
TOWN OF RIVERHEAD TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE RAILROAD AVENUE URBAN RENEWAL AREA

Prepared for:

Town of Riverhead Town Board
Town of Riverhead Community Development Agency
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Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS	3
2.1	Study Area	3
2.2	Plans	6
2.2.1	Town of Riverhead Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Step II Nomination Study	6
2.2.2	Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Plan.....	8
2.2.3	2003 Comprehensive Plan.....	9
2.2.4	Strategic Parking Plan.....	11
2.2.5	Town of Riverhead Downtown Riverhead Pattern Book	11
2.3	Land Use and Zoning	12
2.3.1	Land Use	12
2.3.2	Zoning	17
2.4	Special Districts.....	19
2.4.1	Town of Riverhead Historic District.....	19
2.4.2	Arts District.....	21
2.4.3	Parking District	21
2.4.4	Business Improvement District	21
2.5	Federal Opportunity Zone	25
3.0	ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	26
3.1	Adopt the Transit Oriented Development Plan.....	26
3.2	Adopt a New Overlay District for the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area	26
3.3	Consider Amendments to the DC-3 Zoning Use District	29

FIGURES

Figure 1	Study Area
Figure 2	Existing Land Use
Figure 3	2001 Aerial Photograph
Figure 4	2016 Aerial Photograph
Figure 5	Existing Zoning
Figure 6	Historic District
Figure 7	Arts District
Figure 8	Parking District
Figure 9	Business Improvement District

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:	Recommended Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District (RRA-OD) Code Amendment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nelson, Pope & Voorhis, LLC (NPV) was retained to assist the Town of Riverhead with advancement of the goals for revitalization of Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area (RRURA), including the underutilized Town owned parking areas adjacent to the Riverhead Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Train Station. The Step II Brownfield Opportunity Area Nomination Study (BOA Step II Study) prepared by NPV was adopted by the Town in 2015, and resulted in the designation of the BOA by New York State. The BOA identified several strategic areas whose redevelopment would act as catalysts for investment in the surrounding area. Among the strategic areas were the train station parking lot and neighboring block to the east. The municipally owned parking lot in particular represents an opportunity for the Town to partner with a Master Developer in redevelopment of the property – and possibly nearby properties. The scope of this TOD project as originally envisioned included review of the existing zoning code and recommendations for amendments to encourage redevelopment and support redevelopment of the parking lot as well as to prepare materials for a Request for Expression of Interest from the development community. However, through the course of the initial evaluation, NPV and the Town Community Development Agency recognized that the redevelopment of the parking lot as an isolated project would not achieve the goals for this area and that the issues extended throughout the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area (RRURA). Accordingly, the focus of the TOD project was expanded to study the reasons for the lack of investment in this part of the Town in recent years.

It was ultimately concluded that while this area has the infrastructure and setting to support greater density than permitted under the zoning code, the current zoning provisions are too restrictive to encourage redevelopment.

This conclusion was presented to the Town Board in March 2020, and a recommendation made that the Town Board consider adoption of an overlay district that would apply to properties meeting minimum area requirements the RRURA. Specifically, the analysis supports adoption of an overlay district for the RRURA to encourage a mix of uses and increased density that is needed to reinvent this part of the downtown. Since this initial recommendation was made to the Town Board earlier this year, NPV has worked with representatives from the Town to prepare recommended code amendments for a new overlay district known as the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District (RRA-OD) which are provided in **Appendix A** of this Study.

The overlay district contains bulk regulations for properties 20,000 square feet and larger, and for properties greater than 60,000 square feet as well as increased density that may be achieved through the provision of community benefits. Such zoning would attract the investment of the development community. Recently, there have been expressions of interest from the development community in the redevelopment of the Town parking lot, as well as other properties in the area – which would require zoning modification or zoning relief. The adoption of overlay district provisions would facilitate such investment.

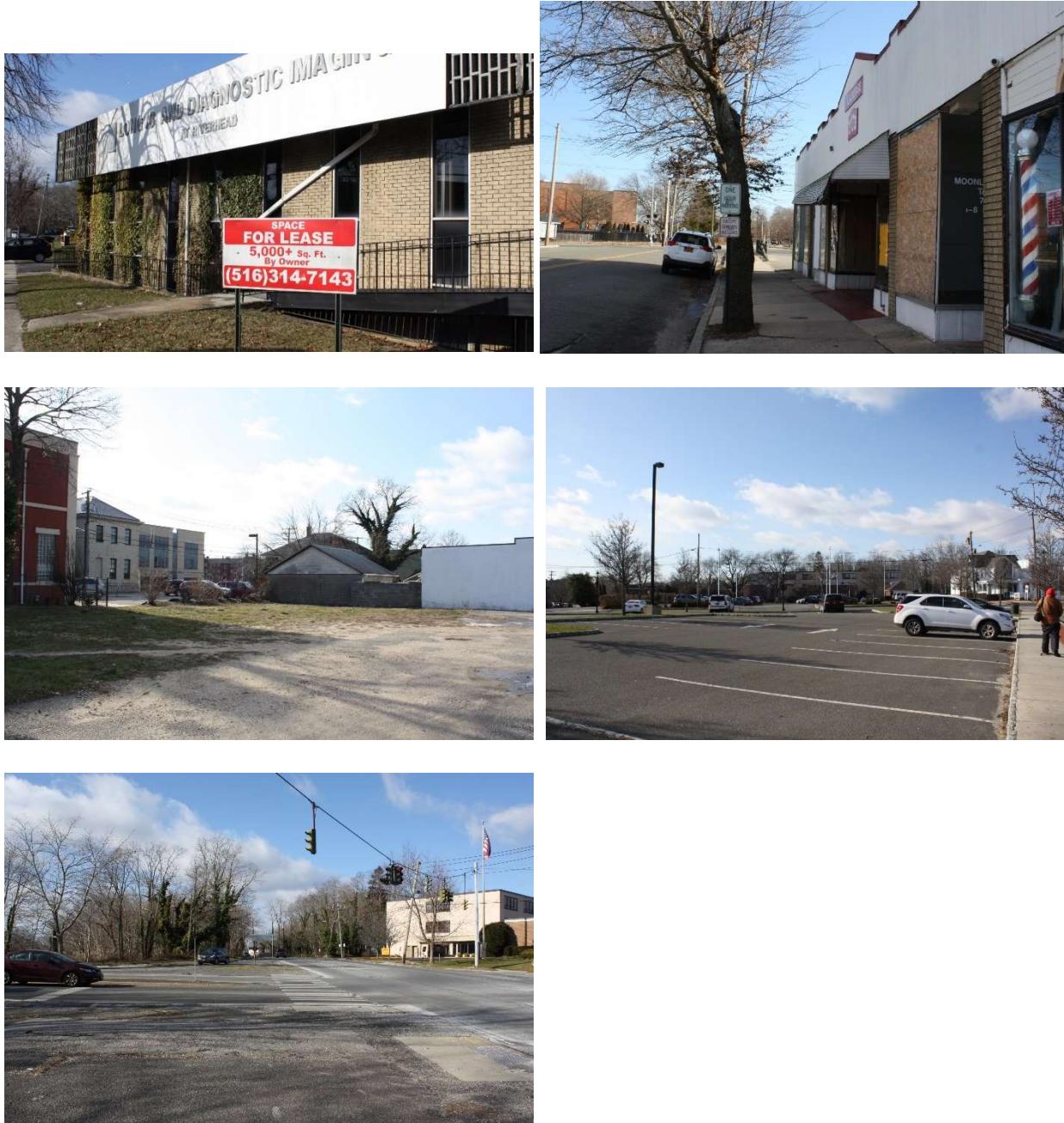
In addition, the Town of Riverhead has been approached by the owner of the Wiener Museum of Decorative Arts (WMODA), a museum that celebrates the fine arts of ceramics and glass in Dania, Florida, with a proposal to bring the museum to Riverhead as part of a mixed use development. This opportunity

would result in a large investment in the Study Area with a community use that would go a long way towards reinventing this area of the Town. Zoning code provisions such as the DC-3 District regulations, would preclude the implementation of such a unique opportunity; as envisioned, the recommended overlay district would provide the Town Board with the flexibility to work with an individual that seeks to build an iconic and lasting building which includes a museum use.

2.0 INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Study Area

The Study Area coincides with the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal District as shown on an aerial photograph in **Figure 1**. The photographs that follow illustrate the underutilized nature of the area.



