

CHARACTER STUDY

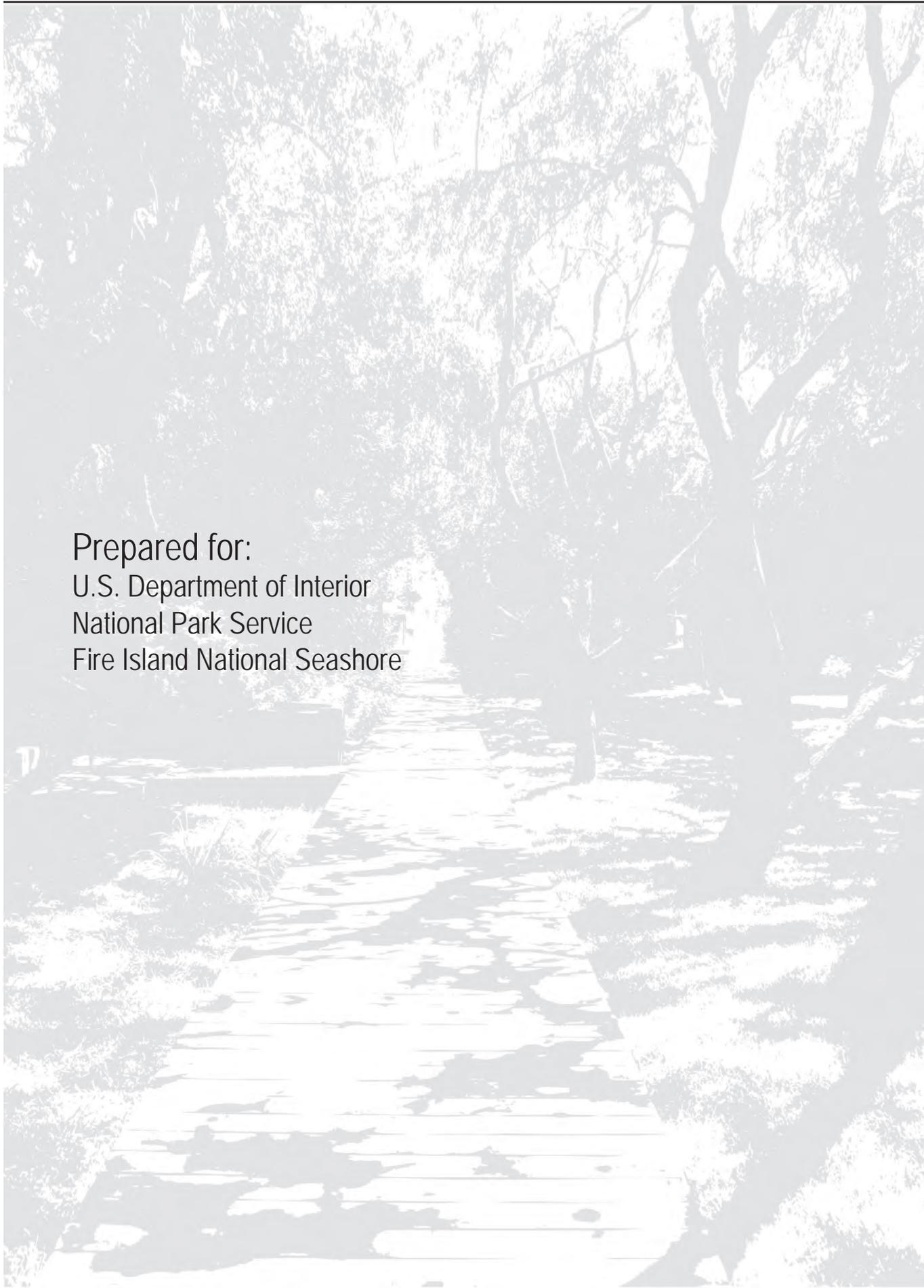
FIRE ISLAND, NEW YORK

JULY, 2012

A. NELESSEN ASSOCIATES, Inc.



visioning planning urban design
Specializing in Visual Preference Surveystm as a public participation tool for Planning and Design



Prepared for:
U.S. Department of Interior
National Park Service
Fire Island National Seashore

