

March 2009

Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Town of Brookhaven Farmingville, NY



prepared for

Town of Brookhaven
Planning Department
Farmingville, NY



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A. Comment Letters Received on Draft Report

Town of Islip, Department of Planning and Development
 County of Suffolk, Department of Planning
 MTA Long Island Rail Road

Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2007, the Town of Brookhaven embarked upon a planning study aimed at revitalizing a multi-block area around the Ronkonkoma Train Station (the “Ronkonkoma Hub” or the “Station”), the busiest station along the entire Long Island Railroad (LIRR) system. The goal is to develop a vision that supports compact, mixed use, transit-oriented redevelopment. The outcome of this planning study is a long-term development strategy that establishes clear and predictable guidance for the revitalization of the area.

This planning study is timely for two reasons. First, the high level of activity at the station, coupled with vacant and underutilized parcels surrounding the station, offers a strong opportunity to promote and facilitate new development. Second, the current political and social climate is seeking to improve the commuting situation while providing more opportunities for workforce housing and transit-oriented development (TOD) in Brookhaven.

Ronkonkoma Station is the terminus of the electrified rail service to Manhattan. The Study Area is located north of the Station and immediately south of I-495 (see Figure 1, Site Location Map). The Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area encompasses approximately 181 acres of land and is generally defined by the rail line to the south, Express Drive to the north, Bay Avenue to the west and Babcock Avenue to the east (see Figure 2, Study Area). The Study Area includes a mix of residential, retail, industrial, and commercial uses.

Project Goals

Key goals of the Town of Brookhaven for this planning study include the following:

- Promote quality and healthy communities;
- Redirect growth to areas already served by existing infrastructure;
- Expand transportation choices to enhance environmental quality;
- Reduce vehicle trips around the station;
- Support compact, mixed-use, transit-accessible, pedestrian-oriented redevelopment;
- Create a sense of place;
- Support local businesses;
- Create housing choices;
- Explore reverse commute opportunities; and
- Enhance the tax base for the Town and the region to support the variety of taxing districts.

With input from local government, residents, businesses and other stakeholders, the planning study began with a vision for the Ronkonkoma Station, which serves as the basis for the Vision. The Vision includes zoning recommendations, identification of transportation improvements, financial implications, and concept plans for the Garrity and Hawkins block and other key TOD sites that are presented in Chapter 3. Successful implementation of the Vision depends on multi-agency coordination among the towns of Brookhaven and Islip, Suffolk County, MacArthur Airport, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), Long Island Railroad (LIRR), and through nurturing partnerships and building consensus within the community, area residents and patrons of the LIRR.

Process

The Ronkonkoma Hub TOD Planning Study consisted of two phases of work. The first phase focused on documenting existing conditions and identifying potential opportunity sites for transit-oriented development. This initial phase of work included: a site tour, data assembly and review; meetings; creation of goals and objectives; analysis of existing zoning, multi-family housing demand, parking, building space, and transportation infrastructure; and preliminary analysis of the development potential for priority development sites. A questionnaire was distributed during Phase I that sought opinions from both the residents and riders of the LIRR. Phase II of the study built upon the work completed in Phase I to generate a long-term Vision and implementation strategy aimed at providing guidance to all interested parties on potential future development around the station.

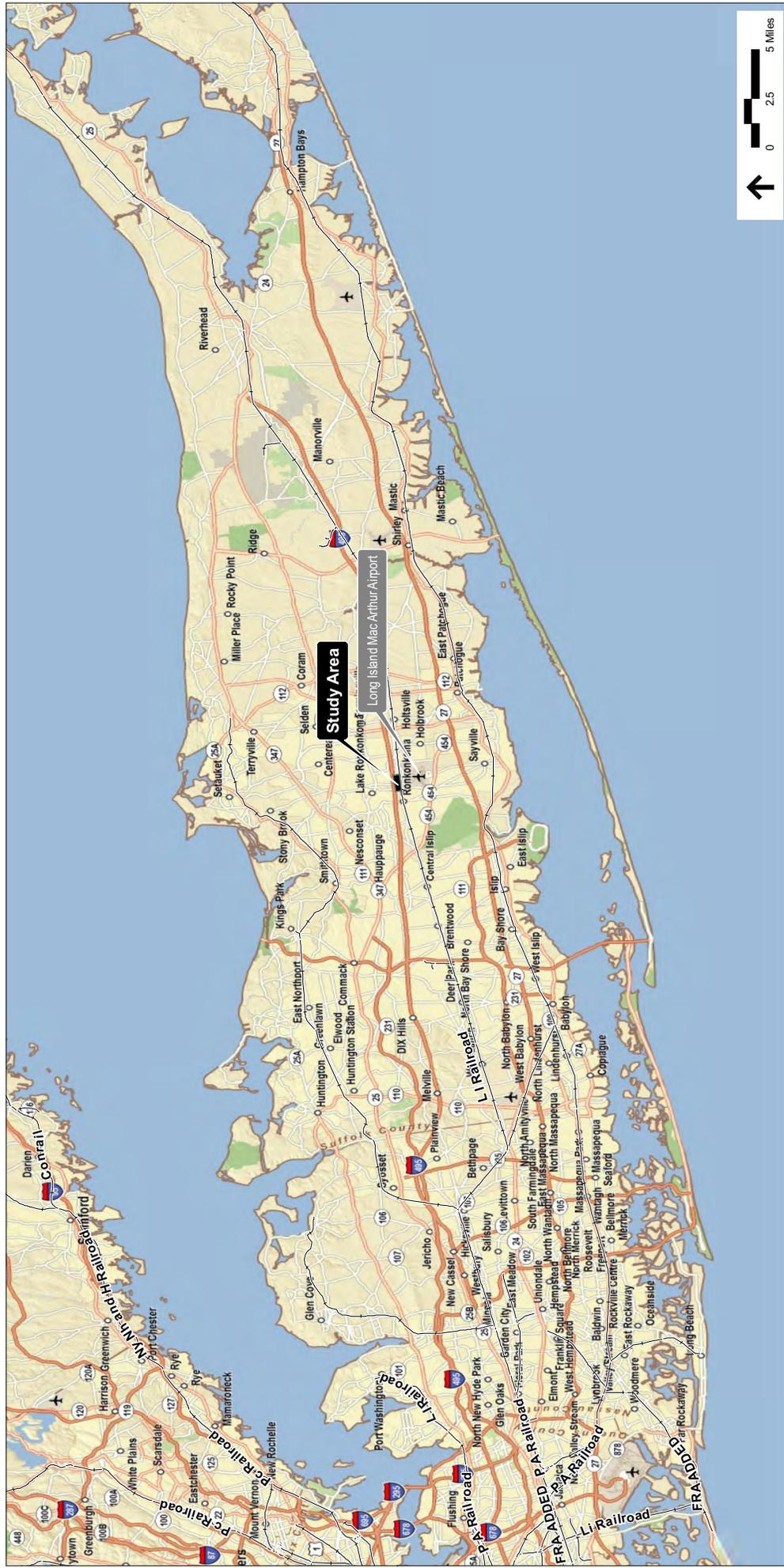
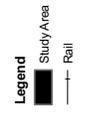


Figure 1

Site Location Map

**Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008



Data sources:
Basemap – ESRI StreetMap World, ESRI Online Services
LIR Rail – Suffolk County GIS

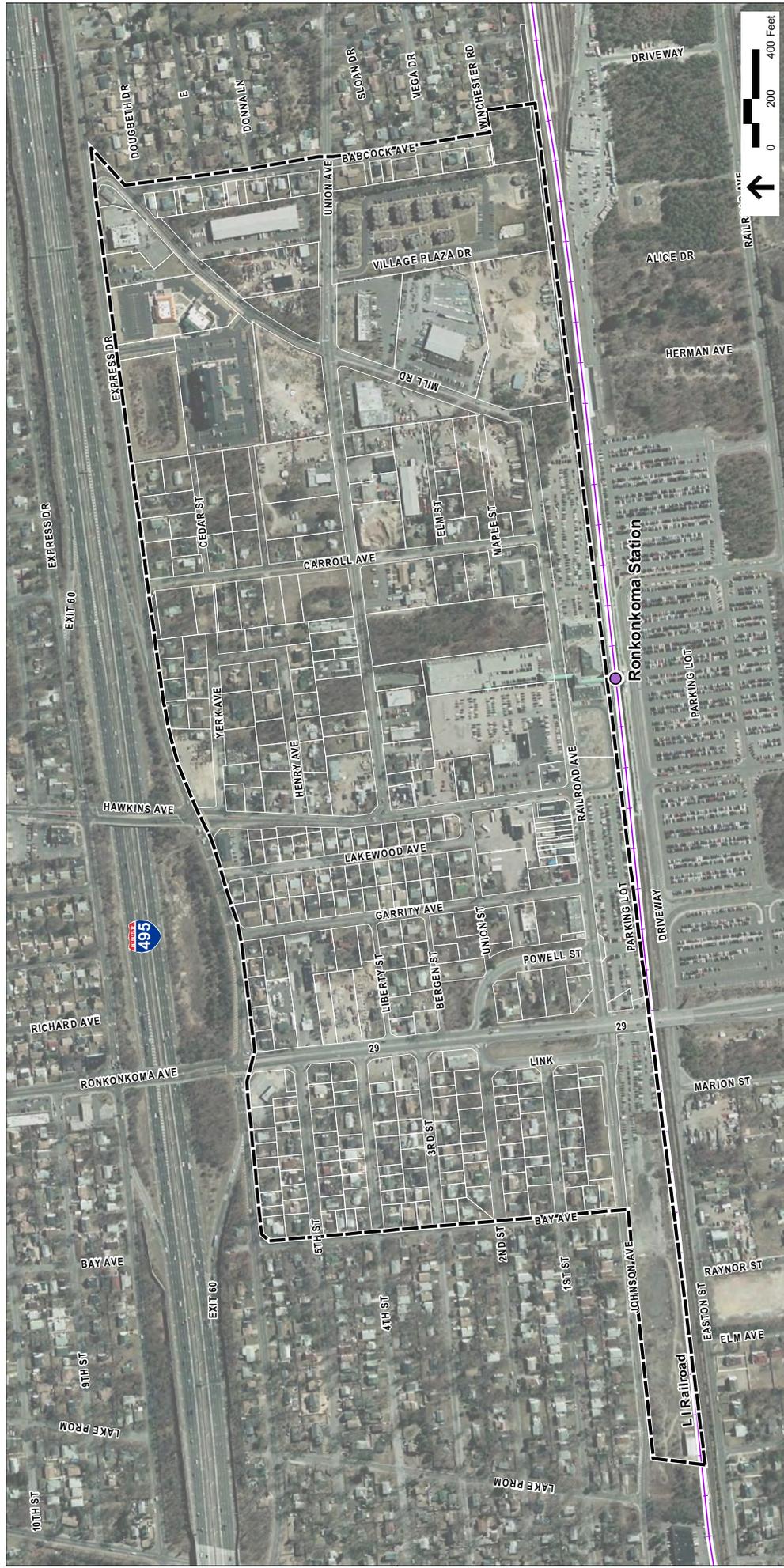


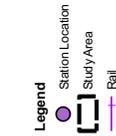
Figure 2

Study Area



Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008



Date sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail, Land Use and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

In addition to numerous meetings with town planning staff, the following meetings were held in support of the Planning Study:

- Municipal Stakeholder Meeting *October 18, 2007*
- Local Stakeholders, Civic League and Chamber Representatives *November 7, 2008*
- Public Information Meeting *January 17, 2008*
- Municipal Stakeholder Meeting *June 16, 2008*
- Public Information Meeting *September 18, 2008*

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) creates mixed-use, higher density communities that encourage people to live, work and shop near transit services and decrease their dependence on driving. Typically, TOD is characterized by:¹

- A mix of uses
- Moderate to high density
- Pedestrian orientation/connectivity
- Transportation choices
- Coordinated parking
- High quality design

Generally, TOD is located within a quarter mile of a transit station, which translates to a five- to ten-minute walk. However, TOD has been utilized in a broad range of communities and neighborhoods around the country and is not necessarily limited to municipalities with extensive mass transit systems. TOD can be built around all modes of transportation including subways, light rail, commuter rail, and buses (the mode that accounts for about two-thirds of all transit trips in the U.S.). Ronkonkoma Hub is a multi-modal facility that accommodates rail, bus, and the automobile and, with diverse economic activity, provides both employment and living options for a wide range of people.

Benefits of TOD include a greater choice of transportation options for residents and employers; a reduction of automobile miles traveled resulting in less congestion, reduced use of petroleum products, and lower emissions; an increase in pedestrian activity around the station; the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized infill properties to more productive uses; and expanded housing and business opportunities.

▼
1 http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-tod.html

TOD also promotes a more efficient use of land and infrastructure through compact design. TOD fosters a sense of place through the creation of mixed-use centers that combine residential uses with economic activity. By requiring high quality urban design and safe, attractive pedestrian connections between uses, TODs create a vibrant sense of place. TODs that combine a variety of housing alternatives with diverse economic activity provide both employment and living options for a wide range of people.²

Existing Conditions

An integral component of the Planning Study was understanding the existing conditions of the Study Area. Of the existing conditions analysis provided in Chapter 2, the most significant findings are summarized below.

Zoning

Three distinct zoning districts incorporate the majority of the land covered in the Study Area, but the J-6 Main Street Business District is the zoning designation that is most closely aligned with transit-oriented development. However, the current zoning is not sufficient to meet the goals of TOD and the Town of Brookhaven for the Ronkonkoma Hub.

Parking

Approximately 2,700 parking spaces exist on five parcels within the Study Area. The 2,700 spaces, which include a 1,000 space five-level controlled access garage, are all within a 13 minute walk of the Train Station. An additional 3,200 parking spaces exist south of the Train Station within the Town of Islip (not in the Study Area). Parking utilization is currently running at approximately 90 percent and nearly half these parked vehicles are located in the garage. Unregulated parking (not in parking fields but off the side of the road) was observed in close proximity to the station. Illegal parking is both unsightly, dangerous, and causes problems for area merchants and residents.

▼
2 http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages_mod-tod.html

Land Use/Buildings

The Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area encompasses approximately 181 acres of land area. A building inventory was conducted which indicates that there are 349 parcels and 312 structures within the Study Area totaling approximately 1.1 million square feet of building gross floor area. Approximately 50 percent of the space within the Study Area accommodates residential use (single family and apartments). At the time the inventory was conducted, the Study Area had a very low building vacancy rate (less than 2 percent). These vacancies are in highly visible locations – i.e. Railroad Avenue. Over 50 percent of the Study Area is residential in use.

Transportation Infrastructure

The roadway network serving the Ronkonkoma Hub area is extensive and includes a wide variety of roadway classifications. Some of the surrounding intersections and roadways are operating at poor levels of service and are likely to be further impacted by additional traffic generated by any new development in the area.

The MacArthur Airport, a commercial airport with three major carriers, is located approximately 3.5 miles from the Ronkonkoma Station. There are currently three modes of linkage between the Station and the Airport—several taxis companies, a privately operated shuttle bus service and transit bus operated by Suffolk County Transit. Use of existing local roadways to link the two hubs entails a ten minute ride. A direct link from the Ronkonkoma Station to MacArthur Airport through the airside of the Airport, by either bus rapid transit or light rail, is unlikely due to construction costs, security concerns and FAA safety issues.

Demographics

Residents of the primary and secondary trade areas surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub offer strong disposable income to support both convenience retailers and shoppers goods. These residents' purchasing power may offer potential to support new convenience goods establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub. Small-scale versions of these convenience and shoppers goods, such as specialty shops, sit-down restaurants, and gym/health clubs will be the most appropriate fit for the downtown scale and character envisioned for Ronkonkoma Hub.

From 2007 to 2017, Suffolk County is projected to add nearly 9,000 households with incomes in the target range of \$50,000 to \$125,000 per year. Ronkonkoma Hub could capture 5 percent of this growth in Suffolk County and 10 percent of growth in the Brookhaven and Islip, or 688 housing units, between 2008 and 2017.

Multi-Family Housing Demand

The majority of demand for new housing will emerge from the primary market area (Brookhaven and Islip), with the next largest source of demand coming from the

secondary market area (Suffolk County). The target market of households most likely to prefer multi-family housing near transit includes households earning \$50,000 to \$125,000. There were an estimated 218,106 target market households in the primary and secondary study areas in 2007. By 2017, it is projected that nearly 9,000 households will be added in these areas.

While the market may provide support for an estimated 688 units, the actual level added in the Study Area will likely be a result of the achievement of a balance between market demand and the capacity of local services (e.g. schools, sewer, etc.) to support these units (taking into account the tax benefits and costs associated with such development). Generally speaking, the impacts of a mix of units, with heavy emphasis on couples without children, on the local school district would be less burdensome than a mix of units focused more on families.

TOD Opportunity Sites

There are numerous opportunities for transit-oriented development near the Train Station, Approximately 40 acres exists within a 10 minute walk of the Station which was identified as being suitable for accommodating TOD (see Figure 3, Potential TOD Opportunity Sites). The residential market analysis identified a demand for upwards of 688 new units within the Study Area. The 40 acres of land could potentially yield 484 of these units at an average of 12 units per acre. To fulfill the full potential of the 688 multi-family residential units, these opportunity sites would need to average approximately 17 units per acre.

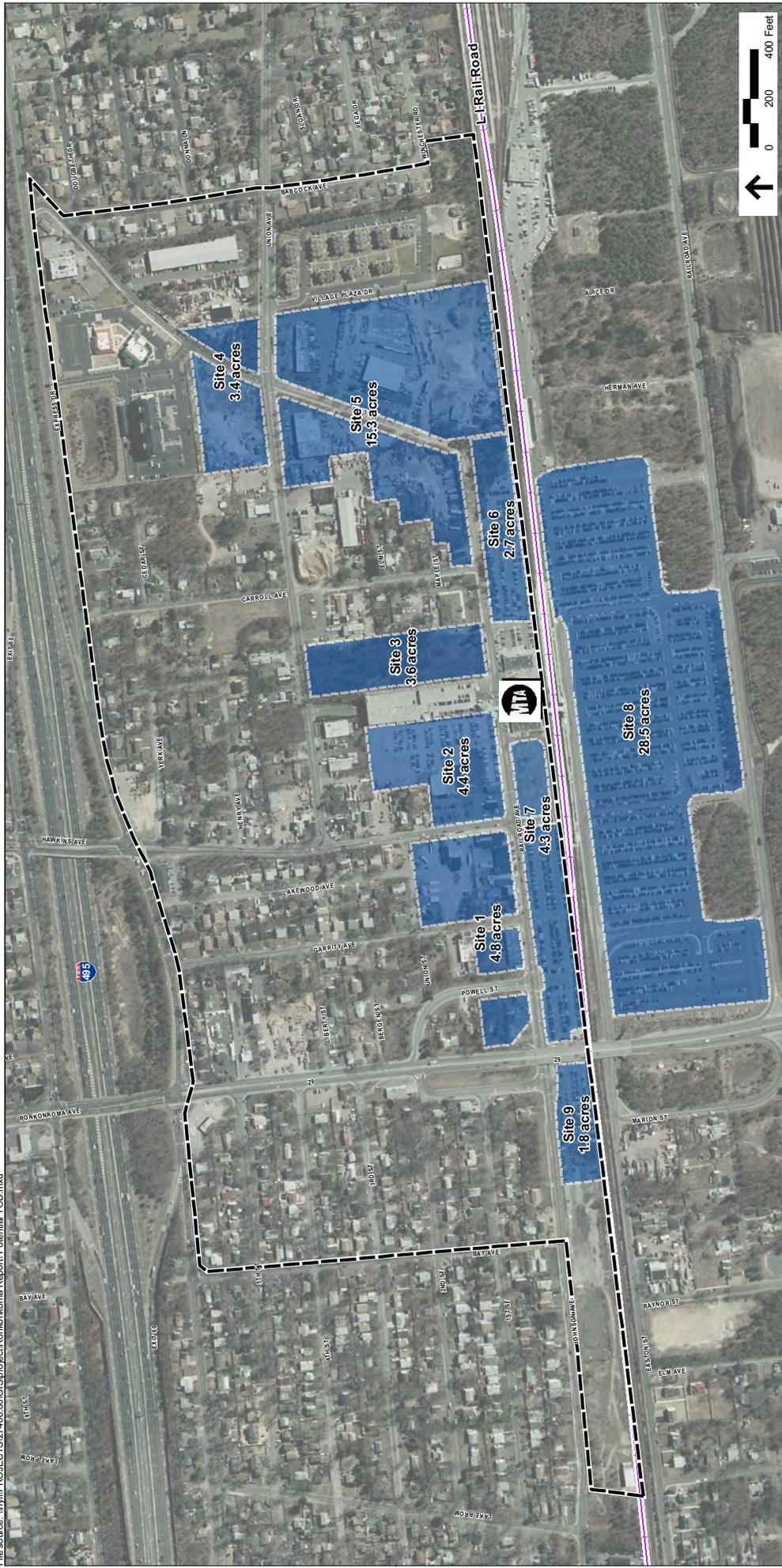
The Vision

A Vision Plan was developed that transforms Railroad Avenue into a community “Main Street” with mixed-use buildings that define the street edge (see Figure 4, Vision Plan). In addition, the Vision Plan includes pedestrian amenities such as small urban plazas at key intersections and streetscape improvements along both sides of Railroad Avenue. Parking is placed at the rear of or internal to these sites to enable new development to front the street. Finally, the Vision Plan calls for a mix of housing, retail, recreation and office space.

Highlights of the Vision Plan include:

- Urban plazas at key intersections to provide public spaces for pedestrians and help activate the street.
- Streetscape enhancements including sidewalks, signage, lighting and landscaping along Railroad Avenue, Mill Road and Hawkins Avenue.
- Orient buildings towards the street edge along Railroad Avenue and Hawkins to help define the “Main Street” character.

File source: \\nvl\PROJECTS\27406.00\GIS\Info\Ronkoma Report_Potential TOD.mxd



Legend
 Study Area
 Rail
 Potential TOD Opportunity Sites



Figure 3
 Potential TOD Opportunity Sites
Ronkoma Hub
 Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Data sources:
 Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
 Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
 September 2008

Vision Plan Opportunities

1. Opportunities for urban plazas at key intersections
2. Streetscape enhancements (Sidewalks, Signage, Lighting & Landscaping)
3. Orient buildings towards the street edge – along Railroad & Hawkins Avenue
4. Place parking at the rear or interior of lots and seek opportunities for shared parking
5. Place active pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor
6. New development on the MTA "bus loop" site
7. Buildings up to 5 stories tall on Railroad Avenue
8. Streetscape enhancements to the train station plaza
9. Buildings up to 2.5 stories tall on Union Avenue
10. Mix of uses on upper floors
11. Orient buildings toward the street edge – along Mill Road
12. Buildings up to 4 stories tall on Mill Road
13. Parking garages located at the interior or rear of lots
14. Orient multifamily buildings toward amenities such as parks or plazas
15. Mix residential unit types
16. Provide pedestrian connections from Fairfield residences

Potential Program	Retail	Office	Residential	Live/Work
Site 1	-	-	-	5 Units
Site 2	-	-	-	10 Units
Site 3	10,800 SF	16,800 SF	66 Units	-
Site 4	27,600 SF	16,800 SF	66 Units	-
Site 5	14,400 SF	39,600 SF	30 Units	-
Site 6	-	-	98 Units	-
Site 7	-	-	157 Units	-
Site 8	6,000 SF	-	-	-
TOTAL	58,800 SF	73,200 SF	417 UNITS	15 UNITS



Figure 4

"Vision Plan" for Eight Key TOD Opportunity Sites

**Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008



Legend
Study Area
Rail

Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

- Parking at the rear or interior of lots and seek opportunities for shared parking.
- Active pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor, particularly along Railroad Avenue between Garrity Avenue and the Station.
- New development on the MTA “bus loop” site.
- Buildings up to 5 stories on Railroad Avenue, up to 4 stories tall on Mill Road and up to 2.5 stories on Union Avenue.
- Streetscape enhancements to the Station plaza.
- Mix of uses on upper floors.
- Buildings oriented toward the street edge along Mill Road.
- Parking garages located at the interior or rear of lots.
- Multi-family buildings oriented toward amenities such as parks or plazas.
- Residential unit types mixed within development sites.
- Pedestrian connections to Fairfield residential apartments.

The Vision Plan accommodates approximately 430 residential units at densities that range from 15 to 20 units per acre. In addition, approximately 132,000 square feet of office and retail space could be achieved.

Development Zones

The Vision is categorized into four zones: TOD Overlay District Zone; Neighborhood Preservation Zone, Neighborhood Commercial Zone, and Hotel and Restaurant Zone (see Figure 18, TOD Land Use Goals).

TOD Overlay District Zone

The potential exists to create a new TOD Overlay District within the Study Area to enable the various uses, densities and other characteristics and qualities that are desired by local officials and the community. The goals for this portion of the Study Area include:

- Create TOD Overlay District and design guidelines.
- Increase densities for residential uses.
- Allow greater building height and number of stories (up to 5 stories on Railroad Avenue).
- Accommodate vehicle traffic
- Reduce parking requirements for future development.
- Encourage shared parking between parcels and uses.
- Locate active ground floor uses on Railroad Avenue.
- Place buildings close to the street along Railroad Avenue.
- Create activity nodes along Railroad Avenue.

