

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Hempstead Harbor is an arm of Long Island Sound, located on the north shore of Long Island. The shoreline of the harbor includes parts of eight different municipalities, which are listed as follows, running counterclockwise from the northwest corner of the harbor: Village of Sands Point, Port Washington area of the Town of North Hempstead, Village of Flower Hill, Village of Roslyn, Village of Roslyn Harbor, Glenwood Landing (which spans between the Towns of North Hempstead and Oyster Bay), Village of Sea Cliff, and City of Glen Cove. This multi-municipal jurisdictional setting creates the type of management challenge which in other areas has hindered real progress in advancing effective solutions to problems.

In recognizing their shared interests and the benefits that can be derived from inter-municipal and inter-agency cooperation, the Hempstead Harbor communities established the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee (HHPC) in 1995. The HHPC has overseen the preparation of a *Water Quality Improvement Plan* for Hempstead Harbor, which was completed in 1998, and subsequently has been a critical catalyst for advancing (and obtaining outside funding for) a wide range of projects across the harbor's communities. Most recently, the HHPC, in conjunction with the New York State Department of State, has served as the advisory/steering committee for the preparation of this Harbor Management Plan.

Hempstead Harbor is a relatively narrow embayment, especially in its lower reaches. The harbor width is less than one-half mile as far north as Sea Cliff, which is located about three miles north of the mouth of the creek (i.e., Roslyn Creek) at the head of the harbor. From there, the harbor widens progressively towards its mouth, attaining a width of about a mile at Morgan Memorial Park in Glen Cove and about four and one-half miles at the harbor mouth (i.e., along the line spanning between Prospect Point in the Village of Sands Point and Matinecock Point in the City of Glen Cove). This overall configuration, as well as the presence of the Bar Beach spit (which extends about two-thirds of the way across the harbor from its western shore at a distance of about one and one-half miles from the mouth of Roslyn Creek), protects the lower portion of Hempstead Harbor from storm waves under most circumstances.

Because of its sheltered nature, and the abundant natural resources present, Hempstead Harbor was favored by indigenous peoples, who first may have appeared in this area as

early as 3500 B.C. Later, the harbor became an important focal point of colonial settlement, with bustling centers of maritime commerce springing up at Roslyn and Glen Cove and homesteads established in the surrounding area. The status of Roslyn as a maritime center declined dramatically in the latter half of the 1800s due to shoaling caused primarily by sediment discharges that were accelerated by development and other human activities in the adjacent uplands. However, other portions of the harbor — notably including Glen Cove Creek, Glenwood Landing, and the western shoreline in the Port Washington area — continued to support a booming maritime commercial/industrial base.

Within the last few decades, economic conditions and other factors have resulted in the demise of many once-prominent industries along the Hempstead Harbor shoreline, and the gradual transformation of derelict industrial sites to other uses that generally are less intense than had previously operated on these locations. While support for this trend has been virtually unanimous among the harbor's communities, who have sought for many years to have the affected properties converted to productive reuse, the transformation has not been an easy one. Many of the involved sites became significantly contaminated during the industrial era, with several such parcels still needing substantial, and costly, remediation before they are ready for redevelopment.

The enduring need for water-dependent commercial uses in the Hempstead Harbor area remains evident. Such uses have no alternative but to be located at the shorefront, since they require direct access to the water in order to function. Hempstead Harbor remains well-suited to such uses, in terms of navigational considerations, with deep waters remaining at Glenwood Landing, along the Port Washington shoreline, and in the federally-maintained Glen Cove Creek channel. Many such uses (e.g., petroleum and aggregate shipments, marine salvage, marinas, boat yards, etc.) continue to operate in these areas, providing important services to the surrounding communities and the region, and making significant contributions to the local economy and tax base.

Recreational boating is an important activity in Hempstead Harbor. During a typical recent boating season, the harbor has accommodated a combined total of approximately 1,300 recreational vessels in moorings and dockage, about 80 percent of which are accounted for by public and private marina slips.