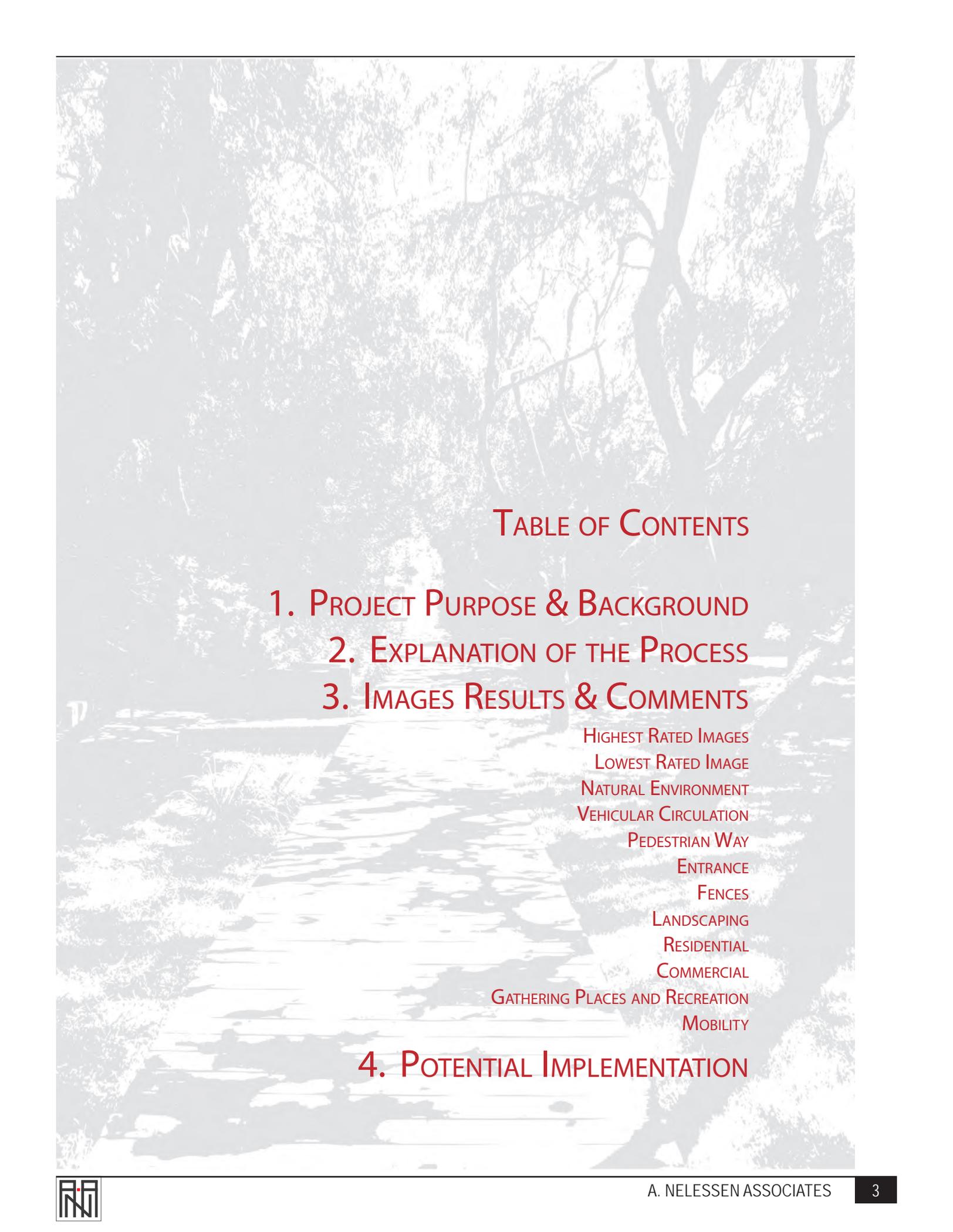


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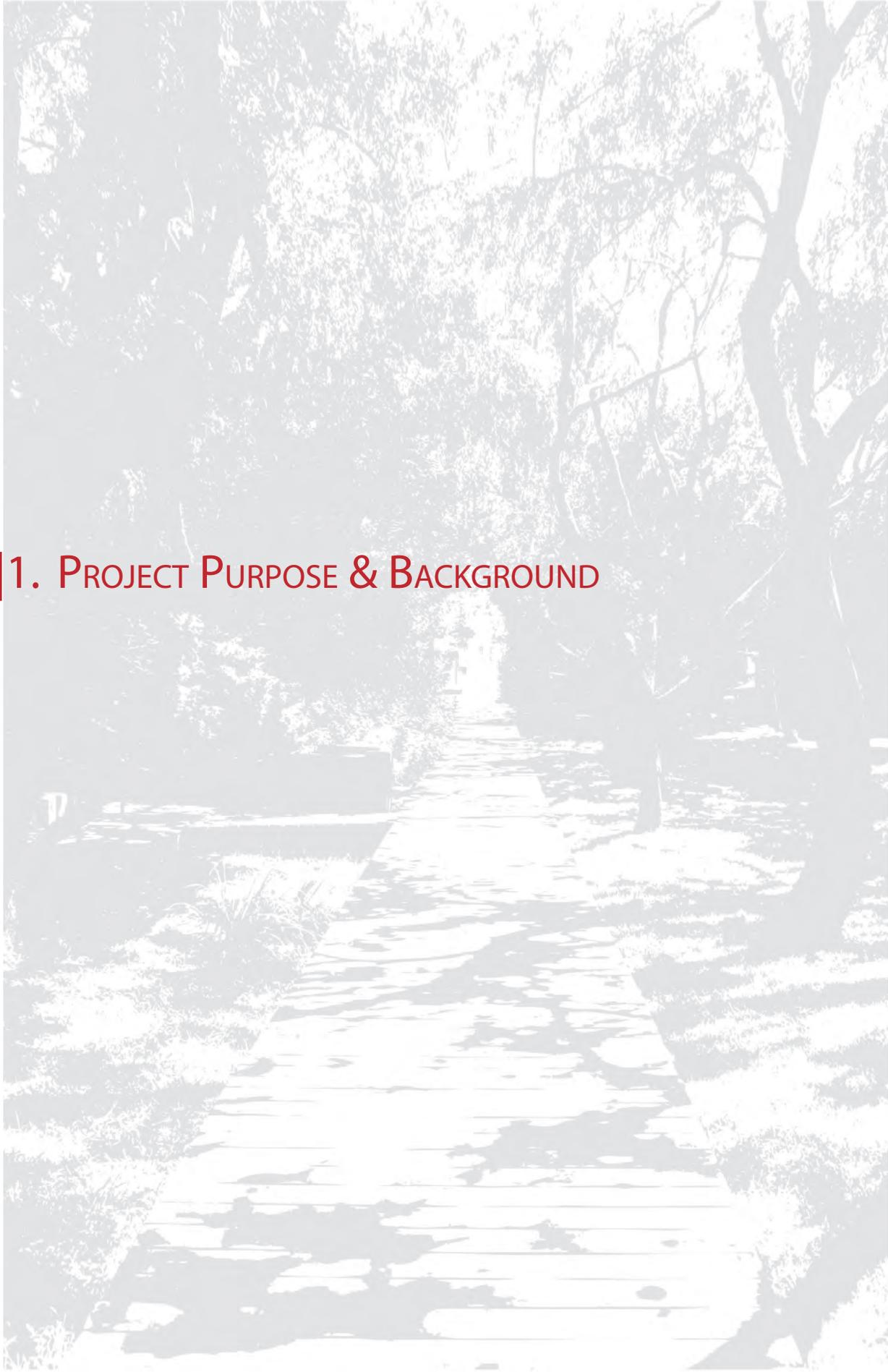
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1. PROJECT PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

PROJECT PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

At Fire Island National Seashore, the National Park Service (NPS) is currently developing a general management plan (GMP). At the core of this effort is a commitment to pursuing a management approach that emphasizes the cooperative stewardship of Fire Island – everyone has a role to play in ensuring the protection of this special place for generations to come. In order to achieve this, the planning team, the park and its many stakeholders must understand and appreciate the full breadth of resources and values that define Fire Island – both public and private.

Within the boundaries of Fire Island National Seashore (the Seashore) are 17 communities that were allowed to remain after the establishment of the park as long as they adopted zoning regulations consistent with standards provided by the Secretary of the Interior and that have been approved by the Secretary. Local zoning codes were approved by the Secretary in 1985. While management policies and practices that guide the Seashore can have an effect on Island communities, land management policies and practices within the communities can likewise have an effect on the seashore's resources.

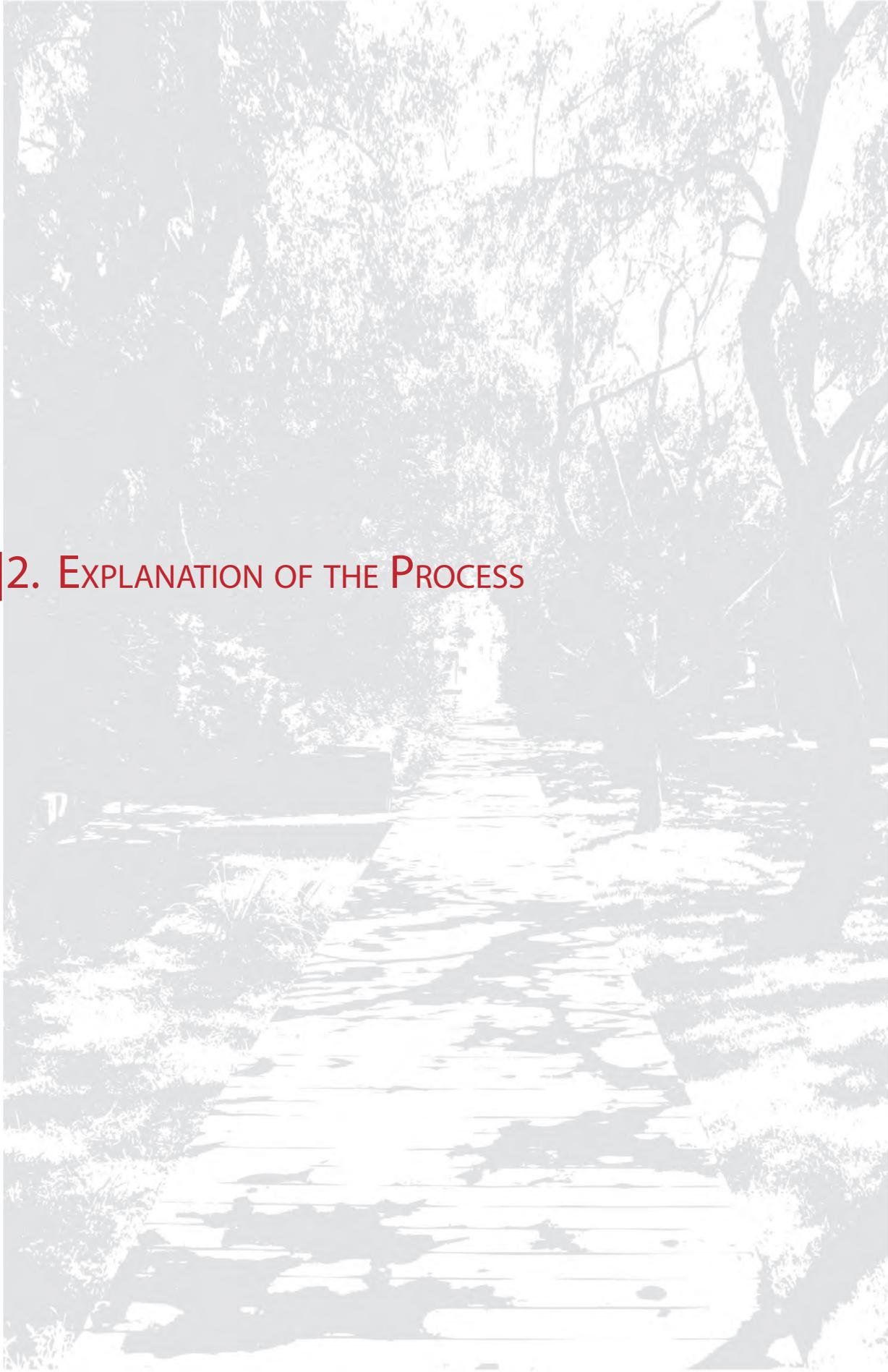
As part of the GMP effort, NPS engaged a consulting firm, A. Nelessen and Associates (ANA) to prepare an analysis and description of the physical features, both cultural and natural, that define Fire Island and its 17 distinct private communities. The consultant is working with community residents and other stakeholders Island-wide to identify and describe these resources and values and define a long-term vision addressing them. The purpose of this Island-wide analysis is to provide baseline information so the National Park Service can better understand what residents value about the natural and built environment in their communities and their concerns for those things. By doing so, the NPS will be better able to evaluate any possible impacts resulting from alternatives proposed in the GMP and work with the communities and other management partners to consider the best possible solutions to address them.

