

VI.

BARRIER BEACH AND SHINNECOCK BAY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This element of the Master Plan is shared with the Town of Southampton's Master Plan. The particular significance of this Development Plan lies in the fact that the unique environmental qualities of the barrier beach and Shinnecock Bay area of the Southampton Community is as yet largely unspoiled by man. As already noted, its values are not limited to scenic beauty and recreation. They include high productivity as a nursery for the fisheries and a bedding place for shellfish, protection of the main land from the full impact of coastal storms, and broad benefits to the entire community's social and economic welfare. Further, since the components of this environmental complex are also found individually and in less dramatic grouping in other parts of the community, the findings of this Development Plan will also be applicable in those situations.

Four distinct components should be recognized in considering this environmental complex, the interplay between its components and man's relationship to each component as well as to the whole: the ocean and beach, the dune lands, the tidal marshes, and the bays and estuaries. Beyond these are the uplands of the main land.

Development controls and use regulations should vary according to the characteristics of each component. In the Town of Southampton the promulgation of such controls and regulations, their administration and enforcement are shared by the Town Board and the Board of Trustees of the Freeholders and the Commonalty. Cooperation between these two public bodies, as well as those on other levels of government concerned with the natural environment, will be a key factor in establishing effective implementation of this Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay Development Plan.

CONFLICTING, YET INTERLOCKING INTERESTS

The immediate enjoyment and material benefit to be derived from scenic beauty and environmental resources are apt to be isolated experiences for men at a particular observation point in time. Yet nature is constantly at work creating such values and providing relatively unheralded supporting services for the human community which are even more important. These values and

services are found in the barrier beach and bay complex. However, with population growth and increased urbanization on Long Island, the conflicting interaction of the many diverse human interest groups with one another and with nature has reached critical proportions. One instance that can be cited is the growing interest in recreational boating. Its impact on the tidal marshes, bays and estuaries will be much like that of automobiles and other vehicles on the upland landscape. This comes about in several typical ways. Power boats take their toll in the shallow waters of the bays and estuaries, where the flushing action of the tide is weak, through oil and waste discharges and wave action. Boating interest also generates requests for dredging and bulkheading which may be particularly destructive of the environment. Yet boatmen obviously enjoy unspoiled marine scenery, swimming and fishing, among other things.

In much the same manner, although the beaches are attractive to many bathers, surf fishermen and others because of their spaciousness and serene beauty, their popularity leads to ever increasing attendance at those beaches. The resultant crowding, whether it be pedestrian or vehicular or residential, eventually lessens the attractiveness of the beach. In fact, it may cause instability in the natural environment and destroy its effectiveness for all purposes. This is especially true on the dune lands since their vegetation, which is so important in stabilizing the blowing sands and resisting wave action, is highly vulnerable to trampling and digging. These same plants also depend on the fresh water ground reservoir found under those porous sands. Their survival is further threatened by development that increases surface water runoff to the ocean or bay; that draws down the water table through pumping, possibly causing salt water intrusion, and that causes other forms of pollution. Finally, man in seeking to capture the environmental values through development attempts to structure the barrier beach terrain in a fixed pattern to serve his needs. However, the fact is that the barrier beach is by nature a fragile, everchanging terrain. The United States Army Corps of Engineers has documented the many times that hurricanes and tropical storms have taken a heavy toll in property damage and human lives. Typically, over the course of history, new inlets have been formed and the dunes have been broken through. These experiences raise the serious question of costs involved in sustaining development on the barrier beach aside from those connected with property damage and loss of life. Yet the attractiveness of the barrier beach to mankind cannot be denied.

