

PATCHOGUE RIVER MARITIME CENTER PLAN



November
1999

Prepared by:
Suffolk County Planning Department

PATCHOGUE RIVER MARITIME CENTER PLAN

**Village of Patchogue
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PATCHOGUE RIVER MARITIME CENTER PLAN

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PATCHOGUE RIVER MARITIME CENTER PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Village of Patchogue has been identified as one of six major maritime centers in the 70-mile long South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER) area, which extends from Hempstead Bay on the west to Shinnecock Bay on the east (New York State Dept. of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization 1998a; Steadman 1999). A *maritime center* is defined as an area where commercial *water-dependent* and *water-enhanced uses* are concentrated.¹ (See Photograph 1.) Several characteristics of the Village of Patchogue met the criteria for this designation:

- The Village is host to a mix of maritime uses, including ferry service.
- A large area along the shoreline of the Village has been historically used for traditional maritime activities.
- The Patchogue River provides deep water access to Great South Bay.
- The River is the Gateway to Fire Island National Seashore.
- The area is a destination as a provider of ferry service to Fire Island communities.
- The Village encompasses a central business district.
- Recreational use of the shore is intense at several public waterfront parks and piers.
- The development pattern is such that conflicts with natural resources are minimal.

As part of the effort to complete the Comprehensive Management Plan for the estuary, the SSER Council has recommended that techniques be identified to support traditional maritime uses, and that partnerships be established to encourage desired growth and redevelopment in maritime centers (New York State Dept. of State Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization 1998c). Subsequently, the Village of Patchogue was awarded a grant under the New York State Environmental Protection Fund for a maritime center study of the Patchogue River area, and the Suffolk County Planning Department was selected by the Village to conduct the work under a contract. The Village also appointed the Patchogue Riverfront Advisory Committee to oversee the study. This *Patchogue River Maritime Center Plan* is the final product of the contract.

¹*Water-dependent Use:* A water dependent use is an activity which can only be conducted on, in, over, or adjacent to the water, and which involves, as an integral part of such activity, direct access to and use of coastal waters. Water dependent uses can take the form of a commercial business or a public facility. Examples include: marinas; yacht clubs; boat yards; commercial fishing vessel facilities; coastal aquaculture; charter and party boat operations and associated support facilities; petroleum unloading facilities; waterborne commerce; ferry service; marine construction; marine fuel sales; marine education or laboratory facilities; and bathing beaches.

Water-enhanced Use: A water-enhanced use does not require a waterfront location in order to function, but is often essential to the efficient functioning of water dependent uses and can be an essential contributing factor to their economic viability. Further, water-enhanced uses often increase the public's enjoyment of the waterfront. A water-enhanced use can take the form of a commercial business or a public facility. Examples include: marine services; boat repair; bait and tackle shops; water view restaurants; and waterfront parks.



Photograph 1 - Marinas and boatyards are major water-dependent uses on the Patchogue River.

The *Regional Setting* map shows the south shore of Suffolk County from Fire Island Inlet to Moriches Inlet, and the general location of study area. The mouth of the Patchogue River is located about 18.0 miles from the Robert Moses Causeway Bridge in the throat of Fire Island Inlet via the Great South Bay Navigation Channel; and about 17.5 miles from the channel leading south to Moriches Inlet via the Long Island Intracoastal Waterway channel. The Fire Island community of Davis Park is located 4.1 miles south of the River; the Fire Island National Seashore (FINS) Watch Hill marina is about 0.9 miles to the east of Davis Park.

The land area within the jurisdiction of the Village of Patchogue is 2.3 square miles, or 1,472 acres. The Village is home to more than 500 businesses. The population of Patchogue Village was estimated to be 11,282 in 1998, and is essentially unchanged for the past 20 years.

