

17. DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

STRUCTURE

The Suffolk County Department of Planning was organized in its present form in 1960 for the purpose of providing guidelines for the environmental, social and economic development of the County. The Planning Department is under the jurisdiction of a 15-member Suffolk County Planning Commission, which is appointed by the County Executive and approved by the County Legislature. Its members are non-salaried and serve four-year staggered terms. A salaried professional staff of 26 comprises the Department and provides assistance to the Commission. The Director of the Planning Department is appointed by the County Executive and is confirmed by the Suffolk County Legislature. As of January 1999, the Division of Real Estate was transferred from the Department of Law to the Planning Department.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the Department to do all types of county-wide planning and to assist County officials, agencies and local governments in planning and zoning matters. The Commission has no power to pass zoning ordinances, but it does review proposed local zoning classifications, variances, special permits and subdivisions that effect real property lying within 500 feet of the shoreline, County and State roads, parks and facilities. The Commission also monitors the boundaries of towns and villages, and the right-of-way boundaries of County and State roads and of County drainage channels.

Proposed local actions concerning property within one mile of a nuclear power plant or airport must also be referred to the Commission.

If the Planning Commission recommends changes or disapproves of a proposed local zoning change and the municipality does not wish to accept the recommendation, the municipality may override the decision by a majority vote plus one of its town or village board and give reasons for the override. However, a local board cannot override a Planning Commission decision that pertains to property 500 feet from a town or village boundary if the decision was rendered

after a public hearing requested by an adjoining municipality.

The Division of Real Estate acquires properties for County land protection including the Drinking Water Protection Program, the Farmland Preservation Program, Open Space Program, South Setauket Woods, Land Preservation Partnership, Greenways Fund Acquisition Programs and land needed for various other capital projects. After tax default on private properties, the Division either sells this land as surplus at auction or rents some of these properties.

RELATION TO OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Suffolk and Nassau Counties participate in the Long Island Regional Planning Board. In 1970 this Board completed the first Bi-County comprehensive plan. The plan is an official statement of policy on the future growth and development of Nassau and Suffolk environmental protection, population size, housing, transportation, and commerce, industries, and jobs. Since zoning powers remain with the towns and villages, the Regional Board is not in a position to enforce its comprehensive plan. The Bi-County Regional Planning Board makes recommendations on the implementation and updating of the plan and prepares reports on matters of joint interest to both counties - e.g., water quality, coastal zone management, transportation, solid waste, economic development and government operations.

The Suffolk County Planning Commission has prepared an overall map and policy plan for all County open space and recreation. The Department also prepares local plans and reports for the County administration, legislature and other governmental groups.

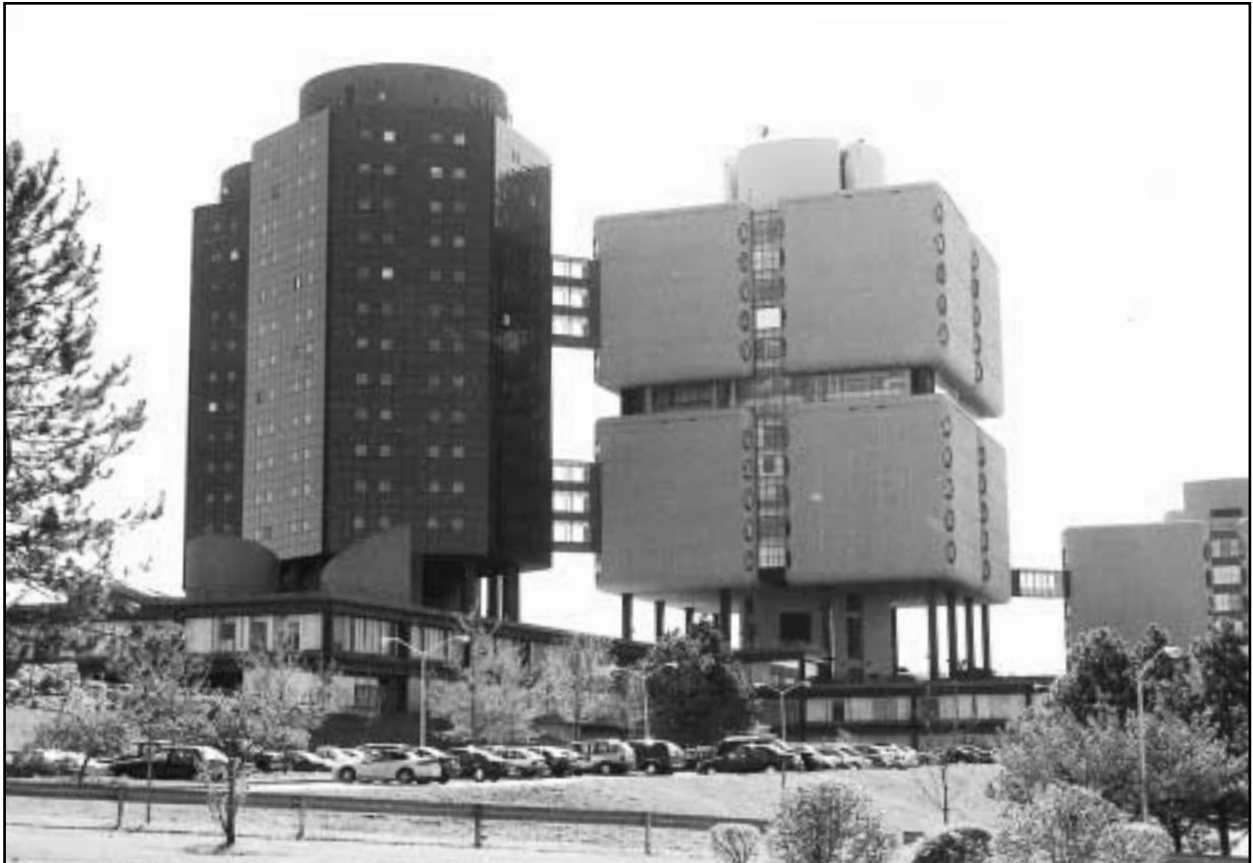


Photo © Adam Gaus

University Hospital and Health Sciences Center, Stony Brook, NY

Part of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, this modern hospital, with helicopter pad for receiving and transferring patients, is a major provider of tertiary care for Suffolk County residents.