has an abundance of assets, the reality is that aspects of the community evoke a negative image. Pressing issues within the community include high crime rates, gang activity and violence, drug use and sales, prostitution, unemployment, abundance of absentee landlords and high levels of poverty. The community identity suffers from a non-distinct linear highway corridor, with a noted lack of access to basic goods, services and resources including a grocery store, post office, bank, and doctor’s offices, among others for the local residential population.

As a result of these pressing issues, the community of North Bellport ranks as the most economically distressed community on Long Island, and therefore a community in greatest need of grants and assistance toward an improved identity. The current ranking is based on the economic distress index developed by the Long Island Regional Planning Board, which ranks communities based on various economic and social factors. In North Bellport, 16% of the community was unemployed as of the date of publication of these rankings. Approximately 29% of the population was below the poverty rate, 67% of the population had graduated from high school, and the median family income in the community was $38,664 as of the date of this publication.  

As part of the implementation of a niche market and branding plan, the community and supporting government, institutional and religious services must work to reverse the negative image and address community issues. Public concerns for safety and wellbeing – regardless of whether they are justified or perceived – will need to be addressed before the successful establishment of branding a market niche. If these factors remain unchecked, it is unlikely that the Greater Bellport community will be able to attract and retain residents, visitors or businesses to the community, regardless of their niche. This report identifies and capitalizes on the community’s assets, and identifies positive steps toward beneficial improvements to effectuate a community identity that will lead to change and provide the greatest potential for branding and niche marketing.

2.2 Community Assets

While the community has its challenges, there are many assets (illustrated on Figure 3: Community Assets and Opportunities) that can be leveraged to promote positive change. Such assets can assist in strengthening a positive perception and encouraging new residents, businesses and visitors to the community. The market niche will draw from and supplement

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3 Nielsen Claritas MarketPlace, Census Demographic Overview 2009 Report. All data specific to Census Designated Place of North Bellport.
these assets, represented by the features, characteristics, unique places, ethnic diversity, cultural heritage and social fabric which comprise the Greater Bellport community. It is necessary for Greater Bellport to focus their efforts on these opportunities and strengths, and identify and promote the competitive advantage that will transform the community.

Of all assets within the community, perhaps the most notable is the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Bellport station, located at the southwest corner of Station Road and Montauk Highway. The station is located along the Montauk Branch, with stops at Amagansett, East Hampton, Bridgehampton, Southampton, Hampton Bays, Westhampton, Speonk, and Mastic-Shirley to the east. Westward stops after Bellport include Patchogue, Sayville, Oakdale, Great River, Islip, Bay Shore and Babylon, with connections to the Babylon, Hicksville and other railroad branches. The travel time between Bellport and Penn Station is between one and a half to two hours, depending on the time of day. One-way fares range from $8.75 for a senior citizen/disabled rider, to $12.75 for an off-peak ticket, and $17.75 for a peak ticket. While the location of the train station is a key ingredient to the community’s transformation, it is important to note that many riders bypass the Bellport station, preferring to board at Patchogue. This preference has occurred despite the efforts that went into improving the station, including parking, security cameras, lighting and decorative signage. Though Patchogue is only four miles away, it is located within a different fare zone, thus decreasing fares by $2.50 each way. When combined with the negative perceptions surrounding Bellport station, most riders favor the option to board at the Patchogue station.

Several active community-based organizations exist in Bellport, including the Greater Bellport Coalition and Bellport Hagerman East Patchogue Alliance. Both organizations strive to better the neighborhood and overcome negativity through various community-driven initiatives and support services focused on housing, safety, education, improving the quality of life, providing jobs, improving access to community services, and providing input on development applications. Membership within the Greater Bellport Coalition and the Bellport Hagerman East Patchogue Alliance stems from residents, businesses, local churches, community service providers, sports and recreation organizations, the School District, and representatives from various other organizations within the community.

The South Country School District serves children from the Greater Bellport community, as well as other school-aged children residing in neighboring parts of Town, with the school district boundary extending as far north as Yaphank. Frank P. Long Intermediate School is located on Brookhaven Avenue, to the direct east of the neighborhood core and northeast of the study area. One of the school district’s major assets is its sports program – most notably, the football

Source: Nelson, Pope & Voorhis

Source: Nelson, Pope & Voorhis

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program. The Bellport High School Varsity Football team has become a proud tradition in the community. The Clippers, a.k.a. the “Junk Yard Dogs,” have won numerous championships including League, Section, County, Long Island and New York State titles, and have been ranked nationally numerous times throughout the history of the program.

The Eastern Suffolk Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) has a campus on Martha Avenue, just north of the heart of the community. The campus plays a key role in the community, offering many classes for students of the South Country School District, in addition to various adult education programs.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Bellport Area is another key asset within the community. The Club offers recreational, cultural, social, learning and sports-oriented experiences for approximately 800 children and teenagers from disadvantaged economic, social and family circumstances from throughout the community. The Club has plans to construct a new and much larger building at their existing location of Atlantic Avenue and Hoffman Avenue. This expansion will allow for increased participation and a greater number of programs offered, furthering the Club’s ability to assist the youth and other age-groups in the community.

Faith-based institutions and organizations also play a key role in the neighborhood. The Greater Bellport community is comprised of many churches and religious organizations, including St. Joseph the Worker Roman Catholic Church located at the corner of Narragansett Avenue and Atlantic Avenue. The church serves 2,300 families in the community, offering mass on Saturday evenings, Sunday mornings and Monday mornings each week. The church runs a school – Holy Angels Regional School – which is located in Patchogue. In addition, the church runs a “Basement Boutique” thrift shop, and also works with the Bellport Hagerman East Patchogue
Alliance to sponsor a food pantry and a weekly soup kitchen. Various other community outreach initiatives include a “Back to School” program where children can come and receive donated school supplies, as well as a Christmas program that offers a meal voucher and presents for children of families in the community.

St. Joseph the Worker’s organic community garden is another more recently established asset to area residents. The three-acre community garden is located across from the church, and features a labyrinth in the center, with flowers, a path, a meditation garden and a peace pole. The garden area has raised garden beds for individual community members to use, including some that are handicapped accessible. Each bed is comprised of a 4’ x 10’ area that can be planted with vegetables; there are no costs associated with participation.4

Victory Church of God – though located slightly farther west of the neighborhood’s core on Montauk Highway in East Patchogue (and outside of the study area) – is a key player in the community’s success. The church offers a Sunday morning worship service, in addition to various regularly-scheduled activities and programs. Music plays a major role in the church, with a worship band, youth band, choir, and the Victory Steel Orchestra. Victory Steel Orchestra was formed over twenty years ago, and has evolved into a full-blown orchestra with over twenty musicians and over 45 pieces including steel drums – the orchestra is the primary source of music during Sunday morning services. The church also runs a school – Victory Christian Academy – which was founded in 1996. The church formed the Victory Housing Development Fund Company, seeking to remove slumlords, refurbish abandoned homes and provide assistance to prospective homeowners within the community. Moreover, members of the church formed the North Bellport Athletic Association, in an effort to provide recreational opportunities for families of North Bellport, East Patchogue and surrounding communities.

Robert Rowly Memorial Park is located south of the intersection of Doane Avenue and Hoffman Avenue, just north of the Boys & Girls Club. The park features a softball field, basketball court, and a playground. Enhancements to the park are underway, including improvement to, and expansion of, the ball field, the development of a spray fountain, a skate park, play areas, multi-purpose handball courts, horseshoe courts, a basketball court, a picnic and barbeque area, and an exercise walkway that will serve to connect the various amenities and features at the park. In addition, the proximity to the Boys & Girls Club could allow

for connections between the two facilities in the future, and would likely increase the benefits to the community.

The Greater Bellport Community Youth Market opened in July 2010. The Market was open on Sundays between 11 am and 4 pm from July through October and is planned to reopen in 2011. Ideally, the location will be more visible for 2011, as the market was held on the short street known as Michigan Avenue on the north side of Montauk Highway. The Market is unique in that it is run by youth from the Boys & Girls Club of the Bellport Area, encouraging entrepreneurship through the provision of invaluable marketing and selling skills and cooperative efforts. Produce was provided by four local farms. According to the Farmer’s Market Manager, the market was able to cover all of their costs and on most days, the market served over 100 customers.

Spicy’s Barbeque Restaurant also acts as a major draw to the community. Located on Station Road just north of its intersection with Atlantic Avenue, the red and white restaurant is hard to miss – it features two red arches and a cartoon chicken on the exterior of the building. Spicy’s is famous for its barbeque ribs and chicken, burgers and chicken wings, as well as their fried seafood dinners and sweet potato pie.

In addition to the above-mentioned assets, the community has begun to see some positive change. New street lighting and plantings are currently being installed along Station Road. A new fresh foods market was opened across from the train station on Station Road – in a shop that had been vacant for years. There has been interest from private investors in the area, including a block development with a grocery store on Montauk Highway, as well as a new development with a proposed wholesale club and movie theatre at Sunrise Highway and Station Road – approximately one mile north of the neighborhood core. These efforts could go a long way in improving the appearance of the neighborhood, providing access to basic goods, services and employment, and assisting in the efforts to portray a more positive image to residents, visitors and businesses alike.

2.3 Review of Past Planning Documents

Efforts to revitalize Greater Bellport date back to the late 1960s, with various plans, policies and initiatives shaping the community since that time. The review of findings and recommendations of past planning initiatives provides important background information and a better understanding of Greater Bellport’s existing conditions, demographics, values and culture. While much has improved over the years, previous studies illustrate continued stress on the community; residents of North Bellport face many of the same obstacles today as they did thirty, forty and fifty years ago. These include overcrowding, code enforcement, unemployment, crime, poverty, and the lack of access to employment, services and amenities. The following section provides a summary of most recent planning initiatives undertaken over the past several decades. Such studies have allowed clear insight as to the strengths and weaknesses of the community, as well as successful recommendations and those that have fallen short of implementation.


The comprehensive plan was completed by The Enterprise Foundation, along with H2M Group and Joseph Biber Associates, and overseen by the North Bellport Task Force. The study aimed to improve the quality of life – including housing, social service, physical development and economic development – for residents of North Bellport. This planning document outlines the background, the then-existing housing needs and resources, recommended housing strategies, community needs and resources, recommended community development strategies, and a timeline and phasing schedule of recommendations.

