

# 4

## GUIDING APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

Due to its attractive small-town character, abundant natural and recreational resources, relatively affordable housing, and proximity to employment opportunities, East Hampton is a desirable residential community that should continue to experience growth pressure over the next ten years and beyond. Unless this growth is guided more appropriately, current patterns of development will consume larger than necessary amounts of forest, farmland, and wildlife habitat, and alter the rural character of the community. By better guiding the character, location, and intensity of development, East Hampton can minimize its impact on community character and protect the natural, historic, and scenic resources that are so important to East Hampton residents.

Major development issues facing East Hampton include:

- guiding more appropriate residential development;
- attracting appropriate commercial and industrial development; and
- improving the appearance of commercial and industrial development.



**Conventional Residential Development**



**Strip Commercial Development**



**Village Development**



**Mixed-Use Development**

## Guide Appropriate Residential Development

With the vast majority of East Hampton zoned for residential use, future residential development will likely create the most significant impacts on community character and quality of life. By guiding more appropriate development patterns, East Hampton can minimize some of the negative impacts of residential development without increasing housing costs.

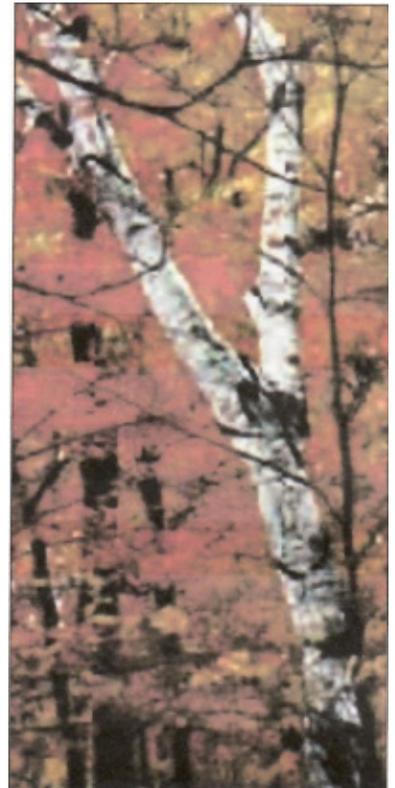
### Consider Adopting Density Based Zoning

As in numerous other communities throughout Connecticut, many East Hampton residents are unhappy with the pattern and appearance of residential development. Like many of these other communities, East Hampton needs to look no farther than its own conventional zoning regulations to place the blame. Property owners and developers are simply seeking to maximize returns on their investments within a regulatory framework where addressing community concerns are often at the expense of building lots and profits.

East Hampton's conventional zoning regulations use minimum lot area and minimum lot width to control the density of development, resulting in large-lot, "cookie cutter" subdivisions that can undermine community character. To maximize densities, developers must incorporate environmentally sensitive areas into building lots, where they become vulnerable to insensitive property owners. Minimum width requirements place a premium on infrastructure and encourage the development of existing, sometimes scenic road frontages to minimize road costs. Open space can become an afterthought at the rear of subdivisions, as placing it towards the front of a subdivision requires longer streets and utilities to serve lots at the rear of a development.

Density-based zoning replaces minimum lot standards with simple density factors that regulate density in a more flexible and less intrusive manner. For example, in the R-4 district, current regulations require a minimum lot size of 85,000 square feet or roughly two acres per lot and a minimum lot width of 100 feet, creating an effective density of one dwelling unit per two acres before accounting for roads and open space. This regulation results in an entire developable parcel being carved into building lots of two-acres or more, with the exception of new roads and any mandatory open space. Under density-based zoning, a simple density factor is used instead of a minimum lot size and lot width. The density factor accounts for the provision of new roads, mandatory open space, and the difficulty of maximizing the number of building lots under conventional zoning when dealing with the irregular area and shape of raw land (an efficiency loss factor). A density factor of 0.38 dwelling units (d.u.) per acre in the R-4 District might be derived as follows:

- 1.0 d.u. per 2 acres = 0.50 d.u. per acre
- 0.50 d.u. per acre – 15% for open space – 5% for public roads – 5% for efficiency loss = 0.375 d.u. per acre, rounded up to 0.38 d.u. per acre.



Thomas Wells © 2000

**A White Birch in the Meshomasic Forest**

## Survey Results

A majority of residents surveyed (66%) agreed with increasing the amount of open space in new subdivisions.



Airline Pond

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The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) can also derive density factors from actual densities achieved in conventional subdivisions in each District or set them at any level that they feel is appropriate to meet community goals.

