

I. EAST MARION HAMLET CENTER OVERVIEW:

East Marion, originally known as Oysterpond Upper Neck, later named Rocky Point was founded in 1646. The present name of the hamlet honors General Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox" of the American Revolution. East Marion is well known as the headquarters of an active lifesaving station which over the years, rescued numerous mariners whose ships were wrecked on the treacherous rocks of the Sound. The hamlet's maritime heritage is evident in the local nickname of "shad-eyes", which is a reference to local fisherman. East Marion houses the only memorial post office in the United States. It has been operating since 1949 as a working memorial to veterans of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam.

East Marion's Hamlet Center is one of the smallest in the Town covering 6.7 acres, and including 5 separate parcels (Figure EM-1).

II. EAST MARION HAMLET VISION:

Looking toward the future, East Marion's hamlet vision includes several fundamental components:

- Strengthen and reinforce rural agricultural character of the land around the Hamlet Center.
- Preserve the small scale nature of the Hamlet Center as the focus of community life.
- Prevent larger scale commercial development. The Hamlet Center's commercial extent is extremely limited, and should remain so. Larger scale commercial development is clearly inconsistent with the Hamlet Center's character. Large scale in this context not only refers to the square footage of a given facility, but also to the intensity of use, the volume of traffic generated, the nature of the intended market (i.e. targeting a larger market, and not simply the hamlet itself), the extent of site improvements, like off-street parking lots or sewage disposal systems, etc.
- While not part of the Hamlet Center, the satellite limited commercial area at the corner of Rocky Point Road should remain intact.
- Opportunities for new residential development exist in East Marion. A new HALO zone should be designed to accommodate a variety of housing types, at a density of 1/2 acre. (1 dwelling/20,000 square feet of lot area).
- Embrace a diversity of housing types, such as townhouses, attached single family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, etc., within the overall context of the existing character of the Hamlet.
- The creation of affordable "workforce" housing is a priority.
- Accessory apartments are viewed as a viable method to accommodate additional growth.

Figure EM-2 presents the effective boundary of the new HALO zone. Figure EM-3 displays lands within the HALO boundary where development cannot take place due to the presence of environmental constraints, or as a result of previous land protection efforts.

III. HAMLET STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES:

Early in the process, the Stakeholders conducted a “strengths and weaknesses” exercise. Stakeholders identified major issues, some of which were viewed as strengths while others were viewed as hamlet weaknesses. These were compiled in the matrix below, and each issue was then carefully evaluated and an action assigned to each; *preserve, add, remove or prohibit.*

East Marion’s rural character, open space and agricultural lands, parks, fishing and water sports natural beauty, quiet, views, historic homes, small business district and its people are all examples of strengths that should be preserved.

The Stakeholders found numerous areas where improvements can be made in East Marion. Specifically, expanding agricultural opportunities on underutilized lands, elimination of nuisance deer populations, creating a better configured, more usable Hamlet Center, eliminating poor quality ugly housing, sprawl, and traffic problems along Route 25 were identified as weaknesses that need to be addressed.

TABLE EM-1 East Marion’s Strengths & Weaknesses				
GOALS	PRESERVE	ADD	REMOVE	PROHIBIT
Quality of Life				
Beaches at the end of most streets	✓			
Rural character	✓			
Open space/agricultural lands	✓	✓		
Parks	✓	✓		
Fishing/water sports	✓			
Natural beauty	✓			
Quiet	✓			
Views from the causeway	✓			
The people	✓			
Location				
Old school house park should be the center of the hamlet			✓	
Hamlet within walking distance of entire community	✓			
Linear community, no center			✓	
No community/civic center		✓		
Housing				
Large, underutilized housing stock	✓			
Historic homes	✓			
Ugly housing development			✓	✓
Development of St Thomas Home property				
Sprawl				✓

Traffic/Transportation				
No traffic light				
Route 25 traffic			✓	✓
Bisected by highway			✓	
Business				
Small business district	✓			
Character of Blue Dolphin			✓	
No commercial activity		✓		
Need a mini-mart		✓		

IV. SPECIFIC HAMLET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT RECOMENDATIONS:

Throughout the course of the Hamlet Study, the Stakeholders were asked to compile lists of specific improvements or projects they may wish to see implemented. One of the final exercises involved refining these lists to reflect the consensus of the Stakeholders.