The project team conducted approximately 50 interviews with representatives from community service providers, nonprofit agencies, businesses and faith-based organizations, as well as federal, state and local officials, residents, and the school district. Such interviews provided detailed information pertaining to the community needs and resources within North Bellport. In addition, a windshield survey of vacant and abandoned units was conducted to understand the prominent housing issues facing the community. Findings indicated that North Bellport was isolated geographically, socially, culturally, racially, politically, and economically. While at least 40-45% of residents were children (which remains similar to the demographic breakdown today), there was a lack of visible role models who take an active interest in these children’s lives. There were few neighborhood amenities, and there was a need to leverage new sources of financial, in-kind, and human resources to expand community-based activities and services. Recommendations focused on increasing affordable homeownership opportunities, rehabilitating the existing stock of rental housing, increasing code enforcement, community involvement in decision-making, law enforcement, a greater provision of education and youth services, the development and access to employment and training opportunities, area beautification, fostering community action and involvement, and revitalizing the local business environment.

“Learn by Doing” was a program created through New Directions Community-Based Research Institute, a Long Island not-for-profit organization that works with civic groups and helps them build better neighborhoods. The goal of the program was to set the framework for key stakeholders to assemble, talk among themselves and develop a shared vision of what their neighborhood might be like in the future. The program had three phases. The first phase included the production of a participatory community design, the second phase studied neighborhood health and human services, and the third phase prepared a grassroots master plan in the community.

The first phase of Learn by Doing was initiated in North Bellport in 2001. The program identified key players, including Catholic Charities Campaign for Human Development, banking institutions, Bellport Hagerman East Patchogue Alliance (BHEP), North Bellport Weed & Seed Committee, Bellport Foundation, Victory Church of God, St. Joseph the Worker, H.E.L.P. Suffolk, Boys & Girls Club and the Superintendent of Schools. The program encouraged the stakeholders to develop a shared vision regarding the future of land use development in North Bellport through background, framework and design options for which dialogue could proceed.

An ad hoc group called “Oversight and Stewardship Committee” was formed during the process of Learn by Doing, and various issues were identified. Perhaps the largest issue facing North Bellport was identified as the lack of identity in the community. There existed many groups with different views, and no one group was able to speak for community; it was quite difficult to work together. Other key issues included the lack of grocery stores or drug stores in easy reach; the lack of coffee shops, convenience shops or specialty stores for people to meet and gather; and the lack of a local library, clinic or day care facility. Housing issues such as absentee landlords, abandoned housing, depressed property values, illegal single-room occupancy, illegal apartments, affordability and eviction issues, and the possibility of alternative ownership agreements were identified. Possibilities for partnerships with the school district were recognized, through programs including Even Start and innovative adult learning curriculums. In addition, an intra-neighborhood transportation system was recommended, and a thesis was prepared for a new Bellport Rail Station. The Committee concluded that the community must find better ways to educate citizens; various types of symposiums have not worked. The Committee has since dissolved; a Civic Association formed in its place.


The South Country School District Hamlet Study was a joint effort between various local representatives, New Directions, SUNY Stony Brook’s Department of Sociology and New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) School of Architecture. The study aimed to create a plan for the 24 square-mile area bounded by the South Country School District. In addition to North Bellport, the study area included East Patchogue, Hagerman, Medford, Bellport Village, South Haven, Brookhaven, Yaphank and a portion of Bellport. The diversity of the school district made it challenging, yet necessary for the study to set district-wide goals, to accommodate disparate needs and desires for each neighborhood.
The study outlined various demographics, including age, income, race and ethnicity and housing values, in addition to land use and zoning. Opinion surveys were mailed to all homes within the school district in order to gain insight from the community. While a very low response rate did not allow for the level of geographic detail that was intended, it did provide valuable feedback from residents of North Bellport and other neighborhoods throughout the school district. The survey responses focused on the provision of quiet and safe neighborhoods, improving public transportation in the community, affordability, utilization of vacant commercial properties, access to shore and marine activities, the desire for a community center and indoor/outdoor recreational opportunities.

Only 33% of survey respondents indicated that services for seniors and children/school, community and ethnic relations were excellent or good. There was a strong desire for better public transportation, neighborhood safe walkways, and a “family-friendly” neighborhood with indoor and outdoor community sports activities and a community center. Sixty percent of respondents preferred vacant land in the community to be used for outdoor sports.

A survey of existing housing conditions in North Bellport was conducted in May 2004, as part of the South Country School District Hamlet Study. This survey examined the condition of siding, house paint, trim, roof, gutters, windows, doors, porch, steps, yard, driveway, fence, out building(s), street, sidewalks, lights and trees of more than 300 housing units. Each housing unit was given an overall rating of good, average or poor. The survey indicates that while a number of units are in good condition, the majority of the housing units are in average condition. Very few housing units were identified as being in poor condition.

The study’s transportation chapter illustrated traffic counts of major roads, as well as existing conditions and proposed improvements to bus and rail service. Recommendations were made, which generally focused on ways to move a greater number of people in less vehicles, through roadway improvements, bike lanes, traffic calming, traffic flow relationships and Intelligent Transportation Solutions.

The South Country School District Hamlet Study was accepted into the Town of Brookhaven’s adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan, with the intention of being used for local guidance for future land use decisions.


Saratoga Associates prepared a retail study as part of the “Greater Bellport South Country Communities: Sustainable Community Plan”, in order to identify and quantify the commercial needs of residents in the community. The study was comparable to a local market analysis, and included an examination of retail trends, identification of trade areas for retail in North Bellport (along Station Road, from Sunrise Highway to the north and Montauk Highway to the south, and along Montauk Highway, between the Caldor shopping center to the west to Station Road to the east), presentation of demographics for the trade areas, examination of the existing business mix through a detailed commercial property inventory, and determination of retail opportunities for Montauk Highway as well as the intersection of Sunrise Highway and Station Road. The study identified spending trends from within the identified trade areas, and recommended areas suited for retail development. Moreover, the study examined regional competition for retail in North
Bellport, and made recommendations as to the potential business mix that should be considered in the community.

The study identified an abundance of automotive repair, and related services in the North Bellport community. The study indicated that the community is saturated with services dedicated to motor vehicles, with over 30 parcels containing automotive repair shops, used car establishments or junkyards. Interviews with local residents indicated that additional automotive repair shops are not demanded in the hamlet of North Bellport.

Specific recommendations for what is needed, on the other hand, include convenience shopping, such as a neighborhood center or a warehouse club at the intersection of Sunrise Highway and Station Road. Moreover, recommendations include attracting customers to “Main Street” shopping by extending retail north along Station Road from its intersection with Montauk Highway. Additional recommendations include the development of a farmers’ market along Montauk Highway, promoting dining as an attraction, and using entertainment – including a theater/cinema, video store, dance club or salsa club, jazz club, and/or an art gallery/exhibit hall – to draw customers. The plan recommends businesses that complement those in demand, including coffee shops, a book store and a bank. It was suggested that North Bellport seek national chains along with independent retailers along Montauk Highway, with opportunities for department stores and other general merchandise stores in the community. The study emphasizes the need to cluster new business, with the leakage analysis identifying the possibility of a restaurant/dining cluster, which could be complemented by entertainment and specialty retail shopping.

The study identifies retail categories that are currently underrepresented within the overall spectrum of goods and services, through an analysis of economic data. The study concludes that various types of retail space that could be supported by a shopping district in North Bellport – along Station Road (between Sunrise Highway and Montauk Highway), and along Montauk Highway (between the Lowe’s shopping center and Station Road). This includes:

- 1 home furnishings store;
- 1 radio, television and electronics store;
- 3 computer and software stores;
- 2 camera and photographic equipment stores;
- 1 nursery and garden center;
- 1 optical goods store;
- 1 “other” health and personal care store;
- 1 women’s clothing store;
- 1 family clothing store;
- 2 clothing accessories stores;
- 1 “other” clothing store;
- 8 jewelry stores;
- 1 sporting goods store;

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6 A leakage analysis compares the demand, in terms of consumer expenditures, and supply, in terms of retail sales, within the trade area. For the purpose of this study, the trade area is defined as a 3, 5 and 8-mile radius from the intersections of Station Road and Sunrise Highway, and Station Road and Montauk Highway.
• 1 book store;
• 1 prerecorded tapes, CDs and/or record store;
• 4 department stores;
• 6 “all other” general merchandise stores;
• 4 florists;
• 1 gift, novelty and souvenir store;
• 8 full-service restaurants;
• 7 limited-service eating places;
• 9 special food services; and,
• 1 drinking place

The above-mentioned list of goods and services represents those that are theoretically supportable in the Bellport area, and could provide a potential basis for enabling a more comprehensive repositioning of Bellport, helping it to be perceived as more of a positive destination in the region.


This document reviews statistical and demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau for the area of North Bellport Census Designated Place (CDP), categorized by age, race and sex. In addition, personalized survey respondent information was collected from 95 respondents with personalized suggestions and observations.

As of the 2000 Census, 9,007 persons resided within the North Bellport CDP. The median age of residents was 29.7 years of age. There were 2,349 households in North Bellport, resulting in an average household size of 3.75 persons, and an average family size of 3.91 persons. The survey questionnaire indicates that 21 of the 83 respondents had more than five members in their household. Roughly 73.7% of occupied housing units were owner-occupied with a median housing value of $129,400, while 26.3% were renter-occupied with a median gross rent of $1,078 per month. Approximately 24.7% of homeowners were paying more than 35% of their household income on mortgage and other owner costs, and over 55% of renters were paying greater than 35% of their household income on rent. It was estimated that 6.8% of housing units were vacant. Approximately 53.1% of the population was white, while an additional 31% of the population was black or African American. Over 20% of North Bellport residents were Hispanic or Latino, of which 11% were Puerto Rican. Over 12% of respondents indicated German ancestry, 12.2% indicated Irish ancestry, 19.9% indicated Italian ancestry, and 48.9% indicated “other ancestries” that were not listed in the Census.

Approximately 41.5% of those who responded indicated that they were grandparents responsible for their grandchildren. The results from the survey questionnaire reveal that 63 of the 76 respondents were employed in Suffolk County.

Additional findings indicated that 52.8% of survey respondents believed the community to be a poor or very bad place to live, raise a family, receive education and grow old. Approximately 48.4% of respondents had seen open drug sales or use, and 53.8% had seen open prostitution.
Survey respondents desired community involvement, health facilities, parks, community events and involvement, with repeated comments regarding things for children to do and keep them off of the streets. Suggestions included educational facilities and recreation centers with amenities such as basketball courts, gyms and swimming pools.


Sustainable Long Island, in partnership with The Greater Bellport Coalition and local elected officials, crafted the Sustainable Community Plan to ensure that future change is responsive and beneficial to the residents of the Greater Bellport community. The plan is meant to be economically, environmentally, socially and governmentally sustainable.

The plan examined environmental, social equity and economic conditions specific to the Greater Bellport community. An extensive public outreach program was conducted throughout the community, in which input was gathered through focus groups, presentations to groups in the community, numerous public meetings and community education workshops, and a weekend-long community visioning session. Over 500 persons in the community were involved in the formation of key goals, objectives and the identification of projects that can be implemented – in both the short-term and the long-term.