Another benefit of density-based zoning is that the P&Z can adopt and easily adjust density factors without creating non-conforming lots since density-based zoning eliminates minimum lot sizes and only regulates the further subdivision of land. For example, if the P&Z rezoned an area from the conventional R-3 District to the R-4 District, existing parcels of approximately 60,000 square feet in area would become non-conforming in size, and a property owner with sufficient land to create two 60,000 square foot lots might not have enough land to create two 85,000 square foot lots. If the P&Z rezoned the same area from a conventional R-3 District to a density-based R-4 District with a density of 0.38 d.u. per acre, it would not create non-conforming lots, since there would no longer be a minimum lot size, but that same property owner would still have insufficient land to create two building lots at the new lower density.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a developable land regulation can be used in conjunction with density-based zoning to subtract unbuildable areas from the development potential of a parcel before building lots are planned, thus minimizing development pressure on sensitive areas. By multiplying a density standard by only the developable acreage, a more environmentally sensitive development yield is achieved. As noted earlier, this process does not prevent the inclusion of environmentally sensitive areas in individual building lots, but there is no longer an incentive to do so in order to maximize development yield.

## Encourage Open Space Development Patterns

In the 2002 Townwide survey, the majority of residents were opposed to alternatives to large-lot residential development and allowing higher densities in sewered areas. One could speculate that residents are not necessarily opposed to the residential housing patterns but to the notion of allowing increased densities, which in turn can lead to more demand for services and higher taxes. Residents should be comforted in knowing that the system of density-based zoning, developable land regulations, and conservation development patterns outlined in this chapter are intended to allow alternative development patterns without increasing densities in the process. In fact, they could result in a gradual lowering of density by better protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

When density factors are used to determine the total number of housing units in a development, more attention can be paid to overall development patterns because there is less incentive to utilize entire parcels. A developer is free to design the development in a more environmentally sensitive manner, maximize profits by reducing necessary public improvements, and set aside additional open space as a result of the ability to reduce lot sizes.

Depending on soil conditions, the amount of additional open space preserved as a result of lot size reductions can be significant. For example, if half of a parcel is developable and the allowed density is tuned to create the equivalent

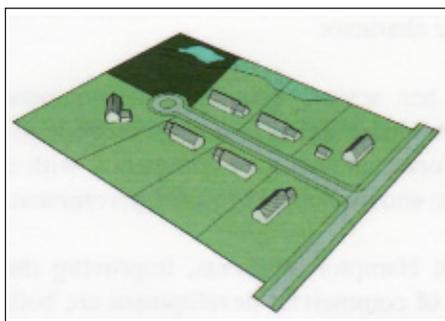
of two-acre lots, the maximum development yield could be achievable with one-acre lots located within half of the developable area, leaving as much as three-quarters of the property as open space.

Density-based zoning also relieves developers of the obligation to design a conventional subdivision for the sole purpose of determining the number of building lots in a conservation subdivision. The added cost of soil testing and engineering a conventional subdivision that the developer has no intention of building can be a major deterrent to developing conservation subdivisions.

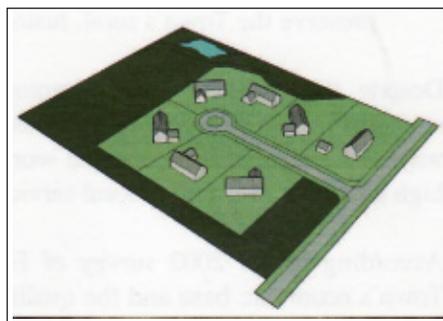
Outside of the sewer service area, soil conditions could also become a deterrent to conservation development patterns by necessitating large lots to accommodate wells and on-site septic systems. By allowing community septic systems, to be managed by the WPCA, more flexible development patterns could be accommodated outside of the sewer service area.

Another method of encouraging open space development patterns is to discourage conventional development patterns by permitting conservation subdivisions by right and requiring Special Use Permits for conventional subdivisions. The P&Z could then place the onus on a developer to show good cause as to why a conventional development is superior to a conservation development on a particular parcel.

The following figures illustrate the benefits of conservation subdivisions that utilize open space development patterns. The hypothetical conventional subdivision on the left would consume the entire road frontage; require a longer cul-de-sac; incorporate wetlands into two building lots, and set aside minimal open space in order to achieve seven lots and maximize profits. In contrast, the conservation subdivision on the right would achieve the same number of lots while preserving half of the road frontage; requiring a shorter cul-de-sac, encroaching on no wetlands, and preserving significantly more open space that is accessible from nearly every building lot.