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Development of the lands described as the Dune Land-Tidal Marsh-Beaches Association by the Department of Agriculture's Soils Conservation Service has attracted considerable interest for both residential and business purposes. In discussing the performance of these soils with respect to selected development characteristics, they note that Dune Land has moderate limitations relative to its suitability for sewage effluent disposal; variable suitability for homesites, streets and parking lots; and severe limitations relative to its suitability for supporting lawns and landscaping. Tidal Marsh and Beaches are considered to be severely limited with respect to all such uses. Further, it was noted that Tidal Marsh is well suited for development as a wetlands - waterfowl habitat. Thus, it may be concluded that, aside from the more complex interrelationships involved, development on the dunes would be subject to some restraints from the standpoint of soils alone and that development of the tidal marshes should be of a very low intensity. These soil qualities, taken in conjunction with all the other various aspects of the barrier beach and bay environmental complex, underscore the need for serious concern over the conflict between development and the natural environment.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In preparing the Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay Development Plan consideration was given to the various community purposes to which this area might be committed in the future and how they could be compatibly related to the four environmental components. From this, certain conclusions and policies will be drawn in the following section of this report.

A fundamental premise of this Development Plan is that there are a sufficient number of persons in the community who, realizing the great importance of this environmental complex and its ecosystems, will support a plan designed to preserve essential resources for the benefit of all. In essence this calls for the maintenance of the ocean and ocean beach as public lands, a relatively low intensity of use on the dune lands with very stringent controls on the ocean front dune, and extremely low intensity development on those tidal marsh lands that are not in public ownership. With respect to the use of water areas as they relate to these various conditions, it is proposed that the ocean beach be set aside for customary beach and park activities, both private and public, and that boating activities with a high generation of traffic be focused on the open water areas with land based services at upland shore points where the tidal marshes and marine edge have already been destroyed and where there is a reasonable flushing action. Boating facilities

in areas close to the tidal marsh and along the unspoiled marine edge are to be limited to those associated with permitted shore front uses.

The Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay Development Plan is presented on Map 4.

Boating Activity and Facilities

Relative to boating interests, the Shinnecock Canal area shall be the major center for servicing, docking, and storing boats. This area is located at the juncture of main highways and water ways. It has good tidal flushing action as well. The future Land Use Plan backs up this waterfront use by including land area for possible resort facilities as well. They would be located along both sides of the Shinnecock Canal and southerly and easterly for some distance along the opposite shore lines.

A second center of activity is projected in the plan near the Shinnecock Inlet. At the present time, the area primarily serves commercial and sport fishing interests. This is considered a good location for such interests because of the tidal flushing action found here. It has been found that the commercial fishing industry is in need of shore front expansion to service offshore trawlers. The plan, therefore, allows for a modest extension to the west. In addition, it has already been suggested that an adjacent area be planned for a future public marina to serve the new county park. Consequently, the commercial and public marina users could be served at one major center of activity.

Other resort and waterfront business areas serving boating interests already exist on Weesuck Creek and Tiana Bay. These may continue, subject to limited expansion but are not to be considered as major centers because of their potential impact on the nearby residential areas, the local street system and the water quality in these estuaries that have limited tidal flushing action.

Also shown on the plan is a long-range proposal for developing a protective anchorage in Great Peconic Bay near the Shinnecock Canal. This anchorage would require the placement of rip rap in about 6 to 18 feet of water offshore in the shape of an inverted "V". It would be of special interest to transient boatmen traveling the Long Island Intracoastal Waterway and to sailboat owners seeking a home port from which to sail Great Peconic and Little Peconic Bays. The "V" anchorage is a design concept recommended by the New York State Fish and Game Service on Long Island as being better suited to preservation of the marine environment than the present practice of dredging and

filling in wetlands. Such offshore facilities would not be disruptive of the natural littoral drift along shorelines, would be subject to good tidal flushing and would form a marine reef habitat for the improvement of finfishing. In line with this future development, the adjacent uplands would have greater significance as a resort area.

Recreation Facilities and Environmental Preserves

Although recreation facilities have been discussed more fully in the section on community facilities, they warrant another mention here in the Development Plan for the Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay since they would play an important role in the resort nature of the area. Primary among these would be the bathing beaches, public boat landings, ramps and public marinas and several shorefront parks. In addition, a number of areas have been suggested for environmental protection. In a broad sense, environmental preserves are also recreation facilities but the activity is more restrictive and less intense since the emphasis is on the natural environment.

