

**Analysis of Business Districts on
Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road
Mastic Beach, Town of Brookhaven,
Suffolk County, New York**

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Development and Population History

The communities of Mastic, Mastic Beach, and Shirley together comprise a 21 square mile area in the southeast area of Brookhaven Town. The focus of this report is the southern portion of those communities, specifically the area surrounding Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road in Mastic Beach and southern Mastic.

Before 1920 there was almost no development in the lower Shirley, Mastic and Mastic Beach area. In the 1920s, Mastic Beach was subdivided in a grid pattern, with small lots for sale for possible development as a summer home and marina community. The first subdivision of Mastic Beach was opened in 1926. A 1930 aerial photo of the area shows only a handful of homes in the area. Although Mastic Road and Neighborhood Road existed, there was no development along either road in 1930. Nine other subdivisions opened in Mastic Beach by 1938 with numerous summer homes constructed in the area. When the hurricane of 1938 struck, hundreds of bungalow homes were swept away, but very few residents lived there year-round at the time.

After World War II, some of the bungalows began to be converted into year-round homes. The area became a source of moderately priced housing for young families. The Smith Point Bridge to Fire Island was completed in 1959 and Smith Point County Park opened on Fire Island in 1964. The number of seasonal housing units in Mastic Beach declined in the 1970s, and there were 958 seasonal homes in Mastic Beach in 1980. Nevertheless, in 1980 Mastic Beach still had the 8th highest number of seasonal housing units of all communities in Suffolk County. By 2000, the number of seasonal homes in Mastic Beach and the surrounding area was

about one-third of what it was just 20 years prior. See Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Seasonal Homes, Mastic Beach, Mastic, and Shirley, 1980-2000.

Year	Mastic Beach	Mastic	Shirley	Area Total
1980	958	170	314	1,442
1990	486	68	188	742
2000	348	72*	122	542*

*Census boundary revision. Data are not exactly comparable to previous years.

Source: U. S. Census Bureau

Since 1950, the year-round population in the Mastic-Shirley area (The Mastic-Shirley area includes the hamlets of Mastic, Mastic Beach, and Shirley) has steadily increased. Population growth has been generated by the continued conversion of former summer homes to year-round use and significant in-fill construction of new year-round homes. By 2000, there were 4,375 housing units in Mastic Beach, and only 348 of them (8%) were seasonal homes. The percentage of seasonal homes in Mastic and Shirley was even lower than in Mastic Beach. Table 2 shows the population change in the Mastic-Shirley area since 1950.

Table 2. Historical Population of Mastic Beach, Mastic, and Shirley.

Year	Mastic Beach	Mastic	Shirley	Area Total
1950	1,079	N/A	N/A	N/A
1960	3,035	2,931	2,986	8,952
1970	4,870	4,118	6,280	15,268
1980	8,318	10,413*	18,072*	36,803*
1990	10,293	13,642	22,936	46,871
2000	11,543	15,165*	25,395	52,103*
2003	11,956	15,824	26,311	54,091

*Census Bureau boundary revision. Data are not exactly comparable to previous years.

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, LIPA (2003 estimate), Suffolk County Planning Department

The Mastic-Shirley area is the most densely populated area in eastern Brookhaven Town because of relatively small building lot sizes and the preponderance of residential development. While the Town of Brookhaven had a 2003 density of 1,800 persons per square mile, the density in Mastic was 3,659, in Mastic Beach it was 2,826, and Shirley it was 2,364. The three community area had a density of 2,740 persons per square mile in 2003. Construction of new homes on remaining vacant lots is expected to continue. In 1997, the Suffolk County Planning Department estimated that the population in the Mastic-Shirley-Mastic Beach area south of the railroad tracks would increase by 20% between 1990 and saturation when all land is developed according to existing zoning.

Local Retail Centers

By the 1960s, a small business district had formed on Neighborhood Road in Mastic Beach to serve the growing number of households in the area. In 2005, roughly the same buildings exist as in 1966. A few new buildings have been added, but a few buildings were removed on the north side of Neighborhood Road west of Elder Drive.