Neighborhood Preservation Zone

Many portions of the Study Area are characterized with residential uses that include single family homes, and small multi-family developments. These areas are generally located in the north and west portions of the Study Area. Goals for these areas focus

on preserving the residential aspects of the neighborhood and providing public space through use of a variety of tools including:

- Transitional zoning
- Directional way-finding
- Traffic calming
- Streetscape enhancements (i.e. sidewalks, lighting, trees, crosswalks, etc.)

Neighborhood Commercial Zone

Ronkonkoma Avenue, Union Avenue and sections of Hawkins Avenue have various commercial uses including small businesses, and auto-oriented uses. These areas will maintain the commercial uses as they front streets that connect to adjacent neighborhoods and business centers and I-495. Goals for these areas focus on enhancing the commercial uses and providing for infill development opportunities.

Hotel and Restaurant Zone

The northeast portion of the Study Area is characterized with a hotel and retail uses, including several restaurants. This area has frontage on the Service Road and Mill Road; however, it is not well connected to Railroad Avenue and the planned TOD uses that are anticipated for the future. Goals for this area include preserving existing uses, while enhancing the connectivity of this area to the Train Station by providing sidewalks, street lights, and way-finding signs. This area is a 10 to 15 minute walk from Ronkonkoma Station; however, it currently lacks continuous sidewalks.

Potential Roadway and Streetscape Improvements

In addition to the land use goals, the study identifies numerous opportunities to enhance the streetscape and roadways to improve the public realm and plan for the anticipated growth in development within the Study Area. Roadway and other streetscape goals include the following:

- Potential new intersection treatment at Railroad and Hawkins Avenues.
- Potential roadway and streetscape improvements.
 - Railroad Avenue
 - Mill Street
 - Union Street
 - Hawkins Avenue
- Streetscape amenities along Railroad Avenue including sidewalks, street trees, lighting, plazas, and landscape improvements at key intersections.
- Implement bike route connections along Railroad Avenue and Mill Road and Union Avenue.
- Bike storage at the Train Station.

In addition, there is the potential to extend the bike path through the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area, connecting neighborhoods to the east and west to Railroad Avenue and the Train Station. This bike route is part of the “Central Corridor Bike Route” connecting distant points such as Bethpage State Park to the west, to the central business district of Riverhead to the east. The route is identified on the Long Island Bikeways and Trailways Map produced by the New York State Department of Transportation. It is classified as a Class 3 on-road signed bikeway. While it links distant destinations described above, it will also serve more localized communities by providing alternative access to major commuter rail stations.

TOD Zoning Recommendations

Pursuant to a typical TOD development, a ten-minute walk radius drawn from the Ronkonkoma Hub should be the focus of TOD zoning and should be considered as the boundary for a new TOD Overlay District developed by the Town (see Figure 9). The overlay district should implement the principles of TOD and encompass the land use and urban design features associated with TOD. The TOD Overlay District should allow for higher density housing than the six units per acre currently allowed in the J-6 district, higher building heights, and small footprint retail stores and other buildings.

While the J-6 district allows drive-throughs by special permit, it is recommended that no additional drive-throughs be permitted in the new TOD overlay district. Prohibiting drive-throughs, whether for fast food restaurants or banks, in the future will minimize curb cuts and reduce vehicle traffic, thereby enhancing the pedestrian experience around Ronkonkoma Hub.

Residential density should be increased from the current six units per acre to twelve to sixteen, although incentives could offer higher densities. As a result, the floor area ratio (FAR) should be 0.8. Setbacks should be zero along Railroad Avenue and no more than ten feet elsewhere in the district. No front yard setback should be required in order to create a truly pedestrian friendly environment. However, a minimum sidewalk width (typically 5 feet) is necessary to ensure safety for pedestrians. No setback is required for side yards either, although alleyways can be encouraged to promote public connections between buildings, open spaces, and streets. In order to encourage developers to use the provisions of the new overlay district, incentives can be offered, either in the form of a density bonus (increased FAR), a reduction in parking requirements, streamlined permit review, or other benefits to the developer.

Transportation-Related Infrastructure

Infrastructure improvements will be required to mitigate any impacts. Improvements will include capacity enhancements at intersections and the installation/upgrade of traffic signals or construction of roundabouts, or other traffic controls as deemed appropriate. Traffic calming elements, sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly

features are recommended to create a walkable community and reduce automobile trips. The following is a list of issues and potential improvements that will affect the transportation-related infrastructure within and adjacent to the study area.

- A direct link from the Ronkonkoma Station to MacArthur Airport through the airside of the Airport, by either bus rapid transit or light rail, is unlikely due to construction costs, security concerns and FAA safety issues.
- An enhanced shuttle service should have attractive, user-friendly, clean fuel vehicles with frequent service and extended hours in order to attract ridership.
- An enhanced shuttle service could be expanded to also connect to other nearby destinations to further promote ridership.
- Multi-level parking decks should be considered as a way to improve efficiency and overall security
- Paid parking should be considered as a way to increase ride sharing and reduce the use of Single Occupancy Vehicles
- Opportunities within the Town of Islip for newly constructed shared parking should be explored if appropriate agreements can be implemented with Suffolk County and the MTA.
- A major marketing campaign would be necessary to promote the benefits of the enhanced shuttle service.

Future Households and Retail Spending

In addition to existing households, future households offer potential to support new retail establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub. Based on recent demographic trends, over the next five years there is potential for an estimated 540 new households to be located within a 3-mile radius of the transit Station. With a median projected income of over \$100,000, future residents (both existing and new) offer potential to spend an average of \$19,000 annually on convenience retail goods and services for a combined total of \$531 million annually.

Tax Implications

The ultimate goal for revitalization of the Ronkonkoma Hub district is to provide redevelopment that will result in a positive tax situation, in which tax revenues generated by redevelopment exceed the costs of services required by such redevelopment. In particular, redevelopment should not result in net costs to the school taxing district. Detailed positive and negative fiscal implications are described in Chapter 3.

The Vision Plan for Ronkonkoma Hub takes these goals into account. Housing units are recommended with fewer bedrooms and in smaller sizes to appeal to couples and singles without children, rather than families that would desire larger units with more bedrooms. Further, the Vision calls for commercial space to balance housing

development with the assumption that the tax revenues associated with commercial space can often outweigh the costs associated with providing services to new residents (including schoolchildren).

With the mix of housing dominated by compact multi-family units (e.g. condominiums, housing above commercial space, and live-work units), the Ronkonkoma Hub development program caters to the needs and preferences of couples and singles without children. Families would be more likely to reside in the townhouse units, which represents just 12 percent of the entire program, or in other single-family homes elsewhere in the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip or the remainder of Suffolk County.

A toolbox of economic incentives is outlined in Chapter 3 to aid the Town in implementing the Vision. The Town can use both existing Town programs as well as adopt innovative new programs that other communities have used with success to support revitalization. Tools range from direct incentives, such as tax credits that support business expansion, to indirect incentives, such as streamlined development review processes.

Next Steps

The Vision represents an ongoing and continued process. As such, in order to maintain momentum and further advance implementation of the Vision, it is recommended that the Town consider the following next steps:

- Engage in continued coordination with local and regional stakeholders (the community, local businesses, Town of Brookhaven, Town of Islip, Suffolk County, MacArthur Airport, MTA, and LIRR).
- Identify and implement “early wins” as part of an overall Neighborhood Improvement Program:
 - Streetscape improvements;
 - New and improved sidewalks;
 - Landscape improvements at MTA surface parking lots;
 - Code enforcement;
 - Drainage and flooding; and
 - Maintenance and security at the Station.
- Draft and adopt a new TOD Overlay District.
- Conduct a traffic impact analysis and develop a phased transportation improvement plan.
- Initiate a sewage capacity study.
- Complete a generic environmental impact statement (under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act) to assess and propose mitigation of any real or perceived adverse impacts.
- Aggressively market the Ronkonkoma Hub as a legitimate and feasible TOD opportunity area for residential and commercial retail development.
- Explore and secure state and federal grant funding for continued revitalization.

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Introduction

Overview

The Town of Brookhaven has embarked upon a planning study aimed at revitalizing a multi-block area around the Ronkonkoma Train Station (the “Ronkonkoma Hub”). The existing Station accommodates more than 17,000 riders per day, making it the busiest station along the entire Long Island Railroad (LIRR) system. The Town’s goals include developing a plan that supports compact, mixed use, transit-oriented redevelopment within the immediate area surrounding the Station. One of the key objectives is to develop a long-term development plan that establishes clear and predictable guidance to the adjacent community, local stakeholders and investors as the Town promotes the revitalization of the area.



Ronkonkoma Station



Railroad Avenue

Opportunities exist in the Ronkonkoma Hub that makes preparation of this plan timely. The high level of activity at the Station, coupled with an extensive number of vacant and underutilized parcels surrounding the Station, offers a strong opportunity to promote and facilitate transit-oriented higher density, mixed-use residential and commercial development. In addition, the current political and social climate seeks to improve the commuting situation while providing more

opportunities for workforce housing and transit-oriented development. Recognizing these opportunities, the Town of Brookhaven has undertaken this planning study to assess the potential for transit-oriented development in the Station area.

The Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area encompasses approximately 181 acres of land and is generally defined by the rail line to the south, Express Drive to the north, Bay Avenue to the west and Babcock Avenue to the east (see Figure 5, Study Area). The Study Area includes a mix of residential, retail, industrial, and commercial uses.

Project Goals

The purpose of the Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning Study is to develop a land use plan that will aid in the revitalization of the Ronkonkoma Hub. Key goals include the following:

- Promote quality and healthy communities;
- Redirect growth to areas already served by existing infrastructure;
- Expand transportation choices to enhance environmental quality;
- Reduce vehicle trips around the Station;
- Support compact, mixed-use, transit-accessible, pedestrian-oriented redevelopment;
- Create a sense of place;
- Support local businesses;
- Create housing choices;
- Explore reverse commute opportunities; and
- Enhance the tax base for the Town and the region to support the variety of taxing districts.

In order to accomplish these goals, it is important to establish clear and predictable guidance for the community and potential developers. This begins with a **Vision**. Created with input from local government, residents, businesses and other stakeholders, this Vision will help provide the direction for new growth around the Station. A product of this Vision is the land use plan and model zoning language, which is outlined in this document. The successful advancement and implementation of the Vision depends on multi-agency coordination among the towns of Brookhaven and Islip, Suffolk County, MacArthur Airport, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), Long Island Railroad (LIRR), and through nurturing partnerships and building consensus within the community, area residents and patrons of the LIRR.

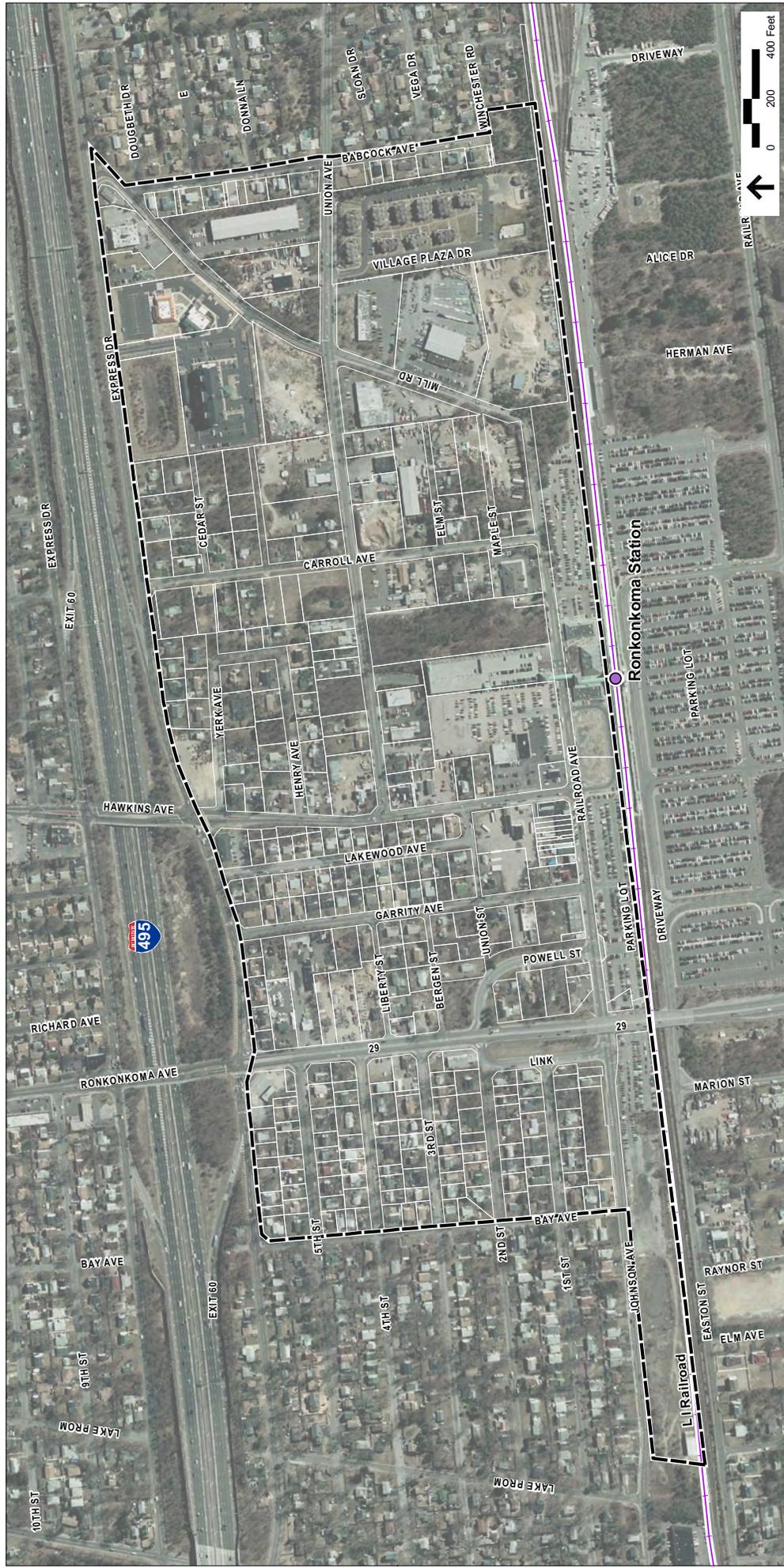


Figure 5

Study Area



**Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008

Legend

- Station/Location
- Study Area
- Rail



Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail, Land Use and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) creates mixed-use, higher density communities that encourage people to live, work and shop near transit services and decrease their dependence on driving. Typically, TOD is characterized by:³

- A mix of uses
- Moderate to high density
- Pedestrian orientation/connectivity
- Transportation choices
- Reduced parking
- High quality design

Generally, TOD is located within a quarter mile of a transit station, which translates to a five- to ten-minute walk. However, TOD has been utilized in a broad range of communities and neighborhoods around the country and is not necessarily limited to municipalities with extensive mass transit systems. TOD can be built around all modes of transportation including subways, light rail, commuter rail, and buses (the mode that accounts for about two-thirds of all transit trips in the U.S.). Ronkonkoma Hub is a multi-modal facility that accommodates rail, bus, and the automobile and, with diverse economic activity, provides both employment and living options for a wide range of people.



TOD Principles

Generally, there are certain characteristics that successful TOD projects and zoning provisions have in common.

- The goal is to create a place rather than a series of unconnected projects.
- TOD is created by market-driven factors rather than by the mere presence of a transit station. Retail development requires a good location, market, and design. Access to transit can strengthen the retail market.
- There must be a mix of uses that includes retail, office, and housing, generally at a higher density. The land uses should be arranged to concentrate activity in close proximity to the transit station. The land use mix falls into two categories – housing and employment uses generate transit ridership, and convenience retail and service uses support the riders and area residents.
- Design guidelines, pedestrian amenities, and streetscape improvements are important considerations.
- Parking standards must be carefully considered to include structured parking, common parking areas, and/or shared parking.



³ http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-tod.html

- A mix of housing types and price levels is important.
- Public-private partnerships can enhance TOD efforts.

TOD Benefits

Benefits of TOD include a greater choice of transportation options for residents and employers; a reduction of automobile miles traveled resulting in less congestion, reduced use of petroleum products, and lower emissions; an increase in pedestrian activity around the Station (especially during the rush hour periods); the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized infill properties to more productive uses; expanded housing and business opportunities; increased property values; and coordinated private investment for public benefit.

TOD also promotes a more efficient use of land and infrastructure through compact design. TOD fosters a sense of place through the creation of mixed-use centers that combine residential uses with economic activity. By requiring high quality urban design and safe, attractive pedestrian connections between uses, TODs create a vibrant sense of place. TODs that combine a variety of housing alternatives with diverse economic activity provide both employment and living options for a wide range of people.⁴

Process

The Ronkonkoma Hub TOD Planning Study consisted of two phases of work. The first phase focused on documenting existing conditions and identifying potential opportunity sites for transit-oriented development. This initial phase of work included: a site tour, data assembly and review; meetings to establish Study goals/objectives and an overall community vision and development style; analysis of existing zoning, multi-family housing demand, parking, building space, and transportation infrastructure; and preliminary analysis of the development potential for priority development sites (Garrity/Hawkins Ave, MTA controlled parcels). In addition, a questionnaire was distributed during Phase I that sought opinions from both the residents and riders of the LIRR.

Phase II of the study built upon the work completed in Phase I to generate a long-term vision and implementation strategy aimed at providing guidance to all interested parties on potential future development around the Station. The Vision includes a land use plan, zoning recommendations, identification of transportation improvements, financial implications, and revised concept plans for the Garrity and Hawkins block and other key TOD sites that were identified in Phase I.



⁴ http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages_mod-tod.html

In addition to numerous meetings with town planning staff, the following meetings were held in support of the Planning Study:

- Municipal Stakeholder Meeting *October 18, 2007*
- Local Stakeholders, Civic League and Chamber Representatives *November 7, 2008*
- Public Information Meeting *January 17, 2008*
- Municipal Stakeholder Meeting *June 16, 2008*
- Public Information Meeting *September 18, 2008*



Public information meeting (1/17/08)



Ronkonkoma Station

The Ronkonkoma Train Station is the busiest station on the entire LIRR system—it accommodates approximately 17,300 riders per day. As the eastern terminus of the electrification of the main branch, Ronkonkoma is a popular station for commuters seeking express service into Manhattan (66 to 85 minute ride to Penn Station). There are currently 30 weekday westbound trains and 33 weekday eastbound trains that serve the Station. The Station has approximately 6,500 peak hour passengers.

platforms were added in 1993, the multi-level parking garage was opened in 1996, and the permanent ticketing office began servicing customers in 1998.⁵



Historic photograph of the Station (circa 1930)



Ronkonkoma Station entrance (2008)

The current Ronkonkoma Station, completed in 1997, contains retail and commercial space, a 1,000-car parking garage, and a Station House. The Station House incorporates rich materials, including slate roofing, heavy timber framing, interior wood finishes, and brick walls and floors. Other details such as large eyebrow dormers, copper weathervanes, and cupolas accentuate the Station House.⁶

Questionnaire

A survey was developed and distributed to area residents and civic organizations by mail and to commuters at the Station in late 2007. The questionnaire sought to understand a variety of characteristics regarding the Station, including its use and potential areas for improvement. A copy of the questionnaire follows this section. Questions were asked on a variety of topics, including:

- How often do you take the train?
- What do you like and dislike about the area around the Train Station?
- What would you like to see happen to the area in the next 10 to 15 years?

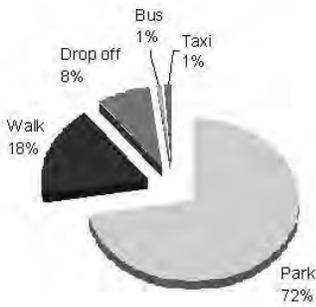
Approximately 15 percent of the questionnaires that were distributed to area residents were returned. The findings from these respondents were calculated and



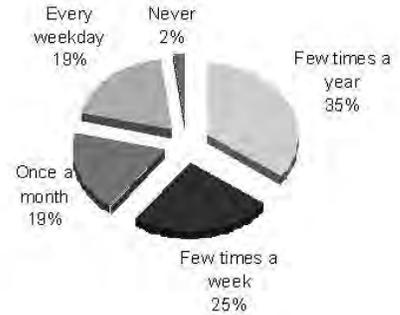
⁵ The history of the Ronkonkoma Station was obtained from the website Trains are Fun at www.trainsarefun.com/lirrphotos/LIRR%20Station%20History.htm, accessed on 10/25/07.

⁶ The design of the Ronkonkoma Station House was obtained from the architect's website at: www.rhbpc.com and accessed on 12/10/07.

key highlights are included herein. Approximately 44 percent of the respondents indicated that they take the train at least a few times a week, with the remainder using the train once a month or less. Approximately 75 percent of respondents indicated that they drive and park at the Station while the rest either walk, are dropped off, take the bus or arrive by taxi.



Arrival Method



Ridership Frequency

Area residents and other train patrons tended to like the Station itself, the convenient parking, the nearby stores, and the gym. Among the least liked aspects was a perceived lack of parking and the unimproved parking areas, the lack of regular maintenance of the Station and the rundown appearance of nearby businesses. The coffee shop, bank ATM, newsstand and health club were the most used facilities near the Station. When asked what one would like to see happen in the future, the most requested items included: restaurants, housing, professional offices, auto services, and a full service bank.

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Brookhaven Town Hall
Planning Department
One Independence Hill
Farmingville, NY 11738

Mail to



We'd love to hear your thoughts!

Questionnaire for the Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study

The Town of Brookhaven has commissioned a Planning study for the multi-block area adjacent to Ronkonkoma Station. The purpose of the study is to develop a land use plan for the revitalization of the Ronkonkoma Hub that supports compact, pedestrian-friendly, mixed use development and enhances the Town and Region's tax base.

As an area resident, business owner, property owner or train patron, your input to this process

is very important. Please see the reverse side for more information about the 'Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study.'

Following the project overview is a series of questions that we would like to hear your feedback on. Please take a few moments to answer the questions. Once complete, please cut the questionnaire section on the dashed line and mail to the address listed below.

Thank you!



For more information...

Visit our website for more information about this study:

www.brookhaven.org

Eschbacher VHB Engineering, Surveying
and Landscape Architecture, P.C.
c/o David G. Buttacavoli
2150 Joshua's Path, Suite 300
Hauppauge, NY 11788

Ronkonkoma Hub Questionnaire

Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Project Overview

The purpose of the study is to develop a Land Use Plan for the revitalization of the Ronkonkoma Hub that establishes clear and predictable guidance to community and developers; supports compact, mixed-use, transit-accessible redevelopment; creates housing choices; promotes quality and healthy communities; expands transportation choices; and enhances the Town and Region's tax base.

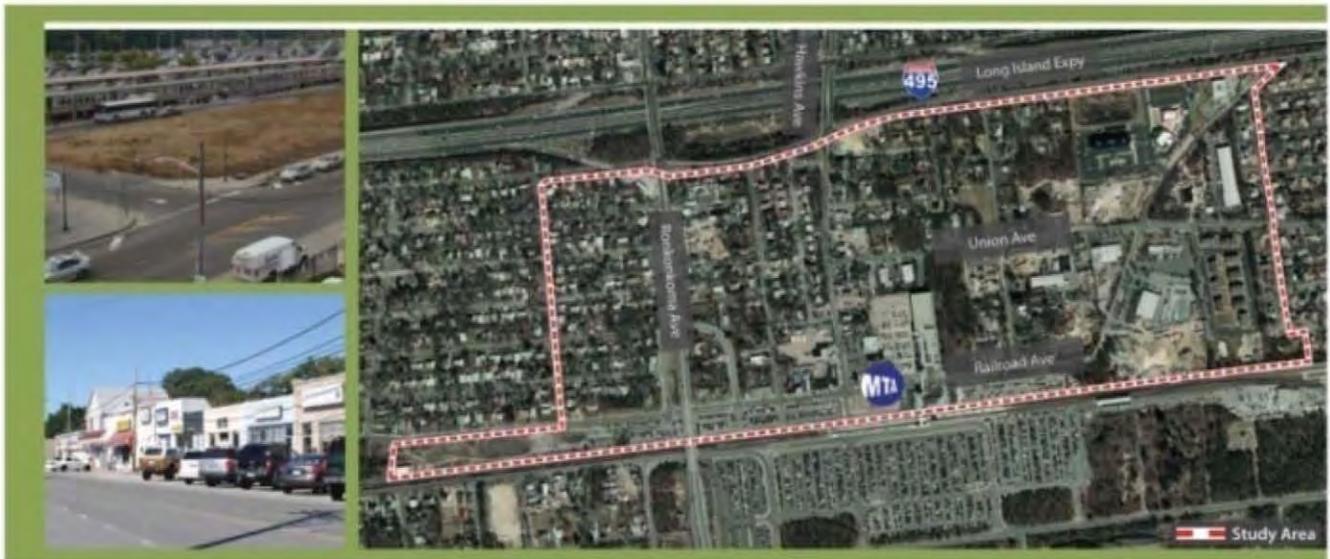


Save the Date... public info meeting

When?
Thursday, Dec. 13

What time?
7:00pm

Where?
Town Hall Auditorium, 2nd floor
One Independence Hill, Farmingville



Let us know *your* thoughts...