The first phase of the project began in earnest in February 2009 when Tony Nelessen, principle of A. Nelessen Associates, and his staff made their initial site visit to Fire Island. By the summer, a project web site was launched and a “photo safari” project was introduced to the public to assemble community images for use in the community character analysis project. Local residents and visitors were invited to submit images of the Island that they thought best represented things that they loved and would like to see preserved as well as those images representing things that were out of character or should not continue.

In early August 2009, Tony Nelessen joined park staff and a small group of community stakeholders to discuss the next step for the project – how and when to engage the larger community in an exercise to rate the images that had been assembled. It was determined that a community meeting before the end of the summer would come too soon and the community stakeholders also expressed concerns that a workshop format simply would not work for this purpose. They also requested that the deadline for submitting images be extended.

In response, the deadline for submitting images was extended to the end of September and Tony Nelessen suggested a web-based strategy that would enable people to participate whenever and wherever it was convenient for them to rate the various images assembled for the project. In early November, the gallery of images was made available and the Fire Island community was invited to go on-line and participate in rating the images and also respond to some demographic, policy and market questions. The on-line project was originally slated to end on December 18th, but in response to community requests was extended to January 15, 2010. A total of 545 people participated in the on-line Visual Preference Exercise from November 2009 through January 2010.

The following report describes the mechanics of the on-line Visual Preference exercise and describes its preliminary outcome. Further discussion with community stakeholders is necessary before A. Nelessen and Associates can make their final findings and recommendations.



2. EXPLANATION OF THE PROCESS



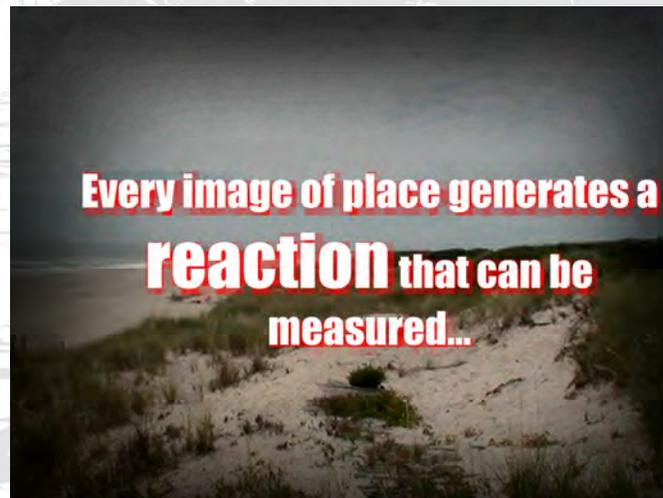
The goal of this Visual Preference Exercise was to understand what visual and spatial character constitutes the positive character of Fire Island and what might jeopardize that character. ANA has conducted hundreds of these exercises to thousands of people who provide a unique insight as to the feelings they have about the places and spaces where they live, work and recreate. This community involvement process has led to their understanding of what constitutes the “soul” of a place, what needs to be applauded, encouraged, preserved and enhanced as well as generating recommendations for improvement to the visual and spatial quality of place thereby contributing to the improvement in value and quality of life.

A total of 545 people participated in the Community Character Study using the Internet from November 2009 to January 15, 2010. This is one of the smaller studies that ANA has conducted, but given the time and the nature of the community, this was an extraordinary response.

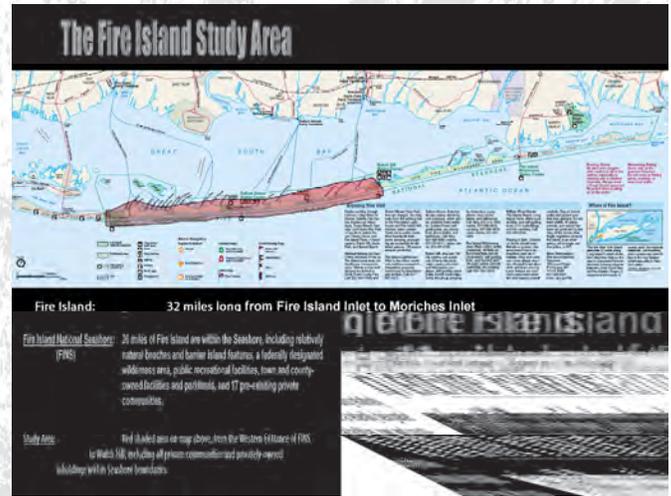
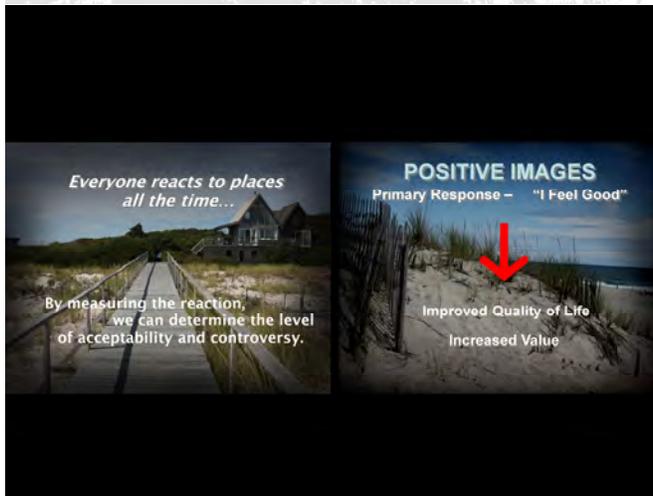
The images that have been assembled in this volume are considered to be “non-controversial” in that there appears to be complete agreement among project participants based on how positively or how negatively they viewed each image. In other words, there was very little ambiguity about how participants felt about these images. By contrast, for images considered “controversial” these are often evenly split with some positive ratings and some negative ones.