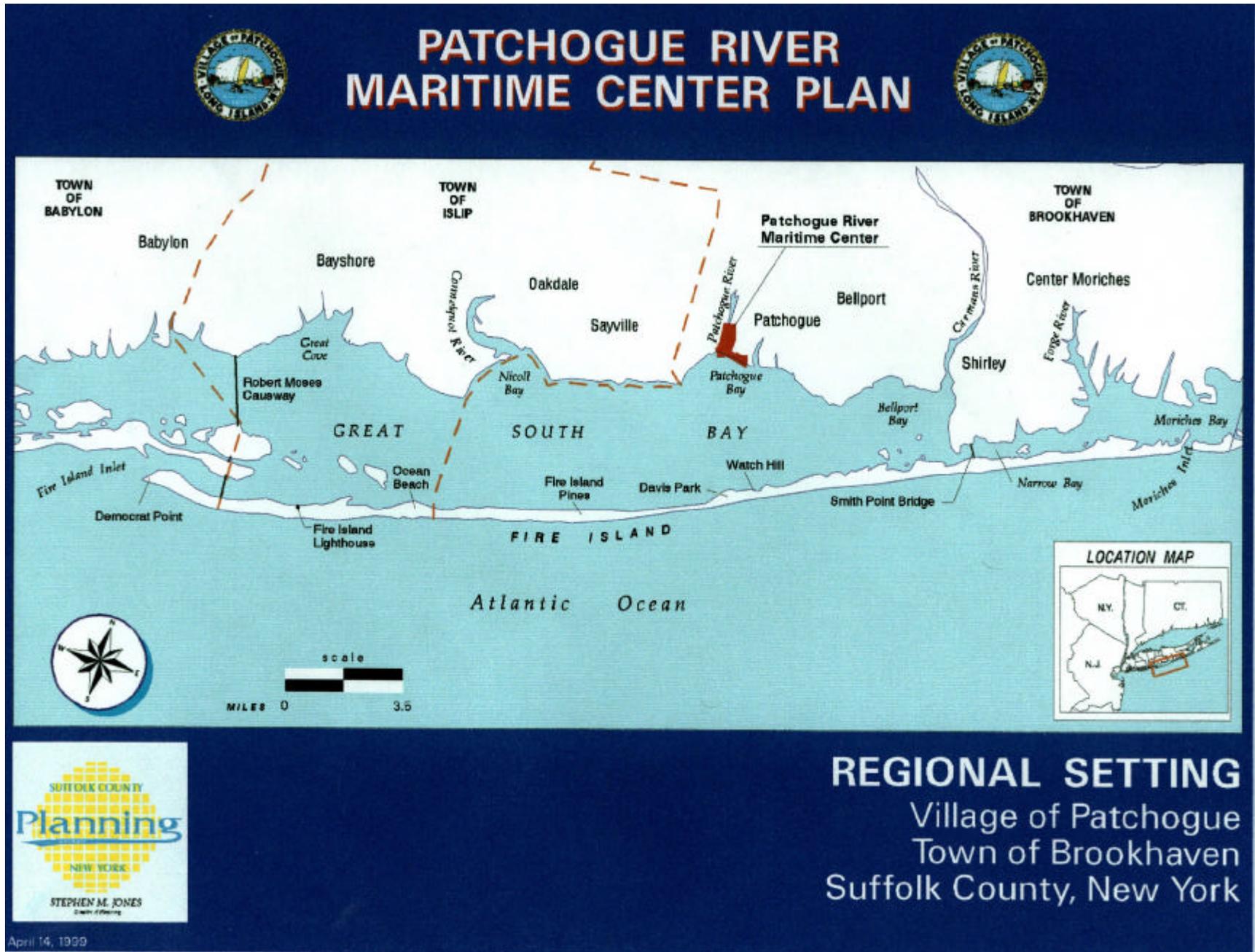
Study Goals

The purpose of this study is to prepare a plan for the Patchogue River Maritime Center that will identify actions targeted to the following goals:

- Maintain and protect the viability of existing water-dependent and water-enhanced uses along the waterfront.
- Provide for the expansion of compatible water-dependent and water-enhanced uses at sites and locations that are available and suitable for such development.
- Ensure prudent protection of the environment, while accommodating desired change.
- Improve the overall condition and attractiveness of the area for the enjoyment and advantage of Village residents, water-related business activities and visitors alike.

Implementation of the recommended actions by the Village of Patchogue, its citizens, the private sector and other levels of government will:

- Revitalize the Patchogue River waterfront.
- Improve the economic base of the Village by creating jobs and expanding the tax base.
- Enhance different forms of public access to the Patchogue River, Patchogue Bay, Great South Bay and Fire Island.



- Prevent and/or mitigate degradation of marine environmental quality.
- Increase the value of Patchogue River and Bay shoreline areas as commercial and recreational assets.