- 1 How often do you take the train at Ronkonkoma Station?
 every weekday a few times a week once a month a few times a year never
- 2 When you take the train, how do you arrive?
 drop-off park Suffolk County bus walk bike taxi
- 3 What do you like the most and least about the Ronkonkoma Station and the surrounding area?
 Likes _____

 Dislikes _____

Where are you replying from? I'm a Long Island Rail Roader I'm a Ronkonkoma area resident

- 4 Which services located at or near the station do you use the most?
 coffee/fast food restaurant newsstand dry cleaners day care health club
 bank/ATM hairdresser other _____
- 5 What services not currently provided would you use if they were located at or near the Station?

- 6 What would you like to see happen to the area in the next 10 - 15 years?

- 7 What short-term or 'quick fix' item(s) would make this area better?

Please reply by Nov. 30, 2007 Thank you for your time!

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2

Existing Conditions

Overview

An integral component of the Planning Study was understanding the existing conditions of the Study Area. This chapter provides an analysis of the existing conditions, which include the following elements:

- Zoning
- Parking
- Building and Land Use
- Transportation Infrastructure, including links to MacArthur Airport
- Demographics
- Multi-Family Housing Demand
- Potential TOD Sites

The analysis detailed in this chapter served as the basis for the vision recommendations that are described in Chapter 3. A series of photographs are provided in Figures 6 and 7 (Existing Conditions Photographs) to assist in the visualization of the existing conditions of the Study Area.



Right and Above: A panoramic view overlooking Railroad Avenue.

Photo Captions

1. Existing Ronkonkoma Station
2. Bus loop and commuter parking
3. Pedestrian bridge and stair tower
4. Station entrance to lobby and platforms
5. Plaza and retail uses adjacent to the Station
6. Pedestrian crossing on Railroad Avenue leading to the Station
7. Railroad Avenue and the MTA "Bus Loop"
8. Station platform
9. Pedestrian bridge over Railroad Avenue
10. Bus stop and bike racks adjacent to the Station platform
11. Retail uses adjacent to the Station
12. Short-term parking adjacent to the Station
13. Existing building along Railroad Avenue
14. Existing retail uses between Garrity and Hawkins Avenues
15. Vacant uses along Railroad Avenue
16. Vacant land on Railroad avenue (targeted for additional surface parking)
17. Tutor Time Day Care facility on Carroll Avenue
18. Existing uses on Union Avenue
19. Mill Road
20. Parking in unpaved spaces along Railroad Avenue
21. Railroad Avenue - looking west towards to the Station
22. Mill Road (no sidewalks)
23. Fairfield Apartments (new residential development off Union Avenue)
24. Fairfield Apartments
25. Temporary advertisements and signs on Mill Road
26. Courtyard Marriot Hotel

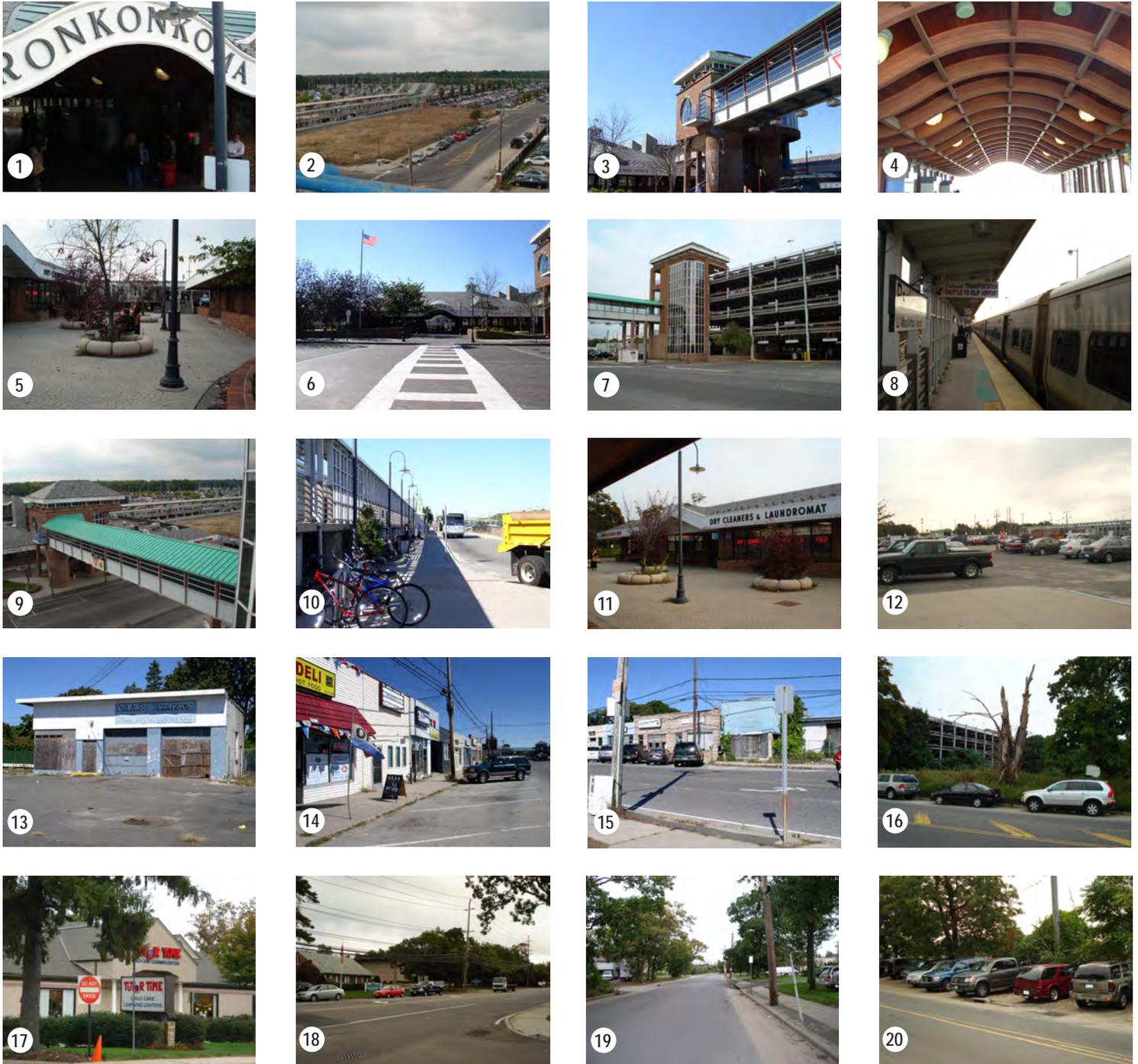


Figure 6 Existing Conditions Photographs

Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study



Prepared for: Town of Brookhaven
Prepared by: Eschbacher VHB
Date: September 2008



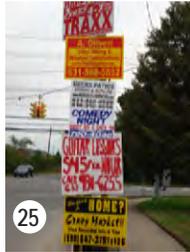


Figure 7 Existing Conditions Photographs

Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study



Prepared for: Town of Brookhaven
Prepared by: Eschbacher VHB
Date: September 2008



Zoning

Existing zoning was analyzed to determine the types of uses currently allowed in the Study Area and whether zoning is sufficient to meet the needs and goals identified by the Town. The analysis indicates that current zoning is not ideal for facilitating transit-oriented development and would require modifications and updating in order to accommodate typical TOD development, which emphasizes transit use, encourages efficient use of land, catalyzes revitalization, and fosters a sense of place, as described in Chapter 1.



Current Zoning

Although the immediate area around the Ronkonkoma Hub is zoned J-6 (Main Street Business District), substantial portions of the Study Area are zoned Light Industry L1 and Residence C (see Figure 8, Existing Zoning).

J-6 Main Street Business District

J-6 zoning is designed to preserve the sense of place in Brookhaven's centers and traditional neighborhoods. It allows for the development of "fully integrated mixed-use pedestrian-oriented main street centers." Highlights of the J-6 Zoning District include the following:

- The July 2003 Main Street Business Design Manual is part of the zoning article.
- Permitted uses by right include retail and personal service stores; restaurants and bars; offices; banks; museums; theaters; studios; indoor recreation; private instruction schools; institutions; and second story residential or office use.
- Special permit uses include hotels and a third story for residential use.
- Certain accessory uses are allowed such as outdoor seating and retail display and drive-throughs require a special permit.
- The minimum lot size is 4,000 square feet. The Town should verify actual minimum lot sizes in the study area as they refine final recommendations for future zoning.
- The maximum permitted floor area ratio (FAR) is 60 percent and the maximum building area is 60,000 square feet of gross floor area. The maximum height is 35 feet or 2 ½ stories. However, the height for hotels and 2- and 3-story residential structures is 50 feet. The minimum frontage is 50 feet, front yard setback is 25 feet, rear yard setback is 30 feet, and there is no side yard setback requirement.⁷ Each residential unit must be at least 600 square feet and the maximum density is 6 units per acre.
- Drive-throughs need to be located to the rear or side of the principal building.



⁷ Note that these standards are as written in the text (§85-273) and differ from the standards in the Table of Dimensional Regulations for Business Districts (§85-207).

- The Planning Board is authorized to grant zoning incentives to encourage main street center and traditional neighborhood development. Incentives include increased FAR, reduced parking, or other relief from development standards as appropriate. Such incentives could be considered if the developer provides for public parking, sewage treatment plant capacity, civic or park space, and/or downtown infrastructure improvements (street furniture, lighting, public amenities, etc...).
- Parking garages are allowed by special permit if they are located to the rear of the district.
- Landscaping and buffering plans need to be submitted for review. A buffer of 25 feet is required adjacent to residential uses.

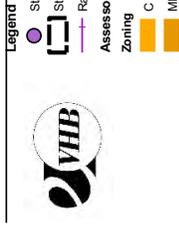
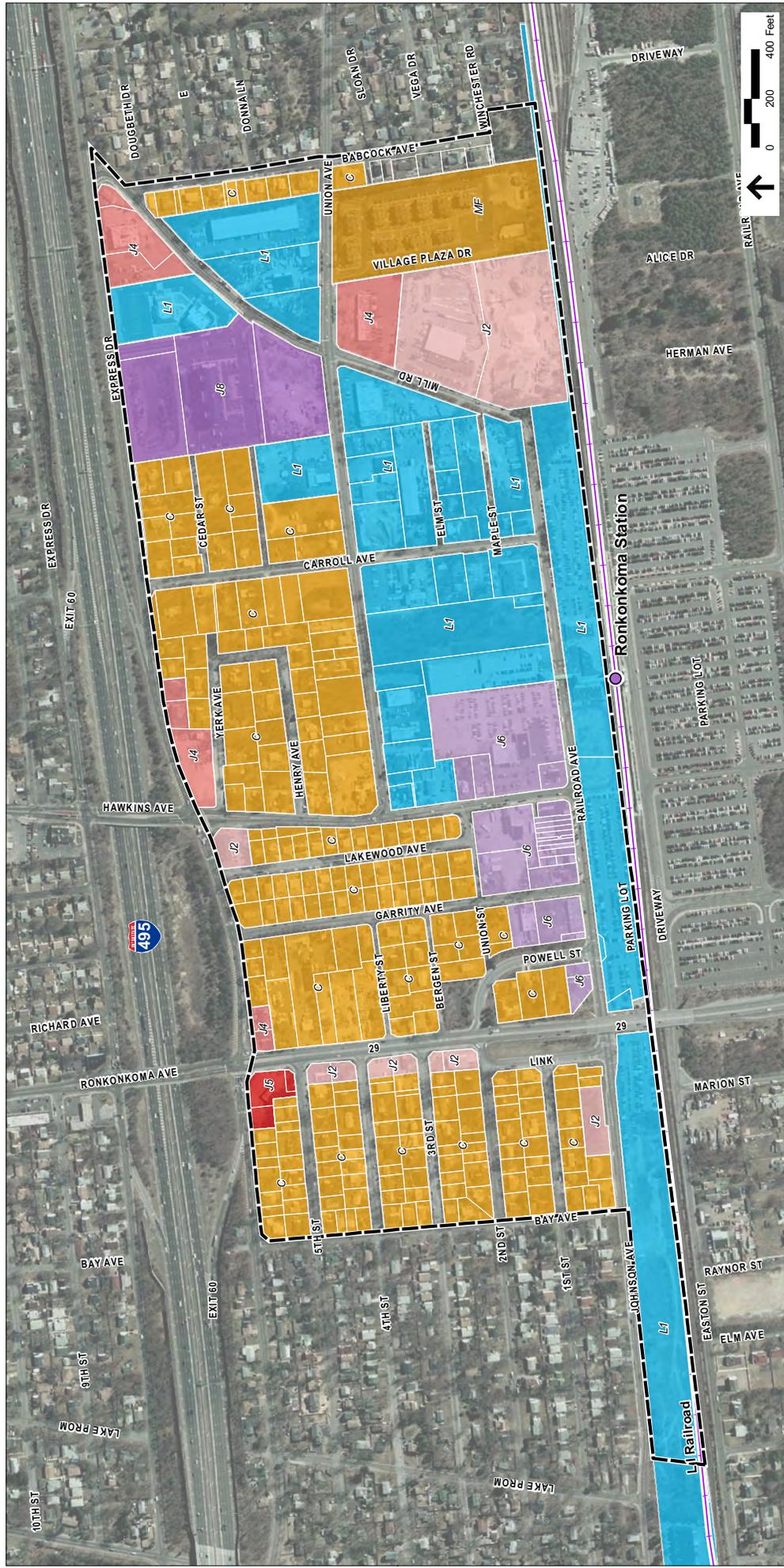
Building design and architectural standards are specified in the Main Street Business Design Manual adopted by the Town in July 2003. The design guidelines are intended to “guide the review and approval of a MSD development plan,” but for the most part do not contain specific standards. Rather, they provide conceptual guidelines with photos and graphics to illustrate the particular guideline. The guidelines cover the following:

- Building design and site layout
- Architecture
- Signage
- Parking
- Landscaping and buffering
- Lighting
- Street furniture
- Pedestrians
- Multi-family residential development
- Parks and open space

L1 District

The land to the south of Railroad Avenue and to the east of the J-6 district is zoned L1. Highlights of the L1 Zoning District include the following:

- Uses allowed include agriculture, banks, churches, commercial laundry, day-care facility, health club, manufacturing, office, printing plants research and development, veterinarian, and warehouse.
- Special permits can authorize an airport, electric generating facility, adult uses, private parking (structure or surface), bars/nightclubs, heavy vehicle sales, kennels, lumberyard, mini-storage warehouse, non-degree granting instruction, retail sales, transportation facility, trucking, terminal, and higher education.
- Drive-throughs are allowed as an accessory use by special permit for banks.



- Legend**
- Station Location
 - Study Area
 - Rail
 - Assessors Parcels
 - Zoning
 - C - Single Family Residential
 - MF - Multi-Family Residential
 - J2 - General Business
 - J4 - Business - Office Building
 - J5 - Business - Gasoline/Filling Stations
 - J6 - Business - Highway Limited
 - J8 - Business
 - L1 - Light Industrial



Figure 8
Existing Zoning

**Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008

- The maximum height in the L1 district is 50 feet or 3 stories. Generally the minimum lot size is 40,000 square feet, frontage is 100 feet, front and rear yard setback is 50 feet and side yard setback is 10 feet. The FAR is 35 percent.⁸
- Additional special permit criteria apply for specific uses.

Residence C District

Outlying portions of the Study Area are within the Residence C district. Highlights of the Residence C Zoning District include the following:

- Allowed uses include single-family homes, churches, educational uses, agriculture, day care facilities, cemeteries, and accessory uses such as home offices.
- The minimum lot size is 9,000 square feet and the maximum height is 35 feet or 2 ½ stories.

There are several individual parcels within the Study Area that are zoned J-2 General Business.

Ronkonkoma Zoning Compared to Model TOD Zoning

Current zoning is not ideal for the implementation of transit-oriented development. Ideally, a designated TOD area should be consistently zoned for uses appropriate for such a district. The Study Area currently has three major zoning classifications within it. Although the entire Study Area may not necessarily be appropriate for TOD, the vicinity immediate to the Station should be a single zoning district. The J-6 designation is closest to the creation of a TOD around the Station.

A number of changes would be required to encourage the correct mix of uses and dimensional regulations to achieve a vibrant TOD. Additionally, the design standards should be updated to apply more directly to TOD development in addition to its existing guidelines for J-6 zoning elsewhere in Brookhaven. The landscaping requirements should also be revised to be more applicable to TOD.

A number of communities around the country utilize an overlay district, which is an option to consider for a portion of the Study Area that is within a ten minute walk from the Station. An overlay district establishes additional provisions that are superimposed over the existing zoning. The underlying zoning remains in place, but the overlay district could provide incentives to promote TOD and the flexibility necessary to attract development of vacant and underutilized parcels.

A comparison between the existing zoning around Ronkonkoma Station and a typical TOD overlay zoning district is illustrated in Table 2.

▼
⁸ Note that these standards are as written in the text (§85-313) and differ from the standards in the Table of Dimensional Regulations for L Industrial Districts (§85-292). There appears to be some internal inconsistencies in the text as well.

Figure 9 (Walking Proximity to Ronkonkoma Station) identifies the 10–15 minute walking radius from the Station, which is central to the TOD model as described in Chapter 1.

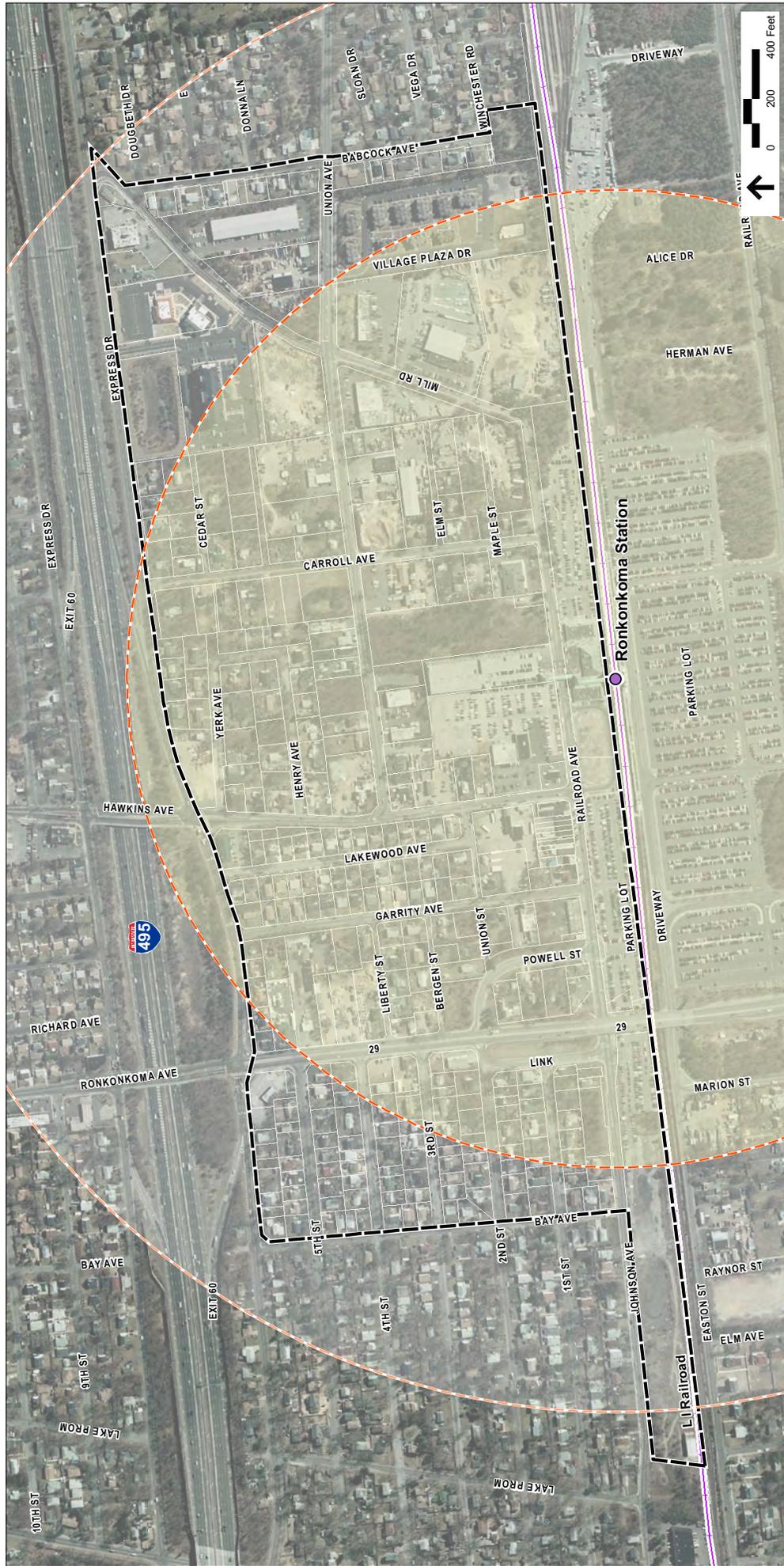
Table 2
Comparative Assessment: Existing Zoning vs. Model TOD Zoning

Zoning Provision	Existing Study Area Zoning	TOD Overlay Zoning District ⁹
Zoning districts	Three (J-6, L1 and Residence C)	One
Allowed uses	Includes most, but not all TOD-related uses. Not coordinated due to the variety of zoning districts	More specifically delineated list of uses
Mixed-uses	Limited and may be expanded to 3rd story by special permit	Typically allowed by right
Density	Six units of housing per acre	Typically 12–16 units per acre
Minimum lot size and setbacks	4,000 sq. ft. in J-6 and larger in L1 and Residence C; variety of setback requirements	Smaller or no minimum lot size; zero lot line
Accessory uses (i.e. outdoor seating)	Special permit	Either allowed by right or special permit
Amenities and design standards	Apply to J-6 zoning, but not entire Study Area	Typically made part of TOD

Key Findings for Zoning

- There are three distinct zoning districts incorporating the majority of the land covered in the Study Area.
- The J-6 Main Street Business District is the zoning designation that is most closely aligned with transit-oriented development, but is not sufficient as currently written to meet the goals of TOD.
- Design guidelines have been established by the Town for the J-6 Main Street Business District.
- A ten-minute walk radius drawn from the Ronkonkoma Hub should be considered the focus of the TOD Overlay District developed by the Town.
- The overlay district should implement the principles of TOD and encompass the land use and urban design features associated with TOD.
- The TOD Overlay District should allow for higher density housing than the six units per acre currently allowed in the J-6 district.

⁹ The overlay district could be established to coincide with the distance covered in an average ten-minute walk from Ronkonkoma Station.



Legend

- Study Area
- Station Location
- 10 Minute Walking Radius (2000')
- 15 Minute Walking Radius (3000')
- Rail



Figure 9
Walking Proximity
to Ronkoma Station

**Ronkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008

Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail, Land Use and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

Parking

Resolution of the existing parking challenges faced at Ronkonkoma Station requires a thorough understanding of how the existing parking supply is being used. An inventory and accumulation study of existing parking was conducted, with the purpose of determining the daily parking needs at Ronkonkoma Station as they relate to passenger rail and to determine the general parking supply and utilization of the lots located within close proximity to the Station.



Methodology

To identify usage characteristics, a parking inventory and accumulation study was conducted by Eschbacher VHB in November 2007 on five parcels located near Ronkonkoma Station. Both improved (paved lots with parking stall striping) and unimproved (unpaved lots without parking stall striping) lots were considered in the inventory. Available parking located south of the railroad tracks (in Islip) was not included in this inventory and accumulation study.

The parking accumulation study recorded the number of vehicles parked in a particular area at a given time. Accumulation data helped to quantify parking demand and establish parking patterns at the area. Statistics of peak occupancy, periods of greatest utilization, and areas of greatest utilizations can be drawn, as needed. Percent occupancy is calculated by dividing the total number of parking spaces observed to be occupied by the total supply of a particular location.



Parking Supply

The parking supply was established by a field count of the number of striped spaces in each improved parking area and the number of parked vehicles in each unimproved parking area (see Figure 10, Parking Inventory). The total parking supply was then compared to that reported in a study previously completed by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).¹⁰ The MTA calculated an estimate of the parking supply of the unimproved lots by dividing the total parcel area by an assumed parking space area of 350 square feet per parking space, a typical parking standard. The parking study did not calculate new capacity values and used MTA's capacity values for the comparison.



¹⁰ LIRR Commuter Parking Capacity and Utilization by Lot and Station. Metropolitan Transit Authority, June 22, 2007.



Parking Analysis

Accumulation data was collected by driving through each individual parking field and counting the number of vehicles present on a Tuesday, a typical day of the work week. The count was conducted at 10:00 AM, considering that by this time most commuters would have already parked. The data was then compared to the MTA/LIRR June 2007 Capacity and Utilization Study.¹¹ According to MTA/LIRR:

- The accumulation data in the previous study was acquired in 2003 or 2004.
- When the data were prepared in 2003 or 2004, the utilization number was acquired in a single day.

The data collected for this report for the number of vehicles currently occupying space on predominantly unimproved parcels was compared with the numbers previously reported in the MTA/LIRR's Capacity and Utilization Study. This comparison allows the percent utilization of each parcel currently being used for parking adjacent to the Station to be ascertained.

As seen in Table 3 below, the data collected in November 2007 shows 2,245 cars were parked in the associated five parcels. The MTA/LIRR calculated the capacity of these same parcels as providing 2,682 parking stalls. Therefore, based on this data collection the maximum daily utilization of the parcels is currently 84 percent.

