

The Future of Oyster Bay Hamlet

Oyster Bay Main Street Association

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Oyster Bay Main Street Association

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Often, throughout the United States, community members feel that there are issues that are important to them. Since 1980, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has forged a powerful network of more than a thousand revitalization programs across the country.

The Main Street program relies on comprehensive, incremental work in four broad areas:

Design: improving the district's physical environment and rehabilitating historic and traditional commercial buildings

Organization: building collaborative partnerships between a broad range of organizations, agencies, businesses and individuals, and mobilizing volunteer support for the revitalization effort

Promotion: marketing the district's assets to investors, visitors, residents and others

Economic restructuring: strengthening the district's economic base while also expanding it by developing a long-range economic development game plan, improving existing businesses, recruiting new ones, and finding new uses for empty or under used buildings

The approach is comprehensive, incremental, and based on principles of self determination and direct, inclusive community participation in the revitalization process.

1.2 PRESERVATION ON LONG ISLAND

Long Island has many communities interested in preservation of their history, as well as downtown economic revitalization. Each of these communities employ similar strategies to achieve the same goal, economic prosperity, and a charming community within which one can live, work, and play. Oyster Bay is capitalizing on its rich historic past to make a comeback. A recently adopted waterfront revitalization plan includes plans for a museum that will recapture Oyster Bay's maritime past. One of 31 historic buildings in the downtown area is the three-story, 96 year old Queen Anne-style Moore Building, where President Theodore Roosevelt had his summer executive offices on the second floor from 1903 to 1908. The restoration of the Moore building took place between 1991

and 1998 in several phases culminating in the final touch, the repair of the turret roof and subsequent installation of a weather vane as it once had shown in Figure 1. Thomas A. Kuehhas, director of the Oyster Bay Historical Society was recently quoted in the New York Times⁽¹⁾ "We are hoping that what was done at the Moore Building will be contagious". At the same time John Venditto, the Oyster Bay Town Supervisor, is quoted as saying⁽¹⁾ " the feedback I get from residents is that they want a certain level of activity, but they also want to preserve and maintain what's here because this is an area of great historical significance".

Community members are in the early stages of working with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A relatively new presence in Oyster Bay is the Oyster Bay Main Street Association. It consists of members from all the various interest groups ranging from the Oyster Bay Chamber of Commerce, to the local clergy, to the average local resident. It has been established to facilitate communication between the various interest groups within the community toward a common goal, "to create a livable village and get away from shopping malls and to do it in a historically and environmentally sensitive fashion"⁽¹⁾.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

No one organization can be responsible for all the different aspects of revitalization whether it is historic or economic. Fortunately for the Oyster Bay Hamlet, it is well endowed with a number of organizations, talented individuals and financial resources. One should identify, in a collective and cooperative manner, the talents and resources of each of the interested parties. Amongst all of them realize a collective vision and mission that directly influences the historic and economic revitalization of the Hamlet, then divide up the responsibilities to each organization that is best suited to tackle them.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE OYSTER BAY MAIN STREET ASSOCIATION

The Oyster Bay Main Street Association serves to facilitate a partnership amongst the various interest groups in Oyster Bay for the betterment of the Community. The Association provides a wide range of services that fit into the framework of an overall organization and market development strategy. The ultimate goal is to instill a historic preservation ethic throughout the community's programs, policies, and practices and to make community preservation a routine part of civic life. The primary revitalization method for downtowns with historic fabric is through preservation, which in turn brings about community pride and betterment. The Oyster Bay Main Street Association derives its responsibilities from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as outlined in section 1.1. The belief is that by preserving and recycling historic architecture and land use, the downtown is made competitive economically with other

regional commercial centers thereby making its own economic base sustainable.

4. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OYSTER BAY MAIN STREET ASSOCIATION

The Oyster Bay Main street Association's responsibilities are:

1. To identify and record the historic architectural structures of the Hamlet as well as the past and present land use.
2. Develop a partnership with the Oyster Bay Historical Society to create a publicly accessible archive of the historic buildings and land use.
3. Provide architectural guidance to building owners and storeowners when they look to modify their facades. Procure the funding for services. Establish an Architectural review board that is part of the building permit process and that would have jurisdiction within the historic district.
4. Establish an endowment for the purpose of purchasing, restoring and reselling historic buildings within the Hamlet.
5. Establish a historic district within the Hamlet. Figure 3 illustrates the region referred to as the Hamlet.
6. Establish design guidelines and/or master planning for the development of the streetscape. Figure 4 shows potential streetscape modifications.
7. Establish guidelines for the future planning and development of the entire Hamlet through public consensus.
8. Establish a public awareness program for the promotion of historic preservation as a means of economic revitalization in the Hamlet of Oyster Bay.
9. Establish a rewards program and tax incentives for the voluntary historic preservation of structures within the Hamlet.

Whether working with neighborhood organizations, business associations, development corporations, Chamber of Commerce, or municipal governments, the ultimate responsibility of the Oyster Bay Main Street Association is to build a unique relationship with its partners to develop, rebuild, and revitalize the Hamlet.

5. THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY - WHAT IS THEIR ROLE

The Oyster Bay Main Street Association would like to establish a major initiative with the Town of Oyster Bay aimed at establishing guidelines for all development in the Hamlet through a collaboration of all the various parties involved. The various organizations within the Hamlet will bring their agenda to the Oyster Bay Main Street Association's attention so as to simplify and facilitate clear communication between the Town of Oyster Bay and the People of Oyster Bay Hamlet.

6. CONCLUSIONS

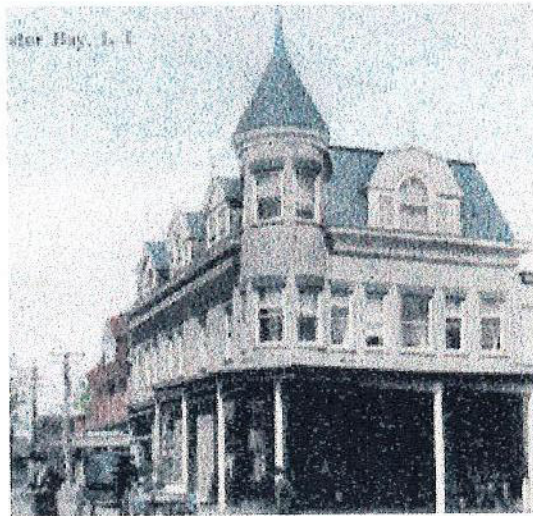
Communities all over Long Island have begun to recognize the value of their often neglected downtowns. Different strategies are being developed to restore the once vibrant centers of Long Island communities depending on the assets and liabilities found in each area. The challenges and goals are common to all of them. The idea is to build a better community that is self sustaining. Throughout, it seems that towns are proving that getting back to basics, working cooperatively, and incorporating a historic preservation ethic - an ethic of conservation - into their planning decisions, is breathing new life into downtowns.

7. REFERENCES

- (1) New York Times, Reviving Main Streets by Historic Preservation, Shaman, D., July 26, 1998.
- (2) The Oyster Bay Guardian, Village Views - The Electric Power and Light Company, Hammond, J., April 28, 1995.

8. FIGURES

(A)



(B)



(C)



Figure 1 The Moore Building

(A) A view from South Street, circa 1910.

(B) A view from South Street, 1999.

(C) A photo from a 1985 Newsday article.