The harbor also continues to serve a vital function for other recreational activities for the residents of the surrounding area, as it has for many years, with abundant beaches, parks, historic landmarks, and other such facilities. In fact, there has been a pronounced trend in recent years for the expenditure of public funds to expand and enhance the harbor's recreational assets, including completed and planned land acquisitions, facility improvements, augmented linkages, and similar actions. Additionally, focus has been

placed on the restoration of ecological resources in and around the harbor, including habitat restoration initiatives and stormwater mitigation projects, in an effort to reverse damages that resulted from past activities.

The primary challenge for the future of Hempstead Harbor will be to achieve an appropriate balance among the diverse interests that benefit from the harbor's myriad assets. This can only be attained by means of a coordinated program of actions by the harbor's municipalities, in cooperation with other involved agencies, to address issues that are hindering achievement of harbor management goals and to take advantage of available opportunities for advancing these goals.

1.2 HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN SCOPE

The information presented in the remainder of this document is outlined briefly as follows:

Chapter 1

Section 1.3 — Delineation of the Harbor Management Plan boundary

Section 1.4 — Summary of the planning process, including authority for the preparation of the plan and public input opportunities

Section 1.5 — Enumeration of the goals of this HMP

Section 1.6 — Description of the benefits that the municipalities derive from completing the HMP

Chapter 2 — Synopsis of the roles played by the public agencies and private organizations that are expected to be involved in actions to implement this HMP.

Chapter 3 — Comprehensive inventory of existing conditions in the HMP study area.

Chapter 4 — Report prepared under the New York State Quality Communities program. This investigation provides a more detailed analysis of a number of properties in the HMP study area which possess significant development or redevelopment potential, and which collectively will play a critical role in the future economic vitality and community quality of the Hempstead Harbor area.

Chapter 5 — Analysis of issues of concern in the HMP study area.

Section 5.1 — Identification of key issues, arranged by harbor management goal

Section 5.2 — Discussion of results of questionnaire surveys conducted as part of this HMP

Chapter 6 — Harbor management recommendations, including a table of implementation priorities based on analysis by the member municipalities.

1.3 HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN BOUNDARY

As described in Section 1.1, the study area comprises the harborfront portions of eight local municipalities (two towns, five villages, and one city), and includes the entire water area of Hempstead Harbor, with the northern boundary being defined by a line extending between Prospect Point in the Village of Sands Point on the west side and Matinecock Point in the City of Glen Cove on the east side. In accordance with the State guidelines for Harbor Management Plans, the study area automatically includes all waterfront parcels, but in this case has been expanded somewhat to include certain inland parcels that were considered by the HHPC to be important and relevant to the harbor management goals. The final HMP boundary is illustrated on Map 3.1 (in Chapter 3 of this report).

1.4 HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

In 1992, the New York State Legislature adopted an amendment to the Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act (Article 42 of the Executive Law) that enhances the ability of municipalities to effectively manage the waterways within their jurisdiction through the preparation of a Harbor Management Plan (HMP). After the 1992 amendment to Article 42 was passed, the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) developed and issued *Guidelines for the Preparation of Harbor Management Plans*. This HMP has been prepared in accordance with those *Guidelines*.

Technical assistance to the HHPC in completing this HMP has been provided by Cashin Associates, P.C., whose work has been supported by an Environmental Protection Fund grant awarded and administered by NYSDOS. This report also contains the product of a planning initiative under the New York State Quality Communities program, which has been funded by a distinct NYSDOS grant, but is closely related to the Harbor Management Plan. The Quality Communities component of this plan is presented separately as Chapter 4 of this document.

As noted previously, the HHPC, in conjunction with NYSDOS, has served as an advisory/steering committee for the preparation of this Harbor Management Plan. The HHPC's membership includes representation from all nine municipalities (two towns, five villages, and one city, as well as Nassau County) that adjoin the harbor. However, the HMP, once "finalized" to the satisfaction of the HHPC, still will have to be presented to the legislative bodies of the involved municipalities for their official acceptance.

