



Town of Riverhead Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor



Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Step II Nomination

Public Open House Summary

May 20th 2014

On May 20th, 2014 the Town of Riverhead hosted an Open House at the Suffolk County Community College Culinary Arts and Hospitality Center as part of the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) grant project. The Open House was facilitated by project consultants Nelson, Pope & Voorhis (NP&V), Nelson & Pope (N&P), and Sustainable Long Island (SLI).

The Open House was the second community-wide public forum held as part of this project and follows a years-worth of research, analysis, Steering Committee meetings, presentations at Town Board work sessions, a community survey, and focus groups. The purpose of the Open House was to provide information about economic and market trends which will influence sustainable development in the study area, and for community members to help refine a community vision statement and to “Dare to Dream” - provide input on initial planning recommendations and possible concepts for redevelopment.

The Open House was designed to be flexible - two sessions were held, one from 3:00-5:00pm and one from 7:00-9:00pm, so that community members could participate as their schedules allowed. The space was set up with five different stations to talk with the Project Team and provide input. Stations were arranged so that participants could circulate throughout the room, participating in interactive activities, and engaging in dialogue with project team staff, Steering Committee members, and Town representatives. A brief orientation presentation was included in order to provide a synopsis of project steps and components to date, as well as an overview of the evening’s open house. Below is a description of each of the stations, activities, and types of input sought.



Figure 1 Participants reviewing display boards at Open House.

- **Overview: NYS BOA Program and Riverhead BOA Project:** A brief orientation slide presentation provided an update on the current status of the project and some of the major themes heard from community input thus far. Display boards provided an overview of the NYSDOS BOA program and of the Riverhead Peconic River/ Route 25 Corridor BOA project, and the status of the project.
- **Issues and Opportunities:** Participants were able to learn about and share their ideas about issues and opportunities within the study area using a map and comments on a flip chart.
- **Economic Market Trends:** Information about the economic analysis that took place. This project task aimed to understand who lives in or around Riverhead, who shops and visits Riverhead and how they





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spend their money while here, who does business in Riverhead, all to determine how much commercial and retail business the area can support. Participants were able to learn about the market trends that will influence redevelopment within the study area.

- **Community Vision:** An interactive activity that sought input to help decide on a community vision for the Peconic River/Route 25 Corridor BOA Study Area by voting on one of the three draft vision statements or submitting one of their own.
- **Alternative Development Scenarios and "Dare to Dream:"** Initial planning recommendations and possible concepts for redevelopment were presented and participants provided feedback and additional suggestions. Participants were then invited to "Dare to Dream" by sharing their own dreams for the future of Downtown Riverhead.

Below is a summary of the discussions that took place, the input received, and comments made at each station during the Open House.

NYS BOA Program and Riverhead BOA Project

These stations were largely informational and were designed to give participants a basic overview of the NYS Department of State (DOS) BOA program, including the phases of the program and major components of each phase. Another poster focused specifically on the Riverhead BOA project, showing a map of the study area and major milestones of the project to-date.

Issues and Opportunities

This station presented a map of the study area with different issue areas outlined, and potential opportunities for improvement given. Participants were asked to place a numbered sticker on the map where they felt opportunities for improvement existed and a corresponding sticker on a comment page where they could explain their idea for how the issue should be addressed. This informational station received a lot of good input. Many of the comments were directed toward improving transportation in the area, and making pedestrian navigation safer and easier. Participants stated that increased public transportation connections to areas of interest like banks, lodging, shopping, and dining establishments should be of primary concern. Customers to the Tanger outlets should also be provided better access to the downtown area and local restaurants, potentially through use of a shuttle service. Pedestrian access and safety were also commented upon, with participants stating that some sidewalks needed to be widened and leveled, and that signals and better marked crossings and signage should be implemented. Improved access to the river, and increased river oriented recreation and transportation services were emphasized as well, with an increased