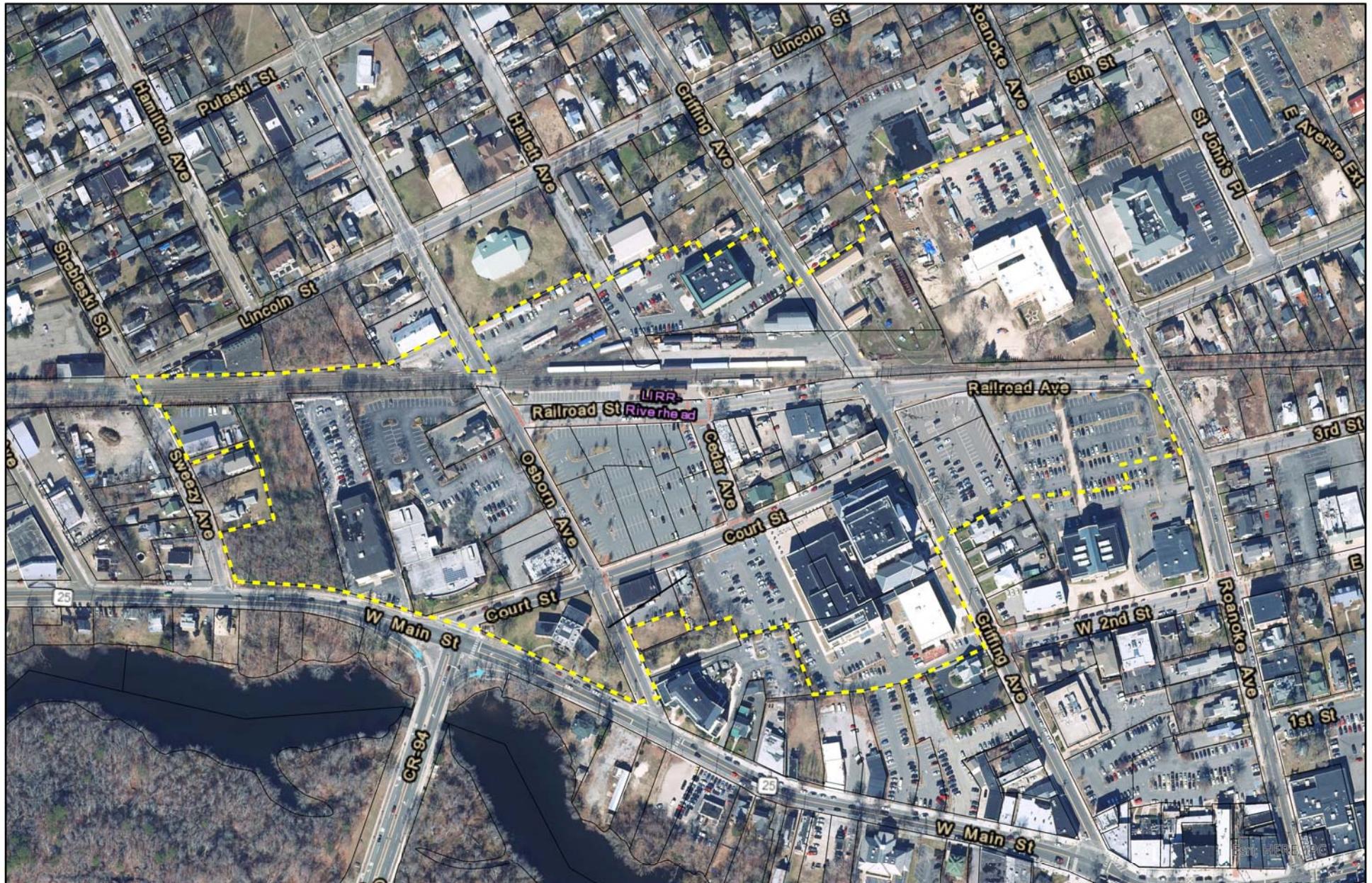


FIGURE 1
STUDY AREA



NPV

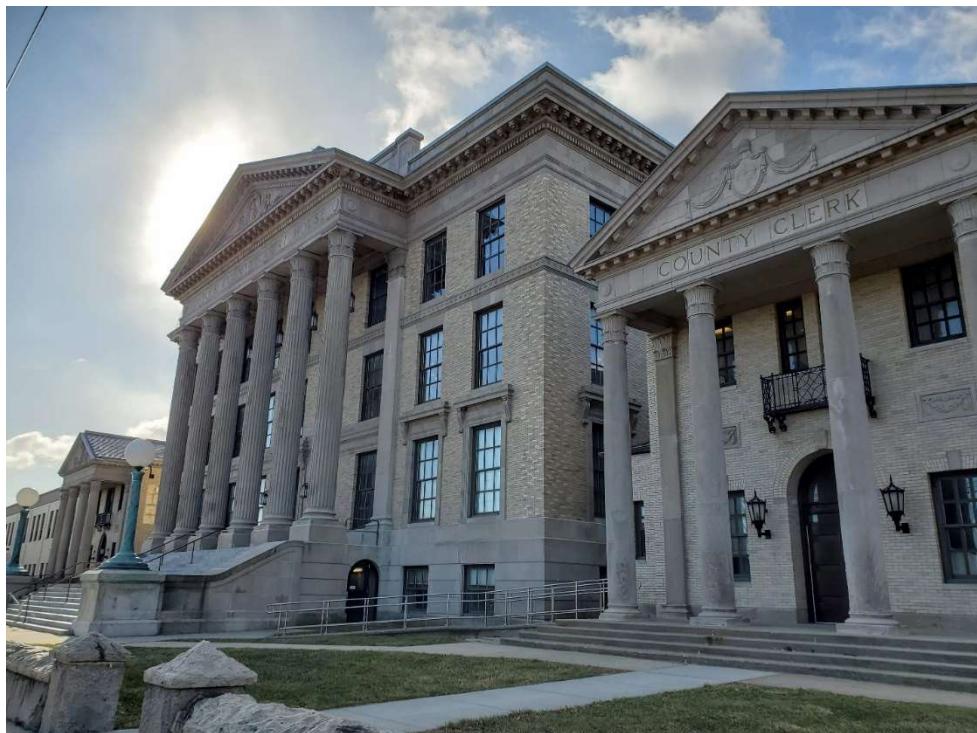
Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 300 feet

Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead

There are a number of civic uses within the Study Area, including the Riverhead Public Library, Suffolk County Historic Society, Suffolk County Courthouse. In addition, the Peconic River, Polish Town and the center of downtown Riverhead are all within walking distance.





2.2 Plans

The Town has completed several planning initiatives in the past 30 years, including the BOA Step II Nomination Study, 2003 Comprehensive Plan, 2020 Strategic Parking Plan and 2020 Pattern Book for Downtown Riverhead. Each of these plans recognize the opportunity that the Study Area has for revitalization, in consideration that the properties in the area are generally underutilized, and that the area surrounding the train is a suitable location for transit-oriented development. The following subsections provide a summary of the relevant recommendations from each of these prior planning initiatives.

2.2.1 Town of Riverhead Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Step II Nomination Study

The BOA Step II Nomination Study identified the train station area as a “strategic site” where redevelopment opportunities exist and provided the basis for this transit-oriented development plan.



The BOA Step II Study identified the parking lot and block to the east as Strategic Site #5 which consists of twenty one (21) tax parcels, ten of which are privately owned and the remainder comprise the parking lot owned by the Town. The surface parking lot is designated parking for the Suffolk County courts and the eastern block is developed with a retail market, a barber shop, vacant store fronts, two residential homes and a building used for education (Empire State Development). The BOA Step II Study noted the tremendous opportunity this strategic area has due to its proximity to the train station and the lack of investment. The BOA Step II Study envisioned a coordinated redevelopment of the properties to include a parking structure and mixed-use building containing retail/restaurants on the ground level and three levels of apartments on the upper floors. The Step II acknowledged that the redevelopment would require zoning relief, or the adoption of code amendments in the form of a new overlay district.

The Step II Study also provided a review of transportation services, which is summarized here.

- The Riverhead LIRR station is a stop for Suffolk County bus routes (even though the train schedules and bus schedules are not coordinated).
- The train station provides storage racks to promote bicycling as a mode of transportation.
- While the majority of LIRR utilizes electric trains, east of Ronkonkoma including Yaphank, Riverhead and Greenport is served by diesel trains. If people are traveling from Riverhead west through Ronkonkoma, they must switch stations at Ronkonkoma to board an electric train. This can increase wait and travel times which dissuades ridership, which is already low in Riverhead.
- Another contributing factor to the low ridership in Riverhead is the infrequent train times. The current weekday schedule provides five¹ trains daily for both eastbound and westbound travel while weekend and holiday service is limited to two trains per direction a day.
- According to the most recent ridership information available from the MTA/LIRR, at the Riverhead station, the overall ridership for an entire day is 52 patrons entering/exiting the trains.
- The infrequent service, arrival/departure times, and distance from other stations does not appeal to long distance commuters. Also, the even more limited service on the weekends does not promote downtown Riverhead as a day trip destination for possible visitors travelling by train.

¹ The 2020 schedule indicates that weekday trains are now 3 westbound and 4 eastbound trains and 4 in each direction on weekends and holidays.

- Although there is a desire for transit-oriented growth in downtown Riverhead, it is unlikely that the MTA will implement additional train service unless the demand for additional train service presents itself.
- However, as growth of the downtown and surrounding area occurs and a need for increased service is demonstrated, there is the potential to increase train and bus service within the area.

The BOA included a TOD Growth plan which provided recommendations for various modes of transportation as well as evaluated the traffic impacts of the full conceptual build out of the strategic sites. The Traffic Impact Study applied conservative growth factors and assumed that most of the vacant storefronts would be occupied. Finally, there was a professional assessment of the source of traffic flow through Riverhead. To summarize briefly, because the parking lots were observed to be generally underutilized, it was speculated that much of the traffic flow through downtown Riverhead was not generated by the uses in the downtown (but that much of the flow is passing through). Because of delays that occur on Route 58 at peak hours, it is expected that a portion of the traffic through downtown is because Route 25 provides an alternate route between the Long Island Expressway and the area east of Riverhead – and that as development related traffic increases in the downtown, that the alternate route would become less attractive to motorists. However, as this speculation is related to human behavior, and traffic impact studies are based upon numerical data, N&P Engineering, Architecture and Land Surveying, PLLC (N+P) identified delays at signalized intersections resulting from the full build scenario. To mitigate the delays, N+P provided two long term physical options which would require major investment. The alternative would be to consider the reality that increased trips to the downtown would indicate a degree of success in the revitalization, that less cut through traffic would eventually occur, and that delays in a downtown are not unexpected by motorists and provide a degree of traffic calming.