In 1966, there were a few very scattered commercial structures on Mastic Road between Meadowmere Avenue and

Mastic Beach Road. In 1974, the 15,000 square foot shopping center now known as Manzella Shopping Plaza was constructed on Mastic Beach Road just off Mastic Road in Mastic Beach. By 2005, there were more numerous commercial structures in the area, but development was still scattered in nature.

There are no downtown business districts within three miles of Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road. The closest downtown center is in Center Moriches on Montauk Highway. This business district is slightly more than three miles away and has approximately 60 stores. Within one mile of the Mastic Road and Neighborhood Road study area, there are no other shopping centers or central business districts greater than 10,000 square feet in size. For this reason, a modest expansion of the business districts in Mastic Beach may be feasible.

Between one and three miles away, there are numerous shopping centers of various sizes. There are several significant shopping clusters within three miles of Mastic Beach. These retail centers contain a total of more than one million square feet of space. Table 3 displays information on all of the retail centers within three miles, including the small Mastic Beach business district and the Manzella Shopping Plaza just off Mastic Road.

Table 3. Retail Centers Within Three Miles of Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road

Center Name	Community	Address	Square Footage	Major Stores	Year Built
Mastic Beach business district	Mastic Beach	Neighborhood Rd.	48,000	—	—
Manzella Shopping Plaza	Mastic Beach	193-203 Mastic Beach Rd.	15,000	—	1974
Bell Plaza	Mastic	1682-1708 Montauk Hwy.	43,000	Movieland	1973
1495 Plaza	Mastic	1495 Montauk Hwy.	14,000	—	1992
Towne Plaza	Mastic	1355 Montauk Hwy.	10,000	—	1988
Downtown Mastic Plaza	Mastic	1494-1498 Montauk Hwy.	6,500	—	Before 1966
Mastic Shirley Plaza	Mastic	1265 Montauk Hwy.	3,500	—	1988
South Port	Shirley	999 William Floyd Pkwy.	250,000	Kohl's Waldbaums, Sears Hardware	1990
William Floyd Plaza	Shirley	197-273 William Floyd Pkwy.	178,000	Home Depot, King Kullen, Eckerd	1977
Majestic Corners	Shirley	800 Montauk Hwy.	110,000	Pathmark, Amaz. Savings	1981
—	Shirley	803 Montauk Hwy.	35,000	Eckerd	Before 1966
Shirley Plaza	Shirley	51-59 Surrey Circle	28,000	—	1973
The Green	Shirley	447-467 William Floyd Pkwy.	18,000	Family Dollar	1978
Quality Plaza	Shirley	532-534 William Floyd Pkwy.	18,000	OTB	1987
Laundry Plaza	Shirley	579 Montauk Hwy.	18,000	—	2003
—	Shirley	44 Surrey Circle	12,000	Aid Auto	1988
Floyd Harbor Plaza	Shirley	464 William Floyd Pkwy.	11,000	—	1989
—	Shirley	895 Montauk Hwy.	10,000	—	1973
William Floyd Plaza	Shirley	234 William Floyd Pkwy.	8,000	—	1993
Station Shopping Ctr.	Shirley	136 Mastic Blvd. West	7,000	—	Before 1966
—	Shirley	862 Montauk Hwy.	5,500	—	1993
Floyd Harbor Commons	Shirley	427-433 William Floyd Pkwy.	5,500	—	1978
Monarch Center	Moriches	225 Montauk Hwy.	28,000	—	1992
—	Moriches	794-812 Montauk Hwy.	52,000	Waldbaums	1974
Old Neck Market	Moriches	760 Montauk Hwy.	11,000	—	1991
Senix Commons	Center Moriches	625 Montauk Hwy.	10,000	—	1988
Center Moriches Square	Center Moriches	514-552 Montauk Hwy.	70,000	King Kullen, CVS	1964
TOTAL			1,025,000		

Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

On Montauk Highway in Shirley, approximately two miles north of the study area, there is a cluster of shopping centers. The largest shopping center in that area (and the largest in the entire Mastic-Shirley area) is South Port, a 250,000 community center

built in 1990. Because the closest large regional shopping centers (Smith Haven Mall and Tanger Outlet Center) are nearly 20 miles from Mastic-Shirley, South Port contains some national retailers found in regional centers. The other large shopping

centers on Montauk Highway in Shirley are the 110,000 square foot Majestic Corners built in 1981 and a 35,000 square foot commercial building built more than 35 years ago that now contains Eckerd drugs and other retailers.