The plan highlights goals focused on addressing crime and safety issues, improving government responsiveness, creating a beautiful and well-maintained community, enhancing public transit options and connections, developing a range of housing options, attracting commercial business to a hamlet center, enhancing walkability, creating a range of recreational opportunities, and developing pride in the community. Implementation strategies were formed in an effort to attain the community’s goals, which centered on housing – including multi-family housing, commercial center, public safety, recreation, transportation, walkability, beautification and government. An action plan provided a clear set of steps on how to complete each of the implementation strategies.

The review of past planning documents establishes the background and context of the community in terms of how it has changed over time and the directions that have been set. This Niche Market and Branding Plan seeks to move Greater Bellport toward a bright future in consideration of past efforts and current attributes and challenges.
3.0 IDENTIFYING GREATER BELLPORT’S NICHÉ MARKET

During a series of community participation meetings held for the Sustainable Community Plan, the idea of establishing a niche market was discussed. While the automotive industry currently serves as a niche to the west of the community’s core, and a nautical/maritime niche currently serves as a niche to the south of the community’s core, North Bellport lacks an identifying niche of its own. Local residents favored the idea of building the district with a Caribbean motif, creating a very unique identity on Long Island. This community input played a major role in the identification of the Greater Bellport Community’s market niche. While keeping with this preferred theme was of utmost importance, NP&V felt that it was necessary to expand upon it to really pinpoint the community’s niche market and allow for greater positioning toward success.

An examination of Greater Bellport’s demographics, challenges, strengths and assets, as well as an analysis of past planning initiatives provides valuable insight as to the type of market niche that complements the community’s identity while allowing for positive change and growth. As seen in previous sections of this document, the key assets of Greater Bellport are its cultural and ethnic diversity, the LIRR station, several prominent churches and community-based organizations, the youth, sports and recreation, activities involving music, fresh produce and gardening, and Spicy’s restaurant. The Greater Bellport community must capitalize on these assets, as they exist and can therefore be promoted, and they are the elements that can be used to differentiate the community from its surroundings.

In an effort to integrate these assets and narrow the niche to one that is sustainable, it is recommended that the niche market focus on Greater Bellport’s cultural and ethnic diversity, as it is the driving factor behind the community’s unique market position. The elements of food and cuisine, music and the arts would be woven into this diversity, serving as the niche’s predominant and featured attributes. Cafés and restaurants, events, festivals and business opportunities should complement this niche, while supporting the strong presence of the youth in the community, in addition to sports and recreational opportunities. The involvement and strength of the local churches and community-based organizations will serve as integral support and are recommended to assume a leadership role during the implementation process. In addition, the strategic location of the LIRR station should not be overlooked. The Greater Bellport community has the potential to leverage this asset as a primary factor in future community development efforts. While the niche market will primarily cater to residents of the local community, worshippers at local churches, and passersby, the market will be strengthened even more through the location of the LIRR station. The niche market will create a unique and walkable environment that attracts persons from parts of Long Island due to easy access to the cultural, musical and culinary experience. Wherever possible, multi-modal connections and transportation-oriented development should be encouraged to further strengthen the LIRR station’s relationship within the market niche.

The following section outlines ten (10) recommendations that provide a framework for implementation of this Niche Market and Branding Plan.
4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL NICHE MARKET BRANDING

“*The best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make a place attractive to everyone else.*” –William H. Whyte

Negative community realities and perceptions represent the largest challenge to economic development and successful market branding in Greater Bellport. Addressing this perception, as well as the realities occurring throughout the community must be the primary focus on establishing a brand in the community. First and foremost, this is the priority.

Before a niche market can be successfully branded, public concerns for resident, visitor, and employee safety and wellbeing – regardless of they are justifiable or perceived – will need to be addressed immediately. If this is ignored, it is unlikely that Greater Bellport will be able to attract and retain residents, visitors or businesses to the community, regardless of their niche.

The community’s negative perception can be addressed – in large part – through evoking positive change, illustrating that residents and businesses care about the community, and want to better the conditions for themselves and future generations. Town staff and officials, civic, business, education, and cultural leaders should all take responsibility for internal marketing and fostering a positive local image.

In an effort to accomplish this objective, the recommendations outlined in Section 4.1 outline suitable techniques, tools and resources that have been formulated for Greater Bellport to use in creating a stronger presence and sense of pride in the community’s cultural and ethnic diversity. These recommendations provide a means to project positive perceptions and sustainable activity while successfully branding and positioning Greater Bellport’s market niche to others in the region. These strategies are a foundation on which the above-mentioned community leaders can build upon with the intent that the Greater Bellport community will take ownership of the recommendations set forth in this plan.

There are a total of ten (10) recommendations outlined in Section 4.1 that are provided to address the goals of the study and provide a framework for an improved Greater Bellport Community. Each recommendation includes information on the status or timeline of implementation, as well as responsible parties who will be needed to ensure successful implementation. The recommendations outlined in this section are also compiled graphically in Figure 4: Recommendations. This figure brings the recommendations to life, with images depicting where and possible means in which they may be achieved within the community.
Another critical component tied to successful implementation of this plan involves funding sources, which will help to facilitate plan implementation. **Section 4.2** identifies potential funding sources in connection with each of the recommendations outlined in the plan.

Recommendation #2, which suggests a contest to create a logo/slogan to solidify community identity and pride, is at the heart of the overall intent of this Niche Market and Branding Plan. During the course of this study, NP&V prepared several presentations to share with Town and community officials. **Appendix A** provides a presentation which summarizes the inventory and current status of North Bellport, and brings alive ideas which would assist in branding a community identity and source of pride. The basic themes have many common elements, and it is suggested that the community take ownership of a promotional theme and the elements important to the community which can be shared throughout the region, in order to have a successful niche market in the Greater Bellport community. The images and concepts presented in **Appendix A** can be “adopted” by the community, amended/supplemented, or mixed-and-matched to form the community’s identify of itself.

NP&V recognizes the importance of the Sustainable Community Plan prepared in January 2009, and has ensured that the following recommendations are consistent with those made in this recent planning initiative. **Figure 5: Conceptual Streetscape Improvements** illustrates the improvements recommended for the study area, using “before” and potential “after” photos. **Figure 6: Conceptual Plan Rendering** provides a rendering of the core of the community (intersection of Montauk Highway and Station Road, looking west on Montauk Highway) to illustrate how the community may look and feel after successful implementation of the recommendations set forth in both the Sustainable Community Plan as well as this Niche Market and Branding Plan.
4.1 Niche Market Recommendations

**Recommendation #1:** Promote the continued existence and success of the assets found within the Greater Bellport Community.

The community has numerous assets that have been, and should continue to be, leveraged to promote positive change. Two of these assets include the youth farmers market and the community gardening program. The continued success of these two recent initiatives and other such assets are expected to strengthen the positive perception and encourage new residents, businesses and visitors to the community.

1-1: Maintain the Youth Farmers Market.

One of the most recent of these community assets is the Youth Farmers Market. Last year, the market operated on Sundays, between July and October. The market was quite successful during its first season, and in order to continue this success, it is recommended that all efforts be made to bring the program back into operation next year. Additional funding sources (Section 4.2) should be secured to keep the program running next year, and on an annual basis thereafter. Once funding is secured and the program is ensured to operate next year, it is recommended that the community consider an alternative location for the farmers market. The market would benefit by being in a different location that is more highly visible to passersby. Moreover, it is recommended that the community increase the publicity for the market’s existence. A larger sign can be created and installed at the site, and festivals and/or events can be planned in advance for a successful launch of the second season.

1-2: Continue and expand the community gardening program.

In addition to the continued presence of the farmers market, an expanded community gardening program is recommended for a site closer to the neighborhood core. The existing garden at St. Joseph the Worker should remain in operation, as it is a major asset to the community and the church. It is suggested that the church and/or members of the community garden publicize and host a “tour” of the garden every spring, to show residents the benefits of the program and encourage others to take advantage of it. Once interest is built in this program, it is recommended that another similar garden be created within the study area, and the Source: Nelson, Pope & Voorhis

Source: http://urbangardencasual.com/
neighborhood core. SUNY Stony Brook has been working with the community to identify potential locations in the study area to set up new community gardens closer to the intersection of Station Road and Montauk Highway. Volunteers from the garden at St. Joseph the Worker can assist with contact information for suppliers, as well as provide tips, success stories, best practices and lessons learned.

**Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships:** Numerous organizations participated in implementing the Greater Bellport Community Youth Farmers’ Market. Among these are St. Joseph the Worker, Sustainable Long Island, the Long Island Farm Bureau, the Boys & Girls Club and the Long Island Community Foundation. The Greater Bellport Coalition is expected to continue to be involved in this initiative as well as related programs and events.

The Town of Brookhaven and/or the Suffolk County would be a valuable partner in the creation of new community gardens, by potentially supplying public land. Clearing and grubbing of wooded areas requires equipment and is an expense. Perhaps a local contractor could be solicited to donate machinery and time to clear land and ready it for planting. Cornell Cooperative Extension master gardeners could be asked to assist in development of a plan and educating local families about gardening for food and for pleasure. The community garden would benefit the population not only by providing a fresh source of food and herbs, but also would be a gathering place for people with similar interests. Security cameras and lighting may be important to provide a safe environment and reduce the potential for vandalism.

**Timeline for Implementation:** Ongoing.

**Recommendation #2:** Launch a community-wide logo and slogan contest, and choose a winner that accentuates the cultural and ethnic diversity of the community.

The creation of a unified logo and/or slogan is a great first step in reinforcing a positive identify and a source of pride, while introducing the market brand chosen for the Greater Bellport community. Examples of some of the most successful slogans used to market places in the country include, “I Love NY”, “Virginia is for Lovers”, and “The Happiest Place on Earth.” When these slogans are mentioned, people are immediately able to connect it with a particular place. It is recommended that the Greater Bellport Coalition launch a contest to create such a slogan, with an accompanying logo. The contest should be open to all residents of the community in addition to other interested parties on Long Island.

The logo and/or slogan should strive to announce to the public – residents, visitors, businesses, employees, and passersby – that they are somewhere special and worth spending their time in. It
should grab their attention with colors, sketches and words that complement the niche market of cultural and ethnic diversity, while conveying the importance of music, arts, cuisine, and the youth-oriented population to the community.

While it is ultimately up to the Greater Bellport community to brand their niche as they see fit, it is recommended that the slogan and/or logo focus predominantly on their cultural and ethnic diversity, the churches in the community, barbeque, and music – including the strength of the Victory Steel Orchestra. In an effort to integrate these strong assets in the community, several examples of possible slogans and marketing themes were explored as part of this study.