The following recommendations are organized according to the *Hamlet Sustainability Principles* described in Section III of the Town-wide analysis.

1. Gateways:

- ✓ The development of an well designed gateway is recommended. The gateway should include signage welcoming visitors to the historic hamlet of East Marion, and should identify features such as farming, fishing and hunting.
- ✓ A visible and well designed gateway can serve the dual purpose of providing a degree of traffic calming. The gateway might reinforce the speed limit, indicate enforcement measures or include a radar speed clock with the design itself.

2. Building Design:

- ✓ Establish a pre-submission requirement for all HALO projects where input can be solicited from stakeholders regarding project design, aesthetics, etc. prior to the formal review of the project by the Planning Board. This new step in the process will allow for local input to be incorporated into the project at the earliest stage, thereby expediting the formal review and minimizing neighborhood conflicts.
- ✓ A new "village green" Hamlet Center focal point is recommended. This village green can utilize the land behind the Post Office and Fire House as well as the neighboring Kortsolakis property. Reorienting the existing buildings to focus on the green, along with the addition of new buildings (perhaps a small market) along with reconfigured parking, and a new design focal point (a monument, clock, fountain, gazebo, landscaping etc), will reorient the Hamlet Center away from Route 25, which is dangerous and generally unpleasant due to traffic volumes, toward a new traditionally configured village core. This recommendation represents a very unique opportunity to create, almost from scratch, a new Hamlet Center. Nowhere else in Town does such an opportunity exist.
- ✓ Diversity in building design adds a degree of excitement and uniqueness to the Hamlet Center, and it is encouraged. This diversity however, must not jeopardize the areas historic character or resources.

3. Streetscape:

- ✓ One of the attractive aspects of the Hamlet Center's streetscape are its lovely street trees. Preserving these trees however, requires an on-going commitment. A street tree planting program is recommended that incorporates regular pruning and maintenance as well as the replacement of damaged or dead trees.

4. Vehicular Circulation:

- ✓ Orient ferry traffic is excessive and problematic. Methods to mitigate this problem should be aggressively pursued through all available avenues, and continually reassessed, reevaluated and adjusted accordingly.
- ✓ Aggressive traffic calming measures are necessary. The full range of options such as speed bumps, raised and textured crosswalks, chokers and curb extensions, pedestrian refuges, roundabouts, chicanes, cautionary signage, pavement striping, rumble strips, and break-away bollards in center of road, etc., should be considered for use. Any and all traffic calming measures employed must be "farmer friendly."
- ✓ A traffic light should not be placed in East Marion. If traffic volumes meet warrants for the installation of a light, it should be installed closer to the ferry.
- ✓ It is recommended that the posted speed limit through the Hamlet Center be reduced, and violations should be aggressively enforced.
- ✓ One method to minimize the continuous flow of ferry traffic is to work with ferry to stagger departing vehicles. Staggering groups of vehicles by no more than 1 minute, will provide sufficient separation to allow relatively normal vehicle movements along Route 25 to take place.
- ✓ Create an new access and vehicle circulation loop through the interior of the Hamlet Center, behind the Post Office and Fire House, and combining with the adjacent Kortsolakis property. This new loop would support the new "village green" Hamlet Center focal point. The primary purpose of the loop would be to get traffic destined for the Hamlet Center off Route 25, and into a safe and efficient traffic pattern that is seamlessly integrated with the newly created hamlet Center village green.
- ✓ Evaluate all sight distance impediments at driveways and intersections and correct as required. Impediments include utility poles, signs, un-kempt landscaping and street trees, fences, etc. Often, these structures are privately owned and constructed illegally within the right-of-way.

5. Pedestrian Circulation:

- ✓ Evaluate the feasibility of creating new crosswalks across Route 25 at Bay Avenue to the Hamlet Center and at the church to East Marion Park.
- ✓ A very effective method to allow for access to and enjoyment of East Marion's open space resources is to develop a trails system. Such a system, incorporating existing as well as new trails, could connect features such as the school house park, Dam Pond, etc.
- ✓ In addition to the development of a walking/hiking trail system, consideration should simultaneously be given to the development of a bikeway trail.