It should be noted, however that the parking capacity for Lot #111-12 (379 spaces) was inflated by LIRR to include maximum parking capacity if the lot was completely cleared and fully developed for parking. The actual capacity of this undeveloped/unstriped lot is approximately 300 cars. As such, the table, which shows this lot at 75 percent utilization, is actually fully utilized on a daily basis. This brings the overall parking utilization for the Study Area up to approximately 86 percent.

At the time of its count, the MTA/LIRR calculated a maximum utilization of 91 percent or 2,450 parked cars. The data comparison between actual usage in November 2007 and the previous study shows the parking capacity as being underutilized by 437 parking stalls or 16 percent. At that time, the MTA/LIRR report shows a difference between capacity and occupied spaces of 232 parking stalls or about 9 percent. As noted previously, the MTA/LIRR calculated its data for unimproved lots using the parcels total lot area divided by 350 square feet, which is estimated to be a conservative value.



¹¹ LIRR Commuter Parking Capacity and Utilization by Lot and Station. Metropolitan Transit Authority, June 22, 2007.

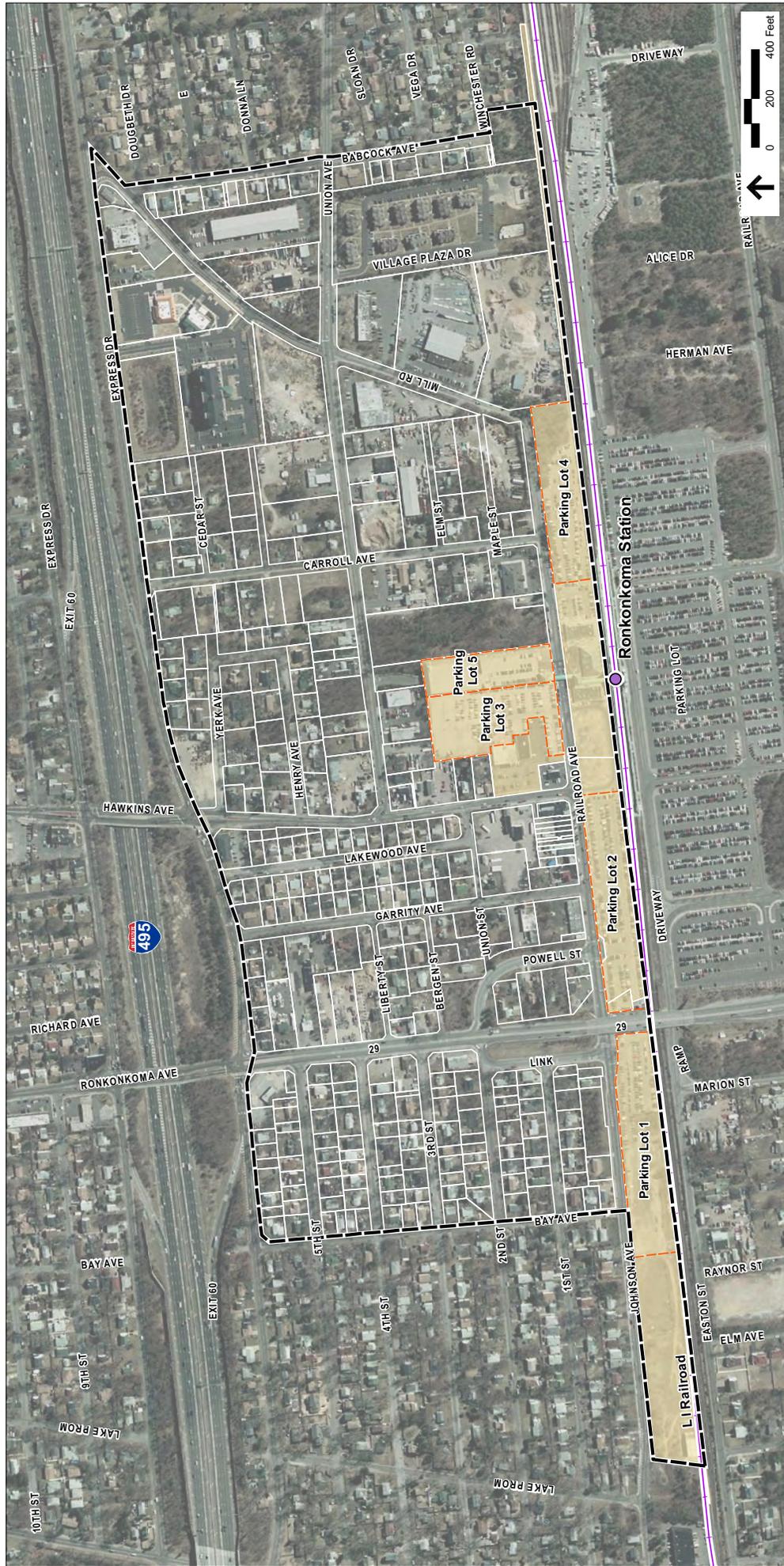


Figure 10
Parking Inventory



Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
 September 2008

Parking Lot	MTA Capacity	MTA Utilization	2007 Utilization
Parking Lot 1	575	480	289
Parking Lot 2	335	335	339
Parking Lot 3	350	214	287
Parking Lot 4	379	378	287
Parking Lot 5	1043	1043	1043

Legend

- Station Location
- Study Area
- Parking Lots
- Rail

Data sources:
 Aerial Imagery - I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
 Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail, Land Use and Zoning - Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

**Table 3
Ronkonkoma Hub Parking Analysis Data Table***

Parking Field	MTA Parcel	SCTM#	MTA Capacity (June 2007 Study)	MTA Utilization (June 2007 Study)	Utilization (Nov. 13, 2007)
1	111-4; 111-4.1	0200 79900 0200 120000 0200 79900 0300 045001	575	480	289
2	111-1	0200 79900 0300 049000	335	335	339
3	111-7	0200 79900 0400 047001	350	214	287
4	111-12	0200 80000 0100 038000	379**	378	287
5	111-6	0200 80000 0100 036000	1,043	1,043	1,043
Total			2,682	2,450	2,245
Percent Utilization				91 %	84%

Notes: * Refer to Figure 10 (Parking Inventory)
** Actual capacity is 300 cars

Unregulated parking (that which exists on the side of the road but not in lots) is seen predominantly adjacent to unimproved parcels because of their proximity to the Station. Available parking on Parcel 1 exists on the western half of the lot; however this location is approximately 2,250 feet or one-half mile from the Station platform. Additionally, pedestrian friendly ways to travel from the western half of parcel one and the Station does not exist. It appears that most unregulated parking, which is located within the vegetated areas adjacent to Parking Field 4, occurs due to this proximity issue.

Key Findings for Parking

- Nearly 2,700 parking spaces exist on the five parcels within the Study Area.
- Approximately 3,206 parking spaces exist south of the Train Station within the Town of Islip (not in the Study Area).
- The existing parking garage (Parking Field 5) costs \$4.00 per day and \$43.25 per month to park. The existing surface lot adjacent to the parking garage costs \$4.00 per day to park. The additional three lots used for parking are free.
- The five lots are within a 13-minute walk of the train station.
- Existing parking utilization is currently running close to 90 percent.
- The parking garage (Parking Field 5) is fully utilized; nearly half of the parked vehicles within the Study Area are located in the garage.
- The remainders of the parked vehicles are located on surface lots (Parking Fields 1-4).

Cont'd on next page...

- Unregulated parking (not in parking fields but off the side of the road) was observed in close proximity to the station. Approximately 40 spaces were observed. Illegal parking is both unsightly and dangerous and causes problems for area merchants and residents.
- Construction of a new parking garage of equal capacity to the existing parking structure would remediate the need for most commuter surface parking.
- If parking were to be relocated into a new parking garage, the existing surface parking fields could be slated for redevelopment under a TOD Overlay District.
- Opportunities exist within the Town of Islip for newly constructed shared parking (if appropriate agreements can be implemented between Suffolk County and the MTA).

Land Use/Buildings

This section provides an inventory of existing commercial, office and residential occupancy, including all second story uses within the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area. The inventory was limited to the parcels located within the Study Area and was based on information gathered from a field survey that was conducted in November 2007. The purpose of this inventory is to identify the existing occupancy by land use and to identify current vacancies.

The building inventory consisted of a “windshield” survey that included traveling through each street to obtain the following data for each parcel within the Study Area:

- Building use
- Building occupancy, including second story uses
- Vacancies
- Parcels for sale

Methodology

The Study Area contains a wide array of existing uses. Observed uses include; apartments, single-family residence, industrial, office, delicatessen, restaurant, hotel, gym, dry cleaner and laundromat, automotive, religious service, barber shop, nail salon, printer, insurance company, pizza, plumbing service, day care, doggy day care, dog training, landscaping and masonry, shed sales, fence sales, taxi service, fast-food, tattoo parlor, wholesale grocery and bar/pub. Ancillary uses such as storage or garages were not included in the inventory.

For the purposes of this study, the observed uses were organized into the following nine categories:

- Single-family Residential
- Apartments
- Office
- Automotive
- Hotel
- Restaurant
- Warehouse
- General Service
- Vacant/Unoccupied

In order to correlate the approximate square footages to the buildings that were inventoried, a land use map was prepared by drafting each building footprint in AutoCAD using a scaled aerial photograph as the basis for the map. The square footages of each building were associated to the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database provided by the Town to calculate the percentages and values that are summarized in Table 4. It is important to note that the areas calculated are approximate and should be verified.



Building Inventory

The Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area encompasses approximately 181 acres of land area. According to the inventory there are a total of 349 parcels within the Study Area and 312 structures (see Figure 11, Land Use and Buildings). In addition, there is approximately 1.1 million square feet of building gross floor area.

Table 4 summarizes the Ronkonkoma Hub building inventory data and includes the summary of building uses, gross floor area (GFA) and percent of total GFA.

**Table 4
Ronkonkoma Hub Building Inventory Data Table**

Building Use	Gross Floor Area (GFA)*	Percent of Total
Single-family Residential	440,993 SF	40.5%
Apartments	104,089 SF	9.5%
Warehouse	136,792 SF	12.5%
Hotel	110,787 SF	10.2%
Office	92,399 SF	8.5%
General Service	86,012 SF	7.8%
Automotive	84,153 SF	7.7%
Restaurants	18,623 SF	1.7%
Vacant/Unoccupied	17,590 SF	1.6%
Total	1,091,438 SF	

Notes: * The square footages are approximate and should be verified with the Towns tax assessors' information. Refer to Figure 11 (Land Use and Buildings) that identifies the land uses described in Table 4.

Key Findings for Land Use/Buildings

- At the time the survey was conducted, the Study Area had a very low building vacancy rate (less than 2 percent).
- Vacancies are in highly visible locations – i.e. Railroad Avenue.
- Over 50 percent of the Study Area is residential in use.
- Approximately 10 percent of the building square footage in the Study Area is used for hotels, approximately 9 percent is used for office, and approximately 8 percent is used for automotive.

Transportation Infrastructure

An assessment of the transportation infrastructure surrounding the Ronkonkoma Hub was conducted. This included a general assessment rather than a detailed traffic impact study which would be conducted at a time when specific land use proposals are brought forward. Ronkonkoma Hub is surrounded by a network of roadways that provide good access to the Station and to the areas along Railroad Avenue north of the LIRR tracks. The network includes a variety of road classifications ranging from freeway and major arterials under the jurisdiction of the New York State Department of Transportation, to major and minor arterials under the jurisdiction of the Suffolk County Department of Public Works, to collector and local roads under the jurisdiction of the Town of Brookhaven. Figure 12 (Sidewalks and Crosswalks

File source: \\ny\proj\PROJECTS\27406_00\GIS\proj\Ronkonkoma Report\Land use and buildings.mxd



Figure 11
Land Use and Buildings




Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008

Legend

	Study Area		Buildings
	Rail		Single Family Residential
	Station Location		Apartment
			General Service
			Hotel
			Restaurant
			Warehouse
			Vacant/Unoccupied

Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

Inventory) depicts key roadways, existing sidewalks and crosswalks within the Study Area.

Approximately one half mile to the north of the Station is the Long Island Expressway (LIE), Interstate Route 495. Access to the Station from the LIE is gained primarily from Exit 60 and to a lesser degree, Exit 61. Exit 60 is a split diamond interchange which connects the LIE with Hawkins and Ronkonkoma Avenues. Hawkins Avenue extends south to Railroad Avenue where it ends. Ronkonkoma Avenue extends south and bridges over Railroad Avenue and the railroad tracks. Local roads serve as ramps to connect Ronkonkoma Avenue to Railroad Avenue. Ronkonkoma Avenue becomes Smithtown Avenue south of the tracks (within the Town of Islip) and continues south to Lakeland Avenue which connects to Veterans Memorial Highway, NY Route 454. Hawkins Avenue and Ronkonkoma Avenue both extend north of the LIE and connect with Middle Country Road, NY Route 25 and Nesconset Highway, NY Route 347.



Links to MacArthur Airport

There are currently three linkages between Ronkonkoma Station and the main terminal at Long Island MacArthur Airport: taxi, shuttle and transit bus (see Figure 13, Links to MacArthur Airport). All three modes travel from the Station to the Airport via Railroad Avenue, Ronkonkoma Avenue (which becomes Smithtown Avenue - CR 29), Lakeland Avenue - CR93, Veterans Memorial Highway, New York State Route 454, to the Airport access road which is opposite Johnson Avenue. The route is approximately 3.6 miles long and takes about 9 to 10 minutes.

Five taxi companies provide service between the two hubs. One taxi company is based at the Station and two reside at the Airport. Service is provided on demand with a typical fare of \$5.00 per trip. The two taxi companies at the Airport, however, have minimum fares of \$30.00 and \$35.00. One of the taxi companies also runs a shuttle bus between the two hubs. The medium-sized bus, typical of those that provide shuttle service between Airport parking lots and terminals, can accommodate approximately 20 passengers and operates every half hour between 5:30 AM and 10:30 PM. The fare is \$5.00.

Suffolk County Transit also provides service between the Station and the Airport via their S57 route. That route has termini at the LIRR Sayville Station and the nearby Smithhaven Mall. The Airport and Ronkonkoma Hub are adjacent stops with ten minutes allotted on the schedule between those stops. The bus is a full size transit bus which runs from 6:30 AM to 8:30 PM with one hour headways in both directions. The fare is \$1.50 with exact change required. Discounts are available for students, senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

It should be noted that the Courtyard by Marriott hotel located on the LIE south service road less than one mile north of the Station provides a free van shuttle service for its guests. Shuttle service is provided on demand every half hour from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM to and from Ronkonkoma Station and the Airport.



Key Findings for Transportation Infrastructure

- The roadway network serving the Ronkonkoma Hub area is extensive and includes a wide variety of roadway classifications.
- A number of Study Area intersections and roadways are currently operating at poor levels of service and are likely to be further impacted by additional traffic generated by any new development in the area.
- There are currently three modes of linkage between the Ronkonkoma Station and MacArthur Airport – several taxis companies, a privately operated shuttle bus service and transit bus operated by Suffolk County Transit.
- Use of existing local roadways linking the train station to the airport involves only a ten minute ride.

Demographics

To create a better understanding of the potential market for the Station area, a statistical analysis of the demographics in the contributing area was conducted. This demographic overview consists of the following components:

- Identification of the retail trade area (e.g. the area from which the majority of demand for commercial goods and services will derive, broken out by convenience and shoppers goods, with primary and secondary trade areas identified).
- Estimation of current buying income per household and total for commercial goods and services, by commercial business type (e.g. convenience and shoppers good, further broken out by subcategory).

Based on this analysis, extrapolation of current (2008) population and income five years forward to 2013, with income listed per household and associated retail spending power is discussed in Chapter 3.

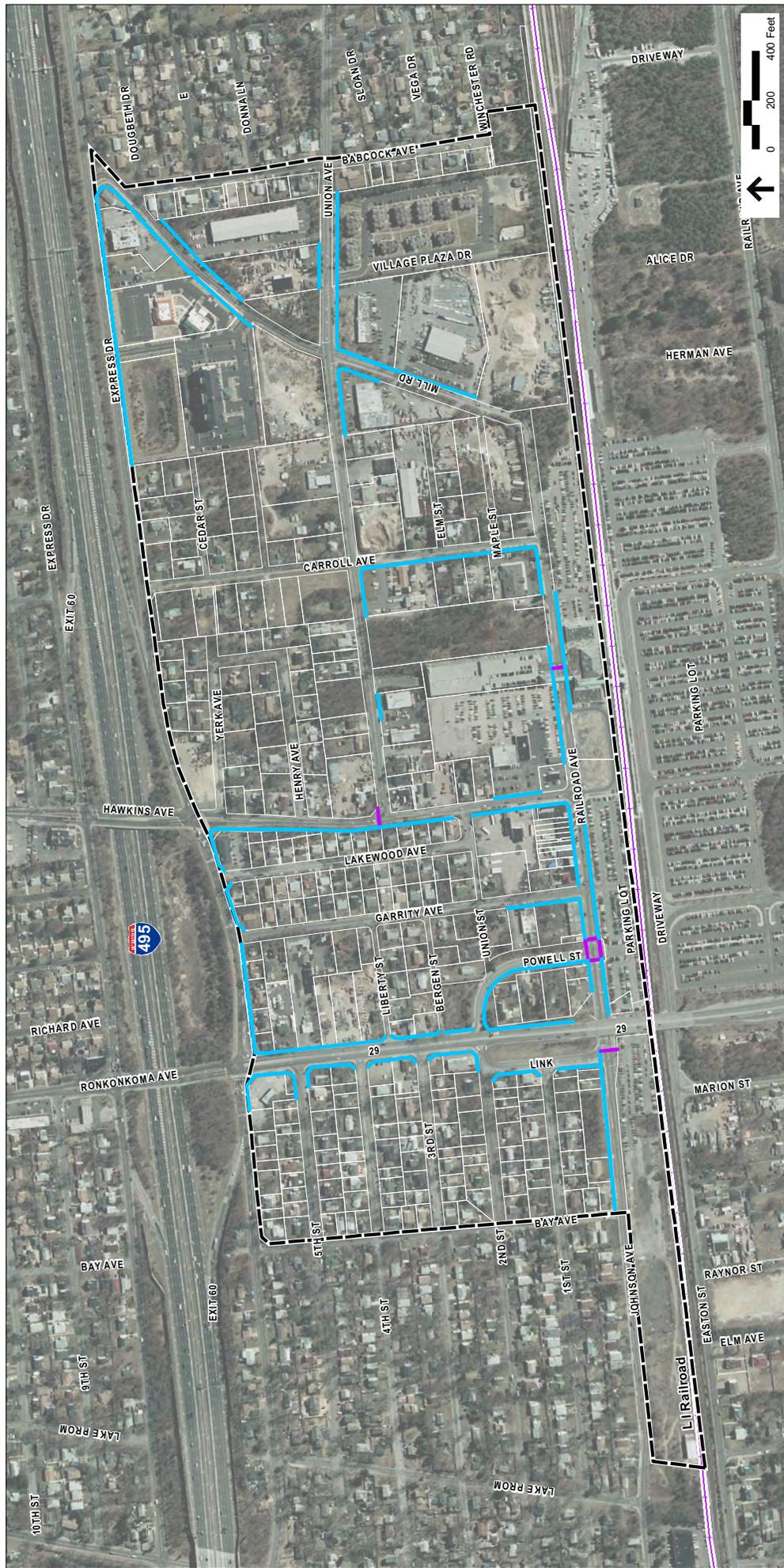


Figure 12
Sidewalks and Crosswalks Inventory



**Ronkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

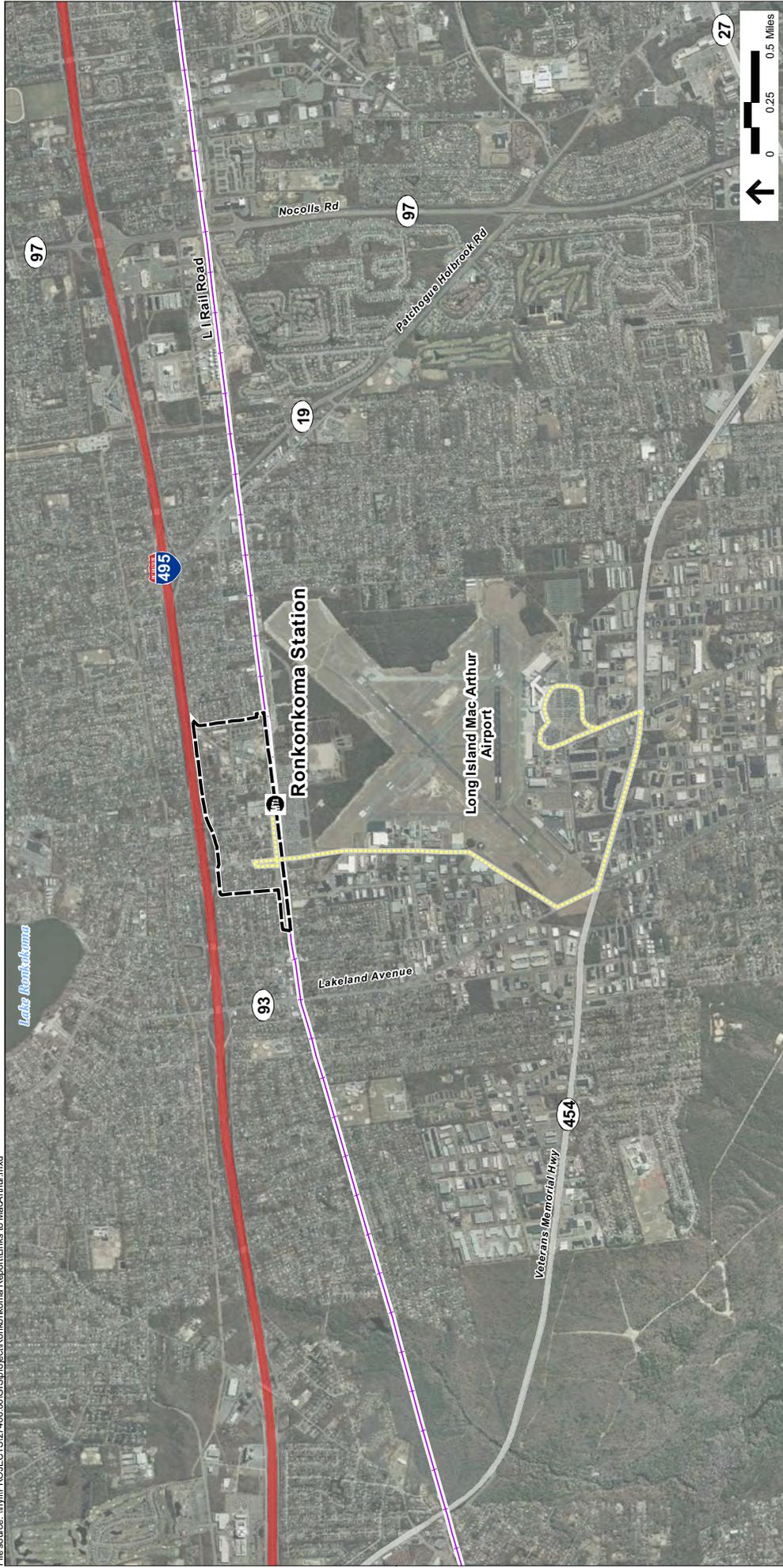
Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008



Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail, Land Use and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

- Legend**
- Study Area
 - Rail
 - Existing Crosswalks
 - Existing Sidewalks

File source: \\ny\proj\PROJECTS\27406.00\GIS\Special\Ronkonkoma Report\Links to MacArthur.mxd



Legend
 MacArthur Airport Link
 Study Area
 Long Island Rail Road



Figure 13
 Links to MacArthur Airport

**Ronkonkoma Hub
 Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

*Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
 September 2008*

Data sources:
 Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services



Retail Trade Area

A trade area is the geographic area from which the majority of a retail establishment's customers originate. Trade areas differ based on the type of products offered at the retail establishment. For example, the trade area for a convenience good such as milk is typically smaller than the trade area for a shoppers good, or "comparison" good, such as furniture or apparel. The distance a consumer will travel to buy a gallon of milk is significantly shorter than the travel distance tolerated to buy a new sofa.

Another factor affecting the trade areas for convenience and shoppers goods is comparison shopping. To purchase a gallon of milk, one generally does not need to compare brands or stores. To purchase a piece of furniture, consumers are willing to travel further distances to compare various merchandise.

These factors impact the designation of trade areas for the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area, which currently offers a small cluster of convenience goods oriented to commuters. This current mix of stores does not, however, preclude the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area from eventually adding shoppers goods. Therefore, two trade areas have been established for the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area:

1. **Convenience goods retail trade area** – defined as all the land within a 3 mile radius of the Station, and roughly equal to an easy 5-minute drive of the Station (which is the typical drawing area of neighborhood-oriented convenience retail establishments, which often include food stores, drug stores, personal service establishment such as dry cleaning and beauty shops, takeout food businesses, and small sit-down restaurants).
2. **Shoppers goods retail trade area** – defined as all the land within a 5 mile radius of the Station, and roughly equivalent to a 10-minute driving distance (which is the typical drawing area of community-oriented retail destinations, which often include destination restaurants, clothing and apparel stores, home furnishings and specialty stores).

Of course, not all sales to Ronkonkoma Hub retail establishments (both existing and future) will draw from these primary trade areas. Establishments situated around the Station already take advantage of the high volume of commuters that patronize the Station, including those that reside beyond a 5-mile radius of the Station. Most of these commuters reside in eastern areas of Suffolk County; therefore, Suffolk County may be viewed as a secondary trade area for both convenience and shoppers goods.