There are also several shopping centers on William Floyd Parkway, the largest of which is the 178,000 square foot William Floyd Plaza (containing Home Depot), built in 1977 and recently expanded. Other large shopping centers in the Mastic-Shirley area include the 41,000 square foot Bell Plaza (with Movieland Cinemas, built in 1973) in Mastic, the 52,000 square foot Waldbaums shopping center in Moriches (built in 1974), and the 70,000 square foot Center Moriches Square (containing King Kullen) in Center Moriches, built in 1964. With the exception of South Port, most of the large shopping centers in the area were built in the 1960s and 1970s.

The three mile area surrounding the Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road area is served by several large retailers. Within three miles, there are five supermarkets, five large drug stores, two large home improvement stores and one department store. There are no wholesale club stores within three miles.

Proposed Retail Centers

Future additional shopping center development in the area is possible. In 2002 developer Wilbur Breslin proposed building two new large shopping centers on Montauk Highway in Moriches, a 147,000 square foot and an 81,000 square foot center. A 63,000 square foot “downtown style” shopping center (with parking in the rear of shops) near the intersection of William Floyd Parkway and Montauk Highway in Shirley

has been proposed.

In 2004, after two years of study and consultations with local residents, the Town of Brookhaven produced its *Montauk Highway Corridor Study and Land Use plan For Mastic and Shirley*. The study envisioned three neighborhood downtown centers along Montauk Highway, with a mix of retail, service, office and high density residential. The three areas are the Shirley Main Street District near South Port shopping center centering on Grand Avenue; Mastic West Main Street District centering on Titmus Drive; and Mastic East Main Street District centering on Herkimer Street near Mastic Road.

If built as envisioned, these three proposed downtown districts would add significant retail center square footage to the area. The square footage of commercial space in these proposed downtown areas was estimated by scaling the proposed layout maps on pages 27 through 31 of the *Montauk Highway Corridor Study and Land Use plan For Mastic and Shirley*. The Shirley downtown area would be 373,000 square feet, the Mastic West would be 172,000 square feet, and Mastic East would be 141,000 square feet. When existing shopping centers in these areas are excluded, **the net increase in square footage would be 362,000 square feet for downtown Shirley, 158,000 square feet for Mastic West, and 98,000 for Mastic East.**

In early 2005, the zoning was changed to J-6 commercial in two of the three proposed downtown areas, Shirley and Mastic East, which will help enable the development pattern envisioned in the *Montauk Highway Corridor Study and Land Use Plan For Mastic and Shirley* for these two areas to occur. The addition of commercial square footage in these two

areas is important when analyzing the business areas of Mastic Road and Neighborhood Road, since the downtown areas proposed for Montauk Highway are 1.5 miles from the Mastic Road business area and 3 miles from the Neighborhood Road business district.

Retail Square Footage Per Capita

Several areas in Brookhaven Town were selected to compare per capita retail square footage to that of the Mastic-Shirley area. These areas were selected because they are similar in geographic size to Mastic-Shirley, they have some significant retail development but like Mastic-Shirley they are not major retail destinations such as Patchogue or Lake Grove. Retail square footage includes only planned shopping centers (including small strip centers) and definable downtown districts within these census designated areas.

Table 4 details the commercial square footage in shopping centers, downtown districts, and per capita in the Mastic-Shirley area and in the selected areas of Brookhaven Town.

At 16.4 square feet per person, the Mastic- Mastic Beach - Shirley area has a lower retail square footage per capita compared to the other selected areas in the Town of Brookhaven. Of the other areas, the Medford area has the highest per person retail square footage (33.1), followed by the Mount Sinai - Miller Place - Sound Beach - Rocky Point area (28.4), Coram (23.6), and the Moriches - Center Moriches - East Moriches area (22.1). Based on this analysis, the Mastic - Mastic Beach - Shirley area seems less served with retail commercial than these other areas. Other areas in Brookhaven Town not selected for analysis, such as the Patchogue area, the Lake Grove area, and Centereach and Selden along Middle Country Road, have even more retail square footage per capita. These areas have many large scale destination retail centers. Brookhaven Town as a whole contains 14,088,000 square feet of retail in shopping centers and downtown districts. This translates into 30.2 square feet per capita, far higher than the per capita retail square footage in the Mastic-Shirley area.