“Hear the Beat, It’s Up!”
This catch phrase evokes an upbeat neighborhood centered on rhythmic music and one that is constantly evolving into something more positive. The play on words strongly suggests the musical connection, which is already quite strong in the community with the Gospel choirs at the local churches and the 45+ piece Victory Steel Orchestra. This music connection could be the grounds for a possible Calypso or Caribbean Island-music logo, with steel drums, maracas, and other traditional instruments. This could be associated with multi-cultural music and food festivals, street fairs, and a multi/bright color palette for architectural and landscape features.

“A Budding Community”
This slogan evokes growth and positive change. The play on words also suggests a connection to flowering plants and trees, which are already quite strong in the community with the street plantings being installed along Station Road as well as St. Joseph the Worker’s organic community garden. The connection could be the basis for a flowering plant theme, with year-round “Greater Bellport in Bloom” festivals, including those that focus on one or more themed flowering trees that might include Cherry Blossoms, Lilac, Rose of Sharon, Redbud, Mimosa, and/or others during their bloom seasons or sequenced throughout the warmer months.

A good example of how a community has leveraged such a theme is found in the “Flower City” of Rochester, New York. The 10-day Lilac Festival is held annually during mid-May in one of the city’s parks. Over 500 varieties of lilacs are displayed on over 1,200 flowering bushes. The event is free to the public, making it the largest, and only such festival in the country.
“Culture and Cuisine”
This phrase evokes cultural, ethnic and culinary diversity. The connection builds on the strength of Spicy’s restaurant, the Victory Steel Orchestra, and the ethnic diversity of the community’s residents. The slogan suggests multi-cultural food and music festivals, street fairs, parades, fairs and festivals, antiques, art, and an array of restaurants and specialty food stores. The color palette and architectural/landscaping guidelines should be flexible, such that multiple cultures represented within the community are embraced and promoted.

“Greater Bellport Quarter”
This slogan evokes a “Little New Orleans”-type image, one that builds on the community’s cultural and ethnic heritage and diversity. This slogan suggests multi-cultural food and music festivals, street fairs, street art, parades, fairs and festivals. This slogan could be associated with a multi/bright color palette, with New Orleans style architectural features built into the design of local buildings.


The slogan and logo contest should be publicized throughout the community, at local restaurants and shops, schools, the train station, as well as in the Long Island Advance, Newsday, and other community newspapers. The contest should be closed after one month, so that involved parties will not lose interest. Entries could be submitted online, or via mail, to the Greater Bellport Coalition. A prize should include a gift certificate to one of the local merchants in the Greater Bellport community.

Once the logo and/or slogan are chosen, it would be taken to the public and used as a basis for celebration. It should be announced in the local papers, churches, and at local community meetings. Residents and visitors must be able to visualize the slogan, and see it throughout the community to remind them of the theme and what it represents. The slogan/theme should appear on banners and flags, gateway signs, at community events and festivals. In addition, local businesses can use this logo and/or slogan in their advertising efforts. Promotional material, fliers and mailings created to market upcoming events should include the logo along with colorful photos of previous festivals and events, as well as general happenings within the community. Once complete, these materials should be posted on local websites, newspapers, the Chamber of Commerce, and at local churches and businesses.
Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships: The Greater Bellport Coalition, with input from the community, should ultimately select the winning logo and/or slogan and promote the new logo and/or slogan to the community.

Timeline for Implementation: A community logo/slogan contest should be launched within three (3) months from the adoption of this plan. A winner should be chosen one (1) month thereafter, and marketing of the logo/slogan should be ongoing.

Recommendation #3: Host an annual clean-up day in the community.

An annual (or more frequent semi-annual or quarterly) community-wide clean-up day is an important means to realize an immediate change and foster excitement in the community. While it is understood that the Greater Bellport community once did this, it is recommended that the program be reinstated. Local volunteers could be split up into groups, with each responsible for a specific section of the community. Necessary tasks would include litter removal, landscaping maintenance, flower planting, painting, and/or vandalism removal. In an effort to recognize and reward volunteers for their time, local merchants could sponsor a volunteer breakfast, mid-day luncheon, or celebration at the end of the day’s work.

A case study of New York City’s mass subway clean-up initiative in the 1980s, albeit on a larger scale, illustrates the positive impacts associated with such. High crime rates throughout New York City contributed to the significant population decline in the 1970s and 1980s. Crime rates were especially high in the subway system, with violence, drug use and sales, vandalism, and other criminal activity. In an effort to address the crime occurring in the subway system, a new subway director and a new head of transit police were hired, who oversaw the cleaning up of graffiti throughout the entire subway system. In addition, increased enforcement played a key role in the improvement. The combination of such initiatives sent an invaluable message to criminals, that such activity would not be tolerated. The program was so effective that the transit police officer was later promoted to head the New York Police Department, translating subway improvements into quality of life improvements for the entire city.

Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships: Greater Bellport Coalition, in conjunction with members from local churches, and interested residents and businesses.

Timeline for Implementation: A community clean-up day should occur within three (3) months from the adoption of this plan, and on an annual basis, thereafter.
Recommendation #4: Pursue a Commercial Façade Improvement Program.

The businesses located within the community’s downtown – specifically those along Montauk Highway and Station Road – do not necessarily evoke a strong presence of a culturally and ethnically diverse community. Rather, they appear as if they could be located anywhere, with no distinguishing architectural details illustrating otherwise. Furthermore, many buildings are in disrepair, tired and run-down, reinforcing negative perceptions that surround the community. One way to transform this appearance, while bolstering the market niche, is through a building façade improvement program.

With funding from the Community Development Block Grant program, property owners could enhance the façade of their buildings through exterior renovations that will greatly improve the community’s character and presence in the local streetscape. The façade of each business should reflect the type of business and the unique products or services that are offered.

In addition to making general repairs, building owners should be encouraged to enhance their facades through the creation of unique design elements that would promote the cultural and ethnic diversity found within the community. Continuity is crucial when developing a strong branding program, and a style guide should be developed that outlines the colors, building materials, fonts, sizes, architectural details, lighting, and other guidelines that should be encouraged for the façade improvement program, as well as for the development of all new buildings in the community.

Such design elements would complement the brand, in addition to the chosen slogan and/or logo. For example, if the community decides on a “Greater Bellport Quarter” or similar-type of slogan, building design could take the form of New Orleans-style architecture, with vibrant colors, second story balconies, and the like.

Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships: The Town of Brookhaven should pursue funding for a Commercial Façade Improvement Program, and then solicit an RFQ for design professionals that can assist in developing the guidelines. This should include coordination with the Greater Bellport Coalition, to facilitate meetings with the community to generate excitement and offer assistance to interested property owners.

Timeline for Implementation: The Town of Brookhaven should pursue funding for a Commercial Façade Improvement Program within (6) months from the adoption of this plan. It is recommended that an RFQ for design professionals be solicited immediately following the
securing of funding, with a Commercial Façade Improvement Program formed within six (6) months, thereafter.

**Recommendation #5: Encourage the installation of additional streetscape and design improvements along Station Road and Montauk Highway**

First impressions last a lifetime; as such, a critical element in the market branding process is appearance. A person must feel that the Greater Bellport community is a special place that’s worth stopping to check out, and worth coming back to. Currently, the impression is not necessarily welcoming to residents, visitors or potential business opportunities, and the economic conditions will likely continue to decline if left as it is.

While recent efforts have resulted in the installation of several street lights and ornamental trees along Station Road, continued improvements are recommended. It is important that these streetscape improvements complement the new infrastructure along Station Road, while encouraging the use of the community’s new logo and/or slogan wherever possible – including on banners and signage, and through the use of appropriate colors in the landscaping. All streetscape improvements should take into consideration the design elements recommended for the building façade improvement program. Such improvements to the Greater Bellport community’s streetscape will establish an improved impression and a stronger sense of place, while boosting community pride and encouraging economic development at the same time.

An example of how streetscape and design improvements have successfully transformed a place and reversed strong negative perceptions can be found in Bryant Park in New York City. In the early 1980s, Bryant Park was overrun with drug dealers. When combined with the park’s overall appearance and lack of activity, the park was often overlooked and not used to its potential, even during broad daylight. A set of design recommendations were initiated, which brought life back to the park. The entrances to the park were enlarged, the tall hedges were removed for improved visibility and security, food kiosks were installed at the main entrance, and seating was provided throughout the park. Bryant Park Development Corporation planned outdoor
movies and other activities that drew the public to the park. In addition, games were lent to those using the park, and a restaurant and café were built. Now, Bryant Park serves as a major draw to residents, employees, and tourists alike.\(^7\)

Another example can be found in Chapel Street in New Haven, Connecticut. To make room for an extra lane of traffic, sidewalks were narrowed and parking was removed along Chapel Street. Not surprisingly, this had negative impacts on the neighborhood: Chapel Street became a thoroughfare, businesses began to suffer and the street life suffered a decline. A streetscape plan was later prepared, and resulted in the re-birth of Chapel Street as a lively place. At intersections, the sidewalks were restored to their original width to allow for outdoor dining, and parking spaces were returned to the rest of the block. Benches and trash receptacles were installed, and the appropriate type and size of trees were planted in strategically placed locations.\(^8\)

5-1: Install additional streetscape enhancements along the major corridors in the community, including Montauk Highway and Station Road.

Additional streetscape enhancements should include gateway signs, banners, colorful flowering plants and/or trees, additional street lighting, directional signage where appropriate, ornamental landscaping, flower boxes and benches. Sidewalk planters can be installed around street trees, with signage indicating the type of tree and its importance to the community.

5-2: Install welcoming signage at each of the community’s gateways.

A colorful “Welcome to Greater Bellport” sign should be installed at each of the community’s gateways. The signage could read “Welcome” in each of the languages spoken in the community to support the significance of the niche market.

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5-3:  **Erect a flag display in the core of the community.**

A flag display could be erected, showcasing flags from each of the countries where residents and their ancestors originate. This would be a clear sign of the diversity of cultures and nationalities that the Greater Bellport community is proud to exhibit. The flag display should be erected along Montauk Highway or Station Road, in the core of the community.

5-4:  **Install bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the community.**

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including bike racks and signage, should be placed throughout the community to foster linkages with the railroad station, and the regional “greenway” system of trails. A series of decorative bicycle racks – including a high heel shoe, a dog, a coffee cup and a guitar – were recently installed throughout New York City, as part of a public art program intended to encourage bicycling. The Greater Bellport Community could replicate this program through the installation of similar bicycle racks, designed to complement the market niche and the chosen logo and/or slogan chosen for the community. These could take the form of silverware, fruits or vegetables, a chef hat, musical instruments, a bicycle, a flower, or a coffee mug, or another similar form to reinforce the critical elements that comprise the market niche.