Study Area

The boundary of the study area was established by the Patchogue Riverfront Advisory Committee during the initial phase of the study. The Patchogue River Maritime Center (henceforth referred to as the PRMC in this report) study area includes the Patchogue River corridor extending from Division St. on the north to Patchogue Bay on the south; and from River Ave. on the west to Cedar Ave. on the east. The study area also includes the shoreline of Patchogue Bay from Cedar St. on the west to Bay Ave. on the east, south of Maiden Lane and Smith St. The southern boundary of the study area corresponds to the jurisdictional boundary of the Village of Patchogue in Patchogue Bay. The boundary of the study area is shown on the *Study Area* map. The base for this map was prepared using Suffolk County Real Property Tax Map parcel boundaries. The study area encompasses 362.4 acres in the Village of Patchogue, of which 234.7 acres are upland property; the remaining 127.7 acres are surface waters.

To the maximum extent feasible, inventory data and information characterizing the study area have been stored in the Suffolk County Planning Department's Geographic Information System (GIS), which is spatially referenced to the parcel-specific base map referred to above. This base has been used to portray data/information collected in the study and present analysis results. Small scale versions of all maps are included in this plan report. Large scale (1 inch equals 200 feet) maps have been prepared for use in public presentations.

Plan Report Organization

The organization of this report generally follows the steps employed to conduct the work, i.e., analysis of historical trends of important water-related activities; inventory of existing conditions in the PRMC study area; consideration of viewpoints of those that work and live there; and the development of recommendations to achieve plan goals. The report begins with an overview of land use and activity changes in the study area over the last century. More recent trends in waterborne commerce, boating facility usage, and ferry passenger activity are then discussed.

The description of existing conditions in the study area includes detailed inventories of land use, water-dependent and water-enhanced businesses and activities, zoning, land available for development, infrastructure (e.g., channel dredging, shoreline hardening structures, sewage treatment facilities, etc.) and environmental resources. This characterization work is then followed by a section on the views of business operators whose establishments are in the PRMC, and the concerns expressed by neighborhood residents.



PATCHOGUE RIVER MARITIME CENTER PLAN



LEGEND

Scale: 0 100 200 300 Feet

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STUDY AREA
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This plan concludes with a section on recommendations that address the goals stated earlier, and that are designed to achieve a new vision for the PRMC. The recommendations include:

- Use of publicly owned and privately owned parcels in the northeast portion of the study area to accommodate tourism interests, expand water-related activities, and provide a focal point for connection with the central business district.
- Use of vacant and/or underutilized parcels along both sides of the River for boating-related activities and other water-related uses.
- Actions that are needed to maintain/improve different modes of access to and along the waterfront of the River and Patchogue Bay.
- Enhanced use of Town of Brookhaven and Village of Patchogue park facilities located in the study area.
- Required infrastructure improvements.
- Implementation mechanisms.

While reflecting the analysis undertaken in the current project, these recommendations were developed with an awareness of the content of previous planning studies, which are reviewed in the following section.

Previous Planning Studies

A survey of previous planning studies involving the Village of Patchogue was undertaken by the Planning Department in order to gain an understanding of present conditions in the PRMC study area with a perspective of the past. Six studies are discussed below. Recommendations and views have changed over the last 40 years. Many initiatives were proposed, but never implemented.

Master Plan - Village of Patchogue, New York - In 1959 a three volume Master Plan was prepared by Edwin S. Voorhis & Son, Inc. for the Village of Patchogue. Volume I discusses the population trends, economic base and land use conditions in the Village. Volume II is devoted to traffic circulation and vehicular parking needs. Volume III contains a utilities study, which describes the sanitary sewerage, water supply and storm drainage systems existing within the Village. The following points are relevant to the PRMC study area.

- A proposed sewage treatment plant situated on Village property south of Smith St. and west of DeWitt Ave. is shown on the Drainage Map.
- Existing and proposed recreational facilities are discussed in the community facilities section of Volume III. The plan indicates that the 700 foot man-made beach at the Brookhaven Town

Sandspit Park can accommodate 4,000 people and provides residents with excellent bathing facilities. Volume III states that the future plans indicate that the River Ave. Park site would be developed into a beach area with adequate playground, parking and restroom facilities. The master plan also calls for the creation of a 3.1 acre neighborhood park (Argyle Park) situated next to the Patchogue River between Pine Blvd. and Campbell St.