Table 4. Retail Center Square Footage Per Capita, Mastic-Shirley and Other Areas*

	Mastic Beach Mastic Shirley	<i>Mastic Beach Mastic Shirley With Two New Downtowns</i>	Moriches Ctr. Moriches East Moriches	Medford	Coram	Mt.Sinai Miller Place Sound Beach Rocky Point
Shopping Centers	843,000	<i>843,000</i>	190,000	758,000	851,000	1,109,000
Downtowns	48,000	<i>508,000</i>	132,000	0	0	48,000
Total	891,000	<i>1,351,000</i>	322,000	758,000	851,000	1,157,000
Sq. Ft. Per Capita	16.4	<i>24.9</i>	22.1	33.1	23.6	28.4

* Using 2003 LIPA population estimates and current inventory of existing retail centers.

Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

If the two proposed downtown areas are developed, downtown Shirley and downtown Mastic East, the square footage in the Mastic-Shirley area would increase significantly. The retail square footage per capita would increase to 24.9 (See Table 4), still lower than the per capita square footage in Medford, Mount Sinai - Miller Place - Rocky Point - Sound Beach area, and Brookhaven Town as a whole. Based on this population analysis, it seems that the Mastic Beach area could support some additional retail space and still not contain more retail space per capita than other areas of Brookhaven Town.

Income Per Square Foot of Retail

The Mastic-Shirley area has a lower median income than most other areas in Suffolk County and Brookhaven Town. The 2000 Census showed that median household income was \$57,300 in Shirley, \$53,700 in Mastic, and \$44,900 in Mastic Beach. These figures were 8% to 28% lower than Brookhaven Town’s median household income of \$62,500. The lower incomes in the area will affect purchasing power and the ability of residents to support local retail.

An analysis of income per square foot of retail space was performed. The aggregate income of residents, divided by the square footage of retail yielded a figure of \$1,065 in income per square foot of retail

in the Mastic-Shirley area. (See Table 5.) Even in this analysis, when income, population, and retail square footage are taken into account, the Mastic-Shirley area’s available income per square foot of retail is higher than all the other selected communities (and higher than Brookhaven Town’s \$770 income per square foot of retail). However, because of the Mastic-Shirley’s lower income, its income per square foot of retail figure is barely higher than that of the Moriches - Center Moriches - East Moriches area and the Coram area. Income per square foot of retail in the Mastic-Shirley area is significantly larger than in the Mount Sinai - Miller Place - Sound Beach - Rocky Point area and the Medford area.

The conclusions change when the two proposed downtown areas on Montauk Highway are factored into the analysis. In this case, if these two downtown areas emerge as planned, the available income per square foot of retail in the Mastic-Shirley area falls to \$705, the lowest of the selected areas, and 8% lower than the figure for Brookhaven Town as a whole. **This finding may indicate that the Mastic-Shirley area, because of its lower income, may not be able to support significant additional retail beyond the proposed downtown districts on Montauk Highway.**

Table 5. Total Income Per Square Foot of Retail

	Mastic Beach Mastic Shirley	<i>Mastic Beach Mastic Shirley With Two New Downtowns</i>	Moriches Center/East Moriches	Medford	Coram	Mt.Sinai Miller Place Sound Beach Rocky Point
Income Per Square Foot Retail*	\$1,065	\$705	\$1,062	\$814	\$1,009	\$884

* Aggregate income from the 2000 census divided by current shopping center and downtown square footage.
Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

Population of Service Area

A neighborhood shopping center generally serves a population of 7,500 to 20,000 people and a catchment area of approximately 1.5 miles from the center. The Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road business districts were analyzed using 1.5 mile service radii. The radii were drawn on a map, and modifications to the service areas were made based on the particular constraints of the street systems in this area. For example, areas west of William Floyd Parkway north of the William Floyd Plaza were excluded because travel times from these areas to Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road would be significantly longer.