The preparation of this HMP was initiated when the Hempstead Harbor communities realized that there is a common need to address issues affecting the harbor and that only through a comprehensive planning process embodied in an HMP can effective solutions be achieved to the mutual benefit of all. Many of the individual municipalities have undertaken their own waterfront development or redevelopment plans to address local concerns; however, that type of planning can only provide solutions that are applicable to the limited waterfront area of the individual community that prepared the plan, and may not fully take into consideration harbor-wide issues. The HMP provides an effective tool for addressing issues that affect the entire harbor across municipal boundaries.

The contents of this HMP reflect input provided by the HHPC during a number of its regular meetings, including comments regarding draft versions of the report that were prepared by Cashin Associates. Additionally, separate meetings were held with representatives from the individual municipalities in order to discuss priority issues, concerns, and potential solutions, and to obtain relevant information for the inventory portion of the plan. In order to help members of the HHPC obtain a comprehensive view of relevant conditions in and around the harbor, a shoreline survey was conducted by boat on August 15, 2001, and the surrounding upland portion of the HMP study area was surveyed by bus (with stops at key locations) the following day.

Broader commentary for the HMP was received from area residents, businesses, and civic groups during a number of public meetings. On July 11, 2002 a special "stakeholders" meeting was held at Flower Hill Village Hall which was attended by local business and agency representatives. On September 26, 2002 a public meeting for area residents was held at Bryant Library in Roslyn. The participants at these two meetings received a draft version of harbor management goals and issues to guide the discussion; the public meeting also included a slide presentation to provide an overview of conditions around the harbor, including a description of key parcels of land on the waterfront. Additionally, a questionnaire survey was distributed to both groups. The stakeholders were mailed their surveys prior to the meeting, whereas the residents were given the surveys on the evening of the meeting, and allowed time to complete all of the questions. The resident survey subsequently was distributed to a wider audience via targeted mailings and other means of distribution by the HHPC, the Town of Oyster Bay, and local civic organizations. The results of the surveys are discussed in Section 5.2.

A draft Harbor Management Plan report was accepted by the HHPC on February 11, 2004 and subsequently was distributed for public review. A public hearing was held at the Bryant Library on March 2, 2004 to present a summary of the key elements of the HMP and to receive comments and answer questions. Appendix F contains a summary of this meeting. Thereafter, the HMP report was finalized based on comments received at the public hearing, as well as comments provided by NYSDOS. This final report has been accepted by the HHPC and, upon acceptance by NYSDOS, will be forwarded to the member municipalities for adoption.

1.5 HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS

Harbor management goals were developed to provide the overall framework for identifying key issues and formulating recommendations to address these issues; and, eventually, will be used for evaluating whether future actions are consistent with the HMP. Preliminary goals were drafted by Cashin Associates for consideration by the HHPC and, based on comments received, these goals were amended.

The guiding principle of the HMP is to provide a mechanism for the various municipalities that share Hempstead Harbor to work cooperatively in an effort to address priority issues related to the wise use and protection of the harbor's surface waters, natural resources, underwater lands, and shorefront. With this principle in mind, the following goals have been established for the Hempstead Harbor HMP, not necessarily listed in order of importance:

Goal #1: Ensure efficient and safe navigation and operating conditions in Hempstead Harbor.

Goal #2: Protect Hempstead Harbor's water-dependent uses, and promote the siting of new water-dependent uses at suitable locations, without impacting important natural resources.

Goal #3: Redevelop vacant and underutilized waterfront land on Hempstead Harbor with appropriate uses.

Goal #4: Increase water-related recreational opportunities within Hempstead Harbor and along the harbor's shoreline, and increase public access to the waterfront.

Goal #5: Protect and enhance Hempstead Harbor’s natural environment and open space resources, including surface water quality, wetlands, coastal fish and wildlife habitats, upland natural areas, and important viewsheds.

Goal #6: Preserve important historical resources along the waterfront of Hempstead Harbor.

Goal #7: Improve linkages between the Hempstead Harbor waterfront and adjacent downtown areas.

Goal #8: Engage in a collaborative effort among the municipalities surrounding Hempstead Harbor, by means of innovative inter-municipal planning and community development techniques that link environmental protection, economic prosperity, and community well-being, so as to ensure effective long-term community, regional, and watershed vitality.