Household Spending Profile

The household spending profile consists of an estimation of the current buying income per household and total allocated to commercial goods and services. It is broken out by convenience and shoppers goods.

Convenience Goods

Residents of the primary and secondary trade areas surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub offer strong disposable income to support convenience retailers. Within a 3-mile radius of the Station, approximately 27,000 households offer \$439 million in annual convenience goods retail spending potential (\$16,000 per household). Residents of Suffolk County, which total nearly 500,000, offer a combined \$8 billion in annual convenience goods retail spending potential (\$16,500 per household).

Table 5
Trade Area Household Spending Profile
Convenience Goods, 2008

Type of Good	Primary Trade Area (3-Mile Radius)		Secondary Trade Area (Suffolk County)	
	Households: Total Expenditures	27,432 Spending Per Household	Households: Total Expenditures	493,870 Spending Per Household
Grocery Stores	\$173,000,000	\$6,300	\$3,180,000,000	\$6,400
Specialty Food Stores	\$15,000,000	\$500	\$273,000,000	\$600
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	\$16,000,000	\$600	\$286,000,000	\$600
Health and Personal Care Stores	\$49,000,000	\$1,800	\$919,000,000	\$1,900
Gasoline Stations	\$110,000,000	\$4,000	\$2,035,000,000	\$4,100
Florists	\$2,000,000	\$100	\$36,000,000	\$100
Office Supplies, Stationary, and Gift Stores	\$10,000,000	\$400	\$192,000,000	\$400
Limited-Service Eating Places	\$55,000,000	\$2,000	\$1,014,000,000	\$2,100
Drinking Places (Bars)	\$9,000,000	\$300	\$170,000,000	\$300
TOTAL	\$439,000,000	\$16,000	\$8,105,000,000	\$16,500

Source: ESRI, BBPC, 2008

Top spending categories of households in both the primary and secondary trade area include: groceries, health and personal care products, gasoline, and limited-service eating places.

Convenience Goods Spending Per Household, 2008



These residents’ purchasing power may offer potential to support new convenience goods establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub. Small-scale versions of these stores will be the most appropriate fits for the downtown scale and character envisioned for Ronkonkoma Hub.

Shoppers Goods

The buying power of households for shoppers goods in the primary and secondary trade areas surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub is also significant. The approximately 76,000 households living within a 5-mile radius of the Station (the primary trade area) offer a combined \$1.7 billion in annual retail spending potential for shoppers goods (\$22,600 per household). The nearly 500,000 households living in Suffolk County offer an annual potential for \$11.5 billion in shoppers goods expenditures (\$23,200 per household).

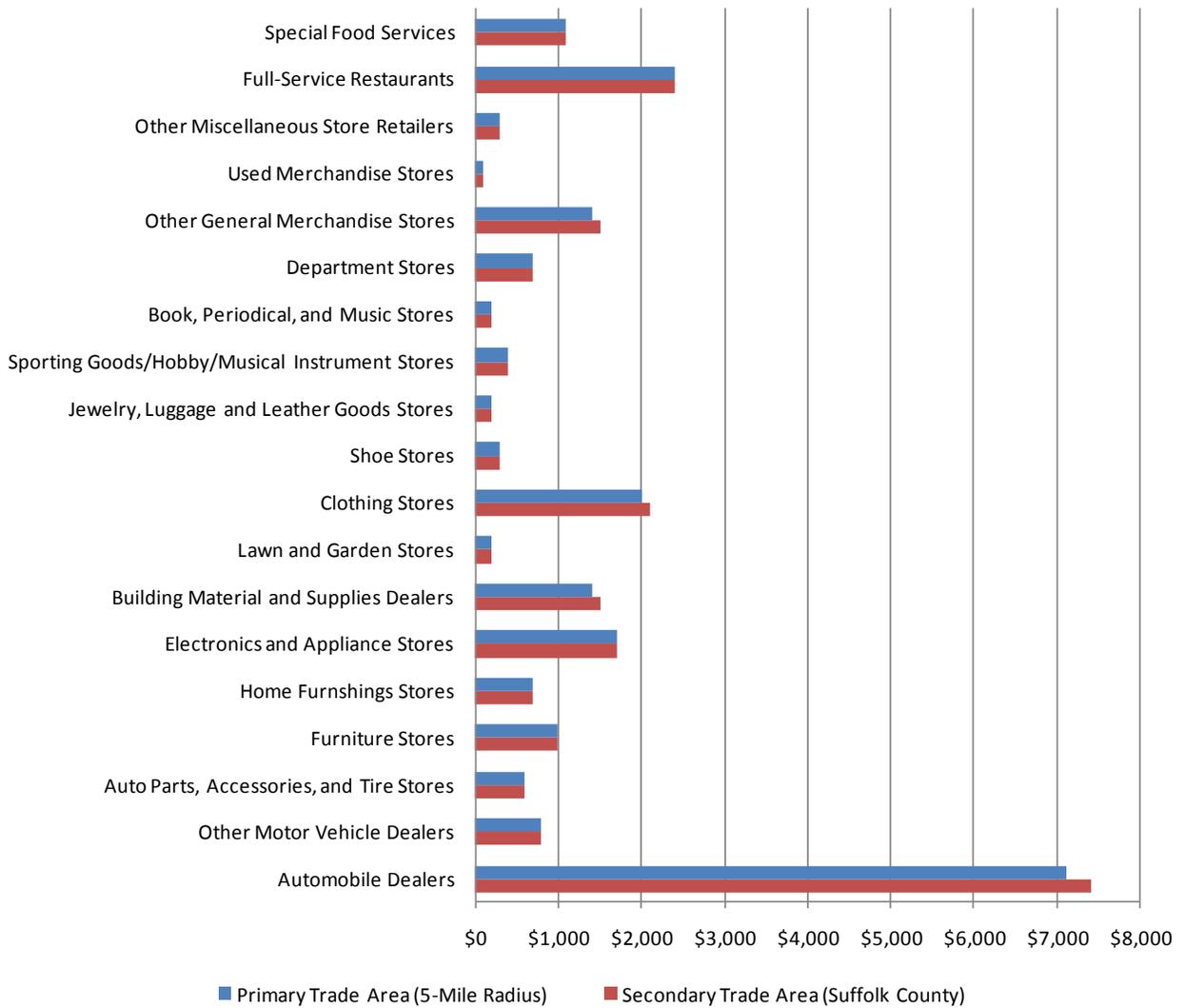
Households in both the primary and secondary trade areas offer the most potential spending on the following types of goods and services: sit-down/full-service dining and clothing.

**Table 6
Trade Area Household Spending Profile
Shoppers Goods, 2008**

Type of Good	Primary Trade Area (5-Mile Radius)		Secondary Trade Area (Suffolk County)	
	Households: Total Expenditures	76,191 Spending Per Household	Households: Total Expenditures	493,870 Spending Per Household
Automobile Dealers	\$542,000,000	\$7,100	\$3,633,000,000	\$7,400
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	\$60,000,000	\$800	\$410,000,000	\$800
Auto Parts, Accessories, and Tire Stores	\$46,000,000	\$600	\$309,000,000	\$600
Furniture Stores	\$73,000,000	\$1,000	\$491,000,000	\$1,000
Home Furnishings Stores	\$53,000,000	\$700	\$357,000,000	\$700
Electronics and Appliance Stores	\$126,000,000	\$1,700	\$841,000,000	\$1,700
Building Material and Supplies Dealers	\$109,000,000	\$1,400	\$726,000,000	\$1,500
Lawn and Garden Stores	\$17,000,000	\$200	\$113,000,000	\$200
Clothing Stores	\$154,000,000	\$2,000	\$1,017,000,000	\$2,100
Shoe Stores	\$22,000,000	\$300	\$147,000,000	\$300
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores	\$17,000,000	\$200	\$115,000,000	\$200
Sports/Hobby/Musical Instrument Stores	\$29,000,000	\$400	\$193,000,000	\$400
Book, Periodical, and Music Stores	\$17,000,000	\$200	\$111,000,000	\$200
Department Stores	\$54,000,000	\$700	\$357,000,000	\$700
Other General Merchandise Stores	\$109,000,000	\$1,400	\$724,000,000	\$1,500
Used Merchandise Stores	\$4,000,000	\$100	\$30,000,000	\$100
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$22,000,000	\$300	\$149,000,000	\$300
Full-Service Restaurants	\$183,000,000	\$2,400	\$1,204,000,000	\$2,400
Special Food Services	\$85,000,000	\$1,100	\$561,000,000	\$1,100
TOTAL	\$1,722,000,000	\$22,600	\$11,488,000,000	\$23,200

Source: ESRI, BBPC, 2008

Shoppers Goods Spending Per Household, 2008



Given the downtown character and modest level of retail space planned for Ronkonkoma Hub (roughly 50,000 square feet), small-scale specialty shops and sit-down restaurants may be the most appropriate means through which to capture a portion of the spending power of primary and secondary trade area households. These types of businesses can fit within a downtown scale and character more appropriately than, for instance, large automobile dealers or department stores.

Key Findings for Demographics

- Residents of the primary and secondary trade areas surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub offer strong disposable income to support both convenience retailers and shoppers goods.
- Top spending categories in convenience retail include: groceries, health and personal care products, gasoline, and limited-service eating places. These residents' purchasing power may offer potential to support new convenience goods establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub.
- Small-scale versions of these stores will be the most appropriate fits for the downtown scale and character envisioned for Ronkonkoma Hub.
- Top spending categories in shoppers goods and services include: sit-down/full-service dining and clothing.
- Small-scale specialty shops and sit-down restaurants may be more appropriate to the downtown scale and character anticipated for the station area than large automobile dealers or department stores.

Multi-family Housing Demand

With one of the most active transit stations in Long Island and an emerging residential market, the Station area offers a substantial opportunity for multi-family housing development oriented to transit. Market trends in the surrounding Towns of Brookhaven and Islip and Suffolk County are positive, with short- and long-term household growth projected to occur through 2012 and 2017.

An assessment of the demand and supply characteristics of multi-family housing in the towns and county surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub was prepared for the Planning Study and is summarized below. This housing assessment identified an opportunity for the development of an estimated 688 new multi-family housing units focused around the Station by 2017. Over this long-term timeframe, the housing assessment assumes that the Long Island residential ownership housing market will recover from its current downturn. However, because of the current market correction occurring in the for-sale market, it is recommended that the new units added through 2012 be offered as rental units to respond to immediate market trends favoring rental housing, and that ownership units be added over the 2012 to 2017 period. Both the rental and ownership housing units could be developed through new construction or adaptive reuse of existing structures within the Study Area boundaries.

While the market may provide support for an estimated 688 units, the actual level added in the Study Area will likely be a result of the achievement of a balance between market demand and the capacity of local services (e.g. schools, sewer, etc.)

to support these units (taking into account the tax benefits and costs associated with such development).



Market Demand Potential

The basis of the multi-family housing assessment is the evaluation of the potential demand for the Ronkonkoma Hub area market. This analysis is provided below and includes the market area definition, the target market profile, the area demographics, and the potential market capture.

Market Area Definition

The Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area is situated within the Long Island residential market. This broad geographic area includes the numerous municipalities that comprise Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Located near MacArthur Airport, the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area is situated at the border of the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip in central Suffolk County. The majority of demand for new housing is assumed to emerge from residents of local jurisdictions. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) suggests that as a rule of thumb, “between 50 to 75 percent of the buyers or renters in a new development come from the local community.”

Using this guidance, the Study Area’s primary residential market area (i.e. the geographic zone within which the majority of demand for new housing will emerge) is defined as the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip. A secondary study area (i.e. the geographic zone from which the next highest proportion of demand for new housing will emerge) includes the remainder of Suffolk County. The secondary study area captures those households currently driving to the Station and traveling toward Manhattan via express rail service.

Target Market Profile

The target market includes households likely to reside in multi-family housing units near transit. These households are identified by examining the current supply of multi-family housing in the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip, including recently constructed multi-family housing within the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area. A reconnaissance survey of current housing supply results in the following determinations:

- The majority of rental multi-family housing units are one- and two-bedroom units;
- The average rental rate for a one-bedroom unit was \$1,300, while a two-bedroom unit was \$1,750 as of October 2007;

- Market rental rates for multi-family housing in the two towns ranges from \$850 for a studio apartment up to \$2,500 for an older three-bedroom unit or newer two-bedroom unit;
- The majority of new for-sale multi-family housing units have two bedrooms;
- List prices for new for-sale condominiums range from \$290,000 to \$350,000;
- Households earning approximately \$50,000 to \$125,000 can afford current rental rates, assuming gross monthly housing costs (e.g. monthly rent and utilities) does not exceed 30 percent of gross income;
- Households earning approximately \$75,000 to \$125,000 can afford currently listed new condominium units, assuming monthly housing costs (e.g. monthly mortgage, taxes, utilities, and HOA fees) do not exceed 30 percent of gross income and assuming a 5 percent down payment is made; and
- The average sale price of residential property in the Station area was \$369,925 in 2007.

Given these current conditions, the target market for new multi-family housing at Ronkonkoma Hub is households earning \$50,000 to \$125,000 annually.

Market Area Demographics

To evaluate the depth of potential demand for multi-family housing at Ronkonkoma Hub, an overview demographic analysis of estimated existing and projected future households in the primary and secondary market areas was performed. Key questions addressed through the demographic analysis include:

- How many estimated existing households meet the target market definition (e.g. how many earn \$50,000 to \$125,000 annually)?
- How many projected future households meet the target market definition in the short-term (e.g. five years)? How many in the long-term (e.g. 10 years)?
- What lifestyle and housing preferences do these households share?

Existing and Future Households

In 2007, there were an estimated 218,106 “target market” households earning \$50,000 to \$125,000 in the primary and secondary market areas. By 2012, total households meeting the target market definition could rise to 222,460 households if households are added at an annual rate of 0.4 percent, as current projections suggest. If this annual growth continues at the same pace through 2017, target market households could increase to a total of 226,901 households.

Given these current growth projections, the Ronkonkoma Hub primary and secondary market areas could add a net 4,354 households earning \$50,000 to \$125,000 from 2007 to 2012 and another 4,441 households earning at this income range from 2012 to 2017. Therefore, the total potential market demand for multi-family housing could be up to 8,795 households.

Top Tapestry Segments

To identify the lifestyle characteristics and housing preferences of local residents, BBPC performed an evaluation of top household tapestry segments. ESRI Business Information Solutions uses demographic information such as labor force characteristics, median income, age, and spending habits to categorize neighborhoods according to a trademarked Community Tapestry classification system.¹²

As evident Table 6 (p. 42), the “Pleasant-ville” tapestry segment, one of several “Upscale Avenues” tapestry types, is the dominant segment in both towns (38 percent of all households in Brookhaven and 38 percent in Islip) and Suffolk County (35 percent).

“High Society” tapestry types are the next most prevalent, with 16 percent of all Brookhaven households identified as “Sophisticated Squires” and 13 and 15 percent of Islip and Suffolk County households identified as residents of “Wealthy Seaboard Suburbs,” respectively. The “Urban Villages” segment is also prevalent in Islip, representing 20 percent of all households.

“Pleasant-ville” households are characterized as affluent households comprised primarily of middle-aged married couples with children; about half of households are empty nesters. Though one fifth of households receive retirement income, the majority of residents work in a variety of industries. Commuting rates are high in this tapestry segment, and an estimated 12 percent commute an hour or more. Most households currently live in single-family residences built in the decades following World War II. Favorite leisure time pursuits include dining out, watching sporting events, and traveling.

“Sophisticated Squires” households include many “baby boomer” married-couple families, including empty nesters. These households are among the most affluent tapestry segments identified by ESRI (grouped collectively as “High Society”). Residents are employed primarily in white-collar occupations, and many have long commutes to work. The majority of households reside in single-family structures, most of which were built between 1970 and 1989. Leisure time activities include playing sports, bicycling, photography, playing golf, and gardening.

“Wealthy Seaboard Suburbs” neighborhoods are characterized as affluent, married-couple families living in older communities in coastal metropolitan areas. Just under half of households have children. Approximately 25 percent of households collect retirement income, while most of the employed residents work in management or professional occupations. Of the 65 tapestry segments identified by ESRI, “Wealthy Seaboard Suburbs” residents are among the top five most likely to commute to work (including commuting out-of-state to work). Most households live in older

▼
¹² ESRI is a subscription-based market research and analysis service.

neighborhoods comprised of single-family homes built prior to 1970. Leisure time is spent shopping, traveling, skiing, ice skating, and going to the theater.

“Urban Villages” communities are diverse clusters of younger families, including married-couples with and without children, single-parent families, and other families. Household incomes are moderate, and most households include dual incomes. The majority of households live in older, single-family structures. Leisure time activities include dining out, traveling, playing sports, and shopping.

Common characteristics of the top three tapestry segments profiled above include:

- Households are relatively wealthy;
- Most households are married-couples;
- Many households are empty nesters or couples without children;
- Many households are headed by baby boomers;
- Most households live in older single-family homes;
- Many households commute long distances to work; and
- Most households enjoy shopping, dining out, and outdoor activities.

Since many households commute long distances, live in older homes, and are either empty nesters or couples without children, some of these households may be interested in “downsizing” from their older single-family homes to smaller homes near transit. Such relocation would afford residents more convenient access to transit and reduce the level of maintenance required on their property, freeing up more leisure time.

Potential Market Capture

Transit-oriented development is gaining currency in towns throughout Long Island and the nation. As traffic congestion increases time spent commuting by automobile in the metropolitan New York area, many households are seeking housing close to transit to improve the quality of their commutes.

The success of recent housing development at Ronkonkoma Hub serves as a strong testament to the market potential for transit-oriented, multi-family housing at the Station. Fairfield at Ronkonkoma Hub, an approximately 60-unit development completed in early 2007, has already reached full occupancy. The swift absorption of units indicates a strong latent demand for multi-family housing in the area, particularly luxury rental housing.

Ronkonkoma Hub is also among the busiest commuter train stations in Long Island. Offering the easternmost express trains to Manhattan on the Main Line, Ronkonkoma Hub has attracted upwards of thousands of daily commuters from the surrounding area and eastern Suffolk County. These commuters are one market segment that should be targeted for multi-family housing at Ronkonkoma Hub.

Demographic trends in the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip and Suffolk County suggest households in the target market (i.e. those earning \$50,000 to \$125,000) will grow over the next five and ten year periods. Growth of these households could serve as a key source of demand for multi-family housing in the Station area.

Given the strong commuter activity at Ronkonkoma Hub, the recent successful multi-family housing development in the area, and the growth of households in surrounding towns and Suffolk County, there are strong opportunities for new multi-family housing at Ronkonkoma Hub.

The Ronkonkoma Hub Station area could capture a modest 5 percent of the household growth that occurs in Suffolk County over the next five and ten years, and 10 percent of the growth that occurs in the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip. Based on current projections, these capture rates translate to demand for 341 new housing units by 2012 and another 347 by 2017, for a total of 688 units over ten years.

The recommended features of these multi-family housing units, including mix of rental to owner-occupied, sizes, rent/price range, and amenities, are described in the following section.



Recommended Characteristics of New Units

Market conditions support the addition of approximately 688 new multi-family housing units at Ronkonkoma Hub over the next ten years, with household growth supporting 341 units from 2007 to 2012 and 347 from 2012 to 2017. The following recommendations detail potential characteristics of new units that would take optimal advantage of short- and long-term market conditions and ensure maximum appeal to target households.

Mix of Rental and Owner-Occupied Units

These units should include a balanced mix of rental and owner-occupied units. In particular, the introduction of 341 multi-family rental units is recommended during the short term (i.e. 2007 to 2012), while the addition of 347 owner-occupied units is recommended over the long term (i.e. 2012 to 2017). This phased mix is proposed for a number of reasons, including:

- **Immediate market conditions are more supportive of rental housing than owner-occupied housing.** Price declines and decreases in sales volumes plagued the owner-occupied market in 2007, and are projected to continue through 2008. According to housing market experts at Moody's Economy, median prices of owner-occupied homes in Long Island could fall 12.3 percent over the next year, from a high in second quarter 2007 to a projected low in first quarter 2009. If

Moody's forecast is correct, the Long Island housing market would not begin to recover until 2009.¹³

- **The multi-family rental market has already proven successful at Ronkonkoma Hub.** The fast absorption of the Fairfield luxury apartments suggests there is strong market support for rental housing at Ronkonkoma Hub.
- **Though current market conditions support rental housing, over the long term, the market should support owner-occupied units.** Though the short-term outlook for owner-occupied housing is bleak, over the long-term the market for owner-occupied housing should recover. Indeed, given long term population and employment growth projections for the New York metropolitan region, the market for owner-occupied housing is likely to expand over the long-term.
- **A balanced mix of rental and owner-occupied housing would appeal to the broad spectrum of potential new households at Ronkonkoma Hub.** The flexibility of rental housing appeals to new households not yet ready to commit to a particular neighborhood, as well as to young professionals and older couples seeking what is usually a more affordable alternative than owner-occupied housing. On the other hand, owner-occupied housing is the preferred housing type for most of the top tapestry segments (e.g. Pleasant-ville, Sophisticated Squires, Wealthy Seaboard Suburbs, and Urban Villages) living in the Ronkonkoma Hub market areas. Owner-occupied units would benefit the Station area by introducing a base of less transient residents with a vested interest in the area's revitalization. The mix of rental and owner-occupied units would also provide a path to homeownership at Ronkonkoma Hub, as residents could first rent an apartment in the Station area and later trade up to an owner-occupied unit.

For these reasons, the phased creation of 341 rental units from 2007 to 2012 and 347 owner-occupied units from 2012 to 2017 is recommended.

Potential Sizes of New Units

To identify a recommended size range for new units, this analysis considered current demand and supply characteristics. In terms of demand, the target market for new housing units at Ronkonkoma Hub is dominated by married couples without children; younger families comprise a minor portion of demand. On the supply side, the majority of new multi-family housing developments in Suffolk County featured two bedrooms and an average of 1,200 square feet of space.

Based on these current demand and supply conditions, BBPC recommends that multi-family housing at Ronkonkoma Hub consist of a mix of primarily two



¹³ Les Christie, "Double-digit home price drops coming," *Money*, 19 September 2007.

bedroom units with larger units including a den, offering between 1,000 to 1,600 square feet of space. This size range would appeal to the target market demographic, offering ample space for couples without children and families with young children. The housing sizes would also be competitive with recently constructed units in other parts of Suffolk County.

Potential Rent and Price Ranges

Aspects of supply and demand were considered in order to establish a market-appropriate range of monthly rental costs and purchase prices. The competitive supply of apartments and owner-occupied multi-family homes includes units renting for between \$1,350 to \$2,500 per month (two and three bedroom units) and homes selling for \$290,000 to \$350,000.¹⁴ With annual household incomes of \$50,000 to \$125,000, the target market can afford monthly rent/mortgage costs of approximately \$1,100 to \$3,000.¹⁵ These monthly costs translate to purchase prices in today's dollars of approximately \$195,000 to \$450,000, assuming a 5 percent down payment and current interest rates.

Given these current conditions, it is recommended that new rental housing at Ronkonkoma Hub rent in the range of \$1,100 to \$2,500 (2007 dollars) to meet the affordability needs of target households and compete favorably with the available rental housing stock. New owner-occupied housing is recommended to be priced between \$200,000 to \$400,000 (with homes priced above \$350,000 offering 3 bedrooms and more square feet). This price range would be affordable to the target demographic, and is priced competitively with recent new housing developments.

Amenities

According to the Urban Land Institute, households interested in transit-oriented lifestyles seek amenity-rich living environments coupled with the convenience of proximity to transit. Households prefer: neighborhoods with urban-style amenities (even in suburban settings); proximity to restaurants, shops, and cultural and sporting venues; historic or architecturally unique buildings; and smaller lots.

To offer a competitive edge and appeal to target households, new units and the surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub district should provide a rich array of amenities. According to the National Multi Housing Council, amenities found in innovative new housing developments include:

- Architecturally distinctive features that pay tribute to the area's heritage
- Compact lots



¹⁴ Selected sample of new multi-family housing units included only two-bedroom units.
¹⁵ Assumes gross monthly housing costs do not exceed 30 percent of annual incomes.

- Private entries
- Direct-entry garage parking
- Nine-foot ceilings
- Bay windows and skylights
- Two-level units
- Gourmet kitchens
- Deluxe master baths
- Full-sized laundry facilities
- Keyless entry systems
- Units wired for integrated telephone, cable, and internet service
- In-wall speaker systems with theater-quality sound
- Business centers, conference facilities
- Media rooms
- Community gardens
- Car wash and car detailing facilities
- Daycare and children's activities
- Pet daycare and dog walking services

The Ronkonkoma Hub Station area already offers several of the community amenities found in innovative new housing developments, including car care and daycare services for children. It is recommended that these services be expanded, and joined by additional services such as pet daycare and dog walking services that would boost the area's appeal to new residents.

Recruitment of destination shops and restaurants should also be considered as a complement to the base of convenience retail stores and services already present in the Station area.

