


Brookhaven 2030

Brookhaven's Comprehensive Plan  Planning the Future



ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES OUTREACH REPORT

PREPARED FOR:



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Table of Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Intergovernmental Interviews	1
	1.2 Brookhaven Town Fair	1
	1.3 Issues and Opportunities Workshops	2
2.0	RESULTS	4
	2.1 Community Character Results	4
	2.2 Community Development Results	6
	2.3 Transportation Results	7
	2.4 Infrastructure Results	8
3.0	CONCLUSION	10



1.0 INTRODUCTION



1.0 Introduction

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

In order to assess the community's interests and concerns and to help prioritize issues to be addressed in Brookhaven 2030, the Phase I Comprehensive Planning process began with an "Issues and Opportunities" outreach component, executed in three different modes:

Intergovernmental Interviews with Brookhaven Town Officials and Employees (August-September 2007)

Brookhaven Town Fair (September 8th and 9th 2007)

Issues and Opportunities Workshops (October 25th and November 13th, 2007)

1.1 INTERGOVERNMENTAL INTERVIEWS

Brookhaven 2030 Team Members conducted interviews with elected officials and key Town, Village, and County staff, and Chairs of Boards and Commissions to gain insight and understanding on particular issues and opportunities that should be addressed when planning for the Town's future.

BROOKHAVEN TOWN FAIR

The Town Fair marked the beginning of the public outreach process. People passing by the Brookhaven 2030 booth in the Town of Brookhaven tent, first asked to place a blue dot on the "Location Identification Map," to indicate where they live (Image 1). This helped the Brookhaven 2030 Team understand if the results of the following step were indicative of the many different Brookhaven communities.

Next, participants were faced with 16 ballot boxes representing the range of issues that must be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan, and given Brookopoly Bucks (\$500, \$200 and \$100) to vote with, thereby identifying and prioritizing these issues (Images 2-3). The ballot issues were grouped into Character Themes (Natural

Resources; Open Space and Recreational Resources; Historic, Cultural and Sacred Places and Resources; and Coastal Resources), Development Themes (Main Street Development; Transit Oriented Development; Residential Development; and Commercial and Industrial Development), Transportation Themes (Transit; Vehicular Road Networks; Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks; Maritime Networks) and Infrastructure Themes (Community Facilities and Services; Educational Facilities and Services; Piped Utilities; Wired and Wireless Facilities and Services).

Placing Brookopoly Bucks in a ballot box did not mean that participants were necessarily for or against any specific issue, but indicated the need for its careful consideration in Brookhaven 2030.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES WORKSHOPS

Finally, two interactive workshops were held, bringing together members of the Steering Committee, the Citizens' Assembly, and the public at large. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the public to the scope, goals, methodology, and schedule of the project; to assess the community's interests and concerns; and to help prioritize issues.

Attendees participated in two activities. First, in "The Best and Least of Brookhaven" participants each placed a blue dot on the "Location Identification Map" indicating where they live, and three green dots on the "Best of Brookhaven Map" and three red dots on the "Least of Brookhaven Map" (see images 4-8), to indicate positive or negative areas or aspects of the Town. Comment cards were used to further describe their three best's and least's, and placed in a ballot box. Next, attendees participated in the Brookopoly exercise, once again using Brookopoly Bucks to vote for broad topics to address in the Plan



Image 1: Citizens at the Town Fair place blue dots on the "Location Identification Map" to indicate where they live and to show the distribution and range of participants.



Image 2: Participants prioritize issues to be addressed in Comprehensive Plan 2030.



Image 3: Participants in "Brookopoly" were faced with sixteen ballot boxes representing issues that must be addressed in the development of Comprehensive Plan 2030.

Later in the workshop, the “Location Identification,” “Best of” and “Least of” maps were brought to the front of the room and a Brookhaven 2030 team member pointed out the distribution of the population in attendance and gathered feedback on the major concentrations of red and green dots. The Brookopoly ballot boxes were tabulated and the results were presented and discussed.