A block by block population count from the 2000 U. S. Census was made for the service areas of Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road. Within the modified 1.5 mile radius of the Neighborhood Road business district, the 2000 population was 15,684 (4,939 households). Within the modified 1.5 mile radius of the Mastic Road business area, the 2000 population was 15,807 (4,990 households). In addition, there are three large public schools of Mastic Road that lie in the service area of the Mastic Road business area. The schools have approximately 6,000 students (many of whom are residents of the existing local neighborhoods) and 650 employees. These figures indicate that there is significant local population to support neighborhood retail in Mastic Beach.

However, there is significant overlap between the Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road service areas. In fact, 6,680 residents live within the service area of both

Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road. In addition, the 1.5 mile service area of the proposed Shirley downtown area and the proposed Mastic East downtown area significantly encroach into the service area of the Mastic Road business area. Half of the service area of the Mastic Road business area is overlapped by both the Shirley downtown 1.5 mile service radius and the Mastic East 1.5 mile service radius. These facts indicate that although the Mastic Road business area is in close proximity to the local schools with their built-in market of students and staff, the location of the Mastic Road business area sandwiched between the Neighborhood Road business district and the proposed business districts on Montauk Highway is not favorable. It seems that because of its location, a small compact business area could be supported along Mastic Road, but not a larger central business district. Neighborhood Road, however, since it is further removed from the Montauk Highway corridor, may be better able to stand on its own as a business district because its service area does not overlap with Montauk Highway.

Business District Analysis

The Mastic Beach business district is located along Neighborhood Road and has traditionally been defined by the Suffolk County Planning Department as the area on Neighborhood Road between Commack Road on the west and Mastic Road on the east. Over the years, the Suffolk County Planning Department has undertaken several field inspections of downtown areas and shopping centers in Suffolk County. The number of occupied stores and the number of

vacant stores was noted. Vacancy rates were computed by dividing the number of vacant stores by the total number of stores. These vacancy rates are not based on square

A store is defined as vacant if it is not occupied and is not in the process of being re-occupied. A store undergoing renovations or displaying a new sign indicating that a store is “coming soon” is considered occupied. Buildings used simply for storage purposes were considered vacant. Non-traditional buildings along the streets within the business area were included in the calculations as storefronts, such as gas stations, offices and churches. Table 6 displays the results of the storefront analysis.

Table 6. Vacant Storefronts, Mastic Beach Business District

Year	Occupied Store-fronts	Vacant Store-fronts	Total Store-fronts	Vacancy Rate	Suffolk Vacancy Rate
1978	31	10	41	24%	8%
1982	32	9	41	22%	5%
1989	35	5	40	13%	8%
1996	26	6	32	19%	11%
2000	25	9	34	26%	8%
2005	26	10	36	28%	—

Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

Mastic Beach’s downtown district has had a vacancy rate consistently above the County average. For the past ten years, the vacancy rate has been about or above 20%. In 2005, the vacant storefronts were scattered throughout the business district.

The Mastic Road area has not been classified as a defined central business district by the Suffolk County Planning Department. Therefore there is no historical data for the Mastic Road business area. Based on a recent field inspection, its 2005

footage.

vacancy rate was 14%. See Table 7.

Table 7. Vacant Storefronts, Mastic Road Study Area

Year	Occupied Store-fronts	Vacant Store-fronts	Total Store-fronts	Vacancy Rate
2005	25	4	29	14%

Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

The Mastic Road study area contains one small shopping center, Manzella Shopping Plaza, built in 1974 on Mastic Beach Road just south of Quay Avenue and just off Mastic Road. The vacancy rate history of this shopping center is displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Vacant Storefronts, Manzella Shopping Plaza

Year	Occupied Store-fronts	Vacant Store-fronts	Total Store-fronts	Vacancy Rate	Suffolk Vacancy Rate
1988	9	0	9	0%	7%
1990	7	2	9	22%	12%
1996	5	4	9	44%	19%
2000	5	4	9	44%	12%
2005	8	1	9	11%	—

Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

The use of an occupied storefront or non-residential building was classified as either retail or non-retail. Examples of non-retail uses found in today’s downtown areas include: church, bank, theater, travel agency, barber shop, beauty salon, dry cleaner, tanning salon, dance, karate, printing, insurance, real estate, medical office and law office. Downtown areas, with their mostly

smaller stores, are more likely to contain these types of uses than are shopping centers.