Key Findings for Housing Demand

- The Ronkonkoma Hub station area is situated within a primary and secondary market area: the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip (the primary market) and Suffolk County (the secondary market). It is assumed that the majority of demand for new housing will emerge from the primary market area, with the next largest source of demand coming from the secondary market area.
- The target market of households most likely to prefer multi-family housing near transit includes households earning \$50,000 to \$125,000. This income range includes households that can afford current market rate rents and purchase prices.
- There were an estimated 218,106 target market households in the primary and secondary study areas in 2007. By 2017, it is projected that 8,795 households will be added in these areas.
- Top tapestry segments (i.e. socioeconomic groups) in the market areas include "Pleasant-ville," "Upscale Avenues," "Sophisticated Squires," and "Urban Villages." These groups are similar in that most households are relatively affluent, are married couples without children, are headed by baby boomers, live in older single-family homes, commute long distances to work, and enjoy shopping, dining out, and outdoor activities.
- Ronkonkoma Hub could capture a modest 5 percent of household growth in Suffolk County (the secondary market area) and 10 percent of growth in the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip (the primary market area). Such capture would result in demand for 688 new housing units over ten years (341 in the first five years and 347 in the second five years).
- Given recent market trends, it is recommended that the station area add 341 new rental units from 2008 to 2012 (since no new housing units were built in 2007), and 347 owner-occupied units from 2012 to 2017.
- New units are recommended to offer layouts with 1,000 to 1,600 square feet (with the mix more heavily weighted to two bedroom units) to match the preferences of key sources of demand, which primarily includes married couples without children, but to a minor extent includes younger families that may prefer a three-bedroom unit with room to grow. Units are recommended to be rented at rates of \$1,100 to \$2,500 per month (2007 dollars), or listed at purchase prices of \$200,000 to \$400,000 (2007 dollars).

Cont'd on next page...

- While the market may provide support for an estimated 688 units, the actual level added in the Study Area will likely be a result of the achievement of a balance between market demand and the capacity of local services (e.g. schools, sewer, etc.) to support these units (taking into account the tax benefits and costs associated with such development). Generally speaking, the impacts of this mix of units, with heavy emphasis on couples without children, on the local school district would be less burdensome than a mix of units focused more on families.
- To appeal to the target demographic, new units should offer a broad range of amenities. These include both in-unit amenities (e.g. architecturally distinctive features, private entries, gourmet kitchens, etc.) and community/station area amenities (e.g. convenient services such as child care, pet care, and car care, as well as destination retail shops and restaurants).
- Developers of new housing units may look to the recently constructed Fairfield at Ronkonkoma development, a rental townhouse community situated to the east of the transit station, as a model for relatively higher density housing catering to the needs and preferences of target market households. This community offers a variety of amenities, including recreational facilities, landscaping, optional detached garages, and gourmet kitchen and designer bath features.



Future Research

The above analysis suggested there is strong demand for market-rate multi-family housing at Ronkonkoma Hub. The study did not evaluate opportunities for affordable and workforce housing to complement the market rate development, nor did it explore potential demand for commercial uses in the Station area.

Future analysis should consider the potential demand for affordable and/or workforce housing development, in accordance with local definitions of “affordable” and “workforce.” Such analysis would likely uncover significant demand for affordable/workforce housing in the Station area. The recommended market rate housing development could be leveraged to support the addition of affordable/workforce housing.

The target demographic for market rate housing in the Station area prefers amenity-rich environments, including those with retail shops and restaurants in walking distance of residences. Future research should quantify demand for commercial uses in the Station area that would enhance the appeal of living at Ronkonkoma Hub.

Potential TOD Opportunity Sites

This section identifies potential TOD opportunity sites within the Study Area. Various densities or “residential yields” were explored at six, twelve and twenty units per acre. This exploration helped gain an understanding of the issues and opportunities that informed the preparation of the subsequent long-term vision, land use plan, and key TOD zoning characteristics that are presented in Chapter 3. Figure 14 identifies the “Potential TOD Opportunity Sites” within the Study Area and south of the rail road track in Islip.



Methodology and Assumptions

The Potential TOD Opportunity Sites were identified based on their close proximity to the Station. In general, these sites exhibit the following characteristics:

- Located within a ten-minute walk to the Station.
- Vacant or underutilized.

To understand the potential residential yield, the approximate land areas were identified (in acres). For this exercise, it was assumed that the Opportunity Sites do not have any limitations on the development potential (including zoning, environmental, sewage capacity, deed restrictions)

The Multi-Family Housing Demand Study (described earlier) identified an opportunity for the development of an estimated 688 new multi-family housing units in the Station area by 2017. Table 7 identifies the residential yields on the Opportunity Sites at six, twelve and twenty units per acre.

Table 7
Potential Residential Yield

	Acres of Land	Density	Density	Density
		Six per acre	Twelve per acre	Twenty per acre
Potential Residential Yield	40.3*	242	484	806

Notes: * This land area does not include the 28.5 acre opportunity site identified outside of the Study Area on the Islip commuter parking lot.

Key Findings for TOD Opportunity Sites

- Approximately 40 acres of land is suitable for TOD within a 10 minute walk of the Train Station.
- With the opportunity for the development of an estimated 688 units, the residential yield at 12 units per acre fulfills 484 of these units. To fulfill the full potential of 688 multi-family residential units, these sites would need to average approximately 17 units per acre.
- Many of the opportunity sites are currently zoned L1 and would need to be modified in order to allow residential development.

Key Opportunity Sites - Garrity/Hawkins and MTA-Controlled Parcels

This section provides an overview of four “opportunity” sites identified by the Town of Brookhaven early in the planning process.

While these sites were the focus of creating the vision plan in Chapter 3, it was noted that there may be other opportunity sites for development within the area that surrounds the Station. The four sites include: (1) three MTA-controlled parcels that range from approximately three-quarters of an acre to three acres and (2) the block bounded by Garrity and Hawkins Avenues between Union Street and Railroad Avenue consisting of approximately three acres of land. The locations and approximate sizes for each of these sites are identified on Figure 15 (Garrity/Hawkins and MTA-Controlled Sites).

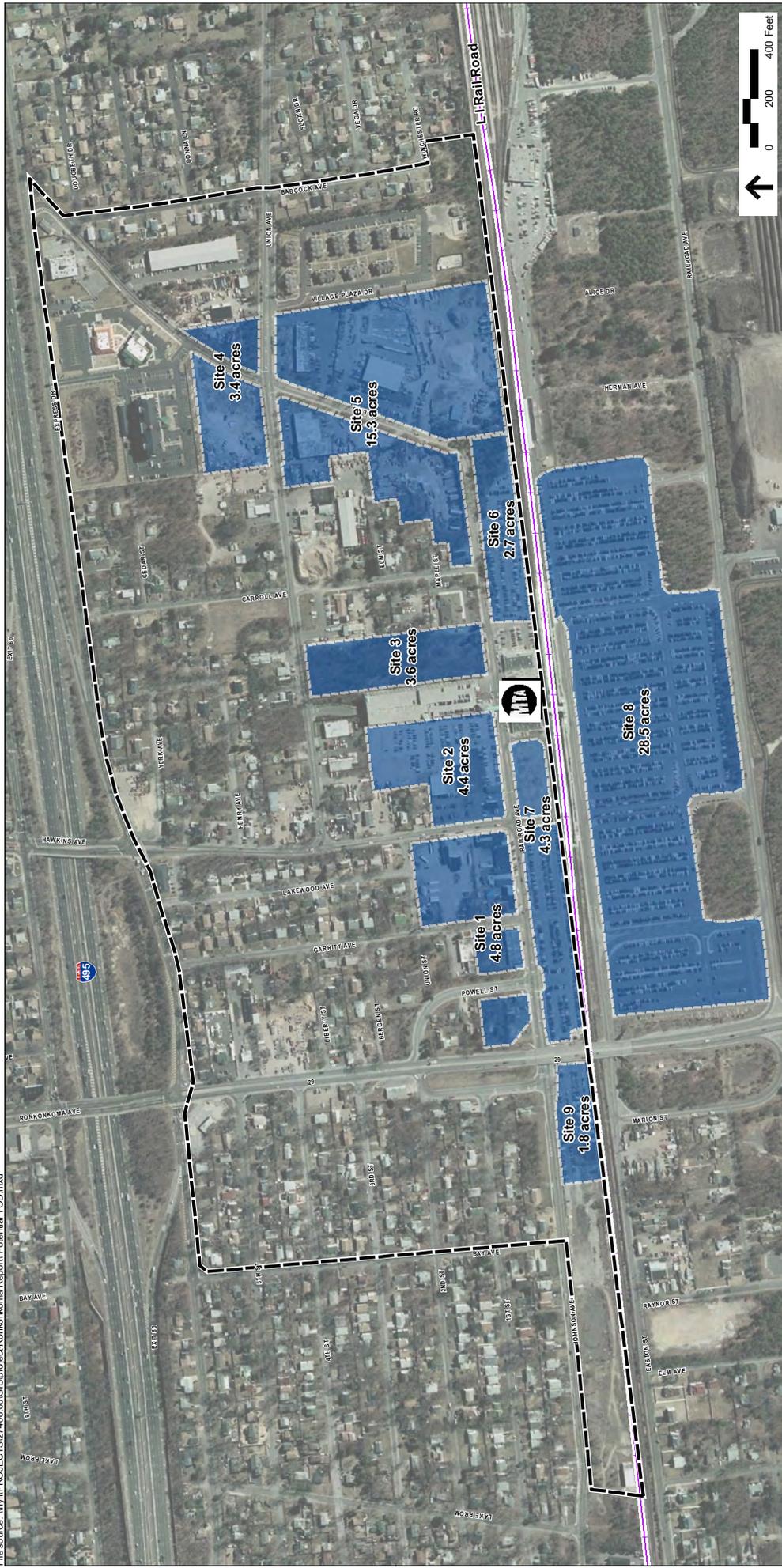


Study Area Opportunities

The Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area has many attributes that informed the potential redevelopment of the four key sites. Figure 16 (Issues and Opportunities) identifies key issues and opportunities within the Study Area. They include:

- Potential Railroad Avenue to become a “Main Street” spine with buildings addressing the street.
- Opportunities to create “Gateways” along Railroad Avenue (to the east and west and at the Station) to celebrate entry to the Main Street area.
- All four opportunity sites are within a 10 minute walk of the Station.
- Large residential and mixed use areas surround the four key sites.
- There is potential frontage along Railroad Avenue for new buildings that could help define the street edge.

File source: \\nvl\PROJECTS\27406.00\GIS\Info\Local\Ronkonkoma Report_Potential TOD.mxd



Legend
 Study Area
 Rail
 Potential TOD Opportunity Sites



Figure 14
 Potential TOD Opportunity Sites

**Ronkonkoma Hub
 Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

*Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
 September 2008*

Data sources:
 Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
 Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

3

The Vision

As discussed in Chapter 1, the purpose of the planning study is to develop a vision that will aid in the revitalization of the Ronkonkoma Hub. This Chapter describes a long-term vision and outlines an implementation strategy aimed at providing guidance to all interested parties on potential future development around the Station. Following the Vision, this chapter contains a land use plan, model zoning and design guidelines language, transportation infrastructure improvements, retail spending predictions, tax implications and economic development tools available to facilitate revitalization.

Vision Plan

A Vision Plan was prepared to explore the potential development opportunities on the key TOD sites. During the first public informational meeting, three “themes” for the future of Ronkonkoma Hub were presented to participants. The public was asked to state their preference for what they would like to see happen in the area that surrounds the Station and, in particular, along Railroad Avenue. The three themes are:

- **Theme 1: “Status Quo ”** – Focus on retaining the area as a commuter parking lot, with additional service retail and enhanced streetscape.
- **Theme 2: “Main Street Village”** – Focus on creating a live/work environment, mixed-uses and enhanced streetscape.
- **Theme 3: “Office Business Center”** – Focus on creating a reverse commute destination (i.e. office); creation of jobs and enhanced streetscape.

The majority of participants at the information meeting stated a preference for Theme 2: “Main Street Village.” As a result, a Vision Plan for the eight sites was developed that explored the opportunity to transform Railroad Avenue into a community “main street” with mixed-use buildings that defined the street edge. In addition, the Vision Plan includes pedestrian amenities such as small urban plazas at

key intersections and envisions that streetscape improvements will be made along both sides of Railroad Avenue. Parking is placed at the rear or internal areas of these sites to enable new development to front the street. Finally, the Vision Plan calls for a mix of housing, retail and office space.

The Vision Plan is conceptual and is meant to convey the broad goals and objectives for creating a mixed-use main street environment. The Vision Plan represents one of numerous ways to accomplish these goals and is intended to provide the town and community with a framework to facilitate the discussion of the issues and opportunities that are identified in the Vision. The opportunities associated with the Vision Plan, its potential development program and the key assumptions are summarized below. Refer also to Figure 17, “Vision Plan” for eight key TOD Sites.

The Vision Plan is based on a number of assumptions that affect land use, density and parking. These assumptions are outlined in Table 9.

**Table 9
Vision Plan Assumptions**

Element	Assumption
Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be modified to enable development.
Development Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions (easements, environmental use restrictions, parking restrictions, etc.) on any parcels that would limit their development potential. Private bus depot would be relocated to continue to serve the LIRR and school district.
Market Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential units were calculated based on a building footprint area with a gross to net ratio of 85% and an average unit size of 1,000 SF. Townhouses were assumed to be 25 x 50 feet. Target residential densities assumed 15-20 units per acre. Commercial uses are illustrative and would need to be verified based on market conditions.
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New development would be surface parked at the following ratios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial and Retail - 1 space per 250-330 SF of GFA. Residential - 1.5 spaces for multifamily units and 2 spaces per unit for townhouses.
Sewer Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not a constraint.

The Vision Plan identifies numerous opportunities for the eight sites and the streetscape adjacent to these sites. These opportunities are summarized below:

- Urban plazas at key intersections to provide public spaces for pedestrians and help activate the street.
- Streetscape enhancements including sidewalks, signage, lighting and landscaping along Railroad Avenue, Mill Road and Hawkins Avenue.
- Orient buildings towards the street edge along Railroad Avenue to help define the “Main Street” character.
- Parking at the rear or interior of lots and seek opportunities for shared parking.

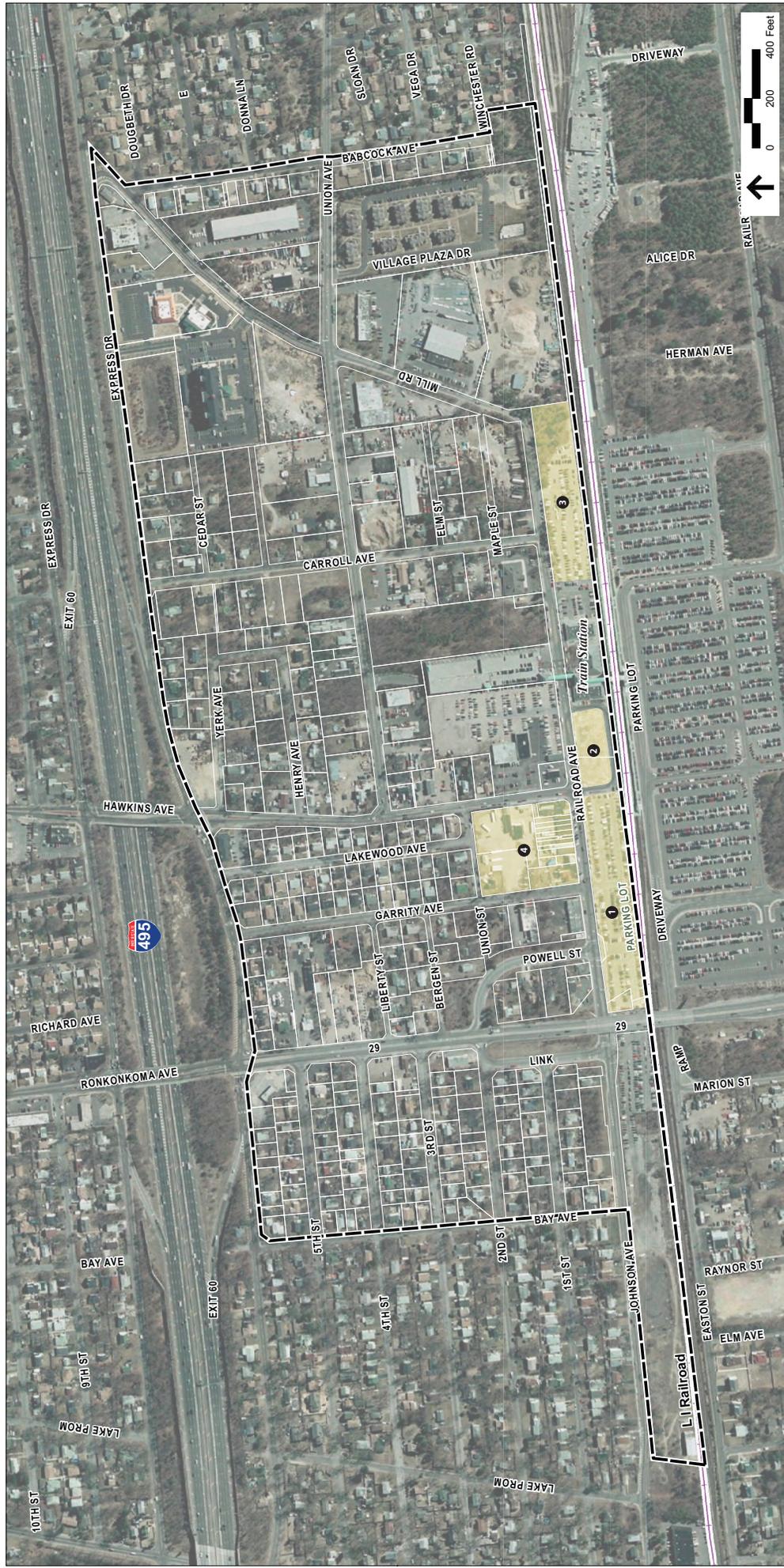


Figure 15

Garry/Hawkins & MTA Controlled Sites

**Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008



Approximate Area
132,224 ft ² = 3.04 Acres
32,450 ft ² = 0.75 Acres
123,950 ft ² = 2.85 Acres
139,198 ft ² = 3.20 Acres

- Sites**
- 1 MTA Site 1
 - 2 MTA Site 2
 - 3 MTA Site 3
 - 4 Garry & Hawkins Block

Legend

- Study Area
- Rail



Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY



Legend
 Study Area
 Rail

Gateway Potential
 Thru Streets
 Internal Streets
 Opportunity Site

Train Station
 Potential Edge/Frontage on Railroad Ave.
 Existing MTA Parking Lot or Structure
 Existing Mix of Uses - Railroad Ave.

Existing Mix of Uses - Union & Mill
 Predominately Residential Area
 Opportunity to Connect Areas & Improve Streetscape



Figure 16
 Issues and Opportunities

**Ronkonkoma Hub
 Transit-Oriented Planning Study**
 Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
 September 2008

Data sources:
 Aerial Imagery - I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
 Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail - Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

- Active pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor, particularly along Railroad Avenue between Garrity Avenue and the Station.
- New retail development on the MTA “bus loop” site.
- Buildings up to 5 stories on Railroad Avenue, up to 4 stories tall on Mill Road and up to 2.5 stories on Union Avenue.
- Streetscape and pedestrian enhancements to the Station plaza, including improvements to the pickup/dropoff area.
- Mix of uses on upper floors.
- Buildings oriented toward the street edge along Mill Road.
- Parking garages located at the interior or rear of lots.
- Multi-family buildings oriented toward amenities such as parks or plazas.
- Residential unit types mixed within development sites.
- Pedestrian connections to Fairfield residences.

It should be noted that during the course of this study, the LIRR put forth a design for its northeast parking lot which is adjacent to Railroad Avenue. Working closely with the Town, the LIRR’s design includes streetscape improvements such as a concrete paver strip, landscaping/trees and decorative lighting. In addition, the design maintains the roadway width of 34 feet along Railroad Avenue to accommodate 2 traffic lanes and potential bike lanes.



Development Program

The development program for the eight sites is summarized in Table 10 below and shown in Figure 17. The Vision Plan includes a mix of building types: live/work, mixed-use (retail/office/residential), townhouses and multifamily (apartments or condominiums). The live/work and mixed-use buildings are targeted for Sites 1-5 as they have frontage on Railroad Avenue. Residential uses were targeted for Sites 6 and 7 and the portion of Site 5 that fronts Union Avenue. Site 8 was targeted for retail uses and parking for that site was assumed to be located in the adjacent MTA parking lot. As stated above, the Vision Plan is conceptual and the potential program is included for illustrative purposes only.

**Table 10
Vision Plan Development Program**

Site #	Retail (SF)	Office (SF)	Housing (units)	Live/Work (units)
Site 1	-	-	-	5
Site 2	-	-	-	10
Site 3	10,800	16,800	66	-
Site 4	27,600	16,800	66	-
Site 5	14,400	39,800	30	-
Site 6	-	-	98	-
Site 7	-	-	157	-
Site 8	6,000	-	-	-
Total	58,800	73,400	417	15

The development program illustrates that approximately 440 residential units could be accommodated on these sites at densities that range from 15 to 20 units per acre. In addition, approximately 132,000 square feet of office and retail space could be achieved.

Land Use Framework Plan

This section presents the Land Use Framework Plan for the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area. The Vision identifies four land use zones and roadway and streetscape improvements. The land use goals and objectives are summarized in the following text and are shown in Figure 18 (Land Use Framework Plan).

TOD Overlay District Zone

The potential exists to create a new TOD Overlay District within the Study Area to enable the mix of uses, densities and other characteristics and qualities that are associated with compact, mixed use development near transit. The TOD Overlay District boundary is shown in Figure 18, and generally includes the land between the Station to the south and Union Avenue to the north. The goals for this portion of the Study Area include:

- Increase densities for residential uses
- Allow greater building height and number of stories (up to 5 stories on Railroad Avenue).
- Reduce parking requirements.
- Encourage shared parking between parcels and uses.
- Create TOD design guidelines.
- Locate active ground floor uses on Railroad Avenue.
- Place buildings close to the street along Railroad Avenue.
- Create activity nodes along Railroad Avenue.

- Provide for streetscape improvements, pedestrian amenities, traffic calming, way-finding and commuter traffic routing.



Neighborhood Preservation Zone

Many portions of the Study Area are characterized with single family and small multi-family residential units. These areas are generally located in the north and west portions of the Study Area. Goals for these areas focus on preserving the residential aspects of the neighborhood and include:

- Maintain and strengthen existing residential uses.
- Provide new recreational opportunities.
- Resolve land use incompatibilities.
- Improve streetscape and lighting to enhance the public realm.
- Connect these areas to other portions of the Study Area.
- Strengthen code enforcement.



Neighborhood Commercial Zone

Ronkonkoma Avenue and sections of Hawkins Avenue (at the Service Road) have various commercial uses including small businesses and auto-oriented uses. These areas will continue to maintain their commercial character and use. Goals for these areas focus on enhancing the commercial uses and include:

- Resolve land use incompatibilities within these areas to limit residential uses.
- Strengthen retail and commercial uses.
- Improve streetscape and lighting.
- Explore signage opportunities that identify the Station.
- Strengthen code enforcement.
- Provide design guidelines.



Hotel and Restaurant Zone

The northeast portion of the Study Area is characterized with a hotel, retail and several restaurants. This area has frontage on the Service Road and Mill Road; however, it is not well connected to Railroad Avenue and the planned TOD district. Most of the goals for this area include preserving these existing uses, while enhancing the connectivity of this area to the Station. This area is within a 10 to 15 minute walk from the Station; however, it lacks continuous sidewalks. The goals for this area include:

- Maintain retail and hotel uses.
- Improve pedestrian connections to TOD district and Station.



Roadway and Streetscape Improvements

In addition to the land use goals, numerous opportunities exist to improve the public realm and plan for anticipated growth. In addition, there is the potential to extend the bike path through the Study Area, connecting neighborhoods to the east and west of the Study Area to Railroad Avenue and the Station. This bike route is part of what is best described as a “Central Corridor Bike Route” connecting distant points such as Bethpage State Park to the west, to the central business district of Riverhead to the east. The route is identified on the Long Island Bikeways and Trailways Map produced by the New York State Department of Transportation. It is classified as a Class 3 on-road signed bikeway. While it links distant destinations described above, it will also serve a more localized community by providing alternative access to a major commuter station. Roadway and other streetscape goals include the following:

- Intersection improvements at Railroad and Hawkins Avenues.
- Roadway and streetscape improvements (sidewalks, street trees, lighting) along:
 - Railroad Avenue
 - Mill Street
 - Union Street
 - Hawkins Avenue
- Streetscape amenities along Railroad Avenue including plazas and landscape improvements at key intersections.
- Bike trail connections along Railroad Avenue, Mill Road and Union Avenue.

Transportation Infrastructure

If the Ronkonkoma Hub area were to be more densely developed, additional traffic volumes would be generated and distributed over the roadway network. Certain intersections and roadway links could become overloaded and some infrastructure improvements would be necessary.