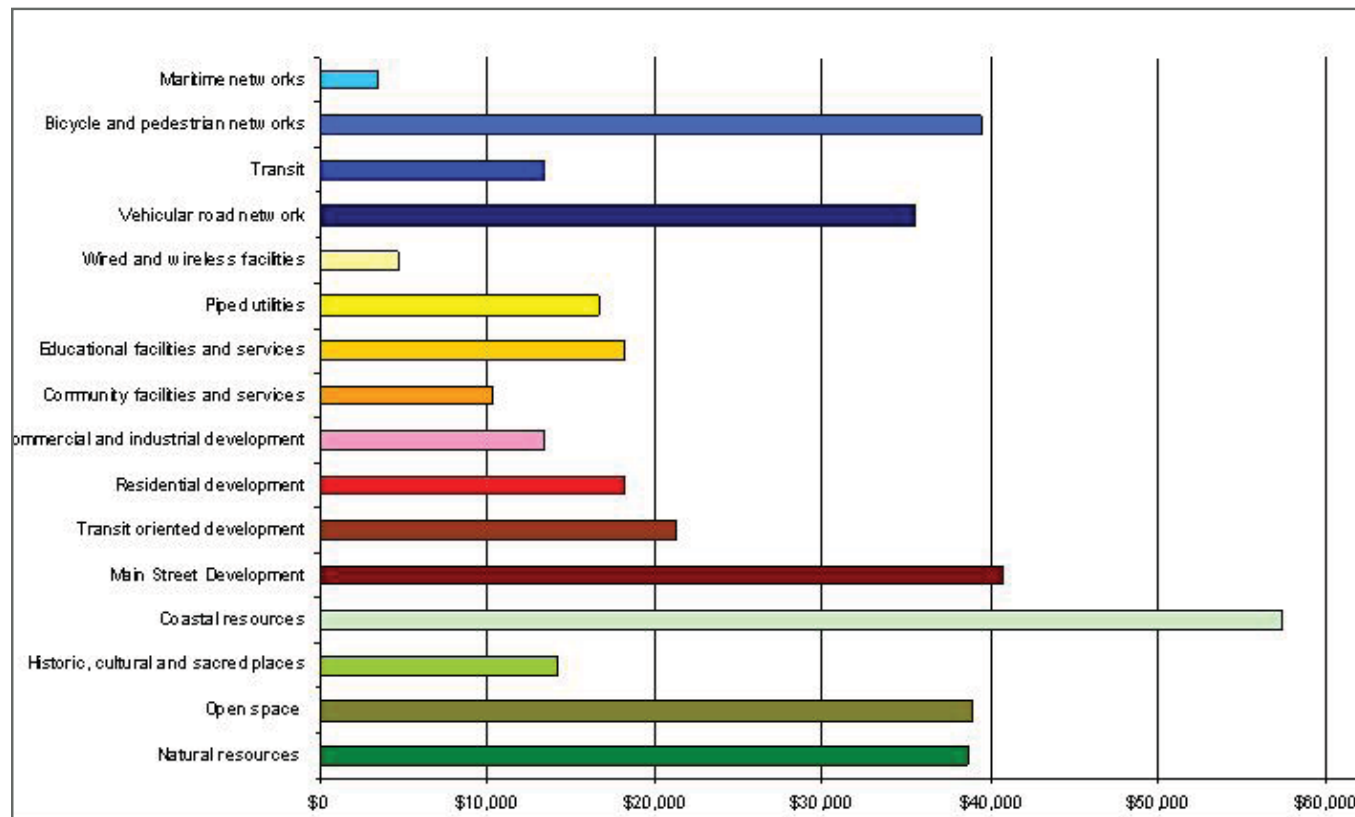


Figure 3-1: Brookopoly Bucks Results
The composite results from the Town Fair and both Issues and Opportunities Workshops show that Coastal Resources and Main Street Development are the top two issues according to Town stakeholders.