**Conventional Subdivision**



**Conservation Subdivision**

### **Residential Growth Management Strategies**

1. Consider adopting a residential density-based zoning regulation.
2. Consider Special Use Permits for conventional subdivisions that maximize lot size (based on applicable density) while allowing conservation subdivisions by right.

*Economic development is an important issue in East Hampton, not only in terms of providing a diversified tax base, jobs and shopping opportunities, but from a community character stand-point as well.*

#### Survey Results

In the 2002 survey of East Hampton households, a majority of residents agreed with the following concepts:

Expand business zones (53%)

Encourage:

- Bed & Breakfasts (81%)
- Restaurants (77%)
- Retail shops (71%)
- Light industrial (71%)
- Corporate offices (60%)

Discourage:

- Mega stores (68%)
- Hotels/motels (66%)

## Guide To Appropriate Economic Development

East Hampton is predominantly a residential community with a light industrial tax base and limited, seasonal tourism activities. Principle businesses include botanical extraction, wire and steel fabrication, precision machining, cabinetry, bell and paper box manufacturing, forestry, and a growing base of small office/home offices (SOHO). East Hampton's non-residential development has historically occurred in the three historic centers of Cobalt, Middle Haddam, and East Hampton's Village Center. Within those centers, development has been concentrated primarily on the major state roadways such as Routes 16 and 196, and particularly along Route 66.

During the planning process, a number of economic development issues were identified including:

- properties zoned for economic development are limited by lack of sewer and water, access, conflicts with existing land uses, contaminants, and natural features;
- adaptive reuse, "incubator," and multi-use regulations have not been developed to encourage maximum reuse of vacant older industrial buildings in the Village Center;
- planning and zoning regulations have not been enacted to provide for concept planning or planned unit development;
- the 1990 Village Center Revitalization Study and 1995 Economic Development Strategy have only been partially implemented due to a lack of coordination and leadership, staffing, funding, and infrastructure;
- an industrial park feasibility study has not been completed in accordance with the Economic Development Strategy;
- the Town lacks specific architectural guidelines that would protect and reinforce East Hampton's distinct sense of place; and
- new and existing businesses looking to expand are challenged to reconcile economic growth and diversification with a desire to preserve the Town's rural, historic character.

Despite these issues, East Hampton has several economic development strengths including access to northeast markets; access to multiple state highways; an available and educated workforce; an attractive community with a high quality of life; quality local services; and the support of local government.

According to the 2002 survey of East Hampton residents, improving the Town's economic base and the quality of commercial development are both important issues. Some of the most frequent business related suggestions from the survey include:

- promoting shops/businesses,
- attracting better restaurants,
- attracting a larger grocery store,
- developing outlet/variety/specialty/gift/antique shops, and
- develop industrial/business base & water system.



## Attract and Retain Appropriate Businesses

With limited commercial/industrial land, lack of direct access to an interstate highway and rural location, East Hampton is not positioned to become a major business destination. However, this does not mean that the Town is without economic development potential. East Hampton needs to make the most of its economic potential by focusing on its strengths to attract and retain businesses.

### *Meet Residents' Everyday Shopping Needs*

Attracting and retaining small-scale retail and service businesses that meet residents everyday needs is a good way to generate tax revenue and improve residents' quality of life without compromising community character. The Economic Development Commission (EDC) can identify unmet goods and service needs and take steps to attract those businesses to East Hampton or grow them from within. Local ownership is preferable to regional or national entities that might undermine the Town's unique character with their ubiquitous corporate architecture.

### *Regulate Large-Scale "Big Box" Commercial Development*

Apart from a necessary grocery store to meet residents' everyday needs, large-scale or what are more commonly known as "big box" retail stores and large "strip malls" are often incompatible with rural small-town character and may be inappropriate for East Hampton's unique character. These types of developments require acres of parking; are an imposing presence on the landscape; generate significant traffic, stormwater runoff and police calls; and bring a sameness that can significantly undermine a community's unique identity.

In June 2004, the Connecticut Legislature passed and subsequently amended legislation, which prohibits commercial construction greater than 12,000 square feet within 2,000 feet of Lake Pocotopaug. Unless repealed, large-scale development in excess of 12,000 square feet will be significantly limited in the portion of East Hampton's business zones located within the boundary area. With the adoption of this Plan, this legislation as amended should no longer apply to East Hampton. With the approval of the new grocery store, the PZC should now consider placing more reasonable floor area limits on single retail establishments and shopping centers to allow modest retail development while discouraging further large-scale retail development.