Both the larger environmental preserves and the smaller mainland natural areas indicated as having fine marine and upland habitats have received special comment by the Division of Fish and Game, New York State Conservation Department, relative to their significance for preservation.

The following description of these facilities and preserves is organized into four areas: the east and west barrier beaches, and the east and west mainland areas. The principal elements described are also shown on Map 4.

East Barrier Beach: The Plan calls for the establishment of two large protective environmental areas along the barrier beach. The East Bay Environmental Preserve would extend from the inlet easterly to include the entire wetlands of the barrier beach and those of the Shinnecock Indian Reservation. It would also include all of the wetlands of Heady and Taylor Creeks which on October 15, 1969, were made part of a marine studies area by resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty. In addition to wetlands, the preserve would include about 1.5 miles of dune land and beaches extending easterly to the inlet, including some county lands. This entire area should be considered for open space uses in keeping with the maintenance of the natural character of the total environment. Marina construction, channel development, and depositing of spoils in this area would be restricted. Limited channel improvement in accordance with the regulations of the Trustees

and the Town Conservation Commission may be provided to establish controlled access to Heady and Taylor Creeks. Bathing and surfing, fishing, hunting and picnicking along the beach should be of a low intensity. Camping should be prohibited. The sweeping natural beauty of this area is clearly evident in the photographs of its tidal marsh and dune land. See Plat 5 and 6.

West Barrier Beach: The West Bay Environmental Preserve would extend from the Long Island Intracoastal Waterway southerly covering nearly all of the wetlands and a significant portion of the dune land and the ocean beaches, between Tiana and Ponquogue Town Beaches. Active centers for swimming and related recreation facilities are to be located along Ponquogue Beach easterly to the Shinnecock Inlet and at an expanded Tiana Beach. Each of these intensive activity centers would be supported by bay side public marinas for visiting boats. The west end marina would be located where municipal channel and bulkhead development has already taken place. As already noted, the east end marina includes commercial fishing and marina uses as well as the proposed public marina. Aside from the advantage of excellent tidal flushing, it has convenient access to the ocean, its location being at the inlet. It should not encroach on the areas suggested for environmental protection just east of the Ponquogue Bridge and south of the offshore islands suggested as potential bird sanctuaries. No other marinas should be permitted in the preserve. Thus, the ecosystem would be protected while providing adequately for boat landings.

The remainder of the wetlands and tidal marshes in the public domain north of Dune Road should be preserved in their natural state with no additional channel dredging or landfill for such things as parking fields and roads. On remaining private property landfill should be held to the absolute minimum necessary for residential development compatible with the marine environment. Further, parking field construction on dune land should be limited to an extent and design standard compatible with the maintenance of a stable dune land environment. They should not disturb vegetation on the forward beach dune and new landscape treatment should be used where necessary to relieve the visual blight of extensive pavement areas. The actual public uses of the West Bay Environmental Preserve and development of dune land will be essentially the same as those proposed for the East Bay Environmental Preserve. However, it would be more readily accessible from the active centers for swimming and related recreational activities and the public marinas.

In order to minimize automobile traffic to the active centers on the barrier beach, consideration should be given to establishing a special beach bus shuttle service originating at and including stops at hamlet centers. This could appreciably lessen the need for widening and other improvements to the collector street system and bridges serving the beach. This would be particularly significant on Dune Road since it is located on the very limited land area of the barrier beach. It would also tend to minimize the blighting effect of traffic on the residential hamlets and villages through which it passes.

East Mainland Area: Along the eastern bay two important natural shore areas should be given special consideration. They are Cormorant Point and Far Pond. Cormorant Point has already been referred to in the Community Facilities Plan which suggests that it have first priority among community park acquisitions. The proposal described a natural environment park for passive recreation use along the marine edge which is to be preserved. Inland areas would be developed for playing fields and courts. Further, it is suggested that this park be linked to Tiana Bay by a greenbelt park. The bay waters and marine edge immediately adjacent to Cormorant Point should also receive the same protection from marina construction and channel development, as that proposed for the environmental preserves.