The exercise asked people to give us their feelings regarding the buildings, the spaces these created, the landscaping, public spaces and the natural environment.



Human beings are constantly responding emotionally to their environment. Those places which constantly receive a positive response are those for which people are very protective. Finding out the intensity of the reaction allows an analysis of the images for those physical and spatial qualities which can generate recommendations and policy for preservation and change.



The ANA process of image evaluation generates a numerical measurement of positive and negative reactions to place. Nothing is more important than people's feeling about place.

The higher the positive response to an image the more intense the feelings. The analysis of the physical, spatial and environmental components of an image can assist in understanding how the combination of imposed and natural characteristics can best work together.

Images with higher rated values make a person feel emotionally positive and therefore influence their perception. If many positive or highly rated images are viewed adjacent to one another or in sequence, the more typical response is "the place shown in this image makes me feel good," "it improves my quality of life and my worth as a human being."

Fire Island is a barrier island with a dynamic physical environment affected by ever changing winds, tidal fluctuations and other coastal processes. It is a fragile landscape that could be seriously affected by a major hurricane at some point in the future. None the less the character of the communities and the shared values of its humanism balanced with nature is a model of a place that stirs strong reactions. It is a cherished and unique place.



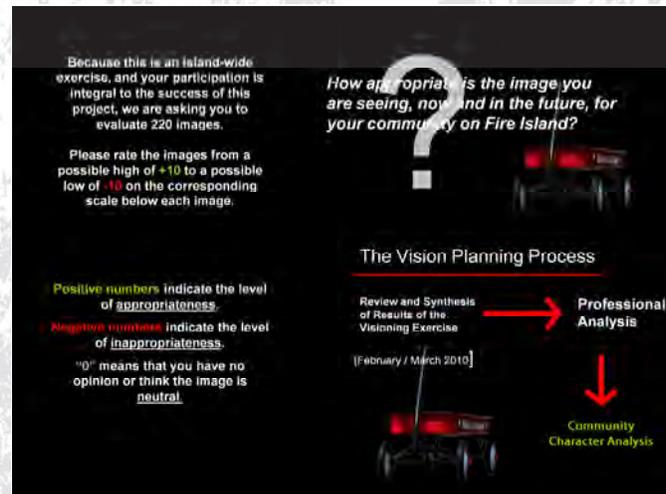


This was a large visual analysis with 210 images in 11 categories including images from the 17 Fire Island communities. A visual and spatial analysis of any place requires a holistic vision. Project participants were asked to evaluate a broad range of images representing a range of categories that contained the essence of the visual and spatial qualities of place. Because of its complexity, this was a large exercise that required participants to spend some extra time to complete it. The 210 images were culled with great difficulty from a total of the thousands of images accumulated during the “photo safari.” We wish to thank all of you who participated in the Visioning Exercise as well as those who shared their Island photographs.

Human beings have the ability to scan, absorb and process multiple images simultaneously. This is compounded when movement [sequence of moving through a place] is considered. The sequence of experiences, as well as the pure diversity of experiences becomes part of the perception and generates the attitude towards place.

There are certain visual and spatial features that are unique to each of the 17 communities. Because of location, they all share specific characteristics. No two of these communities are alike yet they all share specific and unique attributes that make Fire Island unique. Of all the above categories, the strongest positive reaction was to Mobility, Gathering Places and Recreation, Pedestrian Ways, the Natural Environment and Residential.

Every place we see and experience generates an emotional and physical reaction. Participants were asked to rate the images from a +10 to a -10 based on their personal reaction to the image. In this context, by most appropriate, we meant something a participant “likes or does not object to.” By least appropriate, we meant something a participant “dislikes or



The values placed on each image by participants were summed and two primary results, the average value by all participants and the standard deviation were calculated. The standard deviation shown in the brackets on each image, can best be understood as the value spread or the range of values on either side of the average or median value. As an example, if an image received an average value of +4 and has a standard deviation of [2] this can be interpreted as a value range between a +6 and a+2, adding or subtracting 2 to the average value.

With these values stamped on each image, the analysis of each image was completed through various arraying procedures (e.g. isolating the highest valued images with a consistently positive range in a given category).

This meant that because many people gave an image an overall positive value, there were a few who considered this same image to be negative. In images with positive average value and a low standard deviation, if the lowest value on the range was not lower than a +1, that image was considered to be non-controversial. In this context, “non-controversial” simply means that there was a consensus about the whether the image was positive or negative.

While many people gave many images an overall positive value, there were a few participants who considered them to be a negative. In images with positive values only, those images with a positive value and a standard deviation over 1 were considered to be non-controversial. In this context, “non-controversial” simply means that there was basically a consensus around the whether the image was positive or negative – mostly positive.

DEMOGRAPHIC, MARKET & POLICY QUESTIONNAIRE

There were 59 demographic, policy, and market questions included in the Visual Preference exercise. The responses to all the questions are listed in an appendix at the end of this volume. These results will be further analyzed and incorporated into the project report.

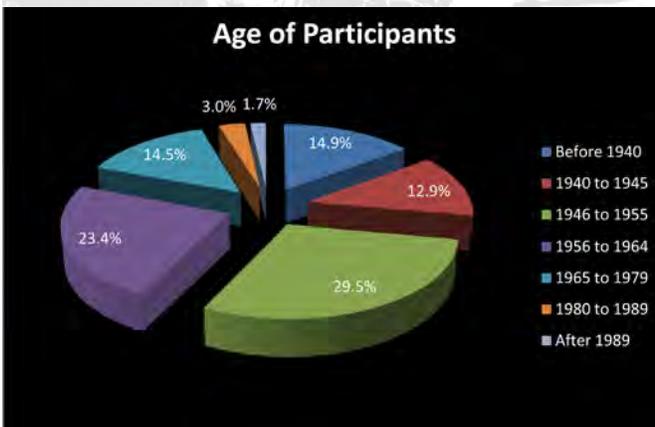
This Demographic, Market and Policy Questionnaire accompanies the Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS™) and is applicable to the Study Area and its Environs. Your responses are critical to assure that your thoughts regarding policies for future development and preservation are incorporated into a Community Character Analysis Report for Fire Island.

The Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS™) and the Demographic and Policy Questionnaire have been developed specifically for the Community Character Analysis of Fire Island. This survey is intended to gauge citizens' perceptions and preferences. A. Nelessen Associates, Inc., will analyze results of the VPS and the questionnaire and use them as the foundation for the Community Character Analysis Report to which you are contributing with your participation.

Participants were not required to provide their name or any other identifiers. The responses and answers are anonymous and confidential. The responses to these demographic questions at the beginning of the Visual Preference Exercise were critical to assure that your thoughts regarding policies for the future preservation and development are incorporated into the Community Character Analysis for Fire Island.