### *Expand the Local Economy from Within*

Given East Hampton's attributes as a business location, attempting to attract major employers to town is not a good use of limited economic development resources. With much of the job growth in the U.S. economy occurring in small startup firms, East Hampton's best strategy is try to grow from within.

In today's wired, global economy, multi-million dollar businesses are being conducted out of residential dwellings. As businesses add employees and out-

## Survey Results

In the 2002 survey of East Hampton households, more than 70% of residents wanted more quality restaurants and retail shops (outlet / variety / specialty / gifts / antiques).

Residents also wanted a larger grocery store.

Conversely, 68% of residents disagreed with attracting "Mega Stores."



**Angelico's LakeHouse Restaurant  
on North Main Street**



**Paul's & Sandy's Too  
on Route 66**

## Survey Results

In the 2002 survey of East Hampton households, 81% agreed that the Town should encourage Bed and Breakfasts while 66% disagreed with encouraging motels and hotels.

## Tourism Benefits

Tourists are a market multiplier without placing demands on schools and only minimally affecting municipal services. As a market multiplier, tourism brings increased demand for services such as restaurants, arts and entertainment, and shopping, and can foster improvements to existing establishments competing for tourist dollars. As a result, East Hampton residents could get a broader selection of restaurants, sundries, and other services without waiting for population growth to drive improvements.

Additionally, tourism fosters aesthetic and other improvements in Town buildings, construction of attractive new buildings, and conservation of natural resources. To attract and hold tourists who seek a rural experience or a New England village getaway, business owners will strive to maintain and improve such things as the Village Center and service businesses along the High Street corridor, directly enlarging the grand list. Municipal leaders may also seek to eliminate evidence of economic blight characterized by abandoned and neglected buildings, equipment, and vehicles in tourist areas. Scenic natural areas will receive similar attention to keep them attractive.

grow the home environment, many owners will look to move locally rather than uproot their families. By protecting its community character and promoting home-based businesses, East Hampton can put its positive residential attributes to work by becoming an attractive place to live and start a business.

To promote home based businesses, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) should examine their home occupation regulations to ensure that they are flexible without compromising residential character in the process. A hierarchy of permits can be created to allow the most innocuous uses as of right while businesses that have limited employees, regular visitors or deliveries, or use hazardous materials (such as paint strippers) would require a higher level of scrutiny through Town Staff inspections and/or through Special Permits by the PZC. By registering all home based businesses, the Assessor can issue forms for home-based businesses to declare personal property used for the business and the EDC can keep better track of business activity in Town.

To help businesses remain competitive and grow, the EDC can play a proactive role by working with state and regional economic development agencies to act as a clearinghouse of information on available loans, training, and other programs available to small businesses; and to maintain a business visitation program to stay informed of the concerns and needs of the business community.

### *Consider Modest Expansion of Commercial and Industrial Development Areas*

With East Hampton's limited potential for new economic development, the Planning and Zoning Commission should consider modest expansions of existing commercial and industrial zones where appropriate due to available utilities, traffic capacity, and adequate buffers against incompatible uses and important resources. Any expansions should be reflected in the Future Land Use Plan in Chapter 6.

### *Expand the Local Tourist Economy*

The Connecticut State Office of Tourism estimates that as of 2005 the tourism industry has created 18,000 additional jobs in Connecticut since their 1992 initiative to promote the State as a tourist destination began. The tourism industry in Middlesex County alone employed 5,638 people and produced over \$30 million in state and local revenue in 1999.

Route 66 between Route 9 in Middletown and Route 2 in Marlborough has evolved into one of several scenic routes throughout the State that are frequented by tourists attracted by quaint historic villages, recreation opportunities and antique and gift shops that dot the highway. As a result, East Hampton has a burgeoning tourist economy with several antique stores, gift shops, and other businesses that take advantage of the Town's location and historic character. The Town also boasts two museums (Chatham Historical Society and the Goff House), Comstock covered bridge, and two historic districts (Middle Haddam and the Belltown Historic District).



East Hampton was an early twentieth-century discovery of New York tourists attracted by the Lake, clean air, and rural setting. Since the introduction of walleye in 2001 to control algae blooms, the Lake has earned a reputation as a productive productive fishery for the prized game fish. The small shops and antique stores in the Village Center have replaced quaint small-town stores, but the Town has retained the Center as a charming and productive place to shop. There are no longer any short-stay accommodations or attractions ring-ing the Lake as there once were, but the Economic Development Commission (EDC) is actively encouraging small-scale restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and country inns to recapture tourist dollars.