Far Pond is a beautiful natural area with an undisturbed ecology. Special effort should be made to protect all of its marine edge and Far Pond against channel development and despoilment. A recommended greenbelt park extends along the pond edge and then northerly to the crest of Shinnecock Hills moraine which is a part of the same greenbelt park system. Most of the land in these greenbelts should result from subdivision park requirements or planned residential developments.

Other east bay proposals would include the acquisition of the spoils area generated at the mouth of Middle Pond. It should be planned for development as a community and local park and playground. A boat ramp facility oriented to serve both Town and Village of Southampton residents is suggested as a feature on the site.

The Development Plan also shows another type of proposal, the improvement of Montauk Highway as a scenic shoreline drive. A small overlook park and parking area would give an outstanding view across the more active boating area of the bay towards Cormorant Point, as shown in Plate 3. This would call for the removal of several small summer cottages to improve the

view. Scenic easements would also be desirable here to assure the continuing quality of this view.

West Mainland Area: In the western bay areas several estuaries have a particularly fine marine habitat. These estuaries, which also serve as natural greenbelt dividers between hamlets, include Daves Creek, the southeastern shore of Weesuck Creek, Carters Creek and the southwestern shore of Rampasture. Pennimans Pond is also a particularly attractive site. All of these areas should be protected from channel extensions, deposition of spoils and indiscriminate uplands development.

Pennimans Pond, located in the Village of Quogue, is outstanding as a natural area for research. Consequently, it should be protected through acquisition by a research or preservation oriented organization. This may be accomplished through the stewardship programs recommended by the Open Space Action Committee of New York. The uplands, sufficiently back from the water's edge, would make a magnificent planned residential development utilizing cluster principals. The others should also be protected in a similar manner. Their function, however, would be primarily as greenbelt parks serving the passive interests of local residents. In the case of Weesuck Creek's natural marine edge and waters, most of its southeastern portion is now considered a wildlife refuge by the Board of Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty. This could be further supported by proper uplands planning which would result in a permanent woodlands easement along the shore. Planned residential development or a stewardship program could be very effective in accomplishing this. In order to protect the residential qualities of the eastern shore and the wildlife refuge established there, intensification of marina activity in the upper portions of Weesuck Creek should be limited to the western shore.

Other public recreational and area improvement proposals for the western bay include a public boat landing in Tiana Bay which will link up with the Hampton Bays Greenbelt Park, terminating at the proposed Cormorant Park. The boat landing proposal would take advantage of a recently constructed private canal. Aside from its excellent location, this proposal would also be advantageous since it would surplant a potential intensive residential development on the canal of a type which has been found to cause pollution of estuarian waters.

A second is a bay beach at the northern bridgehead of the Ponquogue Bridge. This is an area that should be protected from further private development. The beach site would also provide

a fine scenic drive overlook with views out across both the east and west bays. This area is also a particularly critical location for planning future bridge improvements and beach stabilization. The bridge is old and narrow and will eventually need improvement or replacement. Acquisition of the adjacent beach land will assure the community that the improvement can be accomplished when needed and at a lesser condemnation cost. To the west of the proposed beach, a stabilization program should be considered to prevent scouring. This might be accomplished by building three groins on the eastern side of the three creeks just west of the bridgehead. When complete, these groins would provide potential shorefront fishing facilities.

Residential Development and Other Land Uses

Aside from the boating and recreational uses and environmental preserves described above, it is proposed that the remaining privately owned lands on the barrier beach and along the bay fronts be generally limited to a low intensity of development. Residential development is projected in the range of 40,000 square foot lots to 87,000 square foot lots, except where early, small lot subdivision exists. On the barrier beach 40,000 to 87,000 square foot lots are recommended. However, the community should encourage planned residential development applications, since this would require the least public improvements and maintain the greatest proportion of open land. At the same time, it would make possible a variety of housing types, including garden apartments.