Images 4-8: Workshop participants place Brookopoly Bucks in ballot boxes, indicate the “Best and Least” of Brookhaven by placing green and red dots on maps and discuss the results with a Brookhaven 2030 Team Member.

2 . 0 R E S U L T S



2.0 Results

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The interviews, votes, comment cards, and discussions generated through the “Issues and Opportunities” outreach events produced valuable information on cherished resources, conflicting issues, places and matters of pride and concern, and goals for the future. The results, compiled from the input of over five hundred Brookhaven stakeholders, including the Brookhaven 2030 Steering Committee, residents, merchants, town employees and officials from a wide range of communities, are presented below.

2.1 COMMUNITY CHARACTER RESULTS: Protection of Coastal, Inland and Ground Water Resources

Participants in the Issues and Opportunities outreach process decisively indicated the need to preserve and protect their water resources. This includes coastal resources such as the Long Island Sound and the Great South Bay; shoreline beaches such as Cedar Beach, Shoreham Beach, Fire Island National Seashore and West Meadow Beach; inland water resources as the Peconic River, Forge River, Flax Pond, Lake Ronkonkoma, Carman’s River and scattered wetlands; and ground water resources and recharge zones.

Comments suggested that all of these resources face pressures compromising their ecological health and conflicting with the community’s cultural values. Stakeholders often requested that the tranquil, natural character of the shoreline be protected from development that threatens to “harden” the shoreline. More specifically, Fire Island National Seashore was frequently highlighted as an important resource to shelter from development impacts. Comments indicate

that the Island’s ecological needs, dynamic processes and the historic and cultural significance must all be complementarily addressed.

Participants pointed out that all of these water resources face degraded quality due to various factors such as polluted stormwater runoff; absence of a coordinated stormwater plan; existing and pending developments over groundwater recharge zones; and the poor drainage, lack of sewers and high water table in the low-lying, high density residential areas of Shirley and Mastic. Other human actions, such as bulkheads, a proposed liquid natural gas facility and development on bluffs hindering beach replenishment, were cited as other issues compromising the viability of coastal resources. With over 20 watersheds in the region, some stakeholders point out the opportunity for using watershed plans to coordinate infrastructure planning and improvements.

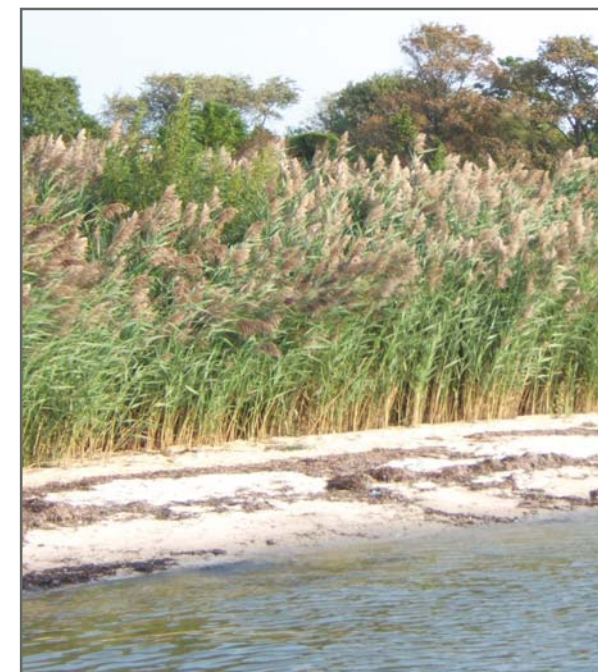
Stakeholders also indicated their enjoyment in utilizing water resources for an array of active and passive recreational opportunities, such as kayaking, boating, fishing and surfing; however many noted the need for improved access to these resources. Comments indicated that marinas are succumbing to residential development, although marina redevelopment may provide economic development opportunities.

Protection of Natural Resources

Numerous participants recognized the importance of protecting, maintaining and restoring the Town’s natural resources, citing satisfaction with the air quality, concern over water quality, climate change and habitat fragmentation, and the need to protect scattered woodlands and the Pine Barrens.