2.2.2 Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Plan

The Town of Riverhead Urban Renewal Plan for the Railroad Street Corridor was adopted on April 1, 1997. The urban renewal area included Railroad Street (aka Railroad Avenue), Cedar Street, and Court Street, as well as segments of Osborn Avenue and Griffing Avenue. The Railroad Street Urban Renewal Area included approximately 31.6 acres (41 parcels) and was characterized by predominantly commercial uses, with some examples of vacant, institutional, and residential properties. The primary goals of the Plan were to reduce blight and stimulate economic development by utilizing the techniques of acquisition, demolition, redevelopment, rehabilitation, code enforcement, and public improvements. The Railroad Street Urban Renewal Plan made recommendations including filling



existing vacancies, expanding institutional uses, improving and expanding parking areas, encouraging commercial uses, redevelopment or reuse of buildings with historic or cultural significance, reconfiguration of certain parcels, developing public facilities, and developing a transportation hub at the railroad station.

The adoption of the Plan provided the basis for Town acquisition of properties for creation of the town owned Railroad Avenue parking lot, however, no other significant improvements since the adoption of the Plan have been implemented and many properties remain underutilized today.

2.2.3 2003 Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Riverhead Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted in November 2003. Although the Plan addressed issues related to land use and development throughout the Town, there was a heavy emphasis on the revitalization of the downtown as it was considered a critical issue in the overall improvement of the Town. It was recommended that the downtown be primarily developed as an entertainment, tourism, and cultural center. As a result of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town rezoned the downtown areas into five distinct categories (DC-1 through DC-5) which are *“each tailored to a distinct part of the downtown area, intended to carefully balance downtown land uses and development patterns in a manner that fits into the historic and natural context of the area.”* The intent of the DC district is to limit sprawl, thereby protecting open space; promote and develop the downtown as the cultural, civic, and tourist center of Riverhead by providing a vital, high-density, mixed-use environment; accentuate the visual quality of the waterfront as well as increase public access to the waterfront; promote transit, pedestrian, and bicycle use; embrace the historic character of the area through preservation of significant historic structures and architectural review of new structures; and provide community facilities.



***TOWN OF RIVERHEAD
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
NOVEMBER 2003***

PURSUANT TO SECTION 272-a OF THE TOWN LAW



The DC-1 (Core Downtown) has been successful in attracting redevelopment and investment in the heart of the downtown. However, the adoption of the DC-3 (Office) district has not resulted in significant investment outside of the core of the downtown.

In review of the recommended uses for the DC-3 area in comparison with the code amendments it is noted that while the Comprehensive Plan identified a mix of uses that included live/work units and apartment buildings, the adopted code for the DC-3 District omitted these uses. In addition, the

Comprehensive Plan recommended authorization of additional height and density, as well as shared parking incentives that were not incorporated into the DC-3 District code language.

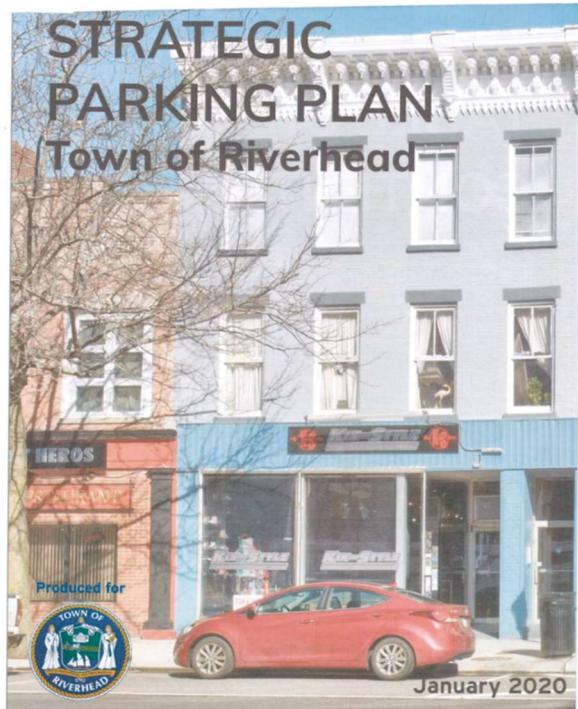
DC-3: Office	DC-3: Office
Preferred Land Uses	Design Concepts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retail Stores, Personal Services• Restaurants, Bars, Cafes• Banquet Facilities• Art Galleries• Funeral Homes• Banks• Offices / Home Offices• Museums• Libraries• Schools• Places of Worship• Parks and Playgrounds• Apartment buildings / Townhouses• Live/work Space• Single-family Houses• Retirement housing• Residential Health Care• Hotels (by special use permit of Town Board)• Parking facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compact lots• Relatively narrow front and side yards• Sidewalk-oriented entrances, window displays and signs• Parking behind or beside buildings, not in front• Shared parking incentives (e.g., 20% reduction in required parking spaces)• Parking waivers with fees• Significant landscaping requirement in parking lot (e.g., 15% = 1.5 times existing regulation); landscaped planter or tree every 10-15 parking spaces, not just around the lot's edges• Height, coverage and/or floor area increases through transferred development rights.

Source: 2003 Town of Riverhead Comprehensive Plan (Page 2-11)

2.2.4 Strategic Parking Plan

The Strategic Parking Plan for the Town of Riverhead was adopted in January 2020 and focused on parking utilization in downtown Riverhead. The Plan contains recommendations related to management of available parking, expansion of the Parking District, and reduction in required off street parking requirements for multifamily residential uses.

The Plan also recognizes the suitability for a transit-oriented development (TOD) near the Riverhead Railroad Station.



2.2.5 Town of Riverhead Downtown Riverhead Pattern Book

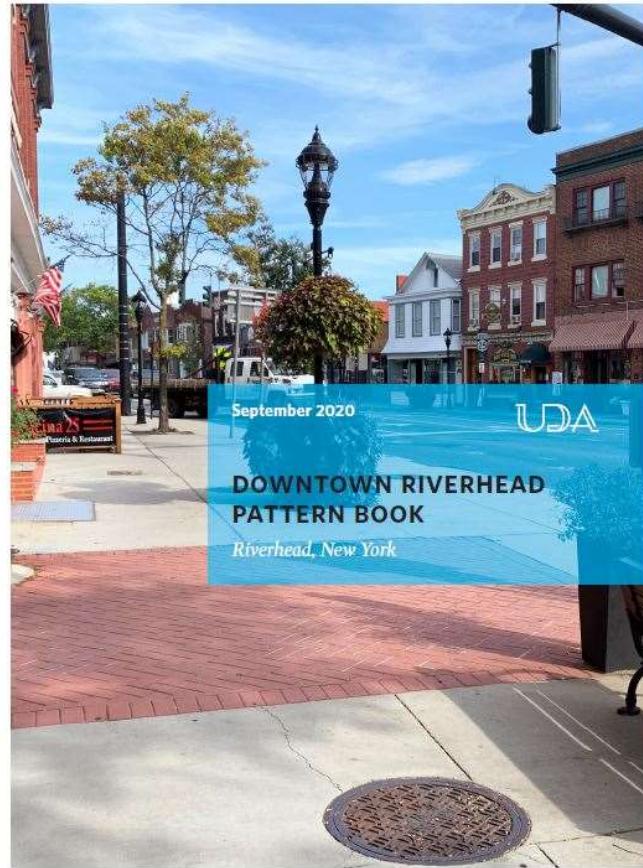
The Downtown Riverhead Pattern Book was prepared by Urban Design Associates through consultation with the Town of Riverhead and adopted in September 2020. The intent of the Pattern Book is to preserve the unique character of downtown Riverhead by providing direction for policies and projects proposed within the Main Street (DC-1) Zoning Use District. Specifically, the Pattern Book focuses on the proper siting and massing of buildings, the enhancement of the public realm, and the issues of resiliency and adaptability in terms of public policy.

The Pattern Book Study Area includes the DC-1 Zoning District, which is adjacent to the TOD Plan Study Area, and includes much of the waterfront area along Main Street in the Downtown. The recommendations of the Pattern Book were developed through an extensive public engagement process and many of the goals and recommendations of the Pattern Book could also be applicable to the TOD Study Area regardless that the TOD Plan Study Area was not the focus of the Pattern Book. The Pattern Book includes a variety of Policy recommendations to address Peconic River flooding, balancing parking and transportation needs, supporting existing land uses while encouraging additional unique uses and special events, sustainability, and analyzing the potential build out permitted by current zoning regulations. The Pattern Book provides guidelines for existing public areas and recommends new public spaces through parks and a Town Square in order to achieve a vibrant public realm with active storefronts, safe and beautiful open spaces, and cohesive circulation patterns. Public areas should be designed with

the pedestrian in mind and should encourage retail patronage and safe gathering, which requires appropriate signage, lighting, and other streetscape improvements.

Standards for private development were included to capture the essential qualities and key patterns of Downtown Riverhead and translate them into a series of quantifiable guidance for the built environment of downtown to foster predictable results while allowing for design flexibility. Standards for storefront glazing including large windows, awnings, and signage help to bring together the private and public realms.

The Pattern Book provides high-quality graphic representations of recommendations for improvements related to the street environment, pedestrian amenities, and building siting and massing that could also be applied during the redevelopment of the TOD area in order to have a cohesive design for both areas of Downtown Riverhead.



