

Shoreham Hamlet Study Update 2005

DeLalio Sod Farm

The 2002 Shoreham Hamlet Study identified the last 150 acres of the DeLalio Sod Farm as “the most susceptible open space in the hamlet for residential development or conversion to public use, such as recreation” (p. 53) and called for a Planned Development District (PDD) to cover the entire area, which was segmented among several owners. The 2004 Update re-emphasized the importance of a unified, comprehensive approach to any future development of the site, declaring “The changes that have occurred in Shoreham since 2002 have only served to strengthen our original recommendation to create a Planned Development District” (p. 11). Since then, a Long Island developer has contracted to purchase the sod farm and has purchased the Tall Grass Golf Course. The golf course was not specifically identified in the 2002 Hamlet Study. However, to protect the community from development of this large area of open green space, the 2004 Update called for a change of zone from A1 Residence to Commercial Recreation. This zoning change has not happened, but in the meantime the developer has presented to the community a conceptual development plan that assumes a PDD (or similar integrated zoning approach) to cover both the sod farm and the golf course.

As in 2002 and 2004, we urge the Town to create a PDD for the sod farm. The longer that this is not done, the greater the risk that Shoreham will lose an opportunity to shape its own future. The golf course, either as a golf course or as public recreation or open space, is essential to the community’s vision for its future. The golf course could be included in the sod farm PDD if language is included that specifies that it continues to exist as publicly accessible green space. If a development plan retains it as a golf course, the Town should require a reverter clause that would ensure that the land be returned to the public in the event that the golf course were to fail. Any development plan under consideration must strive to minimize the financial impact on the Shoreham-Wading River School District, by minimizing the number of new students coming into the district and/or increasing the tax base. Approval of any development plan should also be contingent upon inclusion of covenants and restrictions, such as an architectural code, that are developed with the participation of the existing Shoreham community.

We have requested that the Town consider purchasing a portion of the sod farm for municipal use. The area, if acquired while a development application is on file, should be subtracted from the residential area, not the from any other open space or parkland area already incorporated in the development plan.

Tesla (Peerless Photo) Property

The intent of both the original Hamlet Study and the March 2004 Update was to make the Tesla (Peerless) property a public site focused on a science museum. We continue to recommend this option.

The 2002 Hamlet Study recommended that the northern part of the property be used for small housing units such as town homes, condominiums, and/or small single-family residences. The 2004 Update called for public ownership of the entire site, but indicated that some housing would be acceptable if circumstances dictated. It was suggested that the Tesla site could become the nucleus of a Shoreham town center.

With the increasing likelihood that some high-density housing will be built on the sod farm, some of which may be workforce housing, the desirability of the Tesla property for residential use is diminished. We strongly urge the Town to plan for acquisition of the Tesla property in its entirety, possibly in partnership with the County or some other agency or organization. The pace of development is also reducing the appropriateness

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of focusing a town center on the Tesla site. Its value as a cultural resource remains undiminished, and its direct connection to the future Rails for Trails on its northern boundary make it worth of public acquisition.

Bus Depot

The use of the Laidlaw Bus Depot property is inconsistent with the rest of the community. The 2002 Hamlet Study stated, “the Bus Depot should ensure that its operation fits the available area. Until the owner is able to relocate, the property should be buffered with trees and other landscaping; the buses should be serviced to eliminate noxious emissions, and access should be limited to the Miller Avenue gate” (p. 57). The situation is now becoming untenable. With growing population and increasing traffic, the location of the bus depot, an industrial facility in the heart of the Shoreham community, presents an increasing safety and environmental hazard. The Town should take whatever measures are available to force Laidlaw out of its current location. As recommended in the Hamlet Study, the property should then be rezoned “for a small professional office building or small specialty shops. This property would become part of the new commercial core and hamlet center of Shoreham” (p. 58).

The Triangle

The 2002 Hamlet Study recommended that this parcel be devoted to a 9/11 memorial park and garden. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) rejected this use. The 2004 Update made no new specific recommendation for the property. Because this site is in a transitional zone along Rte. 25A between the open areas along the Rocky Point Bypass and the small commercial area of Shoreham, we considered seeking its preservation as open space. However, the parcel is far from pristine. Instead, we recommend that it be used for a small professional/office building, one that would generate little traffic and be in keeping with residences in the immediate neighborhood. There should be no vehicular access to the property from Rte. 25A.

Route 25A Corridor

To date, all retail and professional development along Rte. 25A in Shoreham has occurred on the north side of the road. We reiterate our original recommendation that, with the exception of a PDD at the sod farm, the existing A1 Residence zoning on the south side remain as such. Any new commercial development in the community should be focused in a single compact area within the sod farm PDD, as near as possible to the existing shopping center. It should be noted that the continued presence of the bus depot at the Miller Avenue intersection makes this proximate location more difficult to achieve.

The question of traffic control along the corridor is increasingly problematic. In the 2004 Update we withdrew our earlier recommendation to add a traffic light at the Ridge Road intersection. The intersection is difficult for drivers on Ridge Road trying to turn west on Rte. 25A, but another light could adversely impact the flow of traffic on this poorly designed stretch of road. We remain ambivalent about the merits of a traffic light here. We urge the Town to apply whatever pressure it can on the NYSDOT to reconfigure the roadways at the east end of the Rocky Point Bypass, to time the existing lights to allow a reasonable period of time for left turns off Ridge Road, and to conduct periodic traffic studies to reconsider installation of a new traffic light.

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The Bluffs (Zoumas Property)

We reiterate our 2004 recommendation that the Town acquire the property known as the Bluffs at Shoreham for preservation as dedicated open space. Residents near the property have expressed concern about maintenance and security, and these concerns need to be directly addressed by the Town. Despite these concerns, 80 percent of respondents to a survey conducted by the two neighboring homeowners' associations indicated their preference to have the property preserved.

LIPA/KeySpan

The wooded KeySpan property remains a critical element in our vision for the future of Shoreham. We continue to endorse the key recommendations of the 2002 Hamlet Study for the wooded KeySpan property:

- Preserve the bluff area and a large portion of the surrounding property as a nature preserve (open space);
- Preserve broad wooded buffers on the margins of the property and between developed areas;
- Focus possible future development on clean energy research.

The Hamlet Study did not suggest a detailed land use plan for this property, nor are we prepared to do so now. New and pending development in Shoreham, Wading River, and neighboring communities comprise constantly changing planning and economic environments. Significant additional residential building, several large proposed retail areas, Stony Brook University's incubator in Calverton, and KeySpan's donation of hundreds of acres of open space and farmland in Jamesport will all influence the ultimate disposition of the Shoreham property. We call on the state, the county and the Town to work together now to preserve one of the last remaining large areas of open space on Long Island Sound.