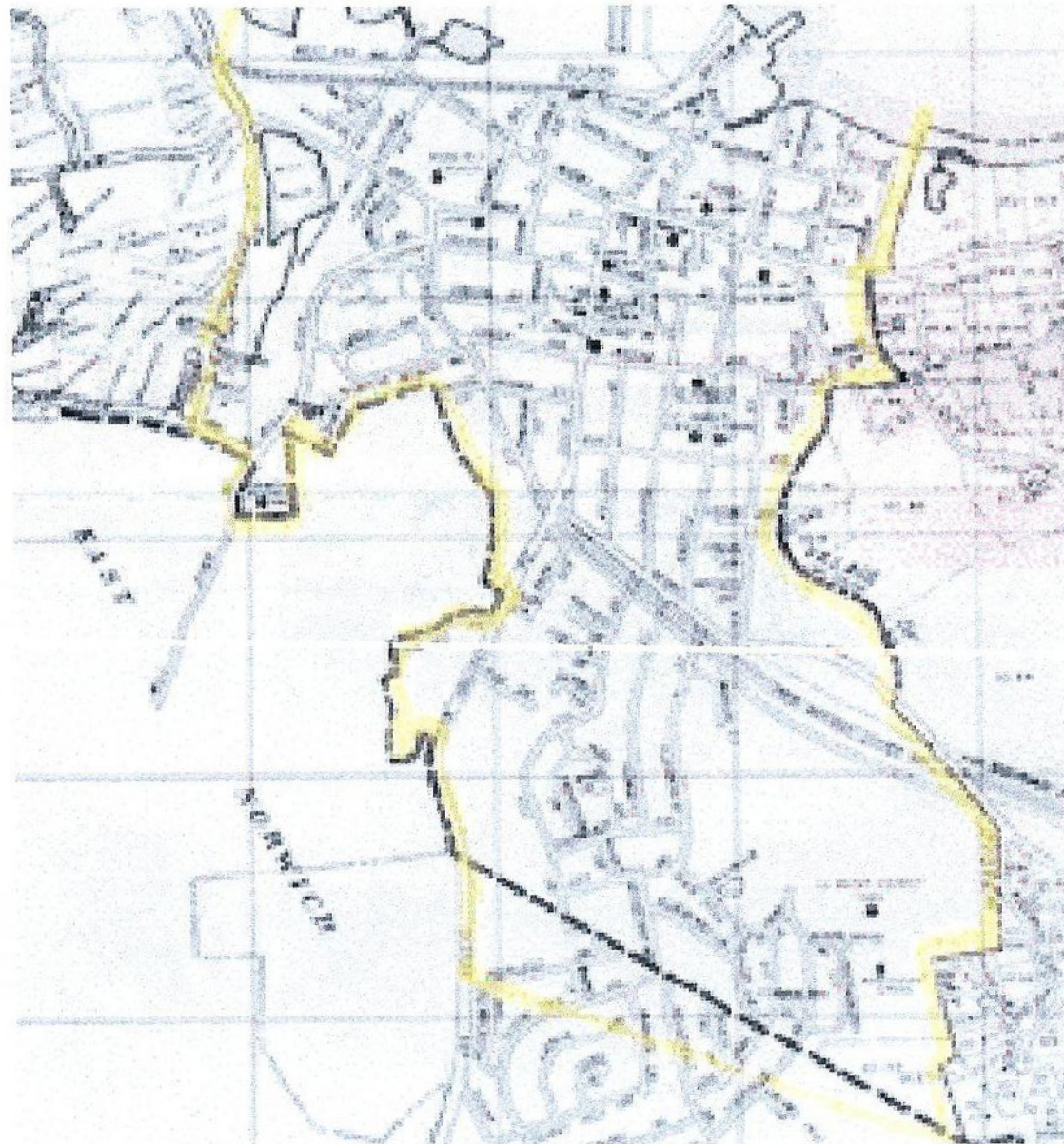


Figure 3. Map showing Oyster Bay Hamlet

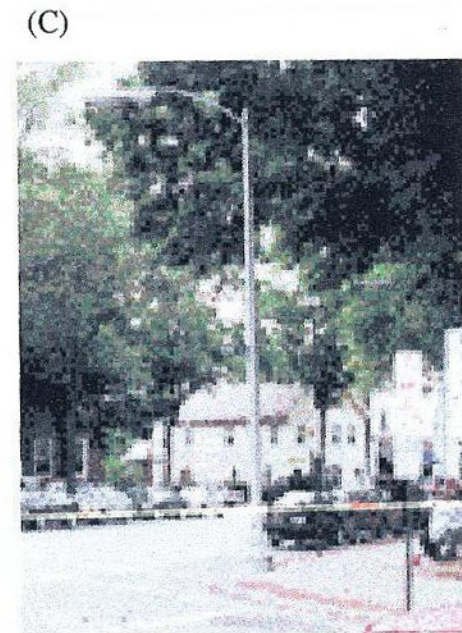
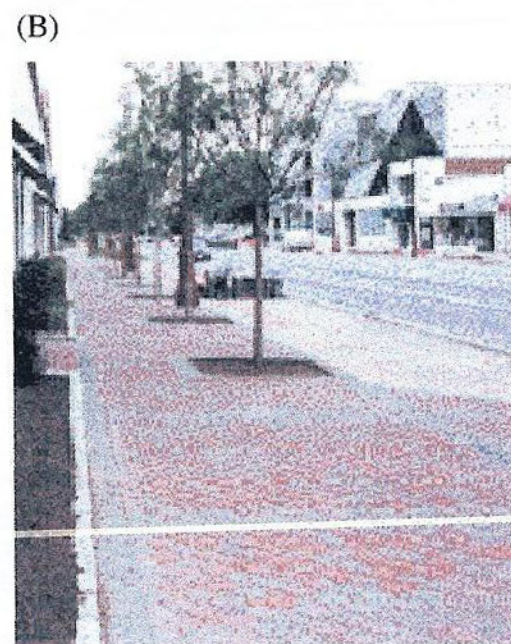


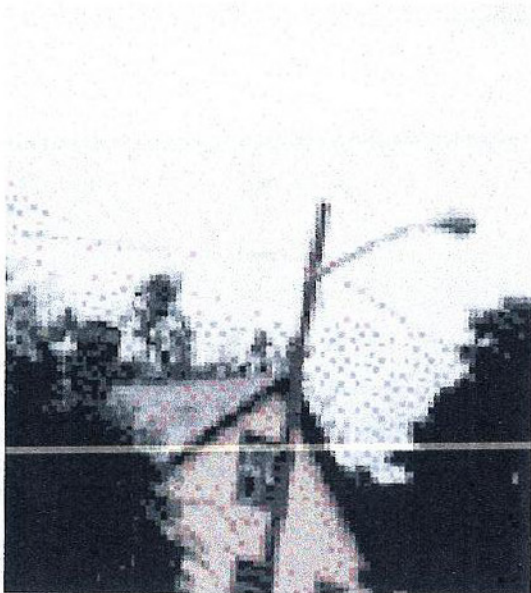
Figure 4 Potential Streetscape modifications

(A) Potential Lights

(B) Potential Sidewalks

(C) Existing Light and sidewalk

(D)



(E)



Figure 4 cont. Potential Streetscape modifications

(D) Existing Light

(E) Potential Replacement.

8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

(A)

The Oyster Bay Chamber of Commerce ISSUES IN OYSTER BAY AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

This preliminary proposal lists a variety of important issues that effect the quality of life for the businesses of Oyster Bay. The ultimate goal is to stimulate economic development for all of Oyster Bay hamlet. By increasing the number of quality stores for shoppers, safer parking, pedestrian traffic, and safer driving, the community will remain competitive well into the 21st century.

1) Tourism

- a) Establish a bicycle path to Bayville from Jacobson's Ship Yard.
- b) Restore D.C. Electric Power Station for use as a Tourist Information Center and museum.
- c) Fully operational Steam engine or dual mode with a dining car running from New York City to Oyster Bay roundtrip during peak tourist season.
- d) Extend Roosevelt Park from its current location to include waterfront properties up to South Street as amphitheatre (NYS Route 106).