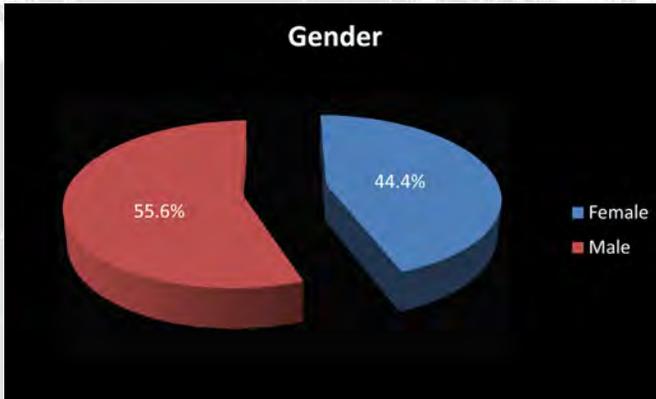
DEMOGRAPHICS

		# of responses	572
1	What year were you born?		
1	Before 1940	14.9%	85
2	1940 to 1945	12.9%	74
3	1946 to 1955	29.5%	169
4	1956 to 1964	23.4%	134
5	1965 to 1979	14.5%	83
6	1980 to 1989	3.0%	17
7	After 1989	1.7%	10
		100.0%	572



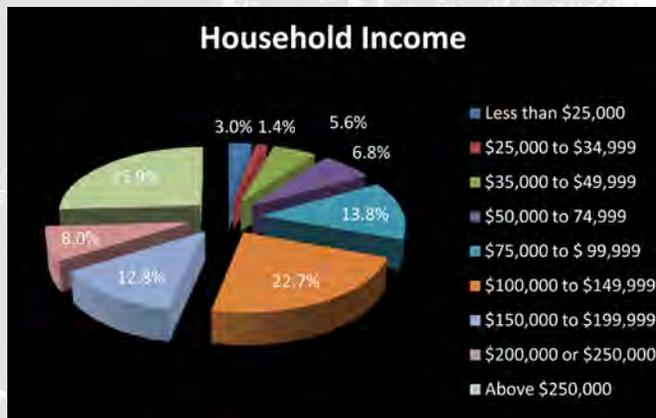
2 What is your gender?

1	Female	44.4%	254
2	Male	55.6%	318
		100.0%	572



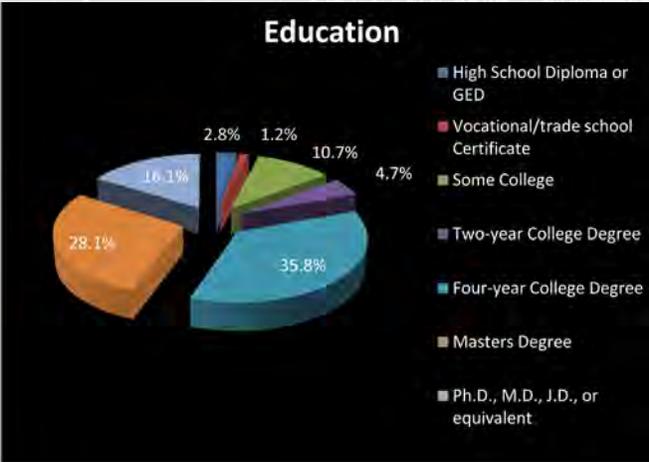
3 Which category best represents your annual household income?

1	Less than \$25,000	3.0%	17
2	\$25,000 to \$34,999	1.4%	8
3	\$35,000 to \$49,999	5.6%	32
4	\$50,000 to 74,999	6.8%	39
5	\$75,000 to \$ 99,999	13.8%	79
6	\$100,000 to \$149,999	22.7%	130
7	\$150,000 to \$199,999	12.8%	73
8	\$200,000 or \$250,000	8.0%	46
9	Above \$250,000	25.9%	148
		100.0%	572



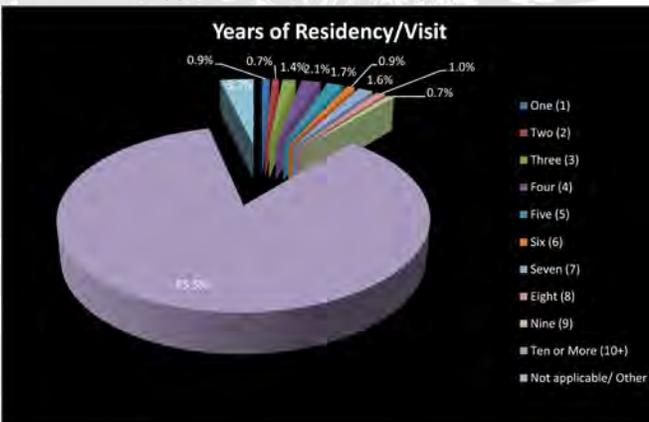
4 What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

1	Less than High School	0.5%	3
2	Some High School	0.0%	0
3	High School Diploma or GED	2.8%	16
4	Vocational/trade school Certificate	1.2%	7
5	Some College	10.7%	61
6	Two-year College Degree	4.7%	27
7	Four-year College Degree	35.8%	205
8	Masters Degree	28.1%	161
9	Ph.D., M.D., J.D., or equivalent	16.1%	92
		100.0%	572



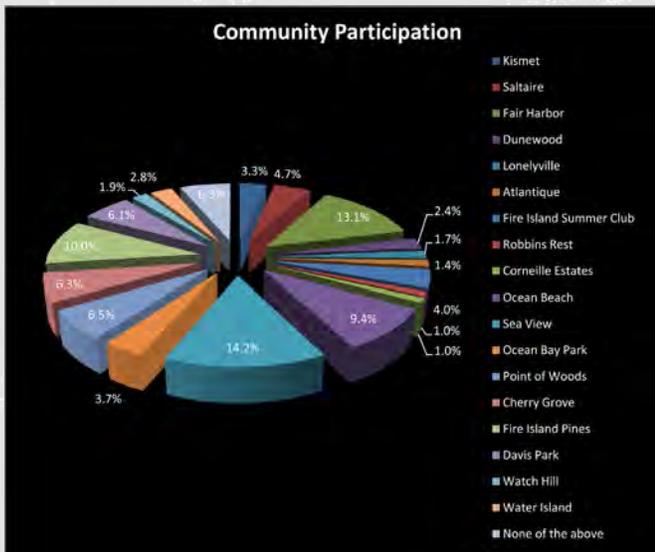
9 How many years have you been a resident/been visiting Fire Island?

1	One (1)	0.9%	5
2	Two (2)	0.7%	4
3	Three (3)	1.4%	8
4	Four (4)	2.1%	12
5	Five (5)	1.7%	10
6	Six (6)	0.9%	5
7	Seven (7)	1.6%	9
8	Eight (8)	1.0%	6
9	Nine (9)	0.7%	4
10	Ten or More (10+)	85.3%	488
11	Not applicable/ Other	3.7%	21



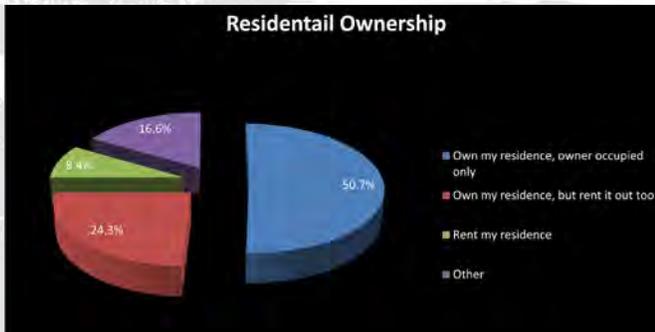
5 Which community do you reside in while on Fire Island?

