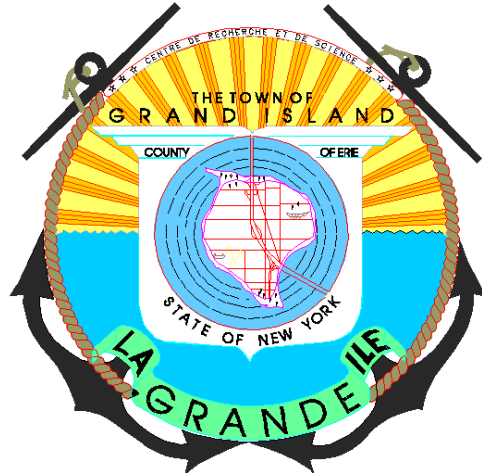


**PROPOSED**  
**TOWN OF GRAND ISLAND**



**DESIGN AND**  
**PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

**May 23, 2007**

# Executive Summary

In May of 2005, the Town of Grand Island reconvened its Long Range Planning Committee, and charged it with reviewing and updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan. A primary assignment of the committee was to analyze the portion of the plan, as adopted in 1995, dedicated to Town Center. Their charge was to examine the development that had taken place over the previous 10 years, and analyze changes that could be recommended to improve the plan in light of what had been learned since its adoption.

This assignment was a response to the prevailing concern that development in Town Center was not thriving as the Comprehensive Plan had envisioned. The development that had occurred over the past 10 years consisted mainly of generic "franchise architecture": buildings lacking common threads of design character that establish an identity as envisioned in the Town's plan.

After studying these issues, the committee concluded that, though the Comprehensive Plan had correctly identified the need for a dense central business district, it did not address the fact that the Town's commercial district is not limited to the area immediately surrounding the Town Hall.



**An example of "franchise architecture" built in the past 10 years.**

The north and south Grand Island bridges have always been a catalyst for development along Grand Island Boulevard. Zoning had always permitted commercial development, and had in effect created business districts north and south of the area identified as "Town Center" that were not addressed by the comprehensive plan. Development in the north and south business district strongly influences the perception of the character of Grand Island because the majority of drivers entering and traversing the town do so along Grand Island Boulevard. In order to bring about consistency in future development, these areas must be included as part of the Comprehensive Plan for "Town Center".

The 1995 Comprehensive Plan had also recommended a Town Center streetscape concept that included a landscaped center median, and over time it became apparent that this concept was not compatible with New York State Department of Transportation goals for Grand Island Boulevard, which is a State-owned highway. The committee concluded that the lack of a valid streetscape concept had contributed to an overall lack of consistency in the existing commercial development, and was a key consideration that must be addressed by revisions to both the Comprehensive Plan and the Town Zoning Code.

The committee also concluded that the Zoning Code established in response to the Comprehensive Plan was too focused on creating sub-zones regulating uses in certain geographical areas of Town Center. After analyzing the permitted uses in each Town Center district, as well as the zoning in the north and south business districts, it concluded that the majority of permitted uses could be considered acceptable in any area along Grand Island's commercial spine. In effect, the specificity of what uses are allowed in each sub-zone was artificially restricting what commercial uses could be built, and in part caused the lack of commercial development in Town Center over the past 10 years.

To address these issues, the Committee recommends the Zoning Code be revised to create three separate business districts that focus less on what uses are permitted, and more on the size and scale of the development that is permitted. A Central Business District would be established, focusing on larger scale buildings, and more intensive commercial and residential uses. North and South Business Districts would be established, which limit the scale of developments, and require more sensitivity to impacts on existing adjoining residential development.

After analyzing the issues facing Grand Island, the committee researched what had been done in other towns facing similar challenges. It concluded that the towns most successful in creating their own identity were those that successfully implemented town-wide standards for development.

As a result, the committee recommended the drafting of new “Design and Performance Standards” to create a flexible framework that would influence future development in a manner less focused on restricting locations for certain uses, and more focused on encouraging a cohesive design character.

The proposed standards provide streetscape arrangements that require the planting of trees along the right-of-way line, which is intended to create the image of a tree-lined boulevard. It contains a preferred arrangement of site elements encouraging development of parking areas alongside and behind developments, and an alternative arrangement that permits parking in front of the buildings as long as it is screened from roadway view. The standards require signage to be limited in both size and location, and that signage and lighting be designed to match the character of the buildings within the development.



**An example of a similar structure in a Town with strong design standards**

These standards provide a flexible guideline for building design that allows for the incorporation of a combination of a variety of materials and methods in a manner that will produce visual interest and compatibility between developments. New and substantially renovated buildings will be required to utilize convincing treatment of materials, colors, fenestration, roof lines, entrances, massing/scale, and other architectural details creating a “village scale” aesthetic effect, and eliminating “franchise architecture” from future developments.

It must be recognized that the changes recommended here are part of a Comprehensive Plan that will take time to have an effect on the Town’s character. The changes recommended present a strong vision for future development currently lacking from the plan. Ultimately, if these recommendations are applied, Grand Island’s Town Center would be a tree-lined commercial spine that stretches from bridge to bridge, with smaller scale development at either end, a more dense commercial core, and structures that utilize materials and forms that create a village scale appearance befitting Grand Island.