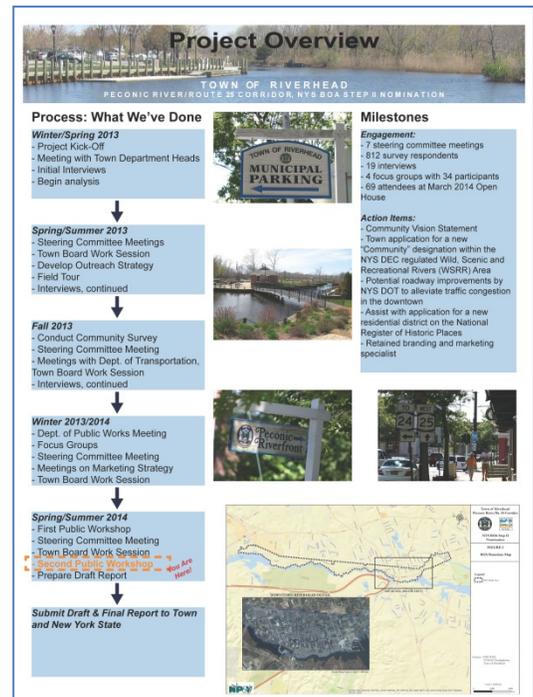


Figure 2 Project Overview display board.





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connection between businesses and the river walk also mentioned. Comments were also made about the desire for a small grocery store, coffee shop, mixed use buildings and apartments above stores, and a visitor's center to help increase awareness of local attractions.

Economic Market Trends

The Economic Market Trends station presented a synopsis of the types of information the Project Team is analyzing - who lives in Riverhead, who shops in Riverhead and how much they spend, who works or does business in Riverhead, and who visits - as well as some of the findings from the that analysis. This data is important to the BOA project, as it will impact future redevelopment projects within the study area. The data showed that in 2013, \$491,198,007 was spent on businesses found in a typical downtown within the primary market, or a 15 minute driving radius. Additionally, it was calculated that the Downtown Riverhead area can support an increase its retail and commercial space by 61,063 square feet by the year 2018.

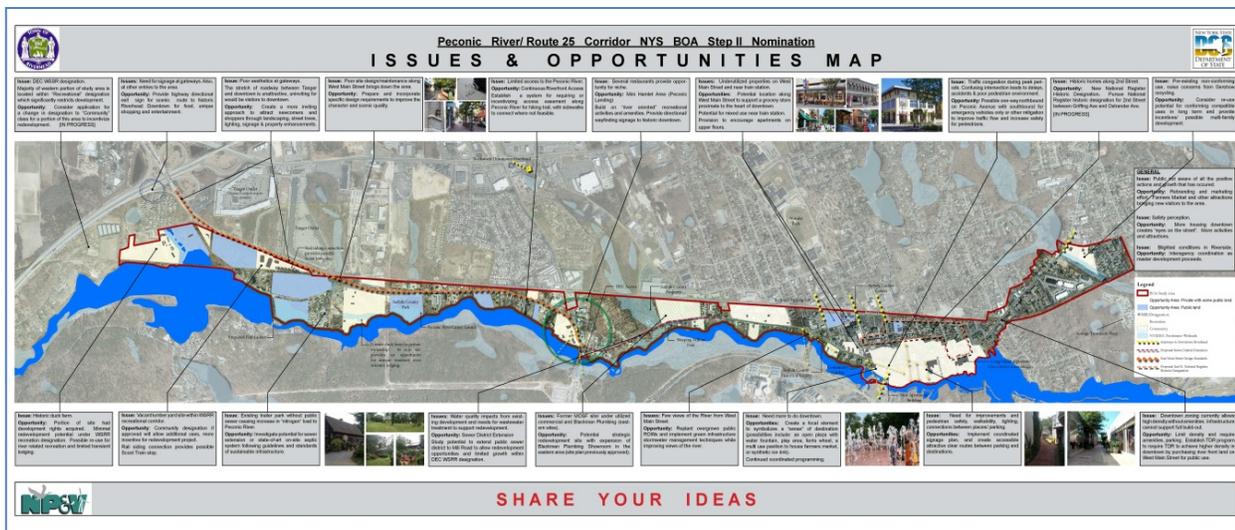


Figure 3 Issues and Opportunities Map Display Board

Community Vision

In this interactive activity the planning team sought input from participants to help decide on a vision statement for the Study Area. Three draft vision statements were prepared using input and feedback gathered from the survey that was conducted, the first public open house, and guidance from the project Steering Committee. Attendees were asked to consider what they wanted to see for the future of Riverhead and to vote on one of the three draft vision statements presented.