In addition to the Lake, residents and visitors also appreciate East Hampton’s ridgelines, wooded countryside, state parks and forests, and the Connecticut and Salmon Rivers. An enjoyable trail system highlighted by Airline East and West trails and Shenipsit trail in Meshomasic State Forest are easy and engag-ing for walks, runs, or recreational bike rides.

Currently, there is no golf course in East Hampton. Golfing not only provides recreation, exercise, and entertainment, but can also preserve open space, dis-place potential housing, provide tax revenue, and attract tourists who could patronize other businesses in town. Given the liberal use of fertilizers, pesti-cides and other chemicals needed to maintain a golf course, the Lake Pocotopaug watershed should be avoided in order to maintain water quality in the Lake. Residents are equally divided on whether attracting a golf course is a good idea for East Hampton.

Agricultural tourism is a growing segment of Connecticut’s tourist economy. While East Hampton’s Zoning Regulations currently allow agricultural activ-ities in residential areas, they should be examined from the perspective of allowing the kinds of commercial activities that Connecticut farmers are turn-ing to make small-scale farming viable. These activities might include orchards selling baked farm produce and handmade gifts; dairies selling homemade ice cream and other dairy products; wineries operating accessory restaurants to showcase their wines; and farmers creating corn mazes and offering hay or sleigh rides. Visitors attracted by agricultural tourism may linger in the area and spend time and money at shops, stores and restaurants, or stay over night if accommodations were made available. While limited in area due to East Hampton’s geology and topography, every two acres of farm-land that remain in productive use over time is one to two less houses that could be built and demand services.

To aid tourists in finding tourist destinations as well as public and other facil-ities, many towns are turning to “wayfinding signs” such as the East Hampton Village Center sign on Route 66. Good signage is vital to helping visitors establish where they are, welcoming them and directing them to places they will enjoy. East Hampton should investigate creating a uniform system of wayfinding signs to direct residents and tourists to these activities and destinations.

The Economic Development Commission suggests that East Hampton could benefit by having a volunteer board focusing on tourism. The board would

## Survey Results

In the 2002 survey of East Hampton households, 50% of residents surveyed agreed that attracting a golf course should be encouraged.



**Should East Hampton Attract a Golf Course?**



**Shops in East Hampton’s Village Center Attract Tourists**

answer to the Economic Development Commission but maintain strong ties to the Connecticut River Valley and Shoreline Visitors Councils, local merchants, as well as the Town's Conservation Commission and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

The function of the Board would be to promote East Hampton as a tourist destination; investigate and encourage new tourist enterprises; and help other volunteers groups organize and promote civic events (such as tournaments and festivals which make use of unique attractions like the lake).



Brooks Plaza on Route 66

### **Strategies to Encourage Appropriate Economic Development**

1. Seek to attract and encourage businesses that meet residents everyday needs.
2. Establish maximum floor areas for commercial development.
3. Promote home-based businesses and create a hierarchy of SOHO permits.
4. Institute a Business Visitation Program with the Economic Development Commission to keep informed of businesses concerns and needs.
5. Consider modest expansions of commercial and industrial zones where appropriate.
6. Consider attracting a golf course as a resident and tourist amenity.
7. Promote agricultural tourism by allow flexibility for accessory agricultural uses.
8. Investigate creating a system of "wayfinding" signs.
9. Consider creating a Tourism Board to help in the promotion of tourist related activities.

### **Improve the Appearance of Business Development**

In the 2002 townwide survey of East Hampton households, residents expressed concern about the appearance of businesses and protecting the rural small-town character of the Town. There are several tools available to the Town that can help improve the appearance of businesses and multi-family development while protecting East Hampton's unique community character.

#### *Implement Design Review*

In recent years, much of the commercial development occurring around the country can be characterized as strip development, catering to motorists and their vehicles while industrial development often consists of utilitarian metal buildings, juxtaposed against residential areas or located at gateways into the community. This type of development can undermine the community character that residents value so highly.

For those commercial and industrial locations outside of the villages, such as along Route 66, a Village District is not an option for controlling the appearance of development. Although lacking the power granted the PZC under a Village District, a separately appointed Design Review Committee can still help to improve the appearance of these outlying commercial and industrial areas.

Rather than adopt rigid zoning standards that must be adhered to, a Design Review Committee creates architectural and site design guidelines for businesses to follow in developing their properties. The Design Review Committee reviews applications for conformance with these voluntary guidelines and makes non-binding recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission based on their findings. While some might argue that this creates another layer of bureaucracy that discourages economic development, many communities have found the opposite to be true. Many businesses appreciate the clear design direction provided by such guidelines and the free advice of design professionals on the Committee that often improves the value of their businesses, as long as compliance is not unreasonably costly. They are also assured that businesses that follow will be held to similar standards, thus maintaining a high quality business environment and protecting their business investment.