2.3 Land Use and Zoning

2.3.1 Land Use

Land use in the Study Area is illustrated on **Figure 2**. The image below also shows key features in the Study Area. As illustrated, the Study Area contains a mix of vacant properties as well as commercial, residential and civic uses.



Figures 3 and 4 show aerial imagery from 2001 and 2016 respectively and illustrate the lack of changes within the Study Area since the Urban Renewal District was established over 20 years ago.

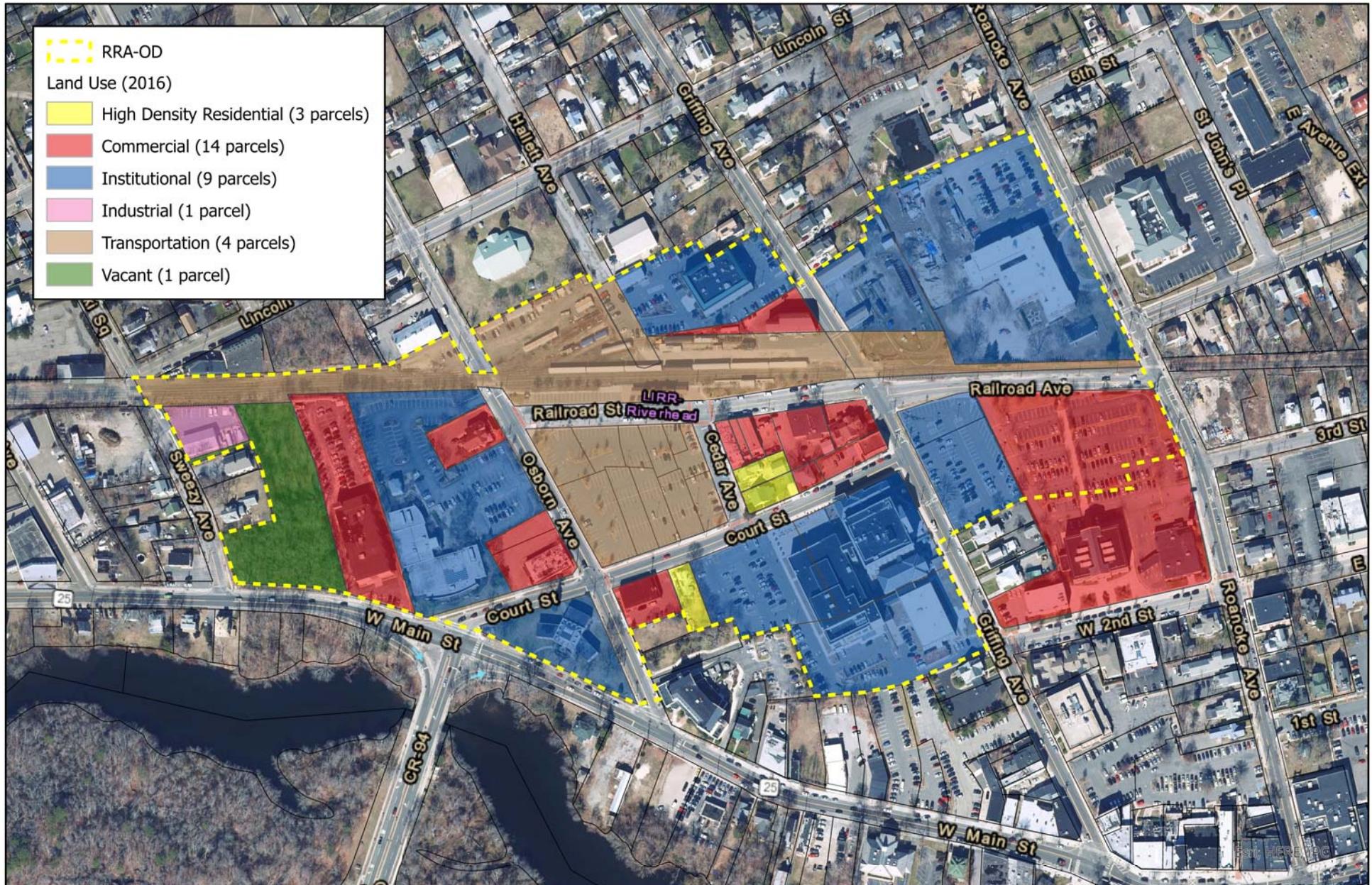


FIGURE 2
LAND USE

Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 300 feet



NPV



Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead



FIGURE 3
2001 AERIAL IMAGERY



Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 300 feet



Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead



FIGURE 4
2016 AERIAL IMAGERY



Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 300 feet



Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead

2.3.2 Zoning

Existing zoning within the Study Area is illustrated on **Figure 5**. The entire Study Area is located within the Downtown Center 3: (DC-3) District and development within this area is regulated by Article XXXI of Town Code. The intent of the DC-3 Zoning Use District is to allow, maintain, and foster a traditional downtown character, similar to that of the Downtown Center 1: Main Street (DC-1) Zoning Use District, but with lower intensities. The DC-3 Zoning Use District complements the State Supreme Court of Suffolk County Complex by allowing a moderate-intensity mix of uses, with ground-floor offices and retail and a greater mix of housing types. Permitted uses within the DC-3 Zoning District per §301-149 of Town Code are as follows:

- (1) Retail stores.
- (2) Banks.
- (3) Personal services businesses.
- (4) Funeral homes.
- (5) Art galleries and studios.
- (6) Restaurants, cafes, bakeries with retail sales on premises, banquet facilities, ice cream parlors.
- (7) Offices and professional offices.
- (8) Governmental offices or other public offices.
- (9) Museums, libraries and other cultural attractions.
- (10) Schools (including business and secretarial).
- (11) Places of worship.
- (12) Townhouses.
- (13) Parking facilities.
- (14) Movie theater and multiplex cinema. [Added 6-7-2005 by L.L. No. 15-2005]

Special permit uses within the DC Zoning District per §301-150 of Town Code are as follows:

- (1) Hotels.
- (2) Taverns.
- (3) Indoor recreation facilities.
- (4) Day-care, nursery schools.
- (5) Bed-and-breakfast establishments.
- (6) Dormitories.
- (7) Single-family dwelling units.

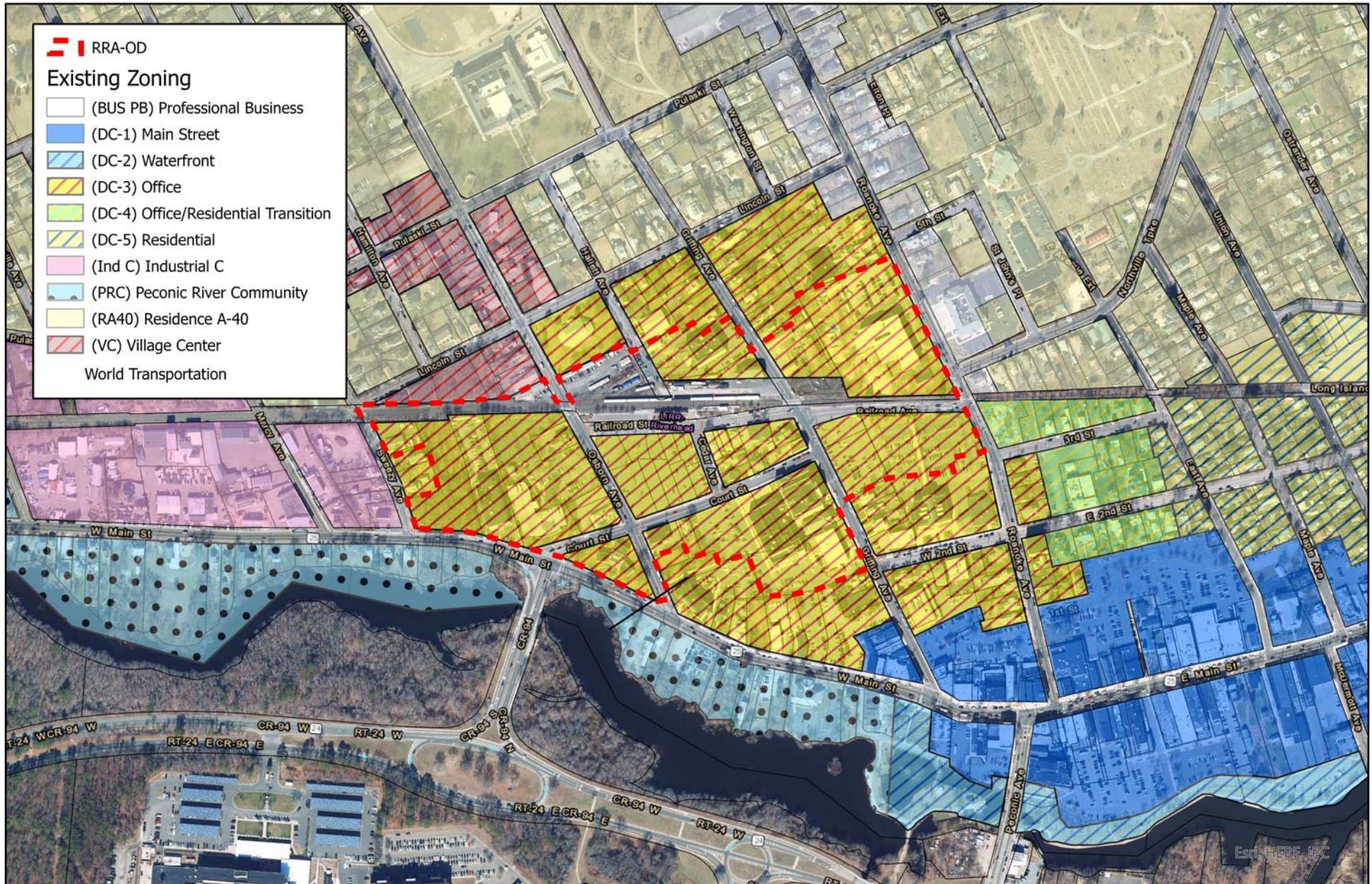


FIGURE 5
ZONING MAP

Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead

Gas stations, car washes, and other automobile-oriented uses and drive-through windows for restaurants and banks are currently prohibited in the DC-3 District. Development within the DC-3 District is guided by design standards contained in §301-151 of Town Code and which seek to create a pedestrian friendly environment with high quality structures and site improvements such as landscaping and appropriately located off street parking. Parking requirements are dictated by §301 of the Town Zoning Code - Attachment 1. Selected minimum parking requirements are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Selected Minimum Parking Requirements per §301 of Town Code

Parking Use	Minimum Number of Spaces
Multiple dwellings	1 1/2 per dwelling unit
Office buildings	1 per 200 square feet of floor area
Restaurants	1 per 3 seats
Retail stores	1 per 250 square feet of floor area

The bulk standards as compared to the DC-1 District illustrate the different scale of development permitted in the DC-3 District.