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Participants were also encouraged to comment on the draft vision statements or to submit one of their own. The most support was given for draft statements A and B. Comments about the statements included a desire for mention of the river, and a sense of community that is friendly, inclusive, and diverse. These results will be discussed with the Steering Committee in order to determine a final vision statement to be included in the nomination study.

Alternative Development Scenarios & 'Dare to Dream'

Over the course of the past several months, building upon input received through the community survey, interviews, meetings, and data analysis, the Project Team has begun to develop preliminary concepts for redevelopment that will strengthen downtown Riverhead. The first board presented preliminary ideas for numerous sites within the study area, based in part upon the size and current use of the parcels. Participants were asked to provide their preliminary ideas for these parcels and suggest potential alternative uses or redevelopments.

Building upon some of the most common suggestions heard throughout the course of the study, the Project Team also came up with three potential "big ideas" for redevelopment and sought to gauge reactions and input from participants. Attendees were then invited to "Dare to Dream" by sharing their own big ideas for the future of Downtown Riverhead on an index card. At this station, community members were shown three different areas of interest in the Riverhead BOA study and were presented with initial planning recommendations and possible concepts for redevelopment. For each of the locations participants were asked to review the concepts and provide input on the display board, indicating whether or not they agreed with the proposed plan.

The first concept was for the redevelopment of the riverfront area near Mill Road, with an emphasis on river oriented recreation. All participants in this activity stated that they would support the proposed concept, indicating that they thought preserving the water quality of the Peconic River was of the utmost importance, and that storm water management was also appropriate. Other comments indicated a desire for increased prevalence of river-friendly businesses like canoe rentals and riverfront restaurants, and also camping, or a hotel/visitors center would be a nice addition.

The second concept was for the redevelopment of Griffing Avenue and Main Street, with a grocery store and parking garage being the main concepts. All participants in this activity stated that they would support the proposed concept, commenting that parking garages are needed, and that a "smaller, quaint scale" grocery store would be ideal. Also noted was the desire to continue the river walk a farther distance and to create more



Help refine a vision statement for the Peconic River Corridor!

A vision statement is an **expression of your hopes for the future** of your community - it should clearly communicate the community's desired future.

Activity: Draft vision statements have been prepared using input and feedback gathered from the survey and first public Open House.
Review the three (3) statements below, consider what you want for the future of Riverhead, and **place a dot below the vision statement you prefer**. Or, **write your own** on an index card!

DRAFT A) Riverhead's historic downtown will be a **safe, inviting, clean and easily walkable** center of thriving local businesses, a variety of cultural arts, restaurants offering locally sourced products, and recreational activities all highlighting a picturesque riverfront that offers boating and fishing opportunities with accessible transit connections. Its county seat of government will be a focal point of legal, judicial, and government related business.

DRAFT B) Downtown Riverhead will be a bustling town center comprised of restaurants with locally sourced products, theater, arts, and a variety of thriving small businesses, all surrounding a safe, accessible and beautiful riverfront. Its historic charm will be a source of pride and the downtown will be a destination for recreational activities, concerts, and events and day-trips. The county seat of government is a hub of legal, financial and professional activity and there are convenient, seamless transit connections available.

DRAFT C) Riverhead is a regional destination with the county seat of government and a vibrant town center that serves as a hub for recreational activities and a gateway to the East End with easy, accessible, intermodal transportation options.

Figure 4 Community Vision Display Board





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storefronts and apartments along the river. One participant did however state that they would not like to see a parking garage on Main Street.

The third concept for redevelopment was the train station block, with the main focus being a coordinated mixed use concept involving a parking garage connected to a combined commercial and residential four story building. All participating community members were in favor of the proposed concept, stating that they would like to keep parking free of charge. Another idea for this area was a piazza like structure, with retail businesses and cafes, and something that would encourage the homeless to become more involved within the community.



Figure 5 “Dare to Dream” Activity

The final activity in this section invited participants to “Dare to Dream” by sharing their dream for the future of Downtown Riverhead on an index card. Ideas included wanting to see the river walk continued farther, camping areas, a speakers square, a youth hostel and other accommodations, and a bike box like at Huntington train station.

Next Steps

Input and information gathered during the Open House will be considered by the Project Team and Steering Committee, and incorporated into further revisions and additions to the Community Vision Statement and Alternative Redevelopment Scenarios which will ultimately become part of the draft Nomination, submitted to the Town and New York State for review.