Because intersections involve turning vehicles and conflicting movements, they are the most critical points within a roadway network. Depending on the volumes of traffic on the approaches and the number of turning vehicles involved, particularly left turns, the intersections may be controlled by stop signs or traffic signals and may require dedicated turn lanes. As traffic volumes increase, the level of service will be adversely affected as the capacity of the intersection is approached or exceeded. Capacity improvements such as the installation of a traffic signal or widening of the approaches of the intersection to provide exclusive left and right turn lanes may become necessary to maintain acceptable levels of service as traffic volumes increase. In some cases, a roundabout may be an appropriate alternative to a traffic signal. When considering any intersection improvement, it is important to include provisions for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Vision Plan Opportunities

1. Opportunities for urban plazas at key intersections
2. Streetscape enhancements (Sidewalks, Signage, Lighting & Landscaping)
3. Orient buildings towards the street edge – along Railroad & Hawkins Avenue
4. Place parking at the rear or interior of lots and seek opportunities for shared parking
5. Place active pedestrian-oriented uses on the ground floor
6. New development on the MTA "bus loop" site
7. Buildings up to 5 stories tall on Railroad Avenue
8. Streetscape enhancements to the train station plaza
9. Buildings up to 2.5 stories tall on Union Avenue
10. Mix of uses on upper floors
11. Orient buildings toward the street edge – along Mill Road
12. Buildings up to 4 stories tall on Mill Road
13. Parking garages located at the interior or rear of lots
14. Orient multifamily buildings toward amenities such as parks or plazas
15. Mix residential unit types
16. Provide pedestrian connections from Fairfield residences

Potential Program	Retail	Office	Residential	Live/Work
Site 1	-	-	-	5 Units
Site 2	-	-	-	10 Units
Site 3	10,800 SF	16,800 SF	66 Units	-
Site 4	27,600 SF	16,800 SF	66 Units	-
Site 5	14,400 SF	39,600 SF	30 Units	-
Site 6	-	-	98 Units	-
Site 7	-	-	157 Units	-
Site 8	6,000 SF	-	-	-
TOTAL	58,800 SF	73,200 SF	417 UNITS	15 UNITS



Figure 17

"Vision Plan" for Eight Key TOD Opportunity Sites

**Ronkonkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008



Legend
Study Area
Rail

Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY

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Table 11 contains a list of candidate locations and potential improvements if development of the Ronkonkoma Hub were to proceed. See also Figure 19 (Traffic Improvement Concepts).

**Table 11:
Transportation Improvement Recommendations**

Location	Potential Improvement
Hawkins Ave at LIE Service Roads	Intersection Improvements
Hawkins Ave at Union Ave	Intersection Improvements, Upgrade Signal
Hawkins Ave at Railroad Ave	Intersection Improvements, Install Signal or Construct Roundabout
Ronkonkoma Ave at LIE Service Roads	Intersection Improvements
Ronkonkoma Ave at Ramps to Railroad Ave	Intersection Improvements (consider Signal)
Union Ave at Mill Rd	Intersection Improvements
Railroad Ave (Ronkonkoma Ave to Mill Rd)	Reconstruct Road with Turn Lanes at intersections, On-street Parking and Bike Lanes (where possible)
Mill Rd (Railroad Ave to Union Ave)	Reconstruct Road with Bike Lanes
Hawkins Ave (LIE Service Roads to Railroad Ave)	Reconstruct Road with Turn Lanes at intersections

Area residents have expressed concern about additional traffic coming into their community. While not part of this study, evaluation of nearby parking facilities outside of the Study Area should be included in future planning. Consideration should be given to utilizing existing park & ride facilities located nearby to the north, south and east of the Study Area where LIRR commuters can meet and travel together to the Ronkonkoma Station in one vehicle. An incentive program to encourage such transit carpooling along with eligible parking convenient to the Station should be explored.

A kiss-n-ride pick-up and drop-off area is provided on the south side of Railroad Avenue adjacent to the Station building. Parking regulations in this area permit pick-up and drop-off operations during peak commuter periods, but limit parking duration during off-peak periods to provide customer parking for Station merchants. As presently configured, the kiss-n-ride has inadequate capacity to accommodate curb-side. Further examination of this issue should be included in the next phase of study. Expanding the limits of the kiss-n-ride east and west along Railroad Avenue would be the simplest solution although there is a practical limit to how far commuters would be willing to walk to and from their ride. Reconfiguration of the bus loop may be possible to provide nearby capacity while still accommodating the buses. Directing drivers to the south side of the tracks where there is a long stretch of roadway adjacent to the tracks could yield additional capacity. Regardless of the configuration of the kiss-n-ride, police enforcement is an important aspect to control orderly operations.

In order to promote a walkable community that provides alternatives to automobile trips, an extensive sidewalk network with provisions for bicycle usage is critical. Equally important in promoting pedestrian activity, the neighborhood roadway network should provide traffic calming elements such as speed tables, bulb-outs and

accent-paved crosswalks, particularly at the gateways to the community. Traffic calming elements will also be used to balance any infrastructure improvements that may result in widened approaches. Roundabouts can be used to provide capacity and operational improvements but are inherently pedestrian-friendly with short pavement crossings and ample islands.



Links to MacArthur Airport

If the linkages to MacArthur – as described in Chapter 2 – were to be expanded to support greater development within the Study Area, two alternatives are envisioned. The first alternative is a direct link through the Airport property via bus rapid transit or a light rail system, either above or below ground; this would be the quickest mode. Aside from the considerable expense of constructing and operating a rail link, there are significant operational and security issues associated with running either a rail line or bus route through the airside of the Airport.

The second alternative is to provide an enhanced shuttle service with frequent service and expanded operating hours. With a travel time between the Ronkonkoma Hub and Airport of ten minutes using the existing roadway system, an enhanced shuttle service is the likely choice. The shuttle service area could also be expanded to include other nearby destinations, including the Long Island Expressway Park & Ride facilities (there are three within 5 miles of the Hub), hotels within two exits in either direction on the LIE, and many restaurants and entertainment facilities associated with the hotels or independently operated. The shuttle buses should be attractive and user-friendly to invite ridership and use clean-fuel vehicles to eliminate noxious emissions generally associated with buses.

Zoning

In order to best achieve the goals of this planning study, it is recommended that the Town create and adopt a Transit-Oriented Development Overlay District that encompasses the area identified in Figure 20 (TOD Overlay District). An overlay district is specifically recommended rather than amending the existing zoning designations or creating of a new zoning district for two reasons. First, by establishing an overlay district, the existing land uses within the overlay district will continue to be in compliance with the underlying zoning. Therefore, this change, if adopted, would not create any additional non-conforming uses within the Study Area.



Figure 19
Traffic Improvement Concepts



Ronkoma Hub
Transit-Oriented Planning Study

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
September 2008

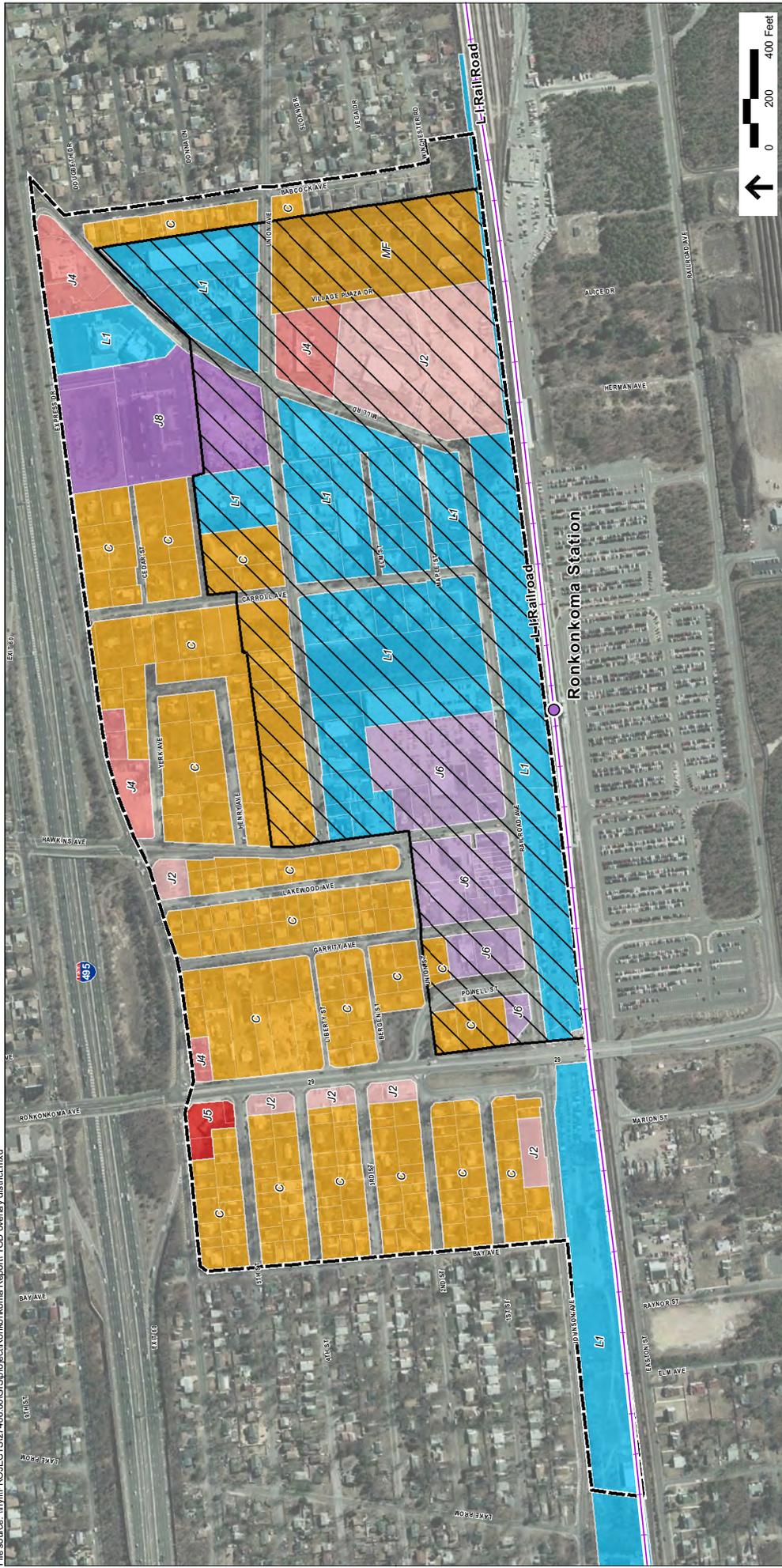
Legend

- Study Area
- Rail
- Existing Crosswalks
- Existing Sidewalks

Data sources:
Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail, Land Use and Zoning – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY



File source: \\nvl\PROJECTS\27406.00\GIS\Info\Ronkonkoma Report\ TOD Overlay.district.mxd



Legend

- Station Location
- Rail
- Study Area
- TOD Overlay District
- Assessors Parcels**
- Zoning**
- C - Single Family Residential
- L1 - Light Industrial
- MF - Multi-family Residential
- J2 - General Business
- J4 - Business - Office Building
- J5 - Business - Gasoline/Filling Stations
- J6 - Business - Highway Limited
- J8 - Business

Data sources:
 Aerial Imagery – I-3 Imagery Prime World, ESRI Online Services
 Assessors Parcels, LIR Rail – Suffolk County GIS Basemap, Town of Brookhaven, Long Island, NY



Figure 20
 TOD Overlay District

**Ronkonkoma Hub
 Transit-Oriented Planning Study**

Prepared for the Town of Brookhaven
 September 2008

Second, an overlay district provides greater flexibility for property owners and developers since they can comply with either the underlying zoning or the new overlay district zoning. Ultimately, it will be important to provide incentives for developers to use the TOD zoning provisions so that the overall goals of this study can be achieved.

The new overlay district as proposed in Figure 20 includes all parcels zoned J-6 and L-1 that lie within the Study Area. In addition, it includes some parcels currently zoned for residential use and one that is zoned J-4 on Mill Road. The proposed district was drawn to include all areas where TOD-type development would be appropriate. The overlay district follows property lines so that no existing lot is split into two zoning districts. The district designation splits two blocks in half to allow compatible development on both sides of Railroad Avenue and Union Avenue respectively:

1. between Bay Avenue and Link above Railroad Avenue
2. between Hawkins Avenue and Carroll Avenue above Union Avenue

The district is drawn to include MTA-controlled parking areas along Railroad Avenue to accommodate development in the future in the event that those lots are released.

In order to encourage developers to use the provisions of the new overlay district, incentives can be offered, either in the form of a density bonus (increased FAR), a reduction in parking requirements, streamlined permit review, or other benefits to the developer. Incentives are already addressed in §85-276 describing the J-6 zoning district if a developer provides public parking, sewage treatment plant capacity, civic or park space, or downtown infrastructure improvements. It is recommended that additional categories be added for which incentives can be offered such as, the inclusion of a minimum of 10 percent affordable units for any multi-family project in excess of six units and buildings that achieve certain “green” development standards.

The TOD overlay district must include several provisions that are not part of the J-6 zoning district. Mixed-use must be specifically allowed and defined. A suggested definition for mixed-use is:

The development of a lot of land or building or structure with two or more different uses, such as, but not limited to residential, office, and retail in a compact urban form.

For mixed-use projects, some municipalities specifically exclude the use of the ground floor for residential use, but typically the first floor is occupied by retail uses and the floors above are either residential or office. Other permitted uses need to be incorporated such as:

- multi-family dwellings (apartments, condominiums, townhouses);

- hotels (consider allowing them by right rather than special permit);
- bed and breakfast/inns;
- service oriented offices (could be allowed on a street level); and
- civic, cultural and community facilities.

Scale is also important, so individual retail stores, for example, should be no larger than 10,000 square feet in size. A portion of the proposed overlay district includes parcels zoned for L-1; therefore, it would be necessary to prohibit future industrial uses in the overlay such as manufacturing and warehousing.

While the J-6 district allows drive-throughs by special permit, it is recommended that no additional drive-throughs be permitted in the new TOD overlay district. Drive-throughs, whether for fast food restaurants or banks, should be prohibited in the future so as to minimize curb cuts which can enhance a pedestrian experience around Ronkonkoma Hub.

Dimensional regulations need to be amended when compared to those in the underlying zoning districts. Height restrictions should be increased to five stories along Railroad Avenue, which is consistent with the height of the MTA parking garage. From there moving north toward Union Avenue, the height restriction should be stepped back to three or four stories so as not to overwhelm the residential structures beyond the bounds of the overlay district. Residential density should be increased from the current six units per acre to twelve to sixteen units per acre, although incentives could offer higher densities. As a result, the floor area ratio (FAR) should be 0.8. Setbacks should be zero along Railroad Avenue and no more than ten feet elsewhere in the district. The existing J-6 minimum lot size seems appropriate unless it is determined that many of the existing lots are smaller. There should be no required front yard setback so that a pedestrian friendly environment can be created. However, a minimum sidewalk width (typically 5 feet) is necessary to ensure safety for pedestrians. No setback is required for side yards either, although alleyways can be encouraged to promote public connections between buildings, open spaces, and streets.

**Table 12
Summary of Zoning Changes for TOD Overlay District¹⁶**

Zoning Element	Change Recommended
Use classifications (additions and deletions from existing J-6 and L1 zoning)	Add mixed-use; multi-family dwellings; hotels; bed and breakfast/inns; service oriented business; civic, cultural and community facilities. Delete manufacturing or warehousing.
Drive-throughs	Not allowed in TOD Overlay District
Incentives	Density bonus for affordable housing and "green" development
Height	5 stories along Railroad Avenue 4 stories elsewhere in TOD Overlay District
Residential density	12–16 units per acre
Residential parking	1.5 spaces per unit
FAR	0.8
Setbacks	Zero feet along railroad Avenue 10 feet elsewhere in TOD overlay district

A significant aspect of TOD zoning is the need to ensure that site improvements be made to enhance the streetscape in a manner that improves the pedestrian experience and discourages dependence upon the automobile. Additionally, it may be important to buffer residential uses from others through landscaping standards.

New parking standards should be developed for the overlay district to take advantage of the benefits provided by TOD in reducing the amount of parking required. This not only reduces the cost of the development and allows for a better design, but it also makes housing more affordable since unnecessary parking costs are not incorporated into the housing prices.

Shared parking should be allowed where there are multiple uses on a property. This would be based on a finding that peak parking demand for different land uses does not occur at the same time. As noted by Urban Land Institute studies, it is common for larger multi-use projects with shared parking facilities to require 20 percent less parking supply than if the peak parking for each use were provided separately.

Residential parking standards should be limited to an average of 1.5 spaces per unit, including guest parking. A comprehensive economic and land use study by CalTrans of over twenty TOD projects in California found that in almost all cases the majority of home owners had either no car or only one car. Major new TOD projects in the northeast, such as Westwood Station in a Boston suburb, limit residential parking to 1.5 spaces per unit, often with one space reserved for the unit and the remaining parking shared among all residents and visitors as needed. Surface parking should be located to the rear of the lot and be landscaped.

In summary, if a new TOD overlay district is to be created as recommended here, the Town can use the framework of the existing J-6 zoning district and revise it as described above.

▼
¹⁶ Summary of changes necessary from existing zoning to establish TOD Overlay District.

Design Guidelines

Although much of the existing design guidelines found in the Main Street Business District Design Manual can be applied to the proposed TOD overlay district, it is recommended that the Design Manual be revised in several areas.

First, it is recommended that graphics be improved to better illustrate the intent of the guidelines. Good graphics make it easier to understand the options available. It will be important for the guidelines and illustrations to promote some degree of flexibility so that they are not too prescriptive and allow for innovation and flexibility if development is proposed that is not necessarily included in the guidelines. Examples of improved graphics are illustrated in Appendix A.

Second, the Design Manual should include more detailed descriptions and examples of what is acceptable and what is not. Examples of this are shown in Appendix A.

Future Households, Income and Retail Spending

In addition to existing households, future households offer potential to support new retail establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub. Based on recent demographic trends, over the next five years there is potential for an estimated 540 new households to be located within a 3-mile radius of the transit Station. With a median projected income of over \$100,000, future residents (both existing and new) offer potential to spend an average of \$19,000 annually on convenience retail goods and services for a combined total of \$531 million annually.

Table 13
Future Trade Area Household Spending Profile
Convenience Goods, 2008*

Year	Primary Trade Area (3-Mile Radius)			
	Households	Income/HH	Spending/HH	Total Spending
2008	27,432	\$89,500	\$16,000	\$439,000,000
2013	27,971	\$108,400	\$19,000	\$531,000,000

Year	Secondary Trade Area (Suffolk County)			
	Households	Income/HH	Spending/HH	Total Spending
2008	493,870	\$86,000	\$16,500	\$8,105,000,000
2013	509,613	\$105,000	\$20,000	\$10,192,000,000

Source: ESRI, BBPC, 2008

Notes: * Assumes retail spending per household increases in proportion to increase in household income

The projected addition of approximately 16,000 new households in Suffolk County, with a median projected income of over \$100,000 for all households (existing and

new), carries with it the potential annual spending of \$20,000 per household on convenience retail goods and services for a total of over \$10 billion per year. Such increase in households and associated purchasing power offers potential to support new convenience goods establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub.

Projected increases in buying power for shoppers goods may also offer support for new shoppers goods businesses in Ronkonkoma Hub. In the next five years, the primary shoppers goods trade area (5-mile radius surrounding the Station) could add approximately 2,000 new households, based on recent demographic trends. With a median income of over \$100,000, future households (both new and existing) will offer combined purchasing power of over \$2 billion per year on shoppers goods (\$27,000 per household).

Table 14
Future Trade Area Household Spending Profile
Shoppers Goods, 2008*

Year	Primary Trade Area (5-Mile Radius)			
	Households	Income/HH	Spending/HH	Total Spending
2008	76,191	\$89,700	\$22,600	\$1,722,000,000
2013	78,321	\$108,400	\$27,000	\$2,115,000,000

Year	Secondary Trade Area (Suffolk County)			
	Households	Income/HH	Spending/HH	Total Spending
2008	493,870	\$86,000	\$23,200	\$11,488,000,000
2013	509,613	\$105,000	\$28,000	\$14,269,000,000

Source: ESRI, BBPC, 2008

Notes: * Assumes retail spending per household increases in proportion to increase in household income

Demographic projections also indicate the buying power of households in Suffolk County will increase for shoppers goods over the next five years. Based on recent trends, the County could add 16,000 new households with a median income over \$100,000 (both existing and new households). With potential to individually spend \$28,000 on average on shoppers goods, these households offer a cumulative potential future purchasing power of over \$14 billion. Such increased purchasing power could support expanded shoppers goods establishments in Ronkonkoma Hub.

Multi-Family Development and Tax Implications

This section provides a summary of the recommended development program, and a description of the experiences of other communities related to multi-family development and fiscal implications. Finally, this section qualitatively describes the potential fiscal implications of the proposed development program in Ronkonkoma Hub.

Overview

The ultimate goal for revitalization of the Ronkonkoma Hub district is to provide redevelopment that will result in a positive tax situation, in which tax revenues generated by redevelopment exceed the costs of services required by such redevelopment. In particular, redevelopment should not result in net costs to the school taxing district.

The redevelopment vision for Ronkonkoma Hub takes these goals into account. Housing units are recommended with fewer bedrooms and in smaller sizes to appeal to couples and singles without children, rather than families that would desire larger units with more bedrooms. Further, the Vision calls for commercial space to balance housing development with the assumption that the tax revenues associated with commercial space can often outweigh the costs associated with providing services to new residents (including schoolchildren).

The proposed development program is illustrated in Table 15.

Table 15
Proposed Development Program
August 2008

Block	Residential (Units)	Retail (SF)	Office (SF)
1	5	0	0
2	30	0	0
3	46	10,800	16,800
4	66	27,600	16,800
5	48	14,400	39,600
6	103	0	0
7	157	0	0
TOTAL	455	52,800	73,200

Source: VHB, 2008

The proposed development program includes 455 residential units, 52,800 square feet of retail space, and 73,200 square feet of office space. All of the proposed residential units are compact, attached units, and include a mix of:

- Condominiums over parking (293 units, or 64 percent of total)
- Housing over retail and office space (94 units, or 21 percent of total)
- Townhouses (53 units, or 12 percent of total)
- Live-work units with garages (15 units, or 3 percent of total)

With the mix of housing dominated by compact multi-family units (e.g. condominiums, housing above commercial space, and live-work units), the Ronkonkoma Hub development program caters to the needs and preferences of couples and singles without children. Families would be more likely to reside in the townhouse units, which represents just 12 percent of the entire program, or in other single-family homes elsewhere in the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip or the remainder of Suffolk County.



Experiences of Other Communities

Municipalities and researchers in the northeast have analyzed the fiscal impact of multi-family residential development, and their findings offer insight into the types of fiscal impacts that may be experienced in Ronkonkoma as a result of future development.

Three analyses, each based on communities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, are profiled below:

1. The Fiscal Impact of New Housing Development in Massachusetts: A Critical Analysis (2003)

This report analyzed the methods 41 case study municipalities in Massachusetts used to estimate the fiscal impact of new housing development, and offered a critique of the methodology and results. Key findings include:

- New residential development does not automatically result in net costs to municipalities; instead, growth can help to slow down increases in per capita costs.
- Indirect impacts of new residential development should be counted in fiscal impact modeling; such modeling would then account for often under-counted impacts (many of which result in state, rather than municipal benefits) such as retail spending and retail sales tax revenues associated with households with children (which tend to have the most purchasing power) and income tax revenues associated with households with children (which often include residents in their peak earning years).

- One- and two-bedroom residential units generally do not attract families; instead, older multi-family developments with three or more bedrooms, new single-family homes, and turnover of older single-family homes have generated the most schoolchildren.

2. Fiscal Impact of Mixed-Income Housing Developments on Massachusetts Municipalities (2007)

This study evaluated the fiscal implications of eight residential communities in Massachusetts, which included: Kendall Crescent (Brookline), Nickey Lane (Falmouth), Fresh Pond Farms (Falmouth), Pine's Edge (Northampton), Stoneybrook (Peadbody), Sherwood Forest (Sandwich), Edgemoor Circle (Wellesley) and Buckingham Estates (Wilmington). Key findings include:

- Cost of education per student was not necessarily related to increases in enrollment; school districts with declining enrollment experienced increases in the cost of education per pupil alongside districts with expanding enrollment.
- Of eight case study residential communities analyzed, three resulted in positive fiscal impacts while five resulted in negative fiscal impacts.
- Commercial construction can result in positive fiscal impacts that outweigh negative fiscal impacts associated with residential development.

3. Fiscal Impacts of Westwood Station (2007)

This analysis focused on the potential fiscal impacts of one new mixed-use, "urban" style development in Massachusetts. Key findings include:

- The project was estimated to result in a positive fiscal impact to the Town of Westwood.
- Projected categories of tax revenues included: residential property tax revenues, commercial property tax revenues, hotel occupancy tax revenues, personal property tax revenues, excise tax revenues (vehicles), other tax revenues (fees, fines, licenses, etc. associated with residents), and one-time building permit fee revenues.
- Projected categories of fiscal costs included: educational costs, public works costs, fire department costs, police department costs, and general government costs (e.g. various governmental agencies including library, recreation, health, human resources, information services, aging, assessor, housing, economic development, zoning, Town clerk, and finance).
- Background data collected from the local school system suggested that the past introduction of 200 new single-family homes (in other projects, not Westwood Station) was estimated to result in 15 new students per year (or 0.075 students per unit, per year).
- Identified \$8,800 to \$11,800 in educational cost per student.

In addition to these studies, a Rutgers University study conducted in the mid-1980s used 1980 national Census data to identify population by residential unit type and size (in terms of number of bedrooms); findings of the study are included in The New Practitioner’s Guide to Fiscal Impact Analysis.

In general, the study found that units with 3 or more bedrooms were most likely to have more than 2 residents (and presumably school children). Single family 3-bedroom homes had the highest population average (3.345 per household), while high rise 1-bedroom homes the lowest (1.221 per household).