While not bound by the design review process, existing businesses may be inspired (or shamed) into voluntarily making architectural and landscaping improvements to their properties in order to keep pace with new development, possibly triggering commercial gentrification throughout East Hampton.

*Provide Tax Incentives for Improving Businesses Properties*

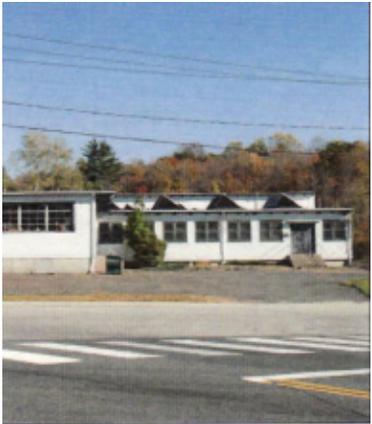
Once design guidelines are implemented, a sharp contrast between old and new commercial and industrial properties will become apparent. To facilitate the improvement of existing older properties, the Town can adopt a tax abatement program under Section 12-65 of the Connecticut General Statutes to abate the increase in assessment due to major building improvements over a seven-year period. These programs are a win-win situation for the business owners and towns. A town benefits from the elimination of blight, the improved appearance of business properties, and eventually reaps the reward of an improved tax base that might not otherwise have occurred without the program. Business owners are able to afford improvements without the immediate added sting of increased taxes as a result. Criteria would have to be established to ensure the program's effectiveness such as a minimum age of building, a minimum cost threshold, and design criteria such as adopted architectural design guidelines described above.

*Consider Adopting a Blighted Property Ordinance*

Many residents are concerned with the appearance of blighted commercial and industrial properties in town. Because creating and enforcing a blight ordinance is a cumbersome and time-consuming task for Town Staff that should not be taken lightly, the Town Council should assess the extent of the blight issue before considering adoption of a commercial blight ordinance. If the problem is limited, to a few properties, it could be more cost effective to work directly with the affected property owners and facilitate cleanup through such measures as providing roll-off dumpsters, waiving waste tipping fees, or coordinating removal of junk vehicles without titles through the Police Department.



**McDonald's on Route 66**



**Main Street**

## **Industrial Heritage Districts**

Both Canton and Stonington, CT have adopted flexible “Industrial Heritage District” regulations to allow for the adaptive reuse of historic mill properties in a manner that respects the architectural and historic integrity of the properties.

The Collinsville Company tool factory and the American Thread mill in each of the respective towns have both received approvals for master plans to allow for their mixed-use development including residential, retail, restaurant, and office uses.



**Old Mill on Skinner Street**

## *Improve Commercial and Industrial Development Standards*

Beyond the oftentimes-subjective nature of architectural design, there are more objective measures that the PZC can use to improve the quality and appearance of commercial and industrial development. The PZC should comprehensively review the Zoning Regulations to identify the standards that have allowed the type of development that residents are concerned with, and make modifications where necessary to ensure that future development is more compatible with the character of the community. Buffers, landscaping, lighting, parking, signage, and yards are all factors that can easily be modified to help mitigate the negative impacts of development. Specific recommendations for improving some of these standards can be found throughout this Plan.

### **Strategies to Improve the Appearance of Business Development**

1. Create a Design Review Committee to adopt and administer development guidelines to help improve the appearance of commercial/industrial development outside of the villages.
2. Create a tax abatement/incentive program to encourage exterior improvements to commercial/industrial buildings.
3. Investigate the need for a blight ordinance and adopt one if necessary.
4. Comprehensively review and modify the Zoning Regulations where necessary to ensure that future development is more compatible with the character of the community.

## **Allow the Adaptive Reuse of the Mills**

With limited land available for new economic development, the mills in the Village Center represent a significant piece of East Hampton’s overall economic development strategy. The mills are particularly well suited to supporting two economic development strategies: building upon the local tourist economy and growing the local economy from within. The location and character of the building makes it attractive as a tourist destination for antiques, gifts, art galleries and possibly dining. Historic mills throughout New England have been successfully put to use as antique shops, gift shops, furniture outlets and even luxury housing. Portions of one or more of the mills could also be used as incubator space for small businesses that have outgrown the home office or garage environment. Small professional offices, such as architects, engineers, and planners are often attracted to the quirky, historic spaces created within mill complexes.