1	Kismet	3.3%	19
2	Saltaire	4.7%	27
3	Fair Harbor	13.1%	75
4	Dunewood	2.4%	14
5	Lonelyville	1.7%	10
6	Atlantique	1.4%	8
7	Fire Island Summer Club	4.0%	23
8	Robbins Rest	1.0%	6
9	Corneille Estates	1.0%	6
10	Ocean Beach	9.4%	54
11	Sea View	14.2%	81
12	Ocean Bay Park	3.7%	21
13	Point of Woods	6.5%	37
14	Oakleyville	0.0%	0
15	Cherry Grove	6.3%	36
16	Fire Island Pines	10.0%	57
17	Davis Park	6.1%	35
18	Watch Hill	1.9%	11
19	Water Island	2.8%	16
20	Blue Point Beach	0.0%	0
21	None of the above	6.3%	36
		100.0%	572



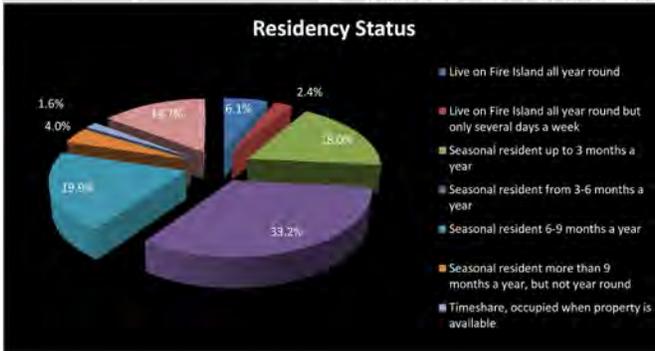
6 Do you own or rent your residence on Fire Island?

1	Own my residence, owner occupied only	50.7%	290
2	Own my residence, but rent it out too	24.3%	139
3	Rent my residence	8.4%	48
4	Other (Specify on the Line Below)	16.6%	95
		100.0%	572



7 What is your residency status on Fire Island?

1	Live on Fire Island all year round	6.1%	35
2	Live on Fire Island all year round but only several days a week	2.4%	14
3	Seasonal resident up to 3 months a year	18.0%	103
4	Seasonal resident from 3-6 months a year	33.2%	190
5	Seasonal resident 6-9 months a year	19.9%	114
6	Seasonal resident more than 9 months a year, but not year round	4.0%	23
7	Timeshare, occupied when property is available	1.6%	9
8	other	14.7%	84
		100.0%	572

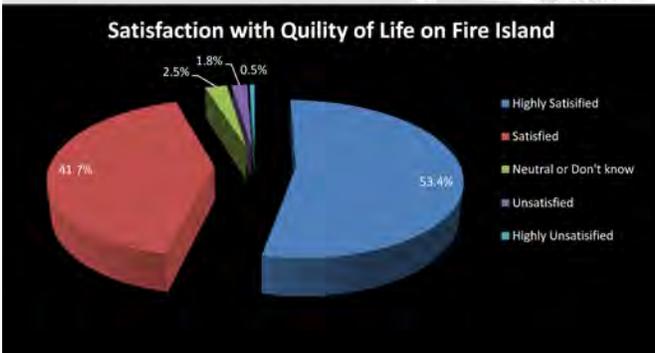


General Opinions

of responses 554

16 Which statement below best describes your satisfaction with the general Quality of Life on Fire Island?

1	Highly Satisfied	53.4%	296
2	Satisfied	41.7%	231
3	Neutral or Don't know	2.5%	14
4	Unsatisfied	1.8%	10
5	Highly Unsatisfied	0.5%	3
		100.0%	554

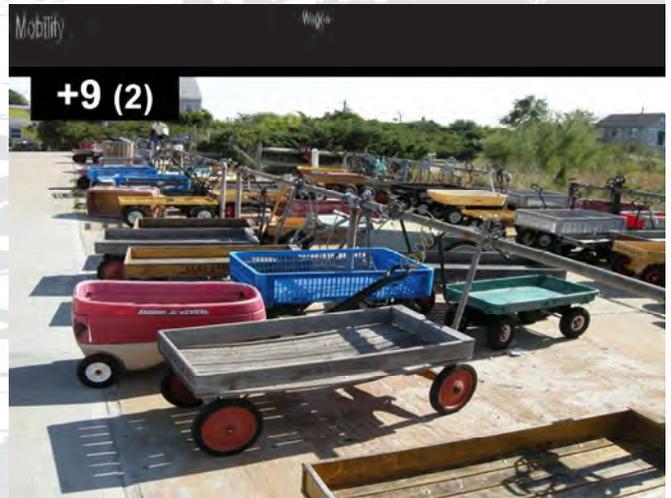
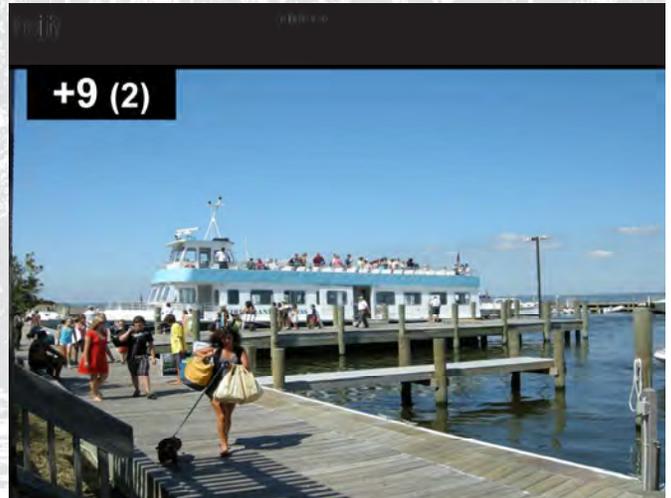
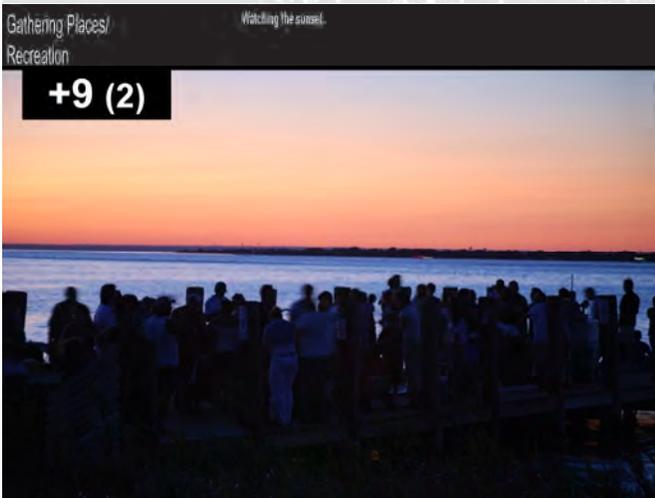




3. IMAGES RESULTS & COMMENTS

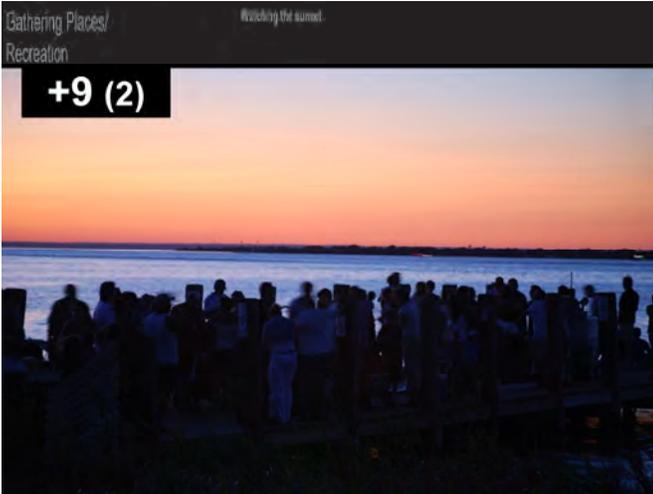
HIGHEST RATED IMAGES

Most of the images in the survey were rated as positive. People really love Fire Island, its humanism, contact with nature, sense of community and unique living experience. The higher the rating on the images, the more it is considered as the essence of place. Typically an average image value above +7 is considered extraordinary, given the number of people who typically have negative attitude/feeling towards most places. In this survey there are four images that received +9. These images are so strong that they command the ultimate respect and consideration. These images represent the character of Fire Island that the participants of this study feel are the most important.