In addition to residential development, the less intensively zoned beach and shore areas would be suited to non-profit beach clubs and customary community facilities.

Even this low intensity development calls for careful application of regulatory measures to protect such areas. These are found in the following discussion on broad policies.

Recommended Broad Policies for Implementation

As long ago as the Dongan Patent, there were people who recognized the wisdom of setting aside certain lands and water bodies for the interest and benefit of all the community's people. This priceless heritage is still enjoyed by the people of Southampton, particularly in the barrier beach and Shinnecock Bay area. However, at this time it would be well to consider broad policies relating not only to these common areas but to private lands located in this environment as well. The following policies are recommended for implementation by the appropriate governmental agencies.

1. All governmental agencies sharing responsibilities in various degrees for the activities and development, both public and private, of the Barrier Beach-Shinnecock Bay area should establish a Joint Committee to review this proposed Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay Development Plan and consider it for adoption as a general guide to the exercise of their responsibilities and as the basis for promulgating new regulations and for programs coordinating their regulatory efforts and public improvements. The jurisdiction involved might eventually extend to all other similar areas.
2. Since today the extent of the lands affected by the grant to the Board of Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the Town of Southampton is unclear, it is recommended that steps be taken that such lands and waters are not diminished in area through a lack of diligence in the examination of claims to such land as private property. Where such a question exists, the validity of the claim should be established as a matter of law to the satisfaction of the town prior to the granting of a permit for any form of development, improvement or use.
3. With reference to development, improvement or use of the wetlands, salt marshes, and bay beaches, the following policies should be implemented:
 - (a) The digging of canals into upland sites should be prohibited in order to protect the already limited capacity of the ground water reservoir
 - (b) The dredging of new boat channels in those wetland and tidal marsh areas still considered to have ecological significance should be prohibited
 - (c) The destruction of tidal marshes or other wetland areas through mining or through the depositing of spoils or any other foreign material on their surface should be prohibited except for the limited area needed on a privately owned lot to permit the construction of an appropriate building
 - (d) Bulkheads for shore line protection should be constructed well above the mean high water line and above all particularly fine upper tidal marshes
 - (e) In those areas designated as Marine Preserves on the Town Future Land Use Plan, (Map 1) and on the Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay Development Plan, Map 4,

boat dock facilities serving adjacent private properties should be limited to floats and docks projecting into open water

- (f) Intensive boating activities such as "barging", long-term anchorage and houseboating, as well as any practice tending to destroy the marine preserves, should be restricted or prohibited.

4. With reference to dune land and ocean beaches, the following policies should be implemented:

- (a) Both dune land and ocean beaches should be protected from any improvement or use that would tend to limit their effectiveness as natural barriers to ocean wave overruns. No development or improvement, other than an approved beach protection measure or an approved walk over the dune area shall be constructed closer to the ocean beach than 40 feet inland of the natural crest of the forward dune
- (b) Every effort should be made to encourage private development to preserve and enhance, where possible, the open scenic qualities characteristic of the barrier beach.

5. In general, both public and private development in these shore front areas should be carefully regulated with respect to the storm water runoff, water supply and sewage disposal systems. Further, a flood plain zoning regulation should be established to assure the safety of the population in such areas as well as the minimization of property damage. Implementation of this latter recommendation would make such areas eligible for low cost, federally subsidized, flood and storm insurance coverage.

6. Finally, it is recommended that the Joint Committee investigate and implement improvement projects and systems for the improvement of the Barrier Beach and Shinnecock Bay area. These should include such things as the stabilization of the Shinnecock Inlet and the regulation of the salinity and temperature of the bays. The latter project would require an in-depth analysis of such things as the littoral transfer systems, tidal flows, upland drainage and they various chemical and biological effects. In carrying out such investigations, the Joint Committee will, of necessity, require funds, either from the participating governmental agencies or from the state or federal governments.