Because of their historic nature as part of a walking mill village (lacking parking), flexibility will be required to adaptively reuse the mills. Flexible parking, area, bulk and other standards will be needed to allow the owners to retrofit properties that are non-conforming in so many ways by today’s zoning standards. A new design development district could:

- Allow sites to be comprehensively master planned for a variety of uses;
- establish reasonable standards that recognize the non-conforming nature of the properties and eliminate the need for variances; and
- protect architectural and historic character in return for design flexibility.

The beauty of such a design development district is that it can be extremely flexible, yet through a master planning process, can specify both allowed uses and standards at the time of a zone change. In doing so, it eliminates the leap of faith required when changing a conventional zone, where the owner or developer can later choose from a list of possible uses and seek variances to address the shortcomings of the site.

The Town should help property owners seek additional grant funding to help resolve environmental contamination issues in the Village Center. Grant funding can also be sought for municipal development, manufacturing assistance, local/regional financing or small business incentive programs to encourage investment and improve existing business profitability in conjunction with the East Hampton Village Center Brownfields Revitalization Initiative. A significant aspect of the initial EPA grant awarded to the Town will be a targeted Village Center property revitalization and redevelopment plan. This activity provides the initial steps in seeking additional funding.

### Mill Redevelopment Strategies

1. Consider a design development district for the East Hampton Village Center mill sites.
2. Complete a Village Center property revitalization and redevelopment plan using available EPA grant funds.
3. Help property owners and businesses seek additional sources of financing for environmental remediation, redevelopment and business startup costs.



Old Mills on Summit Street

### Reinforce the Villages

East Hampton's villages have been the focus of community life for hundreds of years. Churches, civic functions, shops, schools, factories, and shipyards were all located in the villages. Post World War II suburban expansion has shifted the focus away from the villages, with housing, industry and schools all becoming dispersed and more dependent on private motor vehicles.

### Adopt Village Districts

One area where the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) can have a profound impact on the appearance of commercial development is in its villages. All three villages have seen historic structures demolished, moved, and in some cases replaced by development that is out of character with the historic nature of the respective village.



### Village District Myths

*Village district designation will prohibit changes that affect the historic integrity of a property:* **False.**

Village districts are not local historic districts. Village districts often have architectural and site design standards intended to protect the character of the overall village but generally do not regulate many of the fine details that ensure historic accuracy and integrity.

*Village district designation will discourage any development or redevelopment of a property:* **False.**

Village districts will simply provide architectural and site design standards that will ensure that development is compatible with a village. Many developers and businesses appreciate clear standards that, if adhered to, will ensure an approval. However, corporate entities unwilling to modify the proposed design of their establishments to fit the character of the respective village could become discouraged.

*Village district designation can prevent the demolition of an historic structure:*

**False.** A separately enacted Demolition Delay Ordinance can delay the demolition of an historic structure for up to 90 days in order to explore alternatives to demolition such as purchasing the property or relocating the structure. If an existing building fits the architectural standards of the district, a developer could still demolish the building but would be required to replace it with a building that also fits the architectural standards, creating an incentive to adaptively reuse the existing building rather than demolish it.

## Sidewalk Standards

Sidewalks in the villages should be provided on both sides of major streets and at least one side of all other streets. Five foot widths allow pedestrians to walk side by side and comfortably pass. Sidewalks should be either integrated into curbs or separated by several feet to accommodate an area large enough for grass to thrive.

Coordinated streetscape elements such as lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and tree grates, can create an attractive, comfortable pedestrian environment and add significantly to community character and sense of place.

Burial of overhead utilities in these areas can also greatly enhance the streetscape by eliminating overhead wires and allowing the unimpeded growth of street trees.

Traditional zones have long been recognized as an imperfect tool for controlling the aesthetics of development, although through various means many communities have used them effectively nonetheless. With the recent passage of the Village District Act by the Connecticut Legislature, Planning and Zoning Commissions were finally given an effective tool regulating aesthetics, but only for protecting the character of established villages.

After defining the character of each village, the PZC can adopt separate and unique village districts with architectural and site design standards to ensure that new development reflects the most desirable attributes of each village. In doing so, East Hampton can welcome appropriate new business to a village and be assured that businesses will not detract from the character of the village or neighboring properties.

A village district might require buildings to be located close to the street and served by broad landscaped sidewalks, forcing parking to the side and rear of buildings. It might also allow zero lot lines so that multiple buildings can be attached in the traditional manner of a small downtown. Parking requirements could be reduced to acknowledge the availability of on-street parking.