In addition to the installation of bicycle racks, the community should consider the use of decorative crosswalks to enhance the sense of place, while furthering the market niche and the chosen logo and/or slogan for the community. For example, if a slogan such as “A Budding Community” is chosen, decorative crosswalks could be stamped with a pattern comprised of leaves or flower petals.
5-5: **Design and install a community bulletin board along Montauk Highway.**

A community bulletin board should be designed to complement the local streetscape and enhance the market brand with bright colors and architectural detail. This bulletin board should be installed along Montauk Highway, preferably near the train station. This would add to the sense of place while informing residents and visitors of upcoming activities and services that can be found in the community. A map of restaurants, shopping and recreational opportunities, as well as an events calendar and photos from past events should be included on the bulletin board, in addition to sponsors, participants, and winners from raffles held at past events.

**Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships:** The Town of Brookhaven, in conjunction with the Greater Bellport Coalition, should pursue funding for streetscape enhancements. In addition, it is recommended that the Greater Bellport Coalition solicit interest from members of local churches, residents and businesses, regarding the types of enhancements that they would like to see within the community.

**Timeline for Implementation:** The Town of Brookhaven and/or Greater Bellport Coalition should pursue funding for additional streetscape enhancements upon the winning slogan/logo contest is determined, and within (6) months from the adoption of this plan. Installation of such streetscape enhancements should occur within twelve (12) months, thereafter. Maintenance should be ongoing.

**Recommendation #6:** **Conduct a needs survey and business inventory to determine how to best assist local businesses. Upon completion, encourage additional round-the-clock economic development opportunities in the community.**

The existing businesses – especially those located proximate to the intersection of Montauk Highway and Station Road – play an integral role in the community. In order to encourage a successful business climate, to understand what existing businesses need to succeed, and what they need to stay in the community, a task force should be created to support such businesses. This task force should be comprised of local residents, community organizations and elected officials, which would be responsible for identifying and understanding the issues and obstacles faced by a variety of local businesses in the community. The task force would conduct a series of detailed surveys, interviews, meetings and organization of representatives from key businesses. As part of this process, a needs survey should be conducted to determine how best to support these businesses to help them become greater assets to the community. Additional support could include advocating for local businesses by helping to cut through red tape,
providing guidance and translating the needs of the local businesses to outside resources, and helping address pressing concerns including the retention of employees, vandalism, parking, marketing tactics and other issues local businesses may be facing. Findings would be funneled into an action and implementation plan that focuses on the successful retention of businesses in the community. Once the core issues and obstacles are addressed, the business climate is expected to improve.

One such example of an important business in the community is the gasoline station at the northwest corner of Montauk Highway and Station Road. Gasoline stations are a traditional and viable downtown use that can serve as a refuge after hours. Gasoline stations provide an additional level of safety in the community with an “eyes on the street” effect that results from their round-the-clock activity and lighting. Gasoline stations and other uses should be encouraged to enhance their appearance with attractive architecture and signage, as well as expand to allow complementary uses such as offering convenience goods or an automobile service station. Such complementary uses would allow for an increased patronage and a stronger presence in the downtown.

In addition to retaining and supporting the existing businesses in the community, it is essential that Greater Bellport attract additional employment opportunities that support the market niche of cultural and ethnic diversity.

Upon witnessing a successful business climate, this program will assist in marketing and attracting new business, and will therefore allow for the provision of services, as well as stable and sustainable employment opportunities for current and future residents of Greater Bellport. It is important to create both an environment that caters to the everyday needs of locals, as well as one that attracts visitors to the community. Uses and activities that are offered round-the-clock will add to the “eyes and feet on the street” effect, which will serve as another means of deterring crime, and reversing the negative perception associated with the community.

Business recruitment should be used as a means to fill vacancies and gaps in the retail mix, but also to strengthen Greater Bellport’s cultural and ethnic diversity market niche. Such uses that support or complement the niche – especially those that encourage constant activity – should be strongly encouraged.
First and foremost, the Greater Bellport community should seek out uses that will provide local residents with access to the basic goods, services and resources that are demanded within the community. These include a grocery store, a community center, a bank, a book store, and doctor’s offices, among others. The proposed block development with a grocery store along Montauk Highway would serve as a major catalyst for development in this area. Supermarkets have served to anchor downtown revitalization in many communities across the nation. Specifically, there has been a trend toward locating supermarkets in downtown areas; these markets have remained relatively untapped due to the suburbanization that has occurred over the past several decades.

In addition to a grocery store, it is recommended that other specialty food stores are encouraged to locate in the community. Stores that specialize in ethnic merchandise, cooking supplies, spices, and cook books would not only serve the local population, but could also act as a draw to neighboring communities who demand such products but have difficulty finding them elsewhere. Other specialty food stores – including an ethnic bakery, a seafood market, an ethnic cooking school, an imports store, and a café selling an array of local, regional and even international newspapers and magazines – will promote the market niche and could broaden the availability of such specialized products in the local market. An example of such a specialty food store is the Central Market chain, found throughout Texas. In addition to local and organic foods, the market offers community rooms, cooking classes (including those for children) and live music at every location. People come from near and far – not only to shop, but for the total experience.

Moreover, eating and drinking places would cater to both local residents and visitors to the community. Such uses should support the market niche through a diverse mix of restaurants and specialty food stores including an ice cream shop, delicatessen, family restaurants and coffee shop.

Other round-the-clock uses including a 24-hour fitness center, medical and professional office space, and a mix of chain retail with local establishments have the potential to complement the market niche in the community. Moreover, uses centered on community health could include a fitness center, a bike shop, nutrition counseling, medical offices and/or a walk-in clinic, a yoga studio, a dance studio and a martial arts studio.

Space for art displays, an exhibit hall, studio space, an art supply and crafts store, pottery painting classes, live-work units, a movie theatre, a photography studio, public murals and street art would go a long way in promoting the diversity found within the community, while a coffee house, a music store, a recording studio, a multi-cultural/community center, a music hall and a salsa club would promote the various types of music found in the community.

Businesses and activities targeted to children and families would complement Greater Bellport’s community character nicely. Family-oriented uses that bring parents and children to the streets
of the community could help to change the negative image of that is currently evoked. Uses including a Native American museum (which is currently proposed to locate within the community), a party and/or costume store, a collectibles shop, an arcade, a comedy club, and a merry-go-round could be attractive along Montauk Highway and/or Station Road. Sports and recreational uses and activities that could be enjoyed by the whole family could include a train park, a bowling alley, a rock climbing facility, laser tag, a bait and tackle shop, a mini golf course, a hobby shop and outdoor fitness trails.

**Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships:** A task force should be created, that is comprised of Town officials, representatives from local churches and community-based organizations, a representative of the Bellport Chamber of Commerce and interested residents. This task force would be responsible for identifying and understanding the issues and obstacles faced by a variety of local businesses in the community.

**Timeline for Implementation:** The Greater Bellport Coalition should create a task force responsible for implementation of this recommendation within (6) months from the adoption of this plan. A business inventory should be conducted within three (3) months, thereafter, and should take approximately three (3) to six (6) months to conduct. Business retention efforts should begin immediately after the inventory is completed, with ongoing initiatives to encourage the location of demanded businesses within the community.

**Recommendation #7: Develop a community-sponsored street art program.**

A community-sponsored art program is a great way to enhance the appearance of the community and bolster community ownership, while furthering the market niche. All proceeds should be set aside for the provision of additional community-wide events and festivals.

Murals can be designed on various surfaces, including the façades of participating buildings, sidewalks, designated lamp posts, manhole covers and other “canvasses” throughout the community. Street art can be general, such as benches or trash receptacles, or more niche-specific pieces could include music notes, bells (for Bellport), flowers, fruit and vegetables, musical instruments, or “junk-yard dogs”. Each group of participants can choose how to decorate their piece, within the parameters of a chosen theme. It is important that the theme and color scheme complement the market niche. When complete, the finished pieces of art should be placed in key locations throughout the community, including at the train station, in front of Spicy’s restaurant, in front of the Boys & Girls Club, and at Robert Rowley Park, among others. This street art will help to establish a sense of place, while reinforcing elements of the community’s niche market.
Successful street art and public mural programs are found in communities across the nation. Pittsfield, Massachusetts, has dozens of baseball gloves scattered throughout the city to indicate the city’s history as the “birthplace of baseball”. Likewise, Austin, Texas, has installed sculptures in the form of guitars throughout the city to designate its popular music scene. The Oklahoma City National Memorial has installed ground-level chalkboards to encourage youth activity. Youth in San Gabriel, California painted wall tiles that were installed surrounding gateway signage. In Los Angeles, a neighborhood initiative worked with local children to decorate trash receptacles. This assisted in tackling the community’s trash problem while strengthening collaboration within the neighborhood. Another example of how communities have used street art to complement their market niche can be found in Walla Walla, Washington. In an effort to promote its image as a wine country destination, decorative wine barrels are displayed downtown. Empty wine barrels are donated from local wineries to talented artists in the community who transform them into street art. The decorated barrels are later sold through a “Barrel Art Auction,” with proceeds funneling back into the community.9

**Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships:** It is recommended that the Greater Bellport Coalition solicit interest and recruit residents, local businesses, community-based organizations, churches, school clubs, and sports teams – with a special focus on talented artists – to play a role in the community’s design through designing a series of murals, or through sponsoring an ornamental piece of street art.

**Timeline for Implementation:** The Greater Bellport Coalition should create a street art program upon the winner of the slogan/logo contest is determined, and within one (1) year from the adoption of this plan. Murals and/or street art should be installed in key locations throughout the community within six (6) month, thereafter. Maintenance should be ongoing.

**Recommendation #8:** Create and encourage participation at a multitude of community-wide events and festivals that foster cultural and ethnic diversity while promoting community pride.

Events and festivals are a key ingredient in changing attitudes and reversing negative public perceptions, all the while promoting local businesses and excitement within the community. The creation of such festivals would provide people who wouldn’t otherwise visit the Greater Bellport community with an abundance of exciting and new reasons to spend their time there.

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9 National Trust Main Street Center, “Revitalizing Main Street: A practitioner’s guide to comprehensive commercial district revitalization.”
For this reason, it is necessary to provide visitors with a great experience, and one that they cannot find elsewhere. A variety of community-wide events will provide an opportunity to showcase the Greater Bellport community’s assets, and a reason to stick around and/or come back at a later date.

While events can often take time to generate a decent crowd – especially in communities that carry a negative perception – they serve a key role in generating interest. Especially in the beginning, events may not have an immediate impact on the success of the community, but they serve to benefit the long-term vitality and establish a trend. Planned events offer a positive experience, which is especially important in galvanizing a community toward beneficial change. One positive experience will cause visitors to re-think coming to Bellport, but repeated positive perceptions will result in the desire to shop in the community, to dine at restaurants that they may not be able to find elsewhere, and to come back for additional festivals and events occurring in the future. Over time, this will lead to a strengthened local economy.