- Among the zoning recommendations discussed in Volume III, the proposal having most significance for PRMC study area is the suggested modification of the Industrial E category. The recommendation was made to eliminate the Industrial E category and create Industrial I-1 (Limited Industrial District) and Industrial I-2 (General Industrial District) categories. It is shown on the Recommended Zoning Use District Map that the area then zoned Industrial E be changed to the more restrictive Industrial I-1 (Limited Industrial District) category, and that the industrial classification placed on properties between Mulford St. and Campbell St. be changed to residential.

Patchogue Village Planning Study - The Suffolk County Planning Department and the Suffolk County Department of Transportation jointly prepared the Patchogue Village Planning Study, dated February 1979. The study was the result of a request made by the Village to update the 1959 Master Plan. The first half of the report discusses existing conditions with regard to land use, demographics, historic and architectural resources, housing, the central business district, transportation and public transit, recreation and existing zoning. The second half of the report contains recommendations on the above topics.

The following observations and recommendations from the report focus on the Patchogue River corridor:

- The location of the FINS headquarters and terminal on the Patchogue River changes the entire concept of the use of the River from one that was oriented towards industrial use to one that will allow greater public access.
- The central business district lacks any orientation to the waterways in the Village. Providing pedestrian links to Patchogue Lake and Patchogue River is one method of rejuvenating the west end of Main St.
- The Patchogue River, up to Division St., is extensively used by commercial marinas and industrial uses, and public access is very limited. Aesthetically, and as a site for recreation, Patchogue River leaves much to be desired.
- The entire zoning ordinance does not reflect the land uses that presently exist within the Village. A revision of the ordinance should reflect existing conditions that are likely to remain along with realistic changes that are likely to occur based on plan and economic considerations.

- Action should be taken to halt shoreline erosion at Shorefront Park.
- The existing sewage treatment plant at the head of the River will have to be upgraded and should be expanded to serve the entire Village.
- A cluster of substandard housing (formerly seasonal cottages) on Hollow Walk, Pine Walk and Cedar Walk, is recommended as the target for future rehabilitation funding.
- Since FINS will attract the maximum number of visitors on weekends and LIRR commuter parking is at peak on weekdays, it is recommended that the Village reach an agreement with Federal officials wherein parking facilities will be shared on days of maximum need.
- The proposed network improvement plan includes a new roadway bordering the eastern edge of the Patchogue River to afford access to the land uses proposed for this area. This can be accomplished by connecting existing segments of roads in the area.
- A proposed bikeway system is shown on the recreation map. The heart of this system is the lower loop which ties together the ferry terminals, bay front, all southern parks, two schools, the central business district and Patchogue's largest residential area.
- The town land at the end of River Ave. should be acquired for Village use since it does not seem large enough for town-wide recreational purposes.
- Commercial and recreational boating activity has had a long and important history for Patchogue. Marine uses should be given primary consideration on Patchogue's extensive waterfront.
- Since FINS ferries are relocating, the Sandspit Park has a potential for expanding boating facilities. Better and more boat ramps should be encouraged here.
- There are a few major land uses in the Village that should be recognized by special zoning categories. The waterfront area, the downtown business district and the large amount of multi-family housing units are the most important.
- The waterfront requires a special category to encourage the maximum development of marine-related and water-dependent uses. A C-3 marine commercial district is recommended for most of the frontage on the Patchogue River. This would discourage uses that have no relationship to the valuable water frontage.
- The industrial uses, such as oil storage and equipment storage on the River, are expected to be phased out. Marine commercial zoning could be used to encourage this turnover at an early date.

Industrial Location Analyses - In 1980 the Long Island Regional Planning Board prepared a report analyzing industrial land use and industrially zoned land in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York. A portion of that report discussed changes in industrial land use. The Patchogue River was used as an example of such a change in industrial land use where the waterfront was once an industrial site. Demand for residential, recreational, and marine commercial uses has caused industrial uses on the waterfront to be replaced.