Given the resistance that village districts have received in some Connecticut communities, the PZC should consider involving the public in village district workshops when formulating regulations in order to solicit public input, educate the public on their benefits, distinguish them from historic districts, and dispel any myths about them before attempting to adopt them. Unlike local historic districts, the PZC can unilaterally adopt village districts after conducting one of their typical zone change hearings, but reducing public opposition through education and involvement is still a wise decision.

### *Encourage Housing and Maintain Civic Functions in the Village Center*

Housing is a critical element of a successful and vibrant village center. Residents living in or near villages are less dependent on automobiles, patronize village businesses, and contribute to the vitality that makes villages attractive.

Age-restricted housing as well as congregate and assisted-living facilities, if desired, should be focused in or near the villages not only because of their symbiotic relationship with businesses and other village functions but also because of the possible availability of public water and sewer needed to serve them. While this obstacle can be overcome with community wells and septic systems, these solutions should not be used to allow alternative housing options to locate in remote locations such as the Design Development District (which is currently being targeted for active adult-housing), where older residents will be dependent on automobiles or dial-a-ride service to perform daily functions.

Mixed-use development is another way of adding to the vitality of a village. By allowing housing in combination with commercial businesses, business owners can live and work on the same premises or create affordable rental opportunities within walking distance of village services.

With Town Staff scattered across several buildings and sites in Town, any future expansion or relocation of Town Hall or other communitywide facility should consider relocating to the Village Center to reinforce its historic civic



function and generate business activity and add to the sense of place. By adding landscaping, a fountain, and park benches, the sense of place would be enhanced, encouraging people to stroll, gather, and linger in the Village Center.

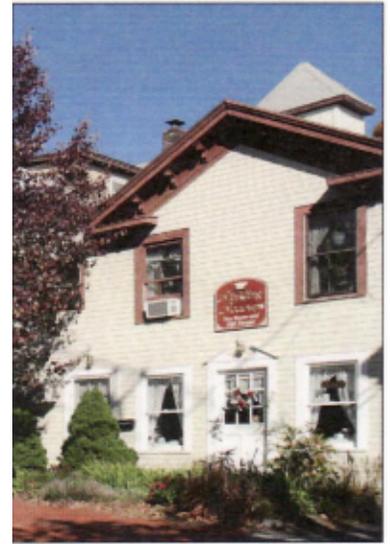
### *Create Walkable Villages*

Enhancing pedestrian access throughout all of the villages will add to community character and quality of life by reducing dependence on motor vehicles as well as promoting a healthier, more convenient environment for residents and tourists.

The Village Center already contains many of the elements needed to create a walkable village, such as appropriately sized sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, streetscape amenities such as shade trees, seating areas, and pedestrian scaled lighting. Many of these improvements can be expanded out to Route 66 as improvements are made or required as properties along the corridor are redeveloped.

The Town should capitalize on the research project completed by CCSU graduate students on developing an Airline Trail trailhead in the Village Center by seeking donations and/or grant funding. A trailhead would increase tourism and pedestrian activity in the Village Center and could also provide additional off-site parking for Village properties.

Burial of overhead utilities can significantly improve the pedestrian environment and overall character of the Village Center by removing unsightly utility poles from sidewalks and allowing for large street-trees that might otherwise interfere with the reliability of the utilities. The cost of burying existing overhead utilities can be prohibitive without grant funding through programs such as federal scenic byway or other non-traditional transportation grants.



**Unique Stores Are Attracting More People to the Village Center**



**The Joseph N. Goff House in the Village Center**



**Pedestrian Access in Village Center Key to Revitalization**

### *Implement Existing Village Plans*

The Village Center Revitalization Study, developed in 1990 by Betty Sanders MLA, ASLA and John Mullin, Ph.D., AICP for East Hampton Village Center, has only been partially implemented. Central Connecticut State University graduate students have subsequently developed another concept plan for the Village. Both studies should be reviewed, considered, and where still feasible, systematically implemented as originally intended.

#### **Village Reinforcement Strategies**

1. Adopt a Village District(s) to allow traditional village development patterns that emphasize small-scale, mixed-use, architecturally compatible development that emphasizes pedestrians over motor vehicles.
2. Encourage age-restricted and other alternative housing in and near the villages.
3. If necessary, consider relocating Town Hall and other community wide facilities to the Village Center.
4. Create walkable villages through sidewalk, safety, and streetscape improvements.
5. Consider creating a trailhead for access to the Airline Trail.
6. Seek grant funding to bury utilities as part of a streetscape improvement program for the Village Center and nearby portions Route 66.



**Stores in the Village Center Attract Tourists and Provide Goods and Services for East Hampton Residents**