2.4 Special Districts

2.4.1 Town of Riverhead Historic District

A portion of the Study Area is within the Town Historic District which is illustrated on **Figure 6**. It includes properties that are in the heart of the downtown from Griffing Avenue in the west to Union Avenue in the east along Main Street. There are several National Register listed and eligible properties within the area, including:

- Suffolk County Historical Society Building (listed -93NR00501) on West Main Street;
- Title Guarantee & Trust Co. (eligible) at 202 Griffing Avenue; and,
- Suffolk County Courthouse Complex (eligible) at 225-243 Griffing Avenue.

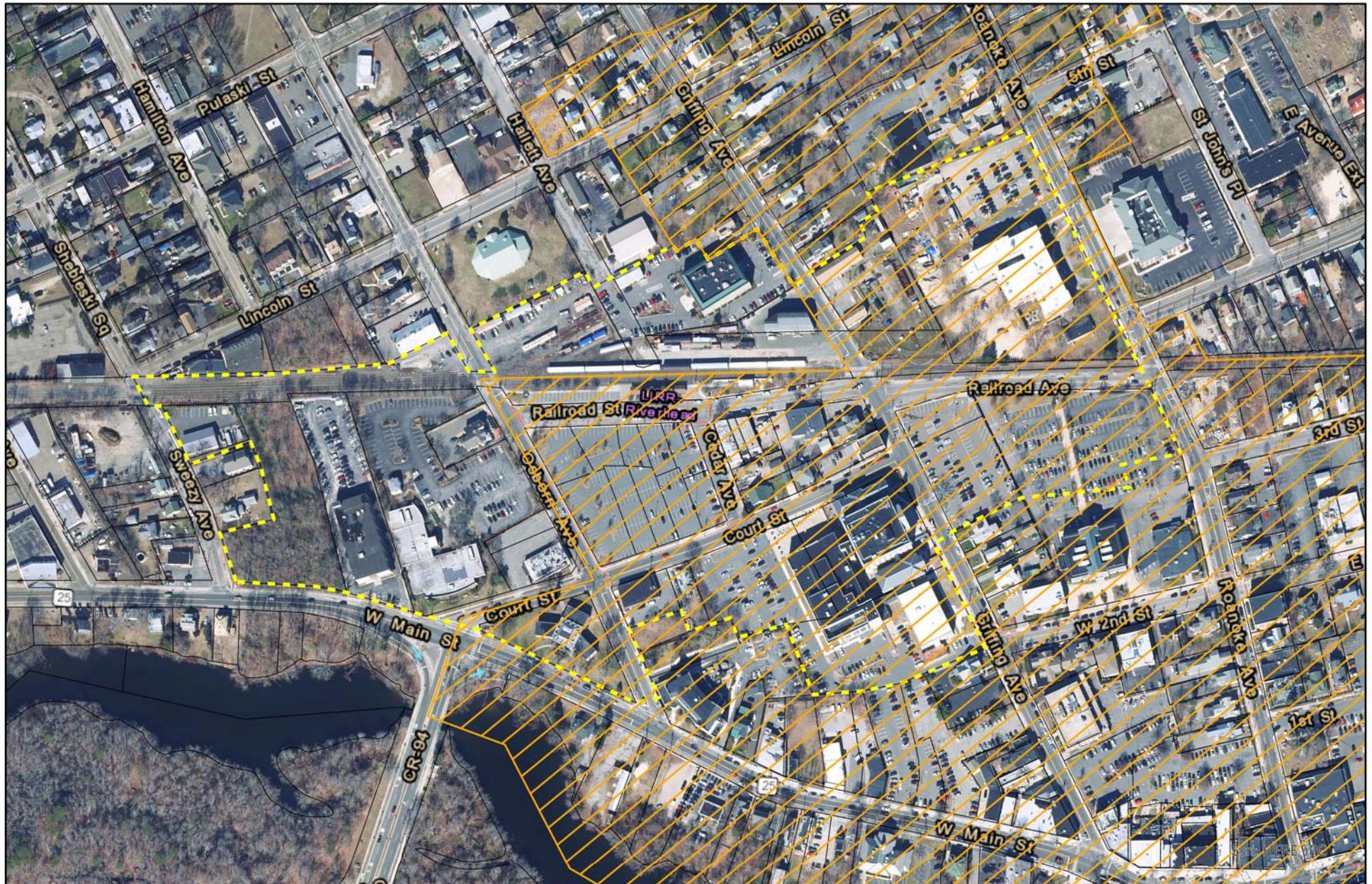


FIGURE 6
HISTORIC DISTRICT



NPV

Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 300 feet



Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead

2.4.2 Arts District

A portion of the Study Area and much of downtown Riverhead has been designated as an Arts District (see **Figure 7**) in order to provide an arena for the creation of arts and cultural resources together with living accommodations for artists². The intent of this district supports a mix of uses including residential units in the DC-1 and DC-3 Districts. However, currently, apartments and live work units are not permitted in the DC-3 District.

2.4.3 Parking District

The majority of the downtown is located within the Parking District (see **Figure 8**), which requires properties to pay an additional tax but eliminates the requirements for providing off-street parking for nonresidential uses. The Strategic Parking Plan recommends expansion of the Parking District, which would provide a benefit for redevelopment within the Study Area and more efficient use of land area dedicated to parking through a shared resource.

2.4.4 Business Improvement District

A portion of the Study Area is within the Riverhead Business Improvement District (see **Figure 9**). All properties located within the BID, except for primarily residential properties, are additionally taxed which allows financing of certain improvements and services for the benefit of the businesses located within the district such as street beautification, special holiday lightings, and other programs that encourage an increased customer base.

² Section 108 of Town Code provides Legislative Intent for the Arts District, stating “*It is further found and declared that the second and third story space have lost and continue to lose retail and office tenants to more modern structures more conveniently situated and that the unused floor space of such buildings constitute a potential housing stock. It is further found and declared that residential uses within the Central Business District contribute to the viability of such Business District and that the provision of an arena for the creation of art and cultural resources, together with living accommodations for artists, would create a unique environment for increased investment contributing to the revitalization of the district. It is further found and declared that the legislation governing the alteration of such buildings to accommodate residential use must be more restrictive than statutes heretofore in effect*”.



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FIGURE 7 ARTS DISTRICT

Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS; Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 500 feet



Train Station Transit-Oriented Development Riverhead



FIGURE 8
PARKING DISTRICT



Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 500 feet



Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead



FIGURE 9
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



Source: NYSGIS Orthoimagery Program, 2016; ESRI World Transportation Layer; Suffolk County GIS;

Riverhead GIS

Scale: 1 inch is equal to 600 feet



Train Station
Transit-Oriented
Development
Riverhead

2.5 **Federal Opportunity Zone**

The Study Area is within a Census Tract that has been designated as a Federal Opportunity Zone and is one of only ten such areas in Suffolk and Nassau counties. A Federal Opportunity Zone is an economically distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. The program was established to spur investment in economically distressed communities and is unique in that it allows deferment of capital gains tax where used for improvements and redevelopment. Investors who use capital gains to invest in an opportunity zone avoid paying taxes on those gains for seven years – but more attractive for the development community is the benefit of maintaining the investments in the designated communities for a period of at least 10 years will allow investors to avoid federal taxes from these projects as well as any capital gain realized on the sale of the Opportunity Zone project. While the federal government is not collecting data on investments in opportunity zones, there are accounts of success stories from economically distressed communities from around the United States and this designation has attracted interest in several properties within the Study Area. However, to date, despite this federal designation, new investment has yet to occur within the Study Area.

3.0 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the recommendations contained in prior planning initiatives going back to the 1990s and the attempts to attract developers and investment, surprisingly little redevelopment has occurred which led to revisions to the Scope of this analysis so that both short-term and long-term incentives are implemented to revitalize the area. The presence of public uses and attractions including the Long Island Aquarium, Suffolk Theater and East End Arts have played a role in the attractiveness of the downtown, as well as the numerous restaurants, microbreweries, other eateries, and shops. Several mixed use and residential buildings have been built and occupied, which has brought new vibrancy to the downtown.