The percentage of storefronts used for retail versus non-retail uses was calculated for downtown Mastic Beach and for the Manzella Shopping Plaza, for 2005 and for several other study years in the past. Typical of many shopping areas, especially downtown areas, the percentage of occupied storefronts that were retail stores has been declining. The retail percentage in the downtown Mastic Beach CBD was 77% in 1996, 44% in 2000 and 41% in 2005. See Table 9.

Table 9. Percentage of Occupied Storefronts Used For Retail

Year	Mastic Beach Business District	Manzella Shopping Plaza
1988	N/A	56%
1989	57%	N/A
1996	77%	60%
2000	44%	80%
2005	41%	50%

Source: Suffolk County Planning Department

Retail uses comprised 56% of the non-residential uses in the entire Mastic Road study area. A tally of the number and type of storefront uses is listed on the following page.

Storefront uses, January 2005, Downtown Mastic Beach (broader definition, includes area east of Mastic Road)

Storefront uses, January 2005, Mastic Road Business Area

Eating and Drinking:

Restaurant	1
Bar	1
Ice Cream	1
Pizza	1
Chinese	1

Eating and Drinking::

Restaurant	1
Bar	1
Ice Cream	1
Pizza	2
Chinese	1

Food Stores:

Supermarket	1
Grocery	1
Deli	1

Food Stores:

Grocery	2
Deli	2

General Merchandise:

Variety	2
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Building Materials:

Hardware	1
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Home Furnishings:

Carpet	1
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Apparel:

Thrift	1
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Automotive:

Gas Station	1
Auto Body	1

Automotive:

Gas Station	2
Auto Body	1

Other Retail:

Video	1
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Other Retail:

Bait and Tackle	1
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Non-Retail:

Barber	1
Laundromat	1
Tanning Salon	1
Nail Salon	1
Dog Grooming	1
Bus Service	1
Industrial/Wholesale	1
Contractors Yard	2
Gravel/Stone	1

Non-Retail:

Church/Temple	3
Shoe Repair	1
Hair Salon	1
Nail Salon	1
Plumbing & Heating	1
Laundromat	1
Dance	1
Office	2
Real Estate	2
Government (senior center)	1
Industrial/Wholesale	2

The Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road business areas are lacking in certain uses that are common in many downtown districts in Suffolk County. There are very few restaurants in Mastic Road or Neighborhood Road. In addition, **the following common downtown storefront uses are absent: bakery, book store, drug store, card/gift store, jewelry store, florist, fitness center, dry cleaner, bank, travel agent, insurance office and medical office.**

Conclusions

Existing population statistics and projections for future growth, in conjunction with an analysis of existing retail space in the Mastic, Mastic Beach, and Shirley areas indicate that the area could accommodate additional retail space. The proposed downtown districts in Shirley and Mastic East could accommodate this need. However, when the relatively low household income values in the area are taken into account, the area seems less able to absorb significant retail space beyond two proposed downtown districts on Montauk Highway.

Nevertheless, a modest intensification and redevelopment of the Neighborhood Road business district within its present boundaries seems feasible. This area is sufficiently distanced from the Montauk Highway retail centers (both existing and proposed), and would be the closest retail center to thousands of residents who live south of Neighborhood Road. The Mastic Road business area is perhaps too closely situated to the potential business districts on Montauk Highway. If the Mastic Road business area were to expand, it should do so only within a very small core area.

Both business districts should remain relatively compact, and the gateways to these business areas should ideally contain open space or residential development to prevent unsightly and inefficient strip commercial development along Neighborhood Road and Mastic Road. A small core commercial center along Mastic Road, and a redeveloped Neighborhood Road central business district would be desirable in Mastic Beach, to improve the aesthetics of the area and to improve the viability of these two areas as small local commercial centers.

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