In order to maximize the number of interested residents and visitors, it is recommended that the community consider regularly scheduled events. A monthly-event series would result in a total of twelve events throughout the year. Other options could include bi-monthly, quarterly or seasonal events, depending upon the commitment of sponsoring organizations, volunteers and the size/magnitude of such planned events. This regular event series should focus on the market niche: the community’s cultural and ethnic diversity. One way to incorporate the cultural and ethnic diversity into the event series is to focus on one specific culture and/or ethnicity each time. Each festival should include traditional food, music, crafts, dance, art, and other customary aspects of the culture being showcased. These elements are major drivers and should be incorporated as much as possible into each event.

In addition to the event series that showcase specific cultures and/or ethnicities, the Greater Bellport community should have at least one large culminating festival per year, celebrating all cultures and ethnicities unanimously. Broader culturally-themed events could include a multicultural music and food festival that would showcase a variety of ethnic foods and products from around the world, along with traditional music, dance, and homemade handicrafts. These types of festivals are found in diverse communities across the nation, with one of the largest annual Latino community gatherings found in a neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia. This community is known for its international diversity and has hosted the annual Arlandria-Chirilagua Festival since 2001. The festival draws up to 60,000 people per year, featuring music and dance performances, children’s activities, and traditional food, arts and crafts from an array of South and Central American backgrounds.
Additional events and festivals have the potential to be major drivers in the local economy. Food-related events could include a barbeque and/or chili cook-off, a pie-contest, or a community-wide pot-luck dinner. Once the market expands and a greater number of restaurants emerge in the community, a “Greater Bellport Restaurant Week” could showcase the diverse dining options in the community, and could extend into neighboring East Patchogue, Hagerman and Bellport Village among others. All participating restaurants would set a reasonably-priced prix-fixe, two- or three-course menu that features their most popular dishes. Alternatively, a “Taste of Greater Bellport” festival would allow local restaurants to come together to provide mini-portions of their signature menu items. A festival of this nature is one of the best ways to highlight the community’s diversity, through showcasing restaurants, food stores and caterers. A successful example of this type of festival is found at the Chowderfest in Saratoga Springs, New York. Each winter, local restaurants and caterers line the downtown sidewalks with samples of their homemade chowder. Participants pay a nominal fee for a small portion of each sample, walking from one booth to the next, sampling the offerings from each restaurant. At the end of the afternoon, participants vote in various categories on their favorite chowder, and winning restaurants receive the bragging rights for the following year. The festival is quite successful, drawing thousands of visitors, which is most critical during the slower winter months.

Arts and crafts-themed festivals can also easily piggyback on the community’s cultural and ethnic diversity. Monthly craft classes for children could be held at the Boys & Girls Club or at Robert Rowly Park, with members of the community teaching children how to make masks, maracas, kaleidoscopes, drums, and other culturally-diverse crafts. Larger arts-related events could include a monthly crafts market or an “Art in the Park” event. Stowe, Vermont, hosts an annual three day-long “Taste of Stowe Arts Festival,” which combines 150 boutiques selling homemade furniture, clothing, jewelry, original paintings, leather work and sculptures, among others. In addition, the festival features a large selection of samples from local restaurants, cooking demonstrations, and a barbeque cook-off.

Music-related events could include a “Battle of the Bands” competition and outdoor concerts at Robert Rowly Park. Sports and recreation-themed events could include a Greater Bellport 5k race, geocaching, and a skate board competition at Robert Rowly Park’s new skate park.

Holiday-themed events could include celebration of various ethnic holidays unique to the community’s demography. Other events could include a Mardi Gras/Fat Tuesday parade, a St. Patrick’s Day parade, an Easter egg hunt, trick-or-treating downtown, Veteran’s Day parade, a harvest festival, a Christmas-tree lighting, a Victorian-themed Christmas celebration with carolers and Christmas-themed crafts, and a New Years Eve/Day party.

Besides holiday events, other themed events could include a book fair, a “railroad rendezvous”, an annual street market/fair, a car show, a “Greater Bellport in Bloom” flower/flowering trees.
Greater Bellport Community
Niche Market and Branding Plan

It is recommended that the community investigate ways to fund these events without burdening its residents. This could be done through small neighborhood grants, volunteerism, and various fundraising efforts. Seattle, Washington, has a “Small Sparks” program that provides grants of up to $250 for residents to coordinate small neighborhood events with the aim of creating a stronger community. Additional funding opportunities could be raised through the creation of a 50/50 or similar-type of raffle at each of the events. The recipient of the winning raffle ticket would receive a gift certificate to a local restaurant or shop that showcases goods or services specific to the culture/ethnicity being showcased during that month’s event. This would be mutually beneficial – to the recipient, as well as the marketing of the local business. In addition, the money raised during this raffle can be set aside for future community-wide events, or put toward purchasing new community beautification materials – including signage, banners, flowers, and the like.

All events should be held in a highly visible location to further a positive perception and increase the number of “eyes on the street”, as well as for ease of those who may be visiting the community for the first time. During the spring, summer and fall months, these events can be held “downtown” along Montauk Highway, the train station, at Robert Rowly Park, or another outdoor location. In the winter, events can be held inside of the Boys & Girls Club, local churches or at a future community center.

**Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships:** It is recommended that the Greater Bellport Coalition work with the Town of Brookhaven, residents and representatives from local businesses, community-based organizations and churches to create a series of events that complement the cultural and ethnic diversity of the community.

**Timeline for Implementation:** It is recommended that a celebratory festival to publicly launch the winning slogan/logo and garner excitement from the community occur within one (1) month of when the chosen slogan/logo is determined and within six (6) months from the adoption of this plan. It is recommended that some type of festival, event, parade or community gathering be held on a regular basis, thereafter. Marketing and publication efforts should be ongoing.
**Recommendation #9:** Promote all events through the Bellport Chamber of Commerce, community organizations and applicable Town departments.

In order to maximize participation, it is recommended that a community website be created that promotes current and future events and festivals. This will provide information to both residents and visitors with all of the information they need to make the most of their time in Greater Bellport. For now, this website could be included within the Bellport Chamber of Commerce, or the Greater Bellport Coalition’s website. In the short-term, the website should include information about the Niche Market and Branding Plan and how individuals can help. Once the niche is more established and events are organized, the website should include a map of the community, a list and information on upcoming special events, photos of past events, brochures and other marketing materials as they become available, as well as the types of businesses that the community seeks to attract, and an inventory of space available for lease or purchase. The website should also include links to the websites of local businesses, churches, restaurants, community-based organizations, realtors, economic development agencies and Town and County officials. It will be necessary for the community to find a volunteer who will be responsible for managing the website to ensure that it is updated on a monthly basis.

When promoting community-wide events, festivals, parades and other activities, it is imperative that they are marketed appropriately. In addition to listing events online, it is recommended that other avenues are pursued to market as effectively as possible. Local churches, the Greater Bellport Coalition, and the Brookhaven Town Parks and Recreation Department can assist in promoting various events. Perhaps the most effective, however, would be the Bellport Chamber of Commerce. This organization can provide expert marketing techniques to member organizations.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the community create a promotional guide that outlines all that the Greater Bellport Community has to offer, including eating and drinking establishments, shopping, recreational opportunities, events and festivals. These should be made available to the Bellport Chamber of Commerce, as well as at local churches, Spicy’s restaurant, the train station, and other local businesses willing to promote the community.

**Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships:** Town of Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Department (and other applicable Town departments), Greater Bellport Coalition, Bellport Chamber of Commerce, local churches, newspapers and community-based organizations.

**Timeline for Implementation:** Local corporate sponsors, vendors and suppliers relative to street, food, craft and music festivals should be solicited following one (1) year of successful attendance at community-wide events and festivals. A thorough marketing and promotion effort should be underway within two (2) years of adoption of this plan.
Recommendation #10: Work with the Bellport Chamber of Commerce to form a business and industry awards program that provides formal recognition to successful area businesses and innovative initiatives.

Successful area businesses and innovative ideas should be formally recognized. One way that this can be done is through working with the Bellport Chamber of Commerce to acknowledge their success through a “Business of the Month/Quarter” or similar-type of frequent recognition. The awarded business should be spotlighted on the Chamber and the Greater Bellport Coalition’s website, as well as published in the Long Island Advance and other virtual and physical publications throughout the community. Moreover, the Greater Bellport Coalition and the Town should investigate additional ways to promote these award recipients through incentives such as discounted purchases, Chamber membership dues coverage, and/or a month’s worth of free advertising, among others.

Responsible Parties and Possible Partnerships: Greater Bellport Coalition, Town of Brookhaven, Bellport Chamber of Commerce.

Timeline for Implementation: A business and industry awards program should be created within six (6) months of adoption of this plan.

4.2 Potential Funding Sources

As with many sources of grant funding for downtown projects, federal, state and county funding agencies may assign priority to communities with adopted downtown plans. By commissioning and adopting the Sustainable Community Plan for Bellport, and also this Niche Market and Branding Plan, the Town and community organizations are in a better position to secure funding for the recommendations specified in this plan. The Transportation Enhancements Program listed below is one example where having a plan would provide support and help a grant application to receive a higher score.

The following grant opportunities directly apply to one or more of the recommendations of this Niche Market and Branding Plan. It is recommended that the Town work with the various organizations within the community to apply for funding which can assist in the successful implementation of each recommendation outlined in Section 4.1.

- The Community Development Block Grant Program supports an array of community revitalization projects in qualifying census tracts. This may include funding for the creation and/or promotion of a logo and/or slogan contest, the pursuit of a commercial façade improvement program, streetscape and/or design improvements along Station Road and/or Montauk Highway, and the creation of a community-sponsored street art
program, among others. The funding is received by the Suffolk County Community Development Program Office and dispersed to the Towns and Villages consistent with an annual plan. It is important that the Town consider community priorities when submitting a plan to the County on an annual basis in order to be considered for funding. In addition, Land Use Planning Studies are eligible under CDBG. The Town would need to establish a Planning line in their CDBG budget to allocate funds for this purpose. It is noted that if the County has CDBG funds that have not been allocated to other municipalities, the Town could receive an additional allocation to implement the planning study.

- The Transportation Enhancements Program offers federal funding that enhances the transportation infrastructure. This may include funding for streetscape and/or design improvements along Station Road and/or Montauk Highway, and the creation of a community-sponsored street art program, among others. The Town should contact the New York Metropolitan Planning Organization to discuss when application opportunities will be available and to explore possible appropriate projects.

- The Restore New York Communities program, administered by the Empire State Development Corporation, completed three (3) rounds of funding in the past few years for projects dealing with the reuse of underutilized properties with emphasis on employment opportunities. Although, at this date, it is not likely that the funding will be reauthorized, the Town and community organizations should be in contact with the Long Island Office of the Empire State Development Corporation to discuss this program and any new programs that have been authorized by the State Legislature. The agency is currently working on a technical assistance program to aide communities in situating supermarkets into the downtown areas.