The Study Area provides an opportunity for a revitalized area centered around the railroad station which is supported by infrastructure and which has been documented through prior planning studies. The major obstacle to redevelopment within the Study Area is the zoning, which as noted, is not strictly consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Although the DC-3 Zoning District Purpose and Intent (Section 301-148) identifies the need for a greater mix of housing types, the current dimensional regulations make those types of residential uses impractical and unlikely to be constructed. In recent years, significant investment in the DC-1 District has been achieved in part because of the bulk regulations which have allowed development at a density which attracted the development community. In comparison, the DC-3 Office District has not attracted interest from the development community and yet, the TOD Plan Study Area is home to several assets, proximity to the downtown and transit with a number of underutilized properties that are ripe for redevelopment. This TOD Study Area represents one of the “last pieces of the puzzle” for revitalization of downtown Riverhead. In summary:

- The redevelopment of the parking lot alone will not be enough to turn this area around;
- Zoning is currently discouraging investment and redevelopment interest within the district;
- The DC-3 zoning provisions are not consistent with the intent of the adopted Comprehensive Plan;
- Investment is needed throughout the entire Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal District; and,
- Zoning provisions which attract unique arts opportunities should be incorporated into the code.

The following recommendations are consistent with the prior plans and zoning evaluation conducted for this project.

3.1 Adopt the Transit Oriented Development Plan

This TOD Plan provides the basis for a number of additional recommendations – and the adoption of a new overlay district for the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal District that will encourage investment in the Study Area. The Town Board should consider adoption of this Plan to support implementation of its recommendations.

3.2 Adopt a New Overlay District for the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area

The adoption of a new overlay district is recommended to encourage revitalization of the area surrounding the train station into a mixed-use thriving community by encouraging investment in the short term for catalyst projects and setting the stage for a Master Developer of the train station parking lot.

Additionally, an analysis and update to the zoning requirements in this area will demonstrate the Town's commitment to revitalization, which would strengthen future applications for State funding such as the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) or other Consolidated Funding Applications (CFA) since the Town would be able to demonstrate that redevelopment initiatives are already underway. Draft code language is provided in **Appendix A**.

As envisioned, the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District (RRA-OD) would be applicable to properties at least 20,000 square feet in size within the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area. The Overlay District would not replace the underlying DC-3 Zoning District for properties that do not meet the area threshold and there is no obligation for property owners to conform to the RRA-OD provisions. It is recommended that the RRA-OD incorporate recommendations for off street parking requirements from the Strategic Parking Plan for multifamily uses for redevelopment within the recommended Overlay District and provide opportunity to achieve additional density and height for sites that can accommodate the development with the provision of community benefits consistent with recommendations from this plan and prior planning efforts including but not limited to such measures as the transfer of development credits, projects which result in Peconic River access, green infrastructure and commitment and application of parking management strategies.

In addition, the recommended code language which includes permitted uses, bulk regulations, and density bonuses through community benefits, is written to provide the structure to attract and support development of unique arts related opportunities for larger properties. The project envisioned by WMODA would create a world class museum as part of a mixed-use development in the Study Area. The recommended zoning overlay district provides flexibility for the Town Board to approve an application for a truly extraordinary proposal such as is envisioned for property within the Study Area.

Adoption of a new overlay district requires the creation of a local law and environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) which is discussed in greater detail below.

SEQR Review

Because adoption of zoning is considered a Type I Action under the State Environmental Review Act (SEQR), an action more likely to require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, the Town initiated the SEQR process by preparing a Part I Environmental Assessment Form. It was recognized through this initial analysis that traffic impacts would potentially be a concern in adoption of code that permits additional density in land use and thus the Town requested that NPV's affiliated firm N&P Engineering, Architecture and Land Surveying, PLLC (N+P) prepare an update to the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) that was performed for the BOA in 2015. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the TIS performed as part of the TOD Growth Plan evaluated the vehicular trips from full build out of the strategic sites, all vacancies filled, planned projects, and applied a conservative growth factor. Earlier in the year, NPV and the Town of Riverhead Community Development Agency (CDA) recognized the importance of reevaluating traffic impacts for adoption of an overlay district and fortunately were able to conduct traffic counts prior to the New York State shut down associated with the COVID-19 pandemic that allowed an updated traffic analysis to be prepared to determine whether the adoption of the overlay district language as envisioned would require mitigation, or if a SEQR negative declaration could be supported.

In assessment of the traffic impacts, NPV coordinated with the Riverhead Community Development Agency to identify properties more likely to be redeveloped under the Overlay District provisions and compared the potential density of these sites under the existing conditions and the proposed Overlay District (as a build-out condition). This information was utilized in the Traffic Analysis described in the following section, and has been provided, along with various resource maps, to the CDA for use in completing the SEQR process.

Traffic Analysis

The results of the build-out analysis were utilized to provide an update to BOA Step II Study Traffic Impact Assessment and to identify any traffic impacts that will be created by development of those sites within the Overlay District that have greatest potential for redevelopment as compared to the existing conditions. The analysis prepared by N+P evaluated the traffic impacts associated with the following development assumptions which accounted for the recommended “base density” of the recommended overlay district code without added density through the provision of community benefits:

- increase in 413 apartments units, 35,700 SF of office space, 26,400 SF of retail space and 8,800 SF of restaurant space;
- increase in 30,000 SF of museum space; and
- decrease in 3 single family homes, 38,000 SF of office space, 15,000 SF of commercial space and 4000 SF of institutional (education) space.

Turning movement counts were conducted at the following intersections on Thursday, March 12, 2020 and Friday, March 13, 2020 during the weekday AM (7:00-9:00 AM) and PM (4:00-7:00 PM) peak period and on Saturday, March 14, 2020 during the Saturday midday peak period (10:00 AM – 2:00 PM).

- West Main St at Center Drive/Court Street;
- West Main Street at Griffing Avenue;
- East Main Street at Peconic Avenue;
- East Main Street at Roanoke Avenue; and
- Peconic Drive at Heider Behr Way.

The traffic analysis also included adjusting existing traffic volumes to future 2020 conditions based on annual growth rates and determining trip generation resulting from assumed build conditions. The analysis concluded that the proposed full build out scenario will not result in significant traffic impacts within downtown Riverhead and no mitigation is required for the adoption of the overlay district.

It is noted that if projects exceed the assumed density for the build out conditions assumed for the traffic assessment, for example, if community benefits are proposed which permit additional density or otherwise through Town Board authorization, that the traffic analysis may be updated by N+P through the Town of Riverhead with a fee to be paid by the applicant to cover costs. It is recommended that if applications are submitted which require an updated analysis, that this occur through the SEQR review process and referral to N+P for an addendum to the analysis.

3.3 Consider Amendments to the DC-3 Zoning Use District

The Comprehensive Plan recommended development within the area now zoned DC-3 District on a reduced scale as compared to the area now zoned DC-1 District to support a mixed-use transitional area in proximity to the center of downtown. However, the DC-3 District language and bulk dimensional standards are dramatically lower than permitted in the DC-1 District (50% coverage as compared to 80% in the DC-1, and 35' maximum height in comparison to 60' maximum height in the DC-1). It is recommended that the Town analyze how these bulk regulations may be relaxed to encourage additional investment throughout the DC-3 Zoning Use District. In addition, the Town should consider amending the permitted uses with the DC-3 District to be consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan to permit multi-family uses and live/work units in addition to the townhouse use which is currently permitted.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDED DRAFT RAILROAD AVENUE URBAN RENEWAL AREA OVERLAY DISTRICT CODE

Article XXXI-A
Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District
[Added _____ by L.L. No. _____]

§ 301-151-A-1 Purpose and intent.

The intent of the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District (“RRA-OD”) is to allow, maintain, and foster a traditional downtown character to complement the character of Main Street, with transit oriented development, a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, active ground-floor uses, meaningful public spaces and uses, a twenty-four-hour presence from upper-story residential at an intensity similar to that of the DC-1 Main Street District where feasible and at a scale that is suitable for the property size.

The Town Board recognizes that although the adoption of the DC-1 District code provisions has resulted in investment in the downtown area, there has not been a comparable investment within the DC-3 District and even with the designation of an Opportunity Zone which defers and reduces taxes on capital gains in exchange for capital investment, redevelopment has not occurred. This overlay district is formed in recognition of the blighted conditions that exist in this area of the downtown and the unique obstacles which face the area and which have deterred redevelopment as documented in the 1990 Urban Renewal Plan, the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, and the 2015 Brownfield Opportunity Area Step II Nomination Study.

The Town Board sees this as a unique opportunity for revitalization to build upon the success of the downtown and which will create important synergies with key resources including the Suffolk County Supreme Court Complex, LIRR Station, Riverhead Public Library, Railroad Museum and Riverhead Historic Society Museum. By permitting a higher-intensity mix of uses, with ground-floor offices and retail and residential on upper floors for larger sites within the area, the Town seeks to activate this area of the downtown that has not experienced significant investment since the implementation of zoning district recommended by the 2003 Comprehensive Plan .

§ 301-151-A-2 Applicability.

This article shall be applicable to properties at least 20,000 square feet in size within the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area. The Overlay District does not replace the underlying DC-3 Zoning District for properties that do not meet the area threshold and there is no obligation for property owners to conform to the RRA-OD provisions.

The provisions of the Overlay District provide an alternative option for landowners in development of properties of at least 20,000 SF and provides means to achieve additional density through the provision of community benefits for properties over one acre.