Map 1: The “Location Identification Map” shows the distribution of the 500+ Issues and Opportunities participants.



Images 10-11: Brookhaven stakeholders value their coastal resources from a cultural, recreational and ecological perspective.

Conflicts between local wildlife and residents are increasing as deer, birds and other wild animals lose their natural habitat to development and travel through residential zones to find food or reach other patches of land. Acquiring key areas including the Pine Barrens and the ecologically diverse and sensitive Overton Preserve, are seen as key action towards the protection of all natural resources. Some stakeholders also believe a carrying capacity analysis is necessary to protect ecological and public health, safety and welfare as the Town continues to grow.

Climate change is a significant issue for Brookhaven stakeholders. This great threat is anticipated to result in additional precipitation, thereby producing more polluted stormwater runoff and adverse affects on water quality. Furthermore, the increasing quantity and intensity of storms associated with climate change poses a great danger to both the inland and coastal communities of Brookhaven. Climate change may also compromise the natural processes and ability of some local plant species and wildlife to survive in the region.

There is some concern over how development is changing the natural geography of the land and thereby affecting the natural, dynamic processes of nature and the community’s character. For instance, development on bluffs is affecting beach replenishment. Additionally, a few participants indicated that light pollution, from excessive or unshielded outdoor lighting, also affects natural processes and community character, and should be addressed through “Dark Sky” initiatives.

Preservation of Open Space

Results showed that another top priority for Issues and Opportunities stakeholders is the need to preserve open space for the protection of the Town’s character;

historic, cultural and natural resources; and recreational opportunities. However, participants questioned: How can we pay for preservation as development pressures ensue?

Comments indicated satisfaction over permanently preserved open space that exists scattered throughout the Town of Brookhaven such as The Wertheim Wildlife Preserve, Bald Hill, portions of the Pine Barrens, various ball-fields, golf courses, playgrounds, horse riding facilities, and parks such as Southaven, Smithtown, and Davis Park. However, stakeholders are concerned about the large amount of unpreserved, undeveloped land that still exists, including:

- The 1000 acres Keyspan-Soreham property;
- Overton Preserve;
- AVR Realty Property in Ridge; and
- 500 acres of agricultural land near Exit 69 in Manorville.

Participants indicated that more parks are needed, especially in Manorville and Port Jefferson Station, and the need for greater access to open space and recreational opportunities, especially through a pedestrian and bicycle friendly trail system. Feedback indicated the importance of developing a network of open space accessible to any resident through a short walk or bicycle ride. Such a network would also help address other “issues” including habitat fragmentation and the need to protect local wild life such as deer, birds and other wild animals.

Maintaining a Sense of Place

With fifty-two hamlets and eight villages, participants acknowledged that Brookhaven is a diverse region, from its geography to its population, and their comments indicated that no one adjective can accurately describe the Town’s character or “sense of place.” Many



Images 12: Natural resources and open space should be preserved and protected.



Image 13: Downtown Port Jefferson serves as an example of the type of Main Street participants would like to see encouraged and developed throughout Brookhaven hamlets.

residents pointed out the “small town feel,” others cited the “rural character,” and still others penned the beauty and tranquility of the coast as composing their community’s unique sense of place.

A commonly cited issue was that overdevelopment or poorly planned developments are compromising the individual character, history and culture of rural and coastal communities throughout the Town. Comments further describing this threat include the conversion of former agricultural lands to subdivided, oversized “McMansion” homes, degradation of coastal and inland water resources, the loss of farm stands, sprawling development patterns and the lining of rural and historic transportation corridors with strip malls.