- Much of the funding dispersed by the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, such as the Strategic Investment Program, is for projects that result in employment opportunities for local communities. A capital project that improves the attractiveness of a downtown area and improves the business climate would qualify for this funding source. Additional funding may be able to be used for the creation and/or promotion of a logo and/or slogan contest, as well as for streetscape and/or design improvements along Station Road and/or Montauk Highway. The Town should contact their New York State legislators with specific project details and general cost estimates.

- The Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, funds projects that assign priority to regional solutions. This may include funding for the creation and/or promotion of a logo and/or slogan contest. The Town should contact the County Department of Community Development when these funds become available.

- The New York Healthy Food and Healthy Communities Fund has an innovative financing program created in partnership with the State of New York and the Low Income
Investment Fund to increase the number of food markets in underserved communities. Eligible applicants must be able to demonstrate that the funding will be used to benefit an underserved area. This fund is a bit out of the ordinary in that businesses are eligible to apply.

- The *New York Main Street Program* funded by the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal offers funding to support both public and private capital projects in downtown areas. Rehabilitating a building that could support a storefront and apartment units above it along with streetscape improvements in the same area would be an example of a project worthy of funding from this source. Additional funding may be able to be secured for projects such as the pursuit of a commercial façade improvement program, streetscape and/or design improvements along Station Road and/or Montauk Highway, and the creation of a community-sponsored street art program. A non-profit community organization could apply for the funding if it receives the Town’s support to seek such funding.

- The *Workforce Investment Program* would allow funding to support wages for youth employees aged sixteen (16) and above. This could be utilized to support wages of the youth-run farmers market. The program is administered by the Suffolk County Department of Labor. Funding is also available to support community gardens, by providing seeds and garden tools.

- The *Core Grant Program* is administered by the New York State Council for the Arts. Funding from this program may assist with the creation and/or promotion of a logo and/or slogan contest, as well as the creation of a community-sponsored street art program. In order to receive funding from the New York State Council for the Arts under the Core Grant Program, the municipality or a Non-Project 501c (3) organization, must register with the Council in advance of applying for the funding.

Not all projects have a dedicated source of funding, and the Member Item Funding allows State legislators to authorize local priority projects in the State budget. It is important to contact local State legislators on an annual basis prior to December in order to have a project be included in the State budget commencing on April 1st of each year. Upon contacting the local legislators, it is important that a scope of work and a detailed cost estimate be provided.

The Town could act as a lead-agent in facilitating identification of grant opportunities and submissions. This could include assistance to businesses and non-profit entities that might not have the resources but would clearly benefit from grants toward community improvements.

#### 4.3 Cooperative Efforts to Address Community Realities

In *Section 2.1*, various challenges were presented within the community that results in a negative perception, including crime, drug use and sales, prostitution, loitering and violence, among
others. Successfully addressing these challenges is a critical part of the Niche Market and Branding Plan. This section outlines cooperative efforts that should be continued and expanded to promote a more positive perception of the North Bellport community.

It is important to note that there exist services – within the community and the local government – that are intended to deal with such issues, and cooperative efforts need not duplicate such services. However, it is recommended that these services are taken a step further, and the community collaborate to create a set of innovative solutions aimed at tackling the challenges at hand. Several active community-based and religious organizations exist in Bellport, including the Greater Bellport Coalition, the Boys and Girls Club of the Bellport Area, Victory Church of God, St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church and Bellport Hagerman East Patchogue Alliance, among others. These organizations strive to better the neighborhood and overcome negativity through various community-driven initiatives and support services.

It is recommended that these community-based and religious organizations team together and continue their investments within the community through a variety of cooperative efforts. The community-based organizations should work with the local elected officials, precinct of the Suffolk County Police Department, the school district and the local government (code enforcement officials from the Town of Brookhaven). Through collaboration, successful efforts could include improved code enforcement, increased patrols throughout the community and Robert Rowly Park, educational programs in the local schools and religious institutions, an improved community watch program, and increased communications. Efforts could result in the identification of areas that would benefit from increased lighting and security, an anti-graffiti task force, or through encouraging enrollment at after school activities at the Boys and Girls Club or local churches.

As mentioned in Section 4.1, negative community realities and perceptions represent the largest challenge to economic development and successful market branding in Greater Bellport. Addressing this perception, as well as the realities occurring throughout the community must be the primary focus on establishing a brand in the community. The community’s negative perception can be addressed – in large part – through evoking positive change identified in the successful implementation of recommendations set forth in this Niche Market and Branding Plan. Before these recommendations can be successfully implemented however, public concerns for resident, visitor, and employee safety and wellbeing – regardless of they are justifiable or perceived – will need to be addressed immediately. The community needs to reduce crime, drugs, violence and prostitution. If this is ignored, it is unlikely that Greater Bellport will be able to attract and retain residents, visitors or businesses to the community, regardless of their niche.
5.0 CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

A niche market is one that has been identified as having a special attribute, one completely unique from all others, one that stands out from the competition, a place that’s worth marketing to residents and visitors alike. Branding is a collection of perceptions generated by what people believe something to be, it is what people see, feel, and sense about a place. A niche market and branding plan seeks to marry the two initiatives by exploring the ways that make a place unique and marketable, creating a place that people want to be, where people are comfortable, and a place that people remember and come back to time and again. This Niche Market and Branding Plan strives to promote the community’s niche market to new residents, visitors and economic development opportunities alike, offering a community the opportunity to develop a theme that they want to be known for.

The first step in the preparation of a Niche Market and Branding Plan for the Greater Bellport community is to identify their market niche. In determining the niche market, it was necessary to examine several factors. These include what already exists in the Greater Bellport community – places and events that are already attracting people to the area, factors that make the community unique and stand out from its neighbors, the community’s characteristics and demographics, the issues and obstacles facing residents and businesses, and what outsiders perceive Greater Bellport to be.

An examination of Greater Bellport’s demographics, realities, strengths and assets, as well as an analysis of past planning initiatives have provided valuable insight as to the type of market niche that complements the community’s identity while allowing for positive change and growth. NP&V determined the key assets of Greater Bellport to be its cultural and ethnic diversity, the train station, several prominent churches and community-based organizations, the youth, sports and recreation, music, fresh produce and gardening, and Spicy’s restaurant. The Greater Bellport community must capitalize on these assets, as they are the elements that can be used to differentiate the community from its surroundings.

In an effort to integrate these assets and narrow the niche to one that is sustainable, NP&V recommended that the niche market focus on Greater Bellport’s cultural and ethnic diversity, as it is the driving factor behind the community’s unique market position. The elements of food and cuisine, music and the arts will be woven into this diversity, serving as the niche’s predominant and featured attributes. Restaurants, events, festivals and business opportunities will complement this niche, while supporting the strong presence of the youth in the community, in addition to sports and recreational opportunities. The involvement and strength of the local churches and community-based organizations will serve as integral support and a leadership role during the implementation process.

A set of market branding and positioning strategies were created that will encourage activity and a positive perception throughout the Greater Bellport community while fostering the cultural and ethnic diversity niche. This is proposed through the launching of a community-wide logo and...
slogan contest, hosting an annual community-wide clean-up day, implementing design standards and a commercial façade improvement program, installing streetscape and design improvements, completing a business inventory, encouraging round-the-clock uses, developing a community-sponsored street art program, creating and participating in a variety of community-wide festivals and events, marketing and promotion efforts, and recognizing successful and innovative businesses in the area. Through careful planning and marketing efforts, Greater Bellport will reveal itself as a prominent community, proud of its heritage and diversity.

This plan has identified challenges within the community that result in a negative perception. Addressing these challenges is part of a successful Niche Market and Branding Plan. The community is currently in the process of addressing these challenges through the efforts of many community-based and religious organizations. This plan outlines cooperative efforts that should be continued and expanded to promote a positive perception of North Bellport.

It is essential that this Niche Market and Branding Plan be implemented successfully. The community must take ownership of this Niche Market and Branding Plan, in order to have a successful niche market in the Greater Bellport community. The next steps will involve forging partnerships with community groups so that they may take the lead in creating the niche for the Greater Bellport area. The PowerPoint presentation provided as a CD in Appendix A can be utilized to educate the community about the power of a niche market, and the possibilities for Greater Bellport.

Once the community is on-board with the market niche of cultural and ethnic diversity, it is critical to examine means of implementation. In an effort to assist with this, this Niche Market and Branding Plan includes suggested status and timelines of implementation, as well as responsible parties who will be needed to ensure successful implementation of each recommendation. Another critical component includes securing funding, which is of utmost importance in facilitating plan implementation. NP&V has identified various potential funding sources in connection with each of the recommendations outlined in the plan and the Town should work with the community to secure funding for each of the recommendations outlined in this plan.
Figure 1: Study Area
Figure 2: Census Designated Places
Figure 3: Community Assets and Opportunities
Figure 4: Recommendations
Figure 5: Conceptual Streetscape Improvements
Figure 6: Conceptual Plan Rendering
FIGURE 1
STUDY AREA

Source: ESRI Web Mapping Service
Scale: 1 inch = 400 feet

Greater Bellport Community
Niche Market and
Branding Plan
FIGURE 2
CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACES

Source: ESRI Web Mapping Service
Scale: 1 inch = 2,500 feet
FIGURE 4
RECOMMENDATIONS
Greater Bellport Community
Niche Market and
Branding Plan

Rec #1-1: Maintain youth farmers market
Rec #2: Logo and slogan contest
Rec #3: Annual clean-up day
Rec #4: Pursue commercial façade improvement program
Rec #5-1: Install streetscape enhancements
Rec #5-2: Install welcoming signage
Rec #5-3: Erect flag display
Rec #5-4: Install bicycle and pedestrian facilities
Rec #5-5: Install community bulletin board
Rec #6: Encourage around the clock uses
Rec #7: Develop street art program
Rec #7-5: Install community bulletin board
Rec #8: Community events and festivals
Rec #9: Promote community-wide events, parades, and festivals through Chamber of Commerce
Rec #10: Form business awards program

Legend
- Residential
- Commercial/Office
- Fields & Parks
- Recreational
- Cultural Building
- Shared Parking Lot

Sources: ESRI Web Mapping Service, NYS Orthoimagery Program 2007, NPV, Sustainable Long Island Vision Plan
Source of photos can be found within the main text of the Niche Market and Branding Plan
Scale: 1 inch = 300 feet
FIGURE 5
CONCEPTUAL STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS
Greater Bellport Community
Niche Market and Branding Plan

Before

After
Greater Bellport Niche Market and Branding Plan

Town of Brookhaven

Nelson Pope & Voorhis, LLC

July 22, 2010
Why a Niche Market Study?

“...local residents favored a theme or ‘brand’ by building the district with a Caribbean motif, creating a very unique identity on Long Island.”