Developments within the RRA-OD may incorporate one or more adjoining properties outside of the overlay district boundary to provide related site amenities and limited building encroachments as long as the total area of such parcels do not increase the property by more than 50%.

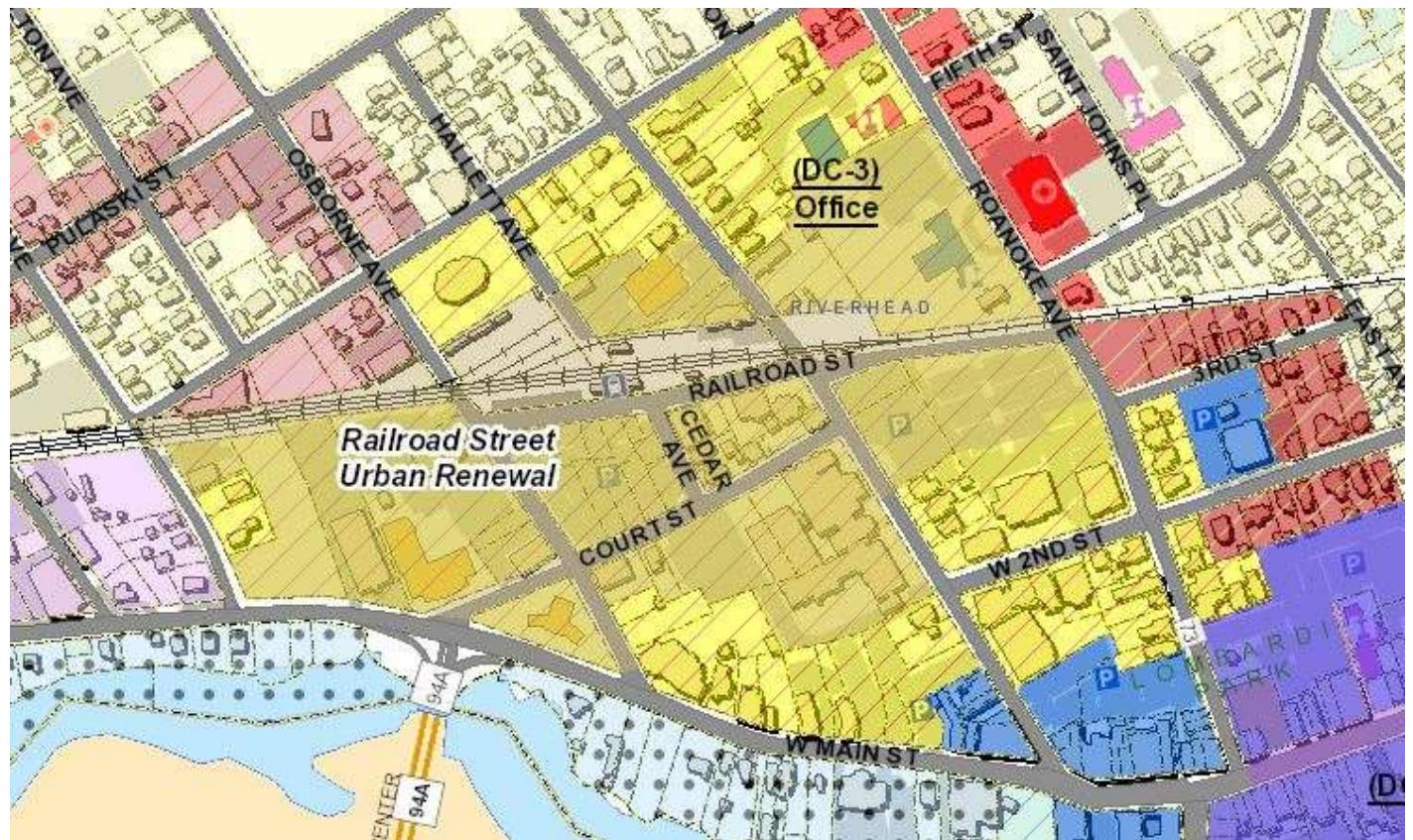
§ 301-151-A-3 Definitions

As used in this article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

Food Hall: An establishment which contains three or more individual businesses in an area where food can be served and diners can enjoy flexible seating, entertainment, with up to 20% of the businesses dedicated to retail. A food hall includes shared entry ways and common flexible space to provide area for dining or entertainment (indoor and/or outdoor), shared restrooms, dumpsters, and facilities such as HVAC, storage areas, and loading dock; and may include shared food prep facilities

Grass-Pavers: A product used to create a stabilized but pervious area for parking using a plastic grid system (or similar product) when installed according to manufacturer's instructions with stabilized base, allows grass to grow, protects roots and allows stormwater to recharge.

§ 301-151-A-4 Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District Map



§ 301-151-A-5 Uses

In the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District, no building, structure, or premises shall be used or arranged or designed to be used, and no building or structure shall be hereafter erected, reconstructed, or altered, unless otherwise provided in this chapter, except for the following permitted uses or specially permitted uses and their customary accessory uses:

- A. Permitted uses through Town Board approval
 - (1) Retail store.
 - (2) Banks.
 - (3) Personal services businesses, such as a beauty parlor, barber shop, health and fitness center, tailor, shoe repair, custom cleaning services.

- (4) Indoor recreation up to 1,500 sf.
- (5) Art galleries and studios.
- (6) Restaurants, cafes, bakeries with retail sales on premises, banquet facilities, ice cream parlors.
- (7) Marketplace including farmers market or food hall.
- (8) Taverns.
- (9) Offices and professional offices (excluding medical offices).
- (10) Governmental offices or other public offices.
- (11) Museums, libraries and other cultural attractions.
- (12) Schools (including business and secretarial).
- (13) Movie theater and multiplex cinema.
- (14) Mixed use buildings (ground floor permitted uses with apartments on upper floors).
- (15) Live-work space.
- (16) Brew pubs and microbreweries.
- (17) Hotels, for properties at least 40,000 SF in size.
- (18) Mixed use incorporating community use on the ground floor and mixed use on upper floors.

B. Accessory uses

Accessory uses shall include those uses customarily incidental to any of the above permitted uses or specially permitted uses when located on the same lot. Specifically permitted are the following accessory use:

- (1) Parking facilities.

C. Prohibited uses

- (1) Gas stations, car washes, and other automobile-oriented uses.
- (2) Drive-through windows for restaurants and banks less than 2,000 SF in size.
- (3) Adult uses as defined § 301-3(4).
- (4) Flea markets, with the exception of farmers markets.

§ 301-151-A-6 Lot, Yard, Bulk and Height Requirements

- A. New buildings shall comply with the lot, yard, bulk, and height requirements of the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Schedule of Dimensional Regulations.
- B. The maximum height for building elements facing West Main Street, Court Street, Griffing Avenue, height shall not exceed 60' measured horizontally from the property line.
- C. New development should be consistent with the recommendations of the Objective Design Standards for Private Development contained in the Downtown Riverhead Pattern Book, with the exception of maximum height which shall be dictated by Section 301 Attachment XX RRA-OD Schedule of Dimensional Regulations.
- D. Exemptions.
 - (1) Bay windows, awnings, unenclosed porches, and other front and side projections shall be exempt from the calculation of building area, so as to encourage a variety in façade design. However, such projections shall be required to meet the setback requirements of the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Schedule of Dimensional Regulations.

ZONING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

301 Attachment XX

Town of Riverhead

Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District Schedule of Dimensional Regulations

[Added **XXXX** by L.L. No. **XX-2020**]

Zoning Use District	Minimum Lot Area (square feet)	Minimum Lot Width at Front Street (feet)	Maximum Building Coverage	Maximum Height of Buildings (feet)	Floor Area Ratio (FAR)		Minimum Front Yard Depth (feet)	Side Yards, Interior Lots		Side Yards, Corner Lots		Minimum Rear Yard Depth (feet)
					Maximum FAR without Community Benefits	Maximum FAR with Provision of Community Benefits		Minimum Depth for Each (feet)	Minimum Combined Depth for 2 Sides (feet)	Minimum Depth Facing Side Street (feet)	Minimum Combined Depth for 2 Sides (feet)	
Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay	20,000 – 60,000	100'	60%	50	2.0	3.0	5	10	20	10	20	10
	Greater than 60,000	100'	80%	60 ⁽¹⁾	2.0	3.0 ⁽²⁾	5	10	20	10	20	20

NOTES:

- ¹ The Town Board has discretion to permit increased height for a mixed use that includes an arts use (museum or performing arts or similar) on the ground floor, as long as the height is less than considered a high rise per NYS Building Code.

§ 301-151-A-7 Community Benefits

A. The Town Board has identified appropriate community benefits by which the applicants that opt into the RRA-OD may increase density on site through parking reductions, additional gross floor area and/or increased height/number of stories as described in Table XX. The maximum FAR with the provision of community benefits is 3.0.