Goal #9: Recognize and build upon the unique characteristics and circumstances of Hempstead Harbor and its watershed in developing approaches to the following concepts: revitalizing existing communities and promoting livable neighborhoods; preserving open space and critical environmental resources; encouraging sustainable economic development; improving partnerships, service-sharing arrangements, and collaborative projects; and heightening public awareness.

Under each of these goals, the HHPC, with the assistance of Cashin Associates and with input from the public, identified a series of issues which represent problems that hinder or opportunities that would serve to advance each goal. The issues are described in Section 5.1.

1.6 BENEFITS OF A COMPLETED HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

An adopted HMP, one that is fully supported by all of the municipalities involved, renders many advantages and benefits to those municipalities and their residents. Specifically, the HMP will become:

A Plan for Now and the Future to Achieve Agreed-Upon Objectives

The adopted HMP describes the wisest and best use of the harbor’s resources. Each local government will be able to more effectively pursue agreed-upon actions for the harbor area in order to achieve common goals and objectives. Local officials also will be able to respond with increased knowledge and purpose to future proposals and events affecting

these waters. It should be noted that the HMP is not a static document; it can (and should) be revised as new issues and solutions become apparent.

A Plan That Becomes the Basis for Decision-Making

An adopted HMP becomes the basis for decision-making. As a result, the regulatory process will become more predictable and efficient. Government agencies will be able to respond to private sector development proposals with a quicker “yes” or “no”. Proposed actions that are not consistent with the HMP, and which cannot be modified to be consistent, should not proceed. Government agencies, having participated in preparing the HMP, will conduct their activities in a manner that is consistent with the plan’s goals and objectives. This includes government agency actions related to funding, permitting, or direct actions.

A Plan That Attracts Funds and Technical Assistance for Implementation

An adopted HMP containing investment priorities can help to attract both public and private investment in waterfront projects since the plan demonstrates the local government commitment to the harbor area. Approved harbor management plans convince funding entities that projects have widespread community support and are realistic, and that project funds will be spent well. As a result, the local governments in the harbor area are more likely to be successful in obtaining county, state, and federal grants to implement their plan. In addition, these communities are more likely to receive technical assistance from a variety of government agencies to implement their plan.

The plan will also demonstrate to private sector investors the local commitment to the harbor. As a result, the plan will give investors confidence in the future of the commercial waterfront area and the harbor area as a whole. Increased investor confidence can result in development projects to improve existing businesses or to establish new businesses and amenities that are consistent with the HMP.

A Plan That Provides Economic Benefits

The HMP is expected to result in the following additional economic benefits:

- By maintaining or improving upon the positive economic aspects of the present built environment, commercial and residential property values will be protected and enhanced.

- Increased predictability and efficiency in the regulatory process will result in less expenditure of time and funds by project applicants and less time consumed by government agencies for project reviews.
- By establishing investment priorities, more efficient and effective use will be made of limited public dollars. Establishing investment priorities will also serve to stimulate private sector activities and investments.
- The HMP increases the likelihood that county, state and federal grants can be obtained. This will reduce the cost to local governments for needed or beneficial harbor improvements.
- Provisions for new or improved amenities in the harbor's business districts will strengthen tourism and benefit area businesses.
- Positive economic benefits to residents and harbor users will be derived from conflict resolution. By defining harbor use areas for moorings and navigation, there will be fewer water use conflicts. Fewer conflicts means less time and energy wasted over competition for moorings and areas to navigate.
- Protecting and enhancing natural resources will ensure that Hempstead Harbor remains an attractive place for visitors, area residents and waterfront property owners. A clean environment is a key contributor to quality of life, and is also important to sustaining commercial and residential property values.
- Water quality improvements through more effective land use practices would provide a number of benefits. These include: enhanced aesthetics and recreational enjoyment; reduced threat of beach closures; and, possibly, as a long-term goal, the opening of currently closed shellfish harvest areas, which would increase the value of the shellfish industry, enhance the income of commercial fishermen, and provide increased recreational opportunities for area residents.