A complete breakout of housing type with number of bedrooms and associated population is as follows:

Single-family	3 bedroom	3.345 persons per household
Townhouse	1 bedroom	1.491 persons per household
	2 bedroom	2.098 persons per household
	3 bedroom	3.000 persons per household
Garden Apartments	1 bedroom	1.295 persons per household
	2 bedroom	2.142 persons per household
	3+ bedroom	3.074 persons per household
High-Rise	1 bedroom	1.221 persons per household
	2+ bedroom	2.956 persons per household



Possible Implications

The proposed development program for Ronkonkoma Hub carries with it a number of fiscal implications, both positive (i.e. revenues) and negative (i.e. costs). Categories of potential fiscal impacts to both local municipalities and the State of New York include:

Tax and other revenues

- **Real property tax revenues** – both residential and commercial, and both direct (e.g. related to the construction of the proposed development program) and indirect (e.g. related to potential changes in surrounding, existing property values and therefore real property tax revenues)
- **Permit fees** – occurring during the construction phase
- **Revenues related to fees, fines, and licenses associated with residents** – which will result as residents use Town services that require fees, fines, or licenses

- **Retail sales tax revenues** – including both direct (e.g. those which occur in the retail spaces identified in the development program) as well as indirect (e.g. those that occur at other retail establishments during the construction period, as workers purchase goods, and during the operation period, as new residents and employees make purchases elsewhere)
- **Income tax revenues** – both during the operation period (e.g. incomes of residents and employees associated with the proposed development program) and construction period (e.g. incomes of employees involved in construction)

Costs of services

- Education
- Public works
- Fire department
- Police
- General government

Based on the findings of researchers and municipalities in Massachusetts, it is not unreasonable to assume the Ronkonkoma Hub proposed development program could result in positive net fiscal implications. Factors that would make the program more likely to result in a positive fiscal impact include:

- **Composition of housing units** – the proposed development program features very few single-family units (just 12 percent of all units are single-family, and they are compact townhomes), and all units are recommended to feature primarily one- and two-bedroom units to cater to the demand for downtown living offered by young and older couples and singles
- **Mix of commercial spaces alongside housing** – the positive fiscal impacts of commercial space (which generally require fewer services in relation to the revenues paid to municipalities) can outweigh potential negative net impacts of residential development

Of course, this qualitative reasoning does not replace a thorough, quantitative evaluation of the tax implications of new development. Such evaluation should occur in the future when developers propose specific projects that relate to this initial planning effort.

Implementation Strategies

This section provides a summary of the broad categories of tools available in Brookhaven or desired to facilitate revitalization. The tools are provided in a matrix which describes each tool briefly and how it applies to Ronkonkoma Hub. This section also provides a profile of selected model programs from other states that

Ronkonkoma area policy leaders may want to consider and emulate in future programs



Existing and Potential Programs

To set the stage for private-sector led investment in Ronkonkoma Hub, the Town of Brookhaven may take action to facilitate redevelopment and revitalization. The Town can use both existing Town programs as well as adopt innovative new programs that other communities have used with success to support revitalization. Tools range from direct incentives, such as tax credits that support business expansion, to indirect incentives, such as streamlined development review processes.

A summary of top tools is offered below, including a description of the tool and its potential application to Ronkonkoma Hub.

Table 16
Revitalization Toolbox for Main Streets in the Town of Brookhaven
Existing and Potential Programs

Program	Description	Applicability
Banking Development Districts	Facilitates the opening of bank branches in areas in need of banking services, resulting in enhanced business access to capital, new jobs, and increased community stability and revitalization.	Could help to spur new business creation and expansion in Ronkonkoma Hub's future commercial spaces
Commercial Incentive Corridor - Industrial/Commercial Incentives Plan (485 B and Double 485 B)	Provides tax incentives to encourage small business sector capital improvement projects	Could help to facilitate the creation and expansion of small commercial businesses in Ronkonkoma Hub's future commercial spaces
Special Districts	Serves as a collective entity to fund specific public improvements, such as sewer, sidewalk, street lighting, and road improvement projects. The Town offers organizational and management support as necessary to support revitalization.	Could be used to fund the provision of future amenities specific to the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area, such as streetscape improvements
Payment in Lieu of Parking (PILOP)	Offers developers the option to make a one-time payment as an alternative to the cost of providing parking on-site. The payment is made to a fund managed by the local municipality or special district, and fund proceeds are then used to maintain existing or create new municipal parking facilities	Could offer an enticement to developers to build the proposed development program, since the Town of Brookhaven's cost at \$900 per stall is significantly lower than the cost of a privately-constructed parking stall, at \$3,000 to \$10,000 per space
Incentive Zoning (J-6 or Overlay District Rezoning)	Creation of an Overlay District allows a downtown revitalization area to expand with uses not permitted under the underlying zoning, but which would incentivize redevelopment	Could allow mixed-use development as called for in the proposed development program for Ronkonkoma Hub

Program	Description	Applicability
Amortization	Non-conforming uses in rezoned districts can be amortized out over a five-year period, which offers land owners predictability regarding future uses and increased incentive to invest in desired uses	Would support existing property owners to invest in expansion of uses called for in the Ronkonkoma Hub Plan, since predictability of other uses (and reduction of non-conforming) is increased
Sanitary Density Transfer Program	Density transfer facilitates the construction of two- and three-story mixed-use development in revitalization areas, since this type of development without such density transfer is constrained by Suffolk County Sanitary Code requirements (Article VI). Investors must purchase credits and provide development consistent with Main Street District design criteria	Would encourage the forms of development called for in the program for Ronkonkoma Hub, which includes multi-story mixed use development
Expedited Permit Approval	Streamlined administrative approval is offered to expedite the review process, from initial application through issuance of a certificate of occupancy. Phased improvements are also offered to manage the cost of infrastructure improvements required with new development	Could facilitate the realization of the proposed development program sooner in the Ronkonkoma Hub revitalization district
Community Development Commercial Façade Program	Façade rehabilitation is encouraged through Main Street Business District Design Manual	Could apply to new development and renovation in Ronkonkoma Hub, and improve the likelihood of consistent design
Transfer of Development Rights	Development rights may be transferred to Main Street Business Districts under the Brookhaven Town Code	Could help facilitate development at a more downtown/urban scale, as called for by the proposed development program
Transfer of Development Value	Program offers transfer of development value from properties zoned for single-family use to properties zoned for commercial use. Specifically, the tax savings to the school district associated with preservation of the property zoned for single-family use (without development) may be transferred to the commercial property	Could help facilitate mixed retail/office development, but would require state enabling legislation followed by Town adoption
Public Assembly of Small Lots	The public sector may assemble obsolescent properties in order to facilitate privately-funded infrastructure improvements that benefit the entire commercial and residential community, but only with the substantial commitment of the private sector to build said infrastructure improvements	Could help facilitate a number of streetscape and other infrastructure improvements that may be needed and desired to support the Ronkonkoma Hub district's revitalization
Public Funded Civic Space	Publicly-funded recreational facilities may be sited within Main Street Districts to enliven the district with increased foot traffic for retailers	The introduction of small civic spaces could enhance the attractiveness of Ronkonkoma Hub and increase visitation by area residents

Program	Description	Applicability
Infrastructure Improvements	Expanded infrastructure improvements associated with reconstruction or construction of federal and state transportation projects	Could apply to future improvement projects related to the transit station in Ronkonkoma Hub
Empire Zone and Industrial Use Relocation	Industrial uses within Main Street Districts are given the opportunity to relocate to industrial parks in the Empire Zone (where tax relief and expansion opportunities are offered)	Could enable industrial businesses in Ronkonkoma Hub that are not necessarily compatible with mixed-use residential, retail and office development to relocate
Municipal Sanitary Infrastructure	Creation of local sewer districts offers an opportunity for multiple developers in a single area to coordinate to provide one sewage treatment plant to support their respective projects	Would facilitate the development of multi-level mixed-use projects called for in the development program
Community Housing Trusts	Not-for profit entities reclaim blighted, neglected, vacant or deteriorated residential units in order to rehabilitate as affordable home ownership units	Could be used if individual properties within the Ronkonkoma Hub Study Area exhibit signs of blight, neglect, abandonment or deterioration
CDBG Enforcement Target	A Town Code Inspector is specifically assigned to specific targeted districts to enforce Town codes	Would offer a mechanism to address code violations as they occur throughout the entire Study Area
CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program	Offers grants to homeowners in specific census tracts to improve residential units	Could encourage existing residents to improve their homes and take part in revitalization, if Ronkonkoma Hub includes targeted census tracts per the program

Source: Town of Brookhaven, BBPC, 2008



Model Programs

In addition to the programs described above, which offer potential for use in Ronkonkoma Hub, model programs from other states that have been crafted to encourage transit-oriented development and revitalization should be considered. Since the addition of similar programs in New York would require state enabling legislation, such programs offer representatives of local districts surrounding Ronkonkoma Hub models from which to propose innovative techniques in New York.

These programs are summarized below, including a brief description of how the program might apply to Ronkonkoma Hub.

**Table 17
Selected Programs from Other States**

Program	Description	Applicability
Pennsylvania's TRID Program	Statewide program offers municipalities a blueprint for transit-oriented revitalization planning and implementation. Municipalities that adhere to the Vision can obtain state funding	Would offer a source of state funding for publicly funded implementation efforts, such as potential infrastructure investments or incentive programs
New Jersey's Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit Program	New Jersey recently introduced the Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit Program initiative, which was designed to encourage investment and job growth around urban transit hubs, which are defined as heavy rail stations. The program offers major incentives for significant projects (e.g. investment of at least \$75 million) that feature large employers (e.g. at least 250 employees). Credits are then applied against state corporate, insurance, or income taxes.	Could facilitate mixed office and retail development in Ronkonkoma Hub and attract large employers from the broader New York region looking for a "reverse commute" location
Maryland's Community Legacy Program	Provides funding for local revitalization efforts in a variety of neighborhoods and communities throughout Maryland. Offers funding for mixed-use development, business retention/expansion/attraction, streetscape improvements, homeownership/home rehabilitation efforts, facade improvement projects, real estate acquisition, and the creation of loan guarantee and credit enhancement programs	Could facilitate streetscape and other public realm improvements that would support revitalization and redevelopment

Source: BBPC, 2008

Next Steps

The Vision represents an ongoing and continued process. As such, in order to maintain momentum and further advance implementation of the Vision, it is recommended that the Town consider the following next steps:

- Engage in continued coordination with local and regional stakeholders (the community, local businesses, Town of Brookhaven, Town of Islip, Suffolk County, MacArthur Airport, MTA, and LIRR).
- Identify and implement “early wins” as part of an overall Neighborhood Improvement Program:
 - Streetscape improvements;
 - New and improved sidewalks;
 - Landscape improvements at MTA surface parking lots;
 - Code enforcement;
 - Drainage and flooding; and
 - Maintenance and security at the Station.
- Draft and adopt a new TOD Overlay District.
- Conduct a traffic impact analysis and develop a phased transportation improvement plan.
- Initiate a sewage capacity study.
- Complete a generic environmental impact statement (under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act) to assess and propose mitigation of any real or perceived adverse impacts.
- Aggressively market the Ronkonkoma Hub as a legitimate and feasible TOD opportunity area for residential and commercial retail development.
- Explore and secure state and federal grant funding for continued revitalization.

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Comment Letters Received on Draft Report

1. Town of Islip, Department of Planning and Development
2. County of Suffolk, Department of Planning
3. MTA Long Island Rail Road

Attention: Diane Mayarakis

TOWN OF ISLIP DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Eugene J. Murphy, A.I.C.P., Commissioner

FXED
12/9/08

December 5, 2008

Paul Rogalle, AICP, Director of Planning
Town of Brookhaven
1 Independence Hill
Farmingville, NY 11738

Re: Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study - Phase II

Dear Mr. Rogalle,

Thank you for sending us a copy of the Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study. It is nice to see the Town of Brookhaven, once again, embarking on a planning effort of this magnitude. Further, we are glad to assist in any way.

We recently received the Suffolk County Planning Department's comments on the plan and we fully concur—particularly on the issue of sewer constraints.

In addition, we have the following comments that might be of interest to you:

- 1) You may be interested in adding a "Constraints" Section just before "The Plan" on page 72. I believe that some comprehensive plans identify explicit barriers to plan recommendations - ie. a) sewer limits b) ROW/Street width c) Community opposition (political), etc.
- 2) Regarding Figure 4 on page 10, are there opportunities for either wrapped or hidden parking? Any other empirical parking calculations that show projected need from existing train patrons, new residents, and new commercial patrons?
- 3) Also on Figure 4, is there a projected square footage of the new retail development on Site 8? It's not in the summary table on Figure 4.
- 4) It appears that the "walking proximity" radius shown in Figure 9 was generated by a GIS process which buffered a point near the LIRR station. You may wish to re-analyze a 10-15 minute walking distance by actual road feet rather than an "as the crow flies" method. Thus, the proximity map would be less circular and would more closely follow the road network.
- 5) Beginning on page 37, the plan mentions that parking with the Town of Islip was not included in the inventory (nor shown in Figure 10). Although difficult to quantify at this time, mention should be made that some opportunities may exist within the Town of Islip for newly constructed shared parking if appropriate agreements could be implemented with Suffolk County and the MTA.

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- 6) On pages 49 and 86, analysis of spending or purchasing power is shown. Although, the standard historical model of primary or secondary trade areas involves a certain *geographic* bias, additional ridership data should be analyzed on a statistical or frequency basis. Is it perfectly accurate to state that "Most of these commuters reside in eastern areas of Suffolk County; therefore, Suffolk County may be viewed as a secondary trade area for both convenience and shoppers goods." Due to the fact that the vast majority of Suffolk County households do not shop within the study area, should those numbers be discounted somewhat?
- 7) We would be happy to broker any discussions with either Theresa Rizzuto or Eric Hofmeister at Mac Arthur Airport regarding transportation links, FAA involvement, and perhaps sewage capacity engineering issues.

Overall, your plan is very well done and please extend our compliments to Eschbacher VHB.

As always, please give us a call if you need anything else.

Sincerely,

Eugene Murphy, Commissioner



Dave Genaway, Town Planning Director

EJM:deg

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVE LEVY
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

RECEIVED

PLANNING DIVISION

THOMAS A. ISLES, A.I.C.P.
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

November 13, 2008

Paul Rogalle, AICP, Director of Planning
Town of Brookhaven
1 Independence Hill
Farmingville, NY 11738

RE: Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study -- Phase II

Dear Mr. Rogalle:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Town's Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study. The analysis of land use and transportation issues associated with the area surrounding the Ronkonkoma train station is an important effort. The Town should be applauded for its efforts to address this regional resource and to include a broad array of stakeholders through its open and inclusive process.

As a follow-up to previous Municipal Stakeholder's meetings, and in response to the Draft Phase II Plan, please find below comments prepared by the Suffolk County Department of Planning associated with the Phase II portion of the study.

Study Boundary:

Although the study process is well underway, we encourage the town to seek a similar planning effort on the Islip portion of the Hub Development Zone. We would be pleased to assist in coordinating such an effort.

Overview:

A fundamental assumption underlying the study is that the development of high density mixed-use transit-oriented developments will decrease dependence on driving, reduce trip generation, promote a more efficient use of land and therefore enhance environmental quality. The study should include objective analysis from similarly sized transit-oriented developments which demonstrate this principle. Evidence should be presented which also demonstrates that the increases in development density will be offset by decreases in traffic and trip generation. Merely asserting that a percentage of residents will avail themselves of public transportation is not sufficient to support the conclusions that traffic within the Hub will decrease and environmental quality will be enhanced.

The study makes little or no mention of sewers and assumes that sewers will not be an impediment to growth. This assumption should be clarified.

Study Goals:

The goals of the study include redirecting growth to areas already served by infrastructure, expanding

Letter to Paul Rogalle, November 13, 2008

transportation choices to enhance environmental quality, reducing vehicle trips around the station, supporting local businesses and enhancing the tax base for the Town and the region to support the variety of taxing districts.

It is unclear how these goals will be accomplished.

- The study proposes to “increase” development within the Hub but it does not “redirect” growth from outside the region. Inclusion of a transfer of development rights (TDR) program which would “redirect” growth from outside the Hub to within the Hub makes sense but there is no recommendation for a TDR program within the study.
- It is unclear how increasing development within the study area increases transportation choices or enhances environmental quality. Increased densities of development may simply result in an increase in trip generation within the study area. The study should provide documentation to support these assertions in light of the stated goal of reducing vehicle trips around the station.
- According to the Phase I Report, overall vacancy rates within the study are low. However, vacancy rates in close proximity to the train station are significant. Recommendations within the study include an expansion of this commercial base by up to 68,000 square feet. Potential impacts to existing vacancy rates resulting from proposed increases in the amount of commercial development should be addressed in light of the stated goal of supporting local businesses.
- The study recommends the rezoning of existing industrial properties in favor of high density residential development while at the same time seeking to ‘enhance the tax base.’ The Town of Brookhaven has little of its current land use zoned or used for industrial development due to a pattern of rezoning to both residential and retail uses over the years. The elimination of additional industrial tax base should be carefully considered in light of the stated goal of enhancing the tax base.

Residential Development:

The study estimates that there will be an increase of approximately 8,795 new households within Suffolk County by 2017 based upon projections from ESRI Business Information Solutions. It further projects that five percent (5%) of this growth will be captured within the Hub and ten percent (10%) of this growth will be captured within the Towns of Brookhaven and Islip.

These projections should be evaluated and the assumption that five percent (5%) of the growth will be captured within the Hub should be documented.

- The study “assumes” that the “majority of demand for new housing will emerge from residents of local jurisdictions.” The study quotes the Urban Land Institute (ULI) that “as a rule of thumb, between 50 to 75 percent of the buyers or renters in a new development come from the local community.” This information should be better documented and supported.
- The study indicates that the Hub can accommodate approximately 688 additional housing units provided an average density of 17 units per acre is considered. This information should be carefully considered with respect to potential impacts to existing infrastructure including roads and sewers. It is noted that the study also identifies Level of Service (LOS) concerns along existing roadways within the study area under current conditions.
- Additional housing development within the Hub should also be considered in context with the town’s overall housing policies and trends within both the Town and region.

Opportunity Sites:

The study identifies approximately 40 acres of property that could be redeveloped as "opportunity sites." However, the accompanying map includes approximately 68 acres of property within the Hub considered as appropriate for redevelopment. This inconsistency should be addressed.

Concept Plans:

The concept plans contained within the study include 31-74 additional housing units along with 43,000-68,000 square feet of additional commercial space.

It is unclear how the goal of an additional 688 housing units would be met. In addition, in light of existing vacancy rates within the vicinity of the train station, potential impacts to existing vacancy rates should be carefully considered prior to the development of additional commercial space.

The concept plans call for 4-5 level parking structures along with significant increases in density. The capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate the proposed increased densities along with its compatibility with existing development patterns should be carefully considered.

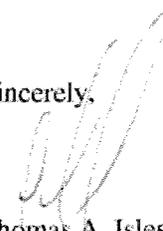
Conclusion:

When used properly, Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) are a valuable tool in curbing suburban sprawl and its associated impacts. However, to be effective, TODs must incorporate a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program in order to properly "redirect" growth from outlying regions to transit hubs. The failure to include a TDR component risks the creation of high density developments, along with their associated impacts, without the intended benefits of open space preservation, traffic reduction and the containment of suburban sprawl.

In general, clearer documentation is needed in order to support the study's underlying assumption that high-density transit-oriented, mixed-use developments will reduce traffic within the Hub and achieve the other above referenced goals of the study.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on Phase II of the Ronkonkoma Hub Transit-Oriented Planning Study. The Town should be commended for its efforts to address this valuable regional resource as well as for its open and inclusive study process. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the Town as it moves forward with its efforts.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Isles, Director
Department of Planning

TAI:ce

cc: Gene Murphy, Commissioner, Town of Islip, Dept of Planning
Dan Gulizio, Deputy Director, SC Planning Dept
Andy Freleng, Chief Planner



December 12, 2008

Diane M. Mazarakis, AICP
Town of Brookhaven Planning Department
One Independence Hill
Farmingville, New York 11738

Re: **Ronkonkoma Hub Transit Orient Development Study: Phase 2**

Dear Ms. Mazarakis:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Phase 2 of the *draft* Ronkonkoma Hub Transit Orient Development (TOD) Study dated September 2008. The Long Island Rail Road continues to support local TOD initiatives in the vicinity of its stations and, as a result, is excited to work with the Town to identify viable opportunities for revitalizing the Ronkonkoma Hub area.

Please note that comments provided below supplement LIRR's earlier comments on the Phase 1 document (Phase 1 comments are attached for reference).

Executive Summary

1. **Page 1, third paragraph**: It is indicated that Ronkonkoma Station is the terminus of electrified rail service to downtown Manhattan.

LIRR Comment

The word "downtown" should be removed from the sentence.

Existing Conditions

1. **Table 3 (Page 40)**: The Table indicates that existing parking utilization on the north side of the Station is currently running between 84 and 91 percent.

LIRR Comment

The 84 percent figure appears low and suggests that there is ample parking on the north side of the Station with up to as many as 400 available spaces on the north side of the Station on any given day. This is inconsistent with actual parking conditions at the Station. Furthermore, the parking capacity figure for lot #111-12 (379 cars) was inflated by LIRR to include maximum parking capacity if the lot were completely cleared of vegetation and fully developed for parking. It should be noted that actual capacity of this undeveloped/unstriped lot is about 300 cars. As such, the table, which shows the lot at 75 percent utilization, should be adjusted to reflect that the lot is fully utilized on a daily basis, thus bringing up the parking utilization rate for this lot as well as the overall parking utilization rate for the north side of the Station.

2. **Figure 4:** As part of the Vision Plan for the 8 key TOD opportunity sites, the Study recommends that streetscape enhancements be implemented along Railroad Avenue.

LIRR Comment

The LIRR, in close coordination with the Town of Brookhaven, modified the design of its northeast parking lot (Lot #111-12) in accordance with the Town's TOD vision for this area. Specifically, the design was modified to include the following streetscape improvements along Railroad Avenue: concrete paver strip, landscaping/trees and decorative lighting. Landscaping will also be added to the interior portions of the parking lot as part of this redesign. In addition, the redesign also maintains a roadway width of 34 feet along Railroad Avenue to accommodate 2 traffic lanes and potential bike lanes.

The LIRR is currently in the process of soliciting bids for 3rd party construction of this parking facility. The project, which will include 295 rehabilitated spaces, is scheduled for completion by the end of 2009.

3. **Key Findings for Concept Alternatives for Garrity/Hawkins and MTA-controlled Parcels (Page 71, bullet #1):** It is stated that the MTA parcels have limited depth which constrains the location of buildings, their setbacks and the location of parking.

LIRR Comment

LIRR agrees with this finding. In this regard, LIRR recommends that any future commercial development on these narrow lots (e.g., the bus-taxi loop lot) include sufficient setback and buffering from the LIRR tracks.

4. **Key Findings for Concept Alternatives for Garrity/Hawkins and MTA-controlled Parcels (Page 71, bullet #2):** It is stated that "replacement parking for MTA commuters requires a parking structure of approximately 4-5 levels (see Alternative C)." This assumes consolidation of existing surface parking on the north side of the Station.

LIRR Comment

Alternative C is not provided in the Phase 2 document, yet was provided in the Phase 1 (Existing Conditions) document.

Based on the Phase 1 document, Alternative C includes a 4-5 story parking deck immediately east of Ronkonkoma Avenue on MTA owned property. This facility would consolidate the commuter surface parking north of the ROW into one (1) facility.

As stated in LIRR's Phase 1 comments, it is recommended that any proposed vertical parking facility development be placed closer to the Station and that it include space for other modes of transportation (bus, van shuttle, taxi, etc.). A vertical parking structure could also serve other commercial parking areas (perhaps on the ground floor level), thus freeing up additional land for commercial development.

Next Steps

1. **Figure 17:** As part of the Vision Plan, 52,800 square feet of retail would be constructed in the Study Area.

LIRR Comment

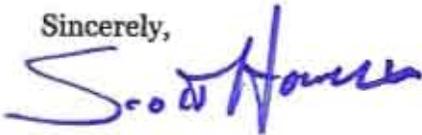
Figure 17 omits the 6,000 square feet of new retail development recommended in the Study (see Table 10, Page 75) for construction on the bus-taxi loop lot (i.e., Site 8). In this regard, the figure should be revised to reflect that 58,800 square feet of retail would be constructed in the study area. This figure should be revised in the Executive Summary section as well (see Figure 4).

As stated in LIRR's Phase 1 comments, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority could be asked to test the marketability of this lot and solicit proposals for the sale or lease of this property. The LIRR would be willing to contact the MTA in this regard.

The Phase 1 comments also stated that any future development and/or disposition of MTA LIRR properties would have to undergo evaluation by the LIRR and MTA Real Estate Department to determine 1) whether there are any operational issues associated with such property and 2) to determine the proper means (from a legal and real estate standpoint) for transferring such property. In addition, LIRR must caution that the transfer of title or any other beneficial interest in its property, including leasing, is subject to the requirements of the New York Public Authorities Accountability Act of 2005.

Once again, the LIRR appreciates the opportunity to be part of this process and looks forward to working with the Town on this exciting initiative.

Sincerely,



Scott Howell
Director, Parking and Stations Program
Long Island Rail Road

cc. Elisa Picca