2.2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESULTS:

Supporting Main Street Development

Brookhaven stakeholders tend to agree that Patchogue, Port Jefferson, and Stony Brook serve as model downtowns (Image 13), providing pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use districts for community members to gather and socialize. While comment cards indicated that every hamlet throughout Brookhaven should have a “Main Street,” it was suggested that communities such as Center Moriches, Manorville, Gordon Heights and North Bellport would provide prime opportunities. Comments indicated that the Town should use incentives to support this type of development which would incorporate a mix of uses, such as shopping, restaurants, retail, and affordable housing, with a higher density, vertical component as compared to traditional residential and commercial development. They also suggest utilizing existing planning studies such as the Rocky Point Vision Plan, the Gordon Heights Vision Plan and the Middle Country Road Vision Plan, for guidance.

Promoting Transit Oriented Development

Comments emphasized the importance of creating transit-oriented developments surrounding Brookhaven’s Long Island Railroad stations, including those in Port Jefferson Station, Patchogue, Ronkonkoma, Bellport, Medford, Mastic and Yaphank. This vibrant, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use type of development would offer easy access to local amenities and the greater region, while minimizing automobile dependency, resulting in a more convenient, efficient, economical and environmental friendly commute and life-style.

Residential Development: Diversity, Form, and Location

Many stakeholders indicated dissatisfaction at the prevalence of sprawling, unplanned residential development. Comments criticized these developments for building homes that are “homogenized,” oversized “McMansions” compromising the community’s “sense of place,” yet not fulfilling the housing variety needed for the residents’ diverse lifestyles, such as senior, affordable, multi-family and rental housing. Feedback suggested that while housing should be provided for all, housing types should not be segregated. Seniors, families, singles, market rate and affordable housing units should be mixed in order to create strong communities where citizens can grow and learn from each other. These diverse residential needs must be balanced with other, conflicting “issues.” For instance, some participants complain that rental housing often means “absentee” landlords who don’t properly maintain their properties.

A key residential development “issue” was the provision of affordable housing. Participants questioned the definition of “affordable,” pointing out that many seniors and workforce households fall



Images 14-16: Stakeholders are concerned about the character of new residential and commercial development.

below the required income. Fearing a “brain drain,” stakeholders pointed out the risk of losing the young college-educated population because they can’t afford to stay in the Town. Some participants expressed their concern over the County plan to provide affordable housing near the Yaphank Correctional Facility, while others suggested Rocky Point, Yaphank and Manorville might be prime areas for the consideration of residential development.

Stakeholders indicated some preference towards preserving community character from both an ecological and cultural standpoint through infill opportunities and brownfield redevelopment in communities such as Patchogue, Holbrook, Bellport and Ronkonkoma. Others suggested employing higher density, compact development to preserve open space. Residential developments should maintain or promote sensitivity to groundwater recharge zones, as discussed previously in the “Protection of Coastal, Inland Water and Ground Water Resources” section, and address public health and water quality issues in existing residential areas that lack sewers. Furthermore, there is concern over how natural processes such as rising sea level will affect low-lying coastal communities.

Character and Location of Commercial and Industrial Development

As apparent from the “Least of Brookhaven” board (Maps 2-3), a large number of Issues and Opportunities participants noted their distaste for the strip malls and “big box” stores found along a number of transportation corridors, especially along Montauk Highway (CR 80) and the southern portion of William Floyd Parkway (CR 46) in Shirley and Mastic; along Middle Country Road (Route 25) through Centereach, Selden, Coram, Gordon Heights and Middle Island; and along Nesconset Highway (Route 347). Participants pointed

out that these commercial corridors are dangerous due to the high volume of traffic and do not properly reflect the desired community character. Stakeholders would prefer to see more mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly developments and the revitalization of existing downtowns. Corridor studies, integrating transportation and land use planning to evaluate issues, determine goals, and set forth guidelines to reinforce the desired community character along many of these roads have been conducted or are underway and should be utilized in the Brookhaven 2030 planning process.

