



South Shore Audubon Society

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SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT SCOPE FOR THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OF THE WILLOW VIEW ESTATES PROJECT, JULY 2019

On behalf of the South Shore Audubon Society (SSAS) thank you for the opportunity to provide the following comments on the draft scope for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) of the Willow View Estates Project. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a local chapter of the National Audubon Society, and we represent approximately 1300 households in southern Nassau County. The mission of SSAS is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and to preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

SSAS supports an alternative that increases wetlands and parkland to provide habitat and mitigate flooding for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

BIRDS

SSAS appreciates the plans for field surveys and the list of resources to be consulted for wildlife assessment. To that list we would like to add the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's database eBird (search North Woodmere Park under Hotspots), and the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (Five Towns count circle under Southern Nassau).

We further recommend that the design of any residences incorporates bird-safe building features. Bird-building collisions kill up to one billion birds each year in the United States, and according to a study by S.R. Loss et al., structures 1-3 stories account for 44% of all bird collision fatalities. Willow View Estates will sit in the Atlantic Flyway and in close proximity to migratory hotspots such as Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Valley Stream State Park, Hempstead Lake State Park, and the Long Beach island beaches. Migratory birds will be attracted by any greenery, descend to stage and forage, and collide with glass that reflects greenery or sky. Nocturnal migrants will be attracted by nighttime lighting and diverted from their original path, especially in foggy or cloudy conditions, and they will collide with lighted structures.

Bird-safe glass and other design features can be incorporated in new construction at minimal cost. Extensive information for architects, planners, and developers can be found on the American Bird Conservancy's website here: <https://abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions/learn-more/>.

The NYS Legislature recently passed the Bird-friendly Buildings Council Act, which establishes a council to promote the use of bird-friendly building materials and design features in buildings; research the magnitude of problems facing birds colliding with buildings; identify existing and emerging products, technologies and concepts to reduce or eliminate bird mortality from building collisions; and develop public awareness. New construction should follow the recommendations of the council.

ENERGY

SSAS supports the draft scope's proposal to reduce the energy demands of the Willow View Estates. We also recommend that the scope explore renewable energy options such as solar panels as alternatives to natural gas.

The NYS Legislature recently passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. The CLCPA requires that the state generate 70 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, with the goal of achieving 100 percent carbon-free electricity generation by 2040. Greenhouse gas emissions, generated primarily by the burning of fossil fuels, are to be reduced economy-wide by 40 percent by 2040 and 85 percent by 2050.

Renewable energy projects, not development dependent on fossil fuels, are needed to combat climate change in the years ahead. Providing Willow View Estates with a renewable energy source now is more cost-efficient and climate-effective than requiring retrofits in the future.

WATER

The scope treats surface water but not groundwater. The development site sits on top of sole source aquifers for Long Island, and the project threatens to pollute the drinking water for three million people. Long Island already faces a water shortage from droughts and heavy usage, and the aquifers of southwestern Long Island show evidence of saltwater intrusion as the water table drops. Willow View Estates would increase demands on a shrinking water supply and could exacerbate saltwater intrusion and shift contaminants in the groundwater. These issues need to be assessed in the DEIS.

FLOODING, CLIMATE CHANGE, ALTERNATIVES

SSAS approves of mitigation measures mentioned in the scope, such as preservation of existing wetlands and use of green infrastructure. However, if the existing golf course were allowed to revert to wetlands, or if wetlands or parkland were created, it would provide the most effective flood mitigation possible with the intensifying storms and sea level rise due to climate change. The Five Towns Civic Association and Town of Hempstead officials have called for a park to provide public space and protect environmentally sensitive land. Alternatives incorporating increased wetlands and parkland should be considered; the scope proposes only a no action

alternative and a different lot configuration and does not consider the needs of the environment and the community.

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