In the report, a 1977 land use map showed a series of industrial clusters on both sides of the Patchogue River. The report stated that industrial uses, such as oil storage, will be gradually phased out, and eventually the entire navigable portion of the River will be converted to non-industrial uses. A plan map for the Patchogue River area showed that an industrial concentration at the head of the River north of Division St. should be retained. The report stated that this area can continue to be used for industrial purposes without having an adverse effect on the River. Valuable waterfront land currently used for industrial purposes is expected to be redeveloped for additional multiple housing units, recreation activities, and marine related commercial uses.

The plan map in the report proposed that much of the immediate area surrounding the Patchogue River be developed with commercial-recreation uses. In addition, the map showed that the plan for the area includes expanded commercial development on the south side of Division St. between River Ave. and the Patchogue River, and between West Ave. and Cedar Ave. The map also proposed that multi-family residential development occur in the area of Bransford St. between River Ave. and the River. In addition, the map showed a small new road connecting West Ave. to Argyle Lane, which itself would connect directly to Beach St. Land uses proposed for the west side of this road are predominantly commercial-recreation, and to the east of this road, single family residential.

Draft Village of Patchogue Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) - The draft LWRP for the Village of Patchogue, which appears to have been written in 1989, has not been adopted by the Village or approved by NYS Dept. of State. The draft is divided into six sections. Sections II (Inventory and Analysis) and IV (Proposed Land and Water Uses and Proposed Projects) have information/recommendations pertaining to the study area covered in the PRMC Plan. The following information is from Sections II and IV:

- It was estimated that 500 people use the ferry to Watch Hill on a typical summer weekend day. Approximately 1,000 people use the Davis Park ferry on an average summer weekend day. Holidays and “good weather” weekend days draw even more people.
- Based on field investigations and a waterfront questionnaire that was distributed to commercial, industrial and public land use owners adjacent to the Patchogue River and Tuthills Creek during the development phase of the LWRP, it was estimated that about 600 boats were docked along the Patchogue River. Most marina owners, contacted through the waterfront survey, expressed interest in expanding their facilities.

- A Waterfront Development zoning district and a General Waterfront zoning district were added to the Village Zoning Ordinance in June of 1983, but have not been applied to any parcels.
- It was recommended that the FINS ferry terminal property be zoned General Waterfront.
- The former Hess oil terminal site should be redeveloped for water-dependent uses, such as a marina/boatyard, or since the piers at this site are still intact, a commercial vessel loading and unloading area.
- The Village will request that the Army Corps of Engineers undertake the periodic maintenance dredging of the channel in the Patchogue River to a depth of 12 feet, as well as “spurs” dredged off the main channel to service private enterprises. If the Corps cannot maintain the channel, some maintenance dredging should be performed by Suffolk County.

Village of Patchogue Study - This 1990 study was initiated by the Village of Patchogue Chamber of Commerce. It discussed issues concerning the vitality of the business district on Main St. in Patchogue and the immediate surrounding area. The study also examined housing, historic districts, transportation, and land use changes and related zoning matters for the entire Village. The study highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the Village, and offered suggestions for preserving the Village’s strengths while modifying or eliminating its weaknesses. The study mentioned the Patchogue River several times. The report stated that:

- FINS offers a potential that has not even begun to be tapped in terms of benefits to the Village, and that the opening up of the Patchogue River as a recreational gateway to the waterfront would provide the Village of Patchogue with some of the amenities currently existing in the Village of Port Jefferson as the result of the revitalization of Port Jefferson harbor.
- Removal of the bowling alley would allow the expansion of tourist opportunities. A walkway system around the River from the FINS terminal would then be possible.
- The portion of the Patchogue River at Division St. offers the best opportunity for new tourist facilities, such as waterfront restaurants. Long-term redevelopment plans should include additional restaurants plus some shops just west of the River. The view of the ferry and other boating activities makes the waterfront attractive to visitors.
- Several of the industrial parcels that occur along the Patchogue River could be converted to condominium usage. The waterfront property is obviously extremely desirable and has amenities that should make such facilities commercially viable. The ultimate removal of the oil storage tanks creates a site for waterfront condominiums that would be compatible with surrounding uses.

- Redevelopment of the area containing the Village sewage treatment plant and marginal residential and business uses would provide a larger buffer for the plant and allow some commercial activities and public access to the River.
- A redevelopment of the southwest corner of Main St. and River Ave. would permit a direct connection from Waverly Ave. to River Ave. This would improve the traffic flow on Main St. and allow direct access to the waterfront and the parking areas south of Main St. New retail uses at West Ave. and Main St. can increase tourist activity in the Village, since they will be closer to a revitalized waterfront zone around the FINS terminal.