2) Increased pedestrian traffic

- a) Include pedestrians when configuring traffic patterns by introducing crosswalk lights that are integrated with vehicular traffic flow.
- b) Connect parking lots with adequate lighting to business district and encourage business district development.
- c) Make arrangements to integrate merchandise deliveries smoothly into the community without creating traffic obstructions.

3) Crime

- a) Decrease crime by increasing the visibility of the Police force, e.g., mounted patrols, foot patrols, etc.
- b) Stricter enforcement of Building code to prevent overcrowding, illegal apartments, poor maintenance and unsafe building practices.
- c) Create a 24 hour neighborhood watch to reduce burden on the Police. The inability to park Friday morning from 3am to 7am in certain areas is a deterrent to attracting responsible residents to available apartments in the downtown districts.
- d) Quick removal of graphitti by both the private and public sectors.
- e) Introduce programs that give teens the opportunity for a sense of ownership of their communities (e.g. work study programs).

5) Environmental Issues

- a) Air pollution due to the heavy volume of diesel trucks entering Oyster Bay Village during a twenty four hour period.
- b) Introduce a jitney that would serve to reduce negative traffic and facilitate movement in and surrounding Oyster Bay.

OYSTER BAY CIVIC ASSOCIATION

ISSUES IN OYSTER BAY AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

1) Apartments and Illegal Housing

- aggressively enforce existing town laws to prevent illegal housing
- adopt special task force to enforce laws
- motivate police department to give OB more attention
- move police booth down to center of town
- consider evening foot-post police patrol
- urge Justice Dept to investigate drug trafficking in town

2) Parking & Roads

- investigate head-in parking options, one-way streets
- require town employees to park in the lot near Roosevelt School
- use technology & design ideas to create more parking in existing lots
- like Huntington Village, repaint crosswalks and install signage reminding motorists of the pedestrian right-of-way

3) Aesthetics

- investigate funding for improved sidewalks
- investigate funding for sidewalk lamps, signage
- investigate funding for commercial storefront cleanup

4) Morale Boost

- generate a good public relations campaign to get the residents involved
- use mailings, speeches and advertising campaign to create momentum
- revitalize Oyster Bay...

TOWN BOARD ISSUES

1) Incorporation

- provide a liaison with TOB to help determine financial implications of incorporating hamlet

2) Town Meetings

- Open town meetings to the floor (currently citizens have to request time)
- Allow podium to face the public and not just the Town Board
- Quicker turn-around on minutes of Town Meetings
- Publish Town Meeting Minutes on the web in PDF format



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The Oyster Bay Historical Society has a number of issues which are of concern to our members and Board. We believe that the Town of Oyster Bay, working in conjunction with some Oyster Bay village agency, could address these concerns:

- incorporation of one or more historic districts in downtown Oyster Bay
- promote adaptive reuse of existing historic structures, rather than tearing them down, as a means of assuring architectural continuity in the downtown
- make available the Oyster Bay Historical Society's extensive photograph archives to local business and home owners interested in restoring their properties
- inaugurate a revolving preservation fund which would permit the purchase, restoration, and resale of historic structures with protective covenants attached to the deed
- give the Landmarks ordinance some "teeth;" as the current law stands, the owner of a landmarked property could tear the building down and only suffer a \$250 fine!
- resurrect the Oyster Bay Preservation Group as a means of assisting the Landmarks Commission by filling out applications for landmark status and submitting them to the commission for review
- set up through some agency a means of architectural review, whether it be a business or dwelling, which would be accepted by the Town's permit process
- speed up the process by which Locomotive #35 can be procured from Nassau County, brought up to the Oyster Bay train station, and restoration work can be resumed on the locomotive
- set up a program by which business and home owners could avail themselves of low (or no) interest loans to restore their building's facade