



Presentation Guide: 2025 Proposed Southold Zoning Update

Prepared by: Eric Dantes, Esq., Board Member, North Fork Chamber of Commerce

Meeting Date: May 19, 2025

Reference: [Zoning Update Documents](#)

Chamber Position

- The Chamber **does not support the proposed zoning update** as currently drafted.
 - It is **misaligned with the Town's comprehensive plan, raises implementation concerns, and threatens tax increases** for residential property owners.
 - The zoning update has not been endorsed and comments have not been issued by the **Building Dept., Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Attorney's Office, or NYS Ag and Markets**.
 - The original intent of the zoning update was to clean up problems with the existing code, not to rewrite the code.
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Why Zoning Matters

- Zoning defines what types of businesses and uses are permitted and where they are permitted.
 - NY State law requires zoning to **follow a comprehensive plan**.
 - The proposed changes **contradict** Southold's current comprehensive plan and could be subject to legal challenges.
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Context: Then vs. Now

- **The current 1980s era Code:** Based on a fishing/farming economy.
 - **Today's Economy:** Driven by 2nd homes, tourism, hospitality, marinas, and agritourism.
 - Our zoning must reflect **modern economic realities**, or we risk further decline in:
 - Youth retention and workforce development
 - Affordable housing options
 - Local reinvestment
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What Businesses Need

1. **Streamlined, user-friendly permitting process** (6 months or less).
 2. A **central intake** system (start with Building Dept., refer to other boards).
 3. **More commercial acreage:** increase from 1.8% of town's land acreage to 3.6%.
 4. Acknowledgement that we are a **tourist economy**.
 5. **Support, not barriers**, for business owners and entrepreneurs.
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Problems with the Draft Code

1. **Increased regulation** = higher residential taxes (SEQRA impact analysis missing).
2. **Agritourism limitations:** Unrealistic income and land use restrictions on farmers.
3. **Subjective criteria:** e.g., judging a farmer's "knowledge."
4. **Loss of grandfathering rights:** for long established businesses. E.g. Silver Sands, Sophies and many others.
5. **Hotel restrictions:** Reduces number of rooms allowed per acre without justification.

6. **Overlapping jurisdictions:** Redundant reviews by ZBA, Planning Board, and Town Trustees.
7. **Unclear process:** No coordinated path through permit boards.
8. **Impervious surface rules:** Overly restrictive for builders and homeowners.
9. **Conflict with existing preservation efforts** and past approvals.
10. **Approved Affordable housing districts are missing**, despite years of planning.
11. **Special events permits:** Vague and punitive language.
12. **Imbalance:** No clear path to balance economic growth and preservation.

Examples of Real-World Impact

- **Lieb Cellars:** Improper denial → lawsuit → unnecessary legal costs to obtain permitting approval.
- **The Old Mill Inn:** Bureaucratic delays nearly derailed project.
- **Abandoned sites:** No incentives for redevelopment of blighted commercial properties.

What the Chamber of Commerce is Asking For

- A zoning code that reflects **modern realities**.
- **Clarity, efficiency, and fairness** in permitting.
- **Policies that enable small business, tourism, and affordable housing.**
- A genuine collaboration between **government, business, and the community.**

Closing Message

The zoning code **must be updated**, but not at the cost of our business community, workforce, or tax base. Let's work toward revisions that are smart, fair, and forward-thinking. Until then, we **cannot support** the proposed draft.

Reminder:

Know your rights. If a zoning decision seems improper or SEQRA is bypassed, consult a **land use attorney**. Legal remedies are available under Article 78 of NYS Civil Practice Law.

Southold Town Business Forum:

THURSDAY, MAY 29

BUSINESS OWNERS

Review and discussion of the Town of Southold Proposed New Zoning Code & Map with a focus on local businesses and business-zoned properties.

TIME

6:30-8:30pm

LOCATION

Southold Town Recreation Center, 970 Peconic Lane, Peconic

Zoom Available

Note: The Zoom  option is for **viewing only**—participants will not be able to comment or engage due to technical limitations. Join us in person at the Forum for full participation!

More Info from Southold Town: <https://southoldzoningupdate.com/zoning-map-public-review-draft>