Village of Patchogue River Corridor Study - The Suffolk County Planning Department prepared this report at the request of the Village of Patchogue. A draft of this report dated January 1998 was circulated for comment, but the final version of the study report has not been completed.

The geographic scope of this study included the Patchogue River corridor from Patchogue Bay on the south to the jurisdictional boundary of the Village on the north. Recommendations to revitalize the area; enhance housing opportunities; capitalize on Patchogue River and Patchogue Lake resources for recreation and tourism; and improve traffic, parking and pedestrian access were made. The study area was divided into four sections: Upper Lake area, the Patchogue Lake and Lace Mill site, the Central River section between Main St. and Division St., and the River Harbor south of Division St. Major recommendations in the draft report are summarized below Upper Lake:

- Evaluate vacant parcels for acquisition in order to regain public access to the lake.
- Establish a bikeway starting at St. Joseph's College that would follow attractive routes to the central business district, both sides of the river corridor and Patchogue Bay parks.
- Enhance recreational fishing opportunities at Patchogue Lake.

Patchogue Lake and Lace Mill Site:

- Create a strip park along the shoreline of the lake by reconstruction of Patchogue-Holbrook Rd.; improve bicycle and pedestrian access facilities along the shore and to the proposed commercial center to the south; improve the lake spillway; add landscaping and amenities.
- Develop the Lace Mill site for assisted living housing (west side) and as a commercial center (east side) with parking in between; open up and improve the channel of the River on the site.

Central River Section:

- Create a river walk park along the west side of the river between Main St. and Division St. through obtaining easements and/or acquisition of property; provide necessary bulkheading, security fencing, suitable vegetation buffers and footbridge access.
- Utilize the Village parking lot on West Ave. for access to the river walk park, and for parking and a shuttle service to the FINS ferry terminal.
- Upgrade and improve the area west of the river walk park and south of the new commercial center by encouraging compatible uses. (Large structures housing industrial uses, storage, etc. are currently located on four parcels.) Relocating the bowling alley now at the intersection of Division St. and West Ave. to this area “could have merit.”

River Harbor Section:

- Enhance visitation to the FINS ferry terminal area by docking a coastal schooner or other appropriate vessel(s) at the site; and establishing a display or museum with maritime/nautical themes, with the latter in concert with the Long Island Maritime Museum in West Sayville. “A functional ferry shuttle and/or water taxi ... with a historic flair could also become an attraction.”
- Acquire the bowling alley property and relocate this business to a more suitable area; utilize this parcel for FINS or Village activities.
- Establish public access via acquisition of right-of-ways and easements and construction of a walkway, preferably along the River shoreline, that would connect the FINS ferry terminal with park facilities on Patchogue Bay. Apply a similar approach along the west shoreline of the River.
- Examine sites along the River for additional housing. Private ownership or “high-end rental with direct boating access would be appropriate and marketable” at the former Patchogue Oil Terminal site.

The draft report also contained several generic/miscellaneous recommendations.

- Establish a historic tour of buildings and locations in the Village, starting at the proposed museum at the FINS terminal area.
- Remove debris, repair/replace deteriorated bulkheads, and remove vegetation where needed along the shoreline of the River corridor.
- Monitor and remediate stormwater runoff to surface waters in the corridor.

- Improve traffic flow along River Ave. by extending Waverly Ave. across Main St. to intersect with River Ave. north of the elementary school.
- Improve traffic flow via a direct road connection between Lake St. and Oak St. that crosses North Ocean Ave.
- Extend West Ave. south from its terminus at Laurel St. At the Village's request, the possibility of a more direct route from West Ave. to the Great South Bay was explored. The first option would extend West Ave. to meet up with Beach Ave. The second alternative would extend West Ave. to meet with Roosevelt Ave. The cost of relocation, acquisition and demolition will need to be weighed against the benefits of a more direct route from the downtown to the waterfront.
- In cooperation with the Suffolk County Water Authority, establish recreational uses, such as a nature trail or hiking trail, on the 13 acre parcel south of Main St. that is owned by the Authority and adjacent to Tuthills Creek.