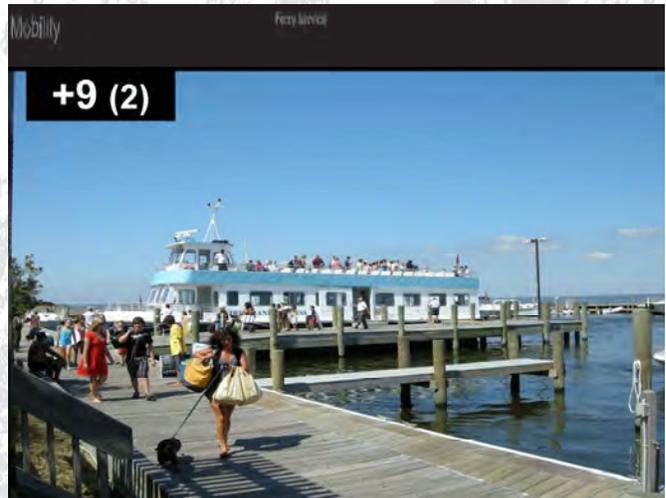


These four +9 images define the essence of Fire Island. These are the places, locations, and experiences that are considered the most important by project participants – Fire Island community residents.





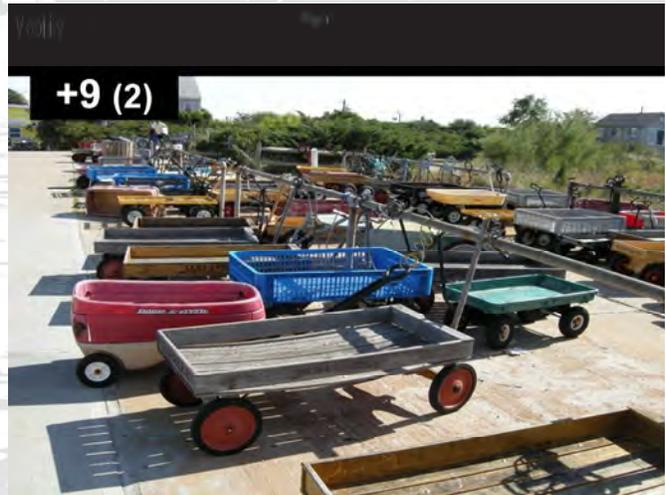
Meeting with friends from your community at sunset is one of the great human experiences that happen on Fire Island. The visual and spatial characteristics of this image include a clear sky, beautiful color, and a long view of infinity, one of the most cherished view sheds. This image when combined with the other three images that received the extraordinary high values helps define Fire Island.



Most people use the ferries or private boats to get to and from Fire Island. It is a shared experience.



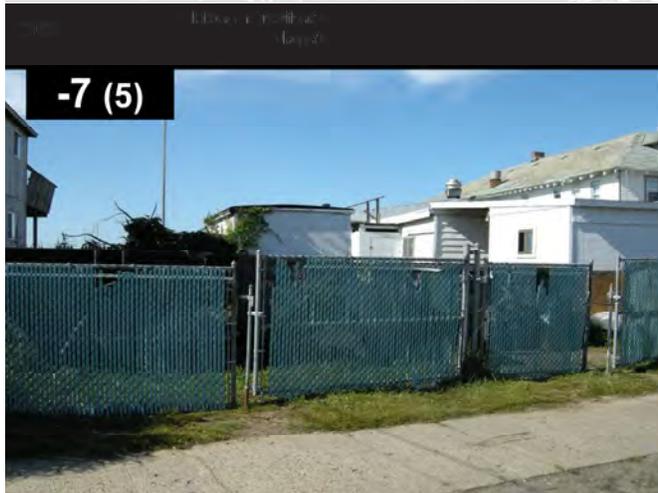
People on Fire Island walk both young and old.



The wagons are another unique feature of Fire Island. These are not motorized, but must be pulled. Each of the wagon parking areas is unique but like many other features on the island, creates a shared value of place.

LOWEST RATED IMAGES

When an image received a negative response, it is of great concern because it diminishes the value of the experience and sense of place. Most of the negative images represent conditions that may be avoidable and could be easily addressed. These four images are the lowest rated images in the study.



Fences

Metal chain link fence

-6 (5)



In cases where the chain link fence is somewhat screened by vegetation, the image still rated as a negative.

Skirting

Open skirting, exposed structure
mechanicals and debris

-5 (5)



Exposed materials and equipment also rated negatively.

Exposed mechanical
equipment

-7 (5)



Often there are locations where storage, utilities, and maintenance equipment are required. These areas should be properly screened. The chain link fence is rated negatively here and in association with other photos in the Visual Preference exercise.

Skirting

Deteriorated lattice and debris as
skirting

-6 (5)



Because houses are raised above grade, the most visually dominant architectural location is the lower level or skirting of the building because the eye is typically focused at a 15 degree downward angle. This image was rated as a negative.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Fire Island relies on a balance between development and nature. Natural characteristics are the primary determinant of the Island's character. These images were shown to question, how appropriate is the image is now and in the future, for the Natural Environment on Fire Island?



Sand road edged by natural vegetation.



This is the same image as the previous except that this image has the poles and overhead utility wires. The value changes from +8 to a +1. The presence of poles and wires reduces its value. This image still rates as positive because of the strong value given to the natural environment. Even thin overhead lines and poles diminishes the value.

Natural Environment

Sand dune restoration

+8 (3)



The following three images are the top-rated image in the natural environment category.

Natural Environment

Wildlife on the Island

+8 (3)



A view of wildlife on the Island.

Natural Environment

Beach and dunes in Federal Area

+8 (3)



A long view of the beach that encompasses the natural dunes with little sign of human habitation.

Natural Environment

Bayside with naturalized, private beach edge

+7 (3)



This is the first and highest rated image of the bay side.

Natural Environment Sand dunes with vegetation and fencing

+7 (4)



A view of sand dunes with vegetation and fencing.

Natural Environment Bayside with naturalized, private beach edge

+6 (4)



This is the second image of the bay side.

Natural Environment Beach with development behind the dunes

+6 (4)



Beach with development behind the dunes.

Natural Environment Bayside with developed, public beach edge

+4 (5)



Bayside public beach.

Natural Environment

Bayside with developed, private beach edge

+3 (6)



Private edge Bayside development.

Natural Environment

Beach with adjacent development

+1 (6)



Beach front development directly on the beach.