- Sustainable Community Plan, 2009
Community Realities

- Crime
- Violence
- Gang activity
- Drugs
- Prostitution
- Absentee landlords
- Pedestrian safety
- Lack of access to basic goods, services and resources
Community Assets

- Churches
- BOCES
- Boys & Girls Club
- Train Station
- Greater Bellport Coalition
- Spicy’s restaurant
- Robert Rowley Park
- Farmers Market
- Community Garden
Community Assets and Opportunities Map
Community Assets and Opportunities Map
Demographics

- Population estimate: 10,452 residents
  - 16% increase since 2000 (9,007 residents)
- Relatively young population: median age is 32.1
  - 29.1% of population is under age of 18
- Average household size: 3.68 persons
- 24.4% of population has not completed high school
- Median household income: $73,160
- Per capita income: $23,019
- Poverty: 10.5% of families are below poverty level

Note: All data illustrate 2009 estimates for North Bellport Census Designated Place (excludes Village), from Nielsen Claritas
Demographics

- White/Caucasian: 51.4%
  - Italian (17.3%)
  - German (7.5%)
  - Irish (7.2%)
  - West Indian (non-Hispanic) (2.9%)
- Black/African American: 29.8%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 2.6%
- Other: 16.2%
- Hispanic: 24.3%
  - Puerto Rican (12.6%)
  - Other Hispanic: Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian, etc. (10.5%)

Note: All data illustrate 2009 estimates for North Bellport Census Designated Place (excludes Village), from Nielsen Claritas
Census Designated Place Boundary
LIRR

- **Located along Montauk Branch**
  - Connections to Babylon, Hicksville, other branches

- **Cost: Bellport to/from Penn Station**
  - Peak: $17.75, Off Peak: $12.75, Senior Citizen/Disabled: $8.75

- **Travel time: 1.5 - 2 hours each way to/from Penn Station**

- **Patchogue Station**
  - 4 miles away, in a different fare zone, decreases cost by $2.50 each way, most local riders favor Patchogue

- At least 40-45% of residents are children
- Lack of visible role models who take an active interest in their (children’s) lives
- Few residents are taking advantage of BOCES
- Few neighborhood amenities
- Community is isolated geographically, socially, culturally, racially, politically, and economically
- Need to leverage new sources of financial, in-kind and human resources to expand community-based activities and services
“Bellport Station: First Phase of ‘Learn by Doing’ A grassroots community-building initiative,” 2002

- Depressed property values, absentee landlords, abandoned housing
- Issue with identity: identity of place is by no means clear
- Need for grocery stores, local library, clinic, day care facility, drug stores, coffee shops, convenience shops or specialty stores (i.e. bakery) for people to meet and gather
“South Country School District: Hamlet Study,”
Town of Brookhaven, circa 2004

- Low response rate indicates tendency to not participate in community activities
- 60% preferred vacant land in community should be used for outdoor sports – felt most strongly about this option
- Better public transportation, neighborhood safe walkways
- Desire for “Family-friendly” neighborhood, indoor and outdoor community sports activities, community center
- Equitable access to shore and marine activities
- 33% indicated services for seniors and children/school, community and ethnic relations were excellent or good
“Community Survey: North Bellport & East Patchogue,” circa 2008

- 52.8% believe community to be poor or very bad place to live, raise a family, receive education and grow old
- 48.4% have seen open drug sales or use
- 53.8% have seen open prostitution
- Repeated comments: things for children to do, keep them off streets, educational facilities, recreation centers with basketball courts, gyms and swimming pools, etc.
- Desire community involvement, health facilities, parks, community events, involvement
“North Bellport Retail Study,” 2008

- Significant gap between demand and supply – especially within food and drink category
- Demand for 8 full-service restaurants, 7 limited-service eating places, 9 special food services, 1 drinking place, entertainment-oriented businesses including jazz club, video store, art galleries and possibly a theater
- Complementary businesses: coffee shops, book store, bank
- General merchandise and department stores appropriate for the NE corner of Station Road and Sunrise Highway
“Greater Bellport South Country Communities: Sustainable Community Plan,” 2009

9 Goals:

- Address crime issue and create a safe community
- Improve government responsiveness to issues in the community
- Create a beautiful, well-maintained community
- Enhance public transit options, safety and street connections
- Develop a range of housing options in undeveloped parts of the community – priority
- Attract commercial business to a hamlet center
- Enhance the ability to walk everywhere within the community
- Create a range of recreational opportunities in the community
- Develop pride in Greater Bellport and provide supportive programs
Success Stories

- Farmers market
- Boys & Girls Club
- Current installation of street lighting and future plantings along Station Road
- Interest from private investors
  - New development with proposed wholesale club and movie theatre at Sunrise Highway and Station Road
  - Proposed block development including grocery store on Montauk Highway
Identifying Niche Market

- Build on community assets
  - Diversity
  - Access to LIRR
  - Boys & Girls Club
  - Abundance of churches
  - Spicy’s restaurant
  - Young population
  - Family-oriented
  - Proximity to BOCES
  - Robert Rowley Park
  - Farmers Market
The Niche Market will primarily cater to:

- Residents of local community
- Worshippers at local churches
- LIRR and other commuters
- Passersby
- Attendants of community events and festivals
- Persons dining at local restaurants
Possible Catch Phrase #1

“Hear the Beat, It’s Up!”

Evokes “upbeat” neighborhood, evolution, musical connection (possible island music connection), steel drums, Gospel, multi-cultural music festivals, positive change, street fairs, multi/bright color palette (yellow, blue, green, salmon, New Orleans colors), architectural/landscape colors
Possible Catch Phrase #2

“A Budding Community”

Evokes “growth”, positive change, connection to flowering plants, flowering plant theme, all colors or theme palate, Cherry Blossoms, Lilac, Rose of Sharon, Redbud, Mimosa (or other flowering tree season) festival, “Greater Bellport in Bloom” festival
Possible Catch Phrase #3

“Greater Bellport Quarter”

New Orleans theme building on cultural/ethnic diversity, food and music, multi/bright color theme, street art, musical street parades/fairs, festivals
Possible Catch Phrase #4

“Culture and Cuisine”

Evokes food, music, art, antiques, culture, Barbeque, Soul Food, Caribbean cuisine, Spicy’s Restaurant, diverse restaurants, specialty food stores, flexible color palette (possible teal theme), festivals, street fairs, street art
Additional Possible Catch Phrases

- “Greater Bellport Shines”
- “Good food, Good music, Fun for the family”
- “Progress, Pride and Possibilities”
- “Always in Season”
- “Building a Greater Bellport”
- “Bellport Crossroads”
Uses to Attract

- Everyday family needs
  - Grocery store, community center, bank, book store, etc.

- Eating and drinking places
  - Family restaurants, deli, diverse restaurants and specialty food stores, ethnic bakery, ice cream shop, coffee shop

- Family-oriented activities
  - Native American museum, party/costume store, collectibles shop, arcade, comedy club, merry-go-round
Uses to Attract

- **Community health**
  - Fitness center, bike shop, nutrition counseling, medical office/clinic, yoga studio, dance studio, martial arts studio

- **Sports and recreation**
  - Train park, bowling alley, rock climbing, laser tag, bait and tackle shop, mini golf course, hobby shop, outdoor fitness trails
Uses to Attract

- **Arts**
  - Art galleries, exhibit hall, studio space, art supply store, live-work units, movie theatre, photography studio, public murals, street art

- **Music**
  - Coffee house, music store, recording studio, multi-cultural/community center, music hall, salsa club
Preliminary Recommendations

- Gateway and corridor improvements – let community know they are somewhere special
  - Banners with logo
  - Colorful flowering trees/plants
  - Architectural color theme
  - Decorative street lighting
  - Directional signage
  - Ornamental landscaping
  - Flower boxes
  - Benches
Preliminary Recommendations

- Launch a community-wide logo and slogan contest
  - Logo should include sketches and/or slogans that complement niche market and chosen brand
  - Prize for chosen logo should include gift certificates to local merchants
  - Chosen logo should appear on banners and flags, at community events and festivals, promotional material, fliers, mailings, etc.
Preliminary Recommendations

- Develop a community-sponsored street art program
  - Local businesses, organizations, churches, school clubs, sports teams sponsor an ornamental piece of street art and chooses how to decorate within the parameters of the chosen theme
  - Examples: general pieces such as benches or trash receptacles, or more niche-specific pieces such as music notes, musical instruments, bells, “junk-yard dogs”, flowers, fruit and vegetables, etc.
  - Place in key locations throughout community
  - All proceeds benefit community through provision of other events, festivals, etc.
Preliminary Recommendations

- **Creation of community-wide events and festivals**
  - Restaurant week to showcase diverse dining options
  - Annual street market/fair in vacant lots, parking lots, park
  - BBQ competition
  - Chili cook-off
  - Youth business fairs – children can sell homemade jewelry, clothing, crafts, musical performances, baked goods on designated days
  - Holiday tree lighting
  - “Keep Greater Bellport Clean” – designated community-wide clean-up days
Preliminary Recommendations

- Additional community-wide events and festivals
  - “Greater Bellport in Bloom” – spring flower/flowering trees festival
  - Multi-cultural music and food festival
  - Weekly/monthly outdoor concerts in park
  - Mardi Gras/Fat Tuesday celebration
  - “Art in the Park”
  - Monthly craft classes for children – learn how to make masks, maracas, kaleidoscopes, drums
  - Community-wide garage sale
Preliminary Recommendations

- Encourage round-the-clock uses/activity
  - 24-hour fitness center
  - Medical and professional office space
  - Mix of chain retail with local establishments
  - Women, children, elderly and people with special needs should feel secure

- Conduct a business inventory
  - “How can we help you stay here?”
  - “What do you need to succeed?”

- Promote all events through local Chamber, community organizations and applicable Town departments
Preliminary Recommendations

- Pursue a CDBG-funded Commercial Facade Matching Grant Program
- Initiate a Façade Improvement Program
  - Design elements should focus on a chosen set of colors or color, building materials, architectural details to complement brand and chosen theme
Additional Thoughts

- Transit-Oriented Development
- Opportunity: Animal Hospital moving
- Opportunity for Village Green
  - Could be home to farmers market, community-wide garage sale, community festivals, youth business fairs, etc.
- Gateway definitions, visual corridors
- Two proposed developments – catalysts in community, ensure they fit in to chosen theme
- Opportunity: development of narrow strip south of Montauk Highway
- Grant submission for new BMX park at Martha Avenue
“Placemaking”
Before and After
“Placemaking”
Before and After
Transportation Corridor Improvements
Before and After
Transportation Corridor Improvements Before and After
Transportation Corridor Improvements
Before and After
Pass through to “Main Street”
Before and After
Pass through to “Main Street”
Before and After
Pass through to “Main Street” Before and After
Pass through to “Main Street”
Before and After
Pass through to “Main Street”
Before and After