Some participants indicated that the Town of Brookhaven must also determine the appropriate siting for industrial uses. Waste management concerns stakeholders residing in Manorville and Yaphank, as there are many compost facilities in these communities. Other Town residents felt large sand mines, including one in Middle Island, need to be addressed. Conflicting opinions towards industrial development are also apparent, as some stakeholders feel the Long Island Expressway and Long Island Rail Road corridors should maintain and promote industrial uses, yet others feel these spaces should be “green” corridors linking a network of open space.

Whether a residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use development, participants agreed that developers need to create stronger site plans, which preserves open space, and displays sensitivity to the community’s character and eco-system by building without clear cutting the site. Many stakeholders stressed the importance of developing sustainable communities which balance economic development, social needs and environmental protection, utilizing green building practices and alternative energy sources, as opposed to the “wrong



Images 17-18: Participants indicated the need for better bicycle and walking trails, as well as protection of marinas and harbors.

type of development.” Comments cards and discussions also indicated conflicting opinions over the Tall Grass development proposal, which involves the conversion of the 320-acre sod farm and golf course into residential units, commercial property and ball fields.

2.3 TRANSPORTATION RESULTS:

Safe and Flexible Vehicular Networks

While many residents value the Town’s prime location which provides access to the best of both worlds – New York City and the East End of the Island, a large number of participants indicated traffic and congestion as problematic. Coordination between State, County and Local roads is necessary but regarded as a hindrance to planning and implementation, as the lack of cooperation often slows down the process.

There is some concern over safety issues in residential zones, including speeding and commercial traffic on neighborhood streets. Participants believe design restrictions result in a lack of flexibility and safety issues. Suggestions also indicated the need for a formal access

management policy and plan. New subdivisions are viewed as disconnected from the greater community, as there tends to be only one vehicular access point and the presence of cul-de-sacs in new and old subdivisions also causes community disconnect. Some residents would like to see the construction of “tap streets” to connect subdivisions, and await construction of “paper streets” that were planned but never built.

Transportation planning should consider historic and cultural issues, as well as community-based plans and visioning studies. Participants value the existing tree-lined streets and would like to see them preserved and used as a model for future corridor development. William Floyd Parkway also has historic significance, and stakeholders see the opportunity for this corridor to undergo enhancement and re-development as a gateway to Fire Island National Seashore.

Provision of a Bicycle and Pedestrian System

Numerous participants expressed strong interest in a bicycle and pedestrian network, believing it is

progressive and healthy form of transportation. They feel all communities should be able to access open space in minutes through a pedestrian/bicycle trail, but currently there are few connections. These advocates suggest producing an inventory and assessment of current infrastructure, including open space along highways, to implement a multi-modal trail system.

Many comments indicated that Brookhaven is not bicycle and pedestrian friendly, but dangerous in many places, even in interior neighborhoods. Stakeholders complained about the lack of sidewalks throughout the Town, but others argue that providing sidewalks would compromise the rural character of many Town roads. Suggestions indicated that the “Safe Routes to School Program” can serve as a funding source for implementing sidewalks and traffic calming. These stakeholders noted that the community needs better crosswalks, signs and markings, designated trails and sidewalks.

Expansion of the Transit Network

Participants are appreciative of their close proximity to New York City but feel the travel time through the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) is too long. They also feel bus and rail service is insufficient in its capacity and extent. Comments indicate the need for complete electrification of the rail system, larger platforms, cross-island transit and more frequent trips. Stakeholders on the North Shore would like to see the LIRR extended beyond Port Jefferson.

Protect Maritime Networks

Stakeholders like traveling to Connecticut and other parts of the Island by ferry. There was concern that marinas are succumbing to residential development and should be preserved and protected, possibly through a marina overlay district. Others suggested that ferries,

marinas and harbors should be carefully regarded for economic development possibilities in Brookhaven communities.