Table XX
RRA-OD Community Benefits

Community Benefit Category	Type/Maximum Density Increase/Parking Reduction	Requirement
Parking	20% total reduction in required off street parking requirement	Shared parking for complementary uses. Requires design and implementation of cross access. Certification that the peak parking of two or more uses occurs at different times provided by a licensed traffic engineer. Does not apply to municipally owned sites.
Parking	No off-street parking required for nonresidential uses.	Properties which opt into the Parking District through petition to the Town Board, where public parking lots within the Parking District are located within ¼ mile of at least one of the main building entrances.
Parking	Parking reduction for the number of stalls “parked” off site.	Parking Management Strategy demonstrating how parking needs will be met off site.
Parking	Reduction of up to 3 parking stalls for area to be used for green infrastructure	Construction and maintenance of a rain garden or bioswale designed to collect rain water of 200 square feet per parking stall reduction.
Promoting Multi modal transportation	5% reduction in required off street parking requirement	Provision of interior bicycle storage lockers for ½ of proposed residential units.
Recreation	Increase in the allowable gross floor area equivalent to the area of the dedicated park area minus 10%	Purchase of offsite Peconic River riverfront land within ½ mile of the subject property provided that it meets the criteria below: (1) Such riverfront property is to be used in a passive manner whether dedicated to the Town, conservation group, or maintained privately. (2) The property must remain accessible to the public in a parklike setting for the community (which may include outdoor art installation). (3) No structures other than a structure that is accessory to the use of the park/garden/art installation which does not exceed 10% of the site area or 1,200 SF whichever is smaller. (4) Covenants and restrictions be required to ensure that the riverfront property is maintained as a publicly accessible passive use park or similar in perpetuity.
Open Space or Farmland	3,000 SF floor area per 1 TDR credit purchased	Purchase of up to 5 TDR credits (maximum of 5 credits per project)

Community Benefit Category	Type/Maximum Density Increase/Parking Reduction	Requirement
Preservation		
Sustainability Elements	Additional 200 SF GFA for each 100 SF improved.	Design and implementation of green infrastructure for drainage (rain gardens) on or off site.
Sustainability Elements	Additional 50 SF GFA for each 1000 SF of green roof area.	Green roof
Sustainability Elements	.25 increase in FAR for Gold or Platinum LEED certification	USGBC Certified LEED buildings
Recreation	Additional 10% GFA for each 200 linear feet of easement dedicated.	Provision of public easement along the Peconic River (either through purchase or agreement with property owner)
Recreation	Additional 5% GFA for each 200 linear foot of easement improved for public access.	Improvement of public easement for public access to the riverfront.
Recreation/visual resources	5% increase in GFA per 0.5-acre property improved.	Permitting and implementation of physical improvements of private or public riverfront property to enhance public views of the Peconic River, incorporate green infrastructure and accessible pedestrian improvements through implementation of a boardwalk or path.

B. Additional Community Benefits Available for Properties Over 60,000 SF

Increased height and gross floor area may be provided with approval from the Town Board for development on properties over 60,000 SF in size with the provision of community benefits.

Properties over 60,000 SF in size may achieve parking reductions and increased density through community benefits outlined in the previous section and additional density increases as provided in **Table XX**. The maximum additional floor area achieved for properties over 60,000 SF through the application of community benefits is a Floor Area Ratio of 3.0.

Table XX
Additional Community Benefits Available for Properties Over 60,000 SF

Community Benefit Category	Type/Maximum Density Increase	Requirement
Museum, performing arts	Increase in maximum building height for mixed use building <i>at discretion of the Town Board</i> (at a height less than defined as a high rise building per NYS Building Code).	Commitment to maintenance of the museum or other arts attraction which is accessible to the public for a reasonable period, but not less than 20 years.
Open Space or Farmland	3,000 SF floor area per 1 TDR credit purchased	Purchase of up to 10 TDR credits (maximum of 10 credits per project)

Community Benefit Category	Type/Maximum Density Increase	Requirement
Preservation		

§ 301-151-A-8 Design Standards.

- (1) The principal building entrance and front shall face the primary street frontage and sidewalk. For corner lots, both facades shall be coordinated and if necessary, the principal building entrance shall be designated by the Planning Board.
- (2) Facades of commercial buildings that face sidewalks or pedestrian walkways shall be broken up into bays of no more than 30 feet in width, through use of variations in façade plane, piers, or other architectural features complementary to the building style.
- (3) Signage in the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District shall be provided in accordance with Article **XLVIII**, Signs. All signs permitted in the Downtown Center (DC-3) District are permitted as set forth in §301-254 I.
- (4) Buffering and transitions.
 - (a) Trash and/or dumpster areas shall be screened by wood fences, equivalent no maintenance fence materials that appear to be wood, landscaping, or a combination thereof, pursuant to § **245-8**.
 - (b) Buffer plantings or landscaping or opaque fences, preferably wood fences, shall be provided between commercial businesses and adjoining residential uses and maintained as a condition of approval.
- (5) Deliveries and loading activities shall, to the extent possible, be restricted to the hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekdays.

§ 301-151-A-9 Design Guidelines.

The design guidelines listed in the provisions below are intended as a guide for improvements on participating developments on parcels within this overlay district.

- (1) Where feasible, openings or gates shall be incorporated into fencing between private and public properties to encourage pedestrian activity.
- (2) The intent is to create buildings that are lasting and that each building adds to the revitalization of the Urban Renewal Area. Accordingly, high quality materials are required (e.g. brick, granite, or other masonry matter, including architectural block or architectural precast concrete). Painted or natural utility concrete panels or masonry units, if used at all, must be confined to rear elevations and in loading dock areas and not visible from the public right of way, or other public gathering spaces.

§ 301-151-A-10 Development Standards

The development standards contained herein are required for parcels being redeveloped in accordance with this article or relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals is required.

A. Pedestrian environment.

- (1) Sidewalks at least 6' in width shall be constructed to achieve a walkable environment.
- (2) Walkway pavement shall be a minimum of six feet wide and include pedestrian scale lighting at a height of 12 feet or less, spaced no further apart than 50 feet on center.

B. Public space.

- (1) Public space including alleys between buildings and walkways between building entrances and adjacent public properties shall be consistent with the Objective Design Standards for Private Development contained in the Riverhead Downtown Pattern Book.
- (2) All properties greater than 60,000 SF shall incorporate activated public areas on the ground level.

C. Parking.

- (1) The number of off-street parking spaces in the Railroad Avenue Urban Renewal Area Overlay District shall be provided in accordance with § 301-231, with the exception that off street parking requirements for residential use shall be calculated in accordance with Table XX as recommended by the 2020 Riverhead Strategic Parking Plan.

Table XX
RRA-OD Required Parking for Residential Development

Use	Minimum Parking Stalls Per Unit	Maximum Parking Stalls per unit
Studio/1 bedroom	0.50	1.00
2 bedroom	1.00	1.25

(2) Off Street Parking Design

- i. Off-street parking shall not be permitted in the front yard.
- ii. Parking shall be sited to the rear of buildings, away from street frontages when possible, or to the side of buildings. In all cases, garages and parking areas shall be recessed at least five feet from the primary front facade plane of the main building, and at least 15 feet back from the front property line.
- iii. Parking may also be located fully below buildings, partially below grade in a building, or at grade within a building, provided it is fully enclosed and no entry is provided facing a public street or front yard unless no other alternative exists. Structured parking that is partially below grade shall be screened from the street by steps, trellises, or screens. Where parking is provided on the ground floor, liner stores, which may consist of commercial uses or accessory uses/amenities to multifamily developments are required along the public streets. For block developments which front on more than 1 street, the requirement for liner stores shall apply along all but one of the streets. Access to parking for block developments shall be at the discretion of the approving agency.
- iv. Curb cuts to parking lots shall be minimized by sharing driveways for access to adjacent parking lots.
- v. In order to provide shade, parking lots with 21 or more spaces shall have "orchard" planting: one tree per 10 off-street spaces. Such trees shall be spread throughout the parking lot and along the perimeter.
- vi. Where parking lots cannot be located entirely in a rear yard, a vegetated buffer of at least

5' in width shall be provided.

- vii. To soften the appearance of parking lots and reduce the heat island effect, 10% of parking lot area shall consist of landscaped islands.
- viii. In order to provide area for stormwater recharge, at least one of the following management techniques shall be used in parking lots where underlying soils support infiltration of precipitation to the groundwater:
 - 1. Where sanding and salting are not used in the winter, low-traffic or seasonal parking overflow areas of the parking lot shall be surfaced with porous pavement, grass pave, or gravel.
 - 2. Landscaped areas of parking lots shall be planted, situated and graded in a manner to provide infiltration and detention of runoff from paved areas.

§ 301-151-A-11 Compliance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act

The adoption of this Article was analyzed pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act through the preparation of a Full Environmental Assessment Form and analysis of development under a theoretical build condition scenario for properties within the RRA-OD meeting the minimum area requirements and which were considered more likely candidates for redevelopment. A traffic impact analysis was conducted to supplement the analysis completed for the Brownfield Opportunity Area Step II Nominations Study in 2015 to assess the impact of redevelopment within the RRA-OD on the intersections where an impact was anticipated under the full build out identified by the BOA – specifically the intersections of Center Street/Court Street at West Main and at Roanoke and Peconic Avenues at Main Street.

The negative declaration adopted by the Town Board was supported by a SEQR analysis which evaluated redevelopment of the following parcels applying the base GFA permitted under the code without the application of community benefits to increase density.

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The SEQR documents are on file with the Town Building Department for reference. Any applications that are consistent with the thresholds utilized in evaluation of the adoption of the Overlay District shall benefit from the adopted Negative Declaration.

Projects which exceed the base thresholds for redevelopment within the RRA-OD and/or provide community benefits to increase density will be required to prepare a Full Environmental Assessment Form and a SEQR review will be conducted by the Town. Dependent upon the increase in traffic volume in comparison to the

volumes evaluated for adoption of this Article, a Traffic Impact Study may be required to evaluate the need for traffic mitigation (which may include installation of a traffic signal, modified traffic signal timing, or lane reconfigurations/restriping) if demonstrated to improve level of service at area intersections.