2.3 INFRASTRUCTURE RESULTS:

Expanding Community Facilities and Services

As development continues and population increases, participants noted that more community resources are needed to address rising crime, expand library facilities, provide more community centers and to ensure that the volunteer fire departments are adequately funded and staffed. Participants also indicated that the Town is lacking a Recreation Plan to coordinate recreational needs and responsibilities of the public and groups that use them, and that public spaces need better maintenance and upkeep

Feelings are mixed over the responsiveness of Town government. Many comments indicated that the Town ignores the community’s needs while some participants did express satisfaction at the community outreach process. Comments also criticized a slow permitting process, poor code enforcement and zoning, conflict between council districts and a lack of progress on planning issues despite the abundance of studies and high taxes.

Educational facilities

There were few comments on educational facilities. Generally, participants agreed that institutions of higher education, such as SUNY Stony Brook are beneficial to the community, and expressed satisfaction with the local schools, despite the indication of some friction and a lack of diversity between school districts.

Piped Facilities

As discussed throughout this summary, a principal



Images 19-22: With population anticipated to increase by 90,000 over the next 30 years, Brookhaven will need to improve and expand existing infrastructure including, piped, wired and educational facilities.

issue for many participants is the lack of sewers in the low-lying, high-density residential areas. These residences sit above soils with poor drainage and a high water table, consequently compromising the health and viability of the local eco-system, groundwater and residents. Centralized sewage plants are needed for new and existing developments instead of numerous cesspools that are implemented in a piecemeal fashion. Furthermore, sewage treatment plants should utilize environmentally appropriate systems. In the absence of a sewer

system, some participants suggest sewage undergo tertiary treatment.

Wired and Wireless Facilities

There were few comments on this topic, however, participants suggested new utilities should be built underground, and expressed interest in having more wireless service, especially in Town Hall.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

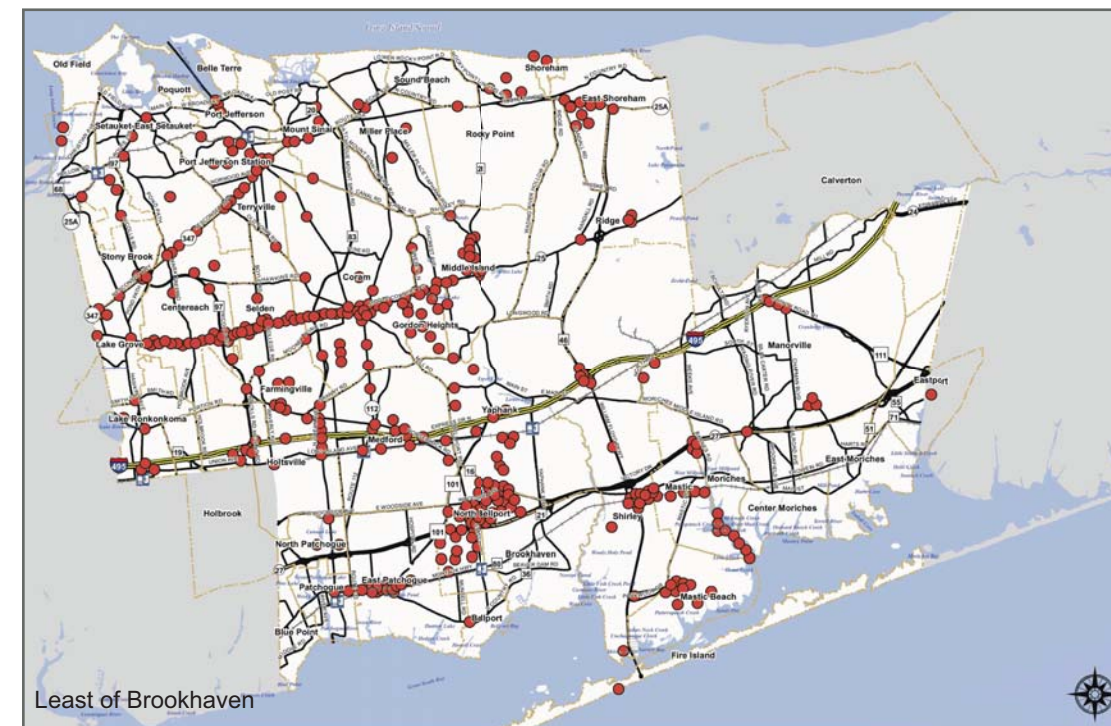
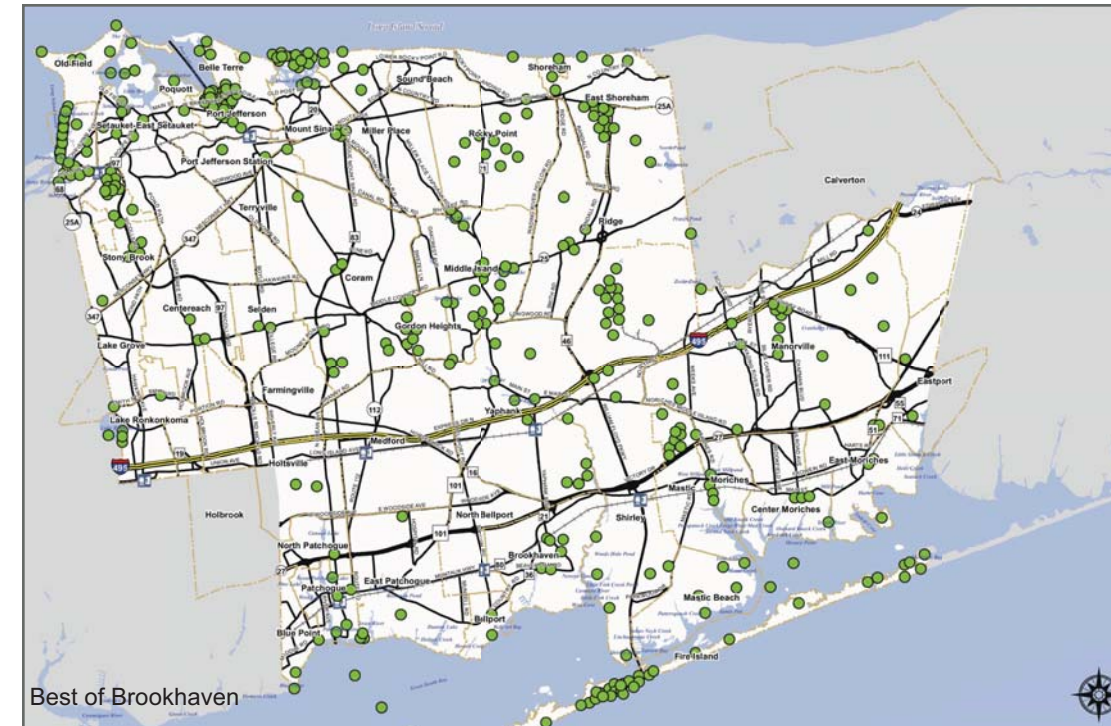


3.0 Conclusions

With over five hundred stakeholders representing communities from all over the Town of Brookhaven participating, the Issues and Opportunities outreach process provided a useful means of determining the community's top interests and concerns. While the Brookhaven 2030 team recognizes that this data collection was a casual means of analysis and is not an exhaustive look at all the issues that must be regarded in the development of the Plan, it has helped us to prioritize issues to be addressed. Below are six broad goals, extracted from this summary, that reflect the most important issues to participating stakeholders:

1. Protect Coastal, Inland Water, Ground Water and Natural Resources
2. Preserve Open Space and Community Character
3. Promote Main Street and Transit Oriented Development
4. Supply Diverse Housing Opportunities
5. Provide a Multi-Modal, Safe and Flexible Transportation Network
6. Expand Community Facilities and Services

The means of achieving these goals has not yet been determined, and as discussed throughout this summary, many conflicting values and issues need to be addressed. Stakeholder support and participation throughout the Brookhaven 2030 process will continue to serve as an invaluable tool for working out a shared vision and approach for Brookhaven's future.



Maps 2-3: Stakeholders indicated the "Best and Least" places and aspects of Brookhaven using green and red dots.