Natural Environment

Bulkhead on the bay

-1 (6)

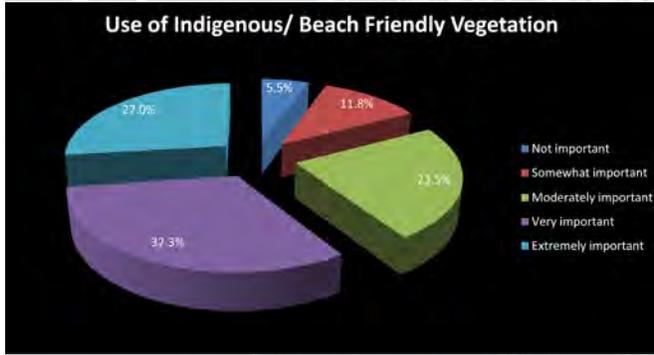


Bayside bulkhead with development behind.

Please rate the importance of the following qualities/resources to you. Please mark one response for this quality/resource.

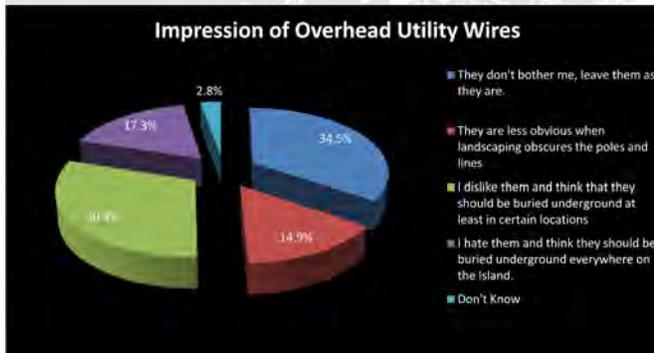
40 Use of indigenous and/or "beach-friendly" vegetation in landscaping

1	Not important	5.4%	24
2	Somewhat important	11.6%	51
3	Moderately important	23.1%	102
4	Very important	31.7%	140
5	Extremely important	26.5%	117
		98.4%	434



19 What is your impression of overhead utility wires throughout the Island?

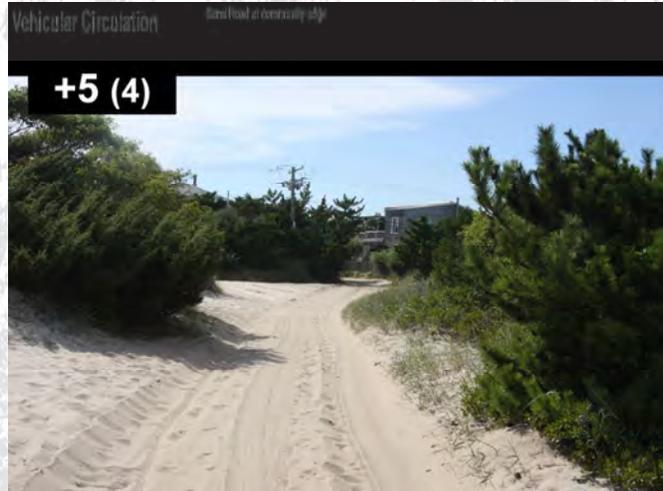
1	They don't bother me, leave them as they are.	33.8%	187
2	They are less obvious when landscaping obscures the poles and lines	14.6%	81
3	I dislike them and think that they should be buried underground at least in certain locations	29.8%	165
4	I hate them and think they should be buried underground everywhere on the Island.	17.0%	94
5	Don't Know	2.7%	15
		97.8%	542



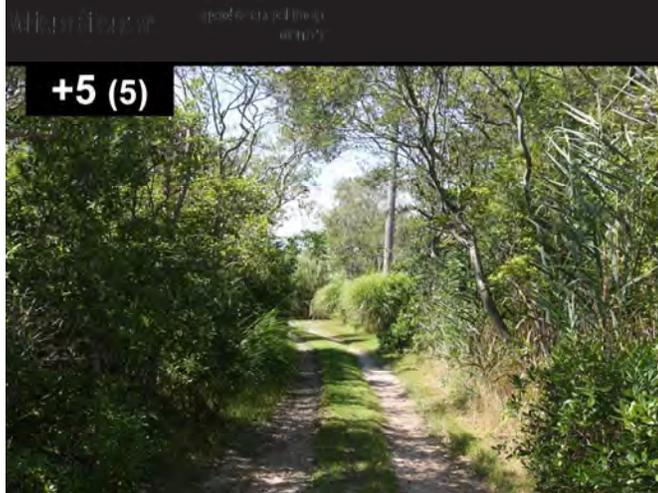
VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

This section includes the value given to images while asking the question “How appropriate is the image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Vehicular Circulation on Fire Island?”

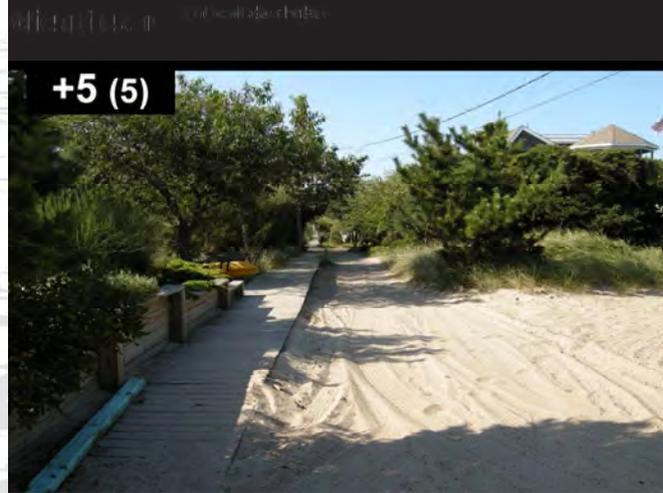
Limited access for vehicles is a functional need along the island. In this case, because cars are restricted on the island, the character of this access is important. The same spaces are used by pedestrians which enhances its function and contributes to the character of place. The key is the narrowness and the adjacent vegetation.



The top-rated image in the vehicular circulation category was this curving narrow sand road with natural vegetation on both side



Of equal value is a very narrow lessder used roadway defined by the two tire tracks dfine by ground cover and edged on both sides by vegetation. .



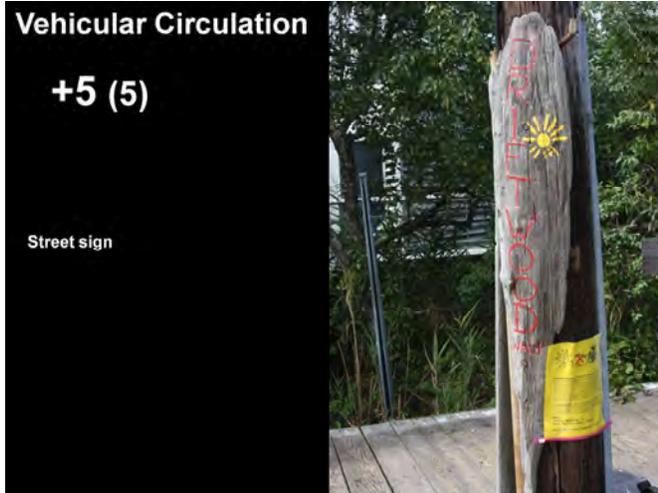
Sand road with adjacent boardwalk.



Sand road with adjacent concrete sidewalk and buried utility wires.



Sand road with adjacent boardwalk and overhead wires. This image is positive but is considered controversial due to the standard deviation of (6). It could be the presence of the parked vehicle



The last of the non-controversial images in the vehicular circulation category is this street sign.



Paved asphalt road with overhead wires and mowed grass edges. This image is one of the few negative images in this sub-set. This image is considered controversial due to the very high standard deviation of (7).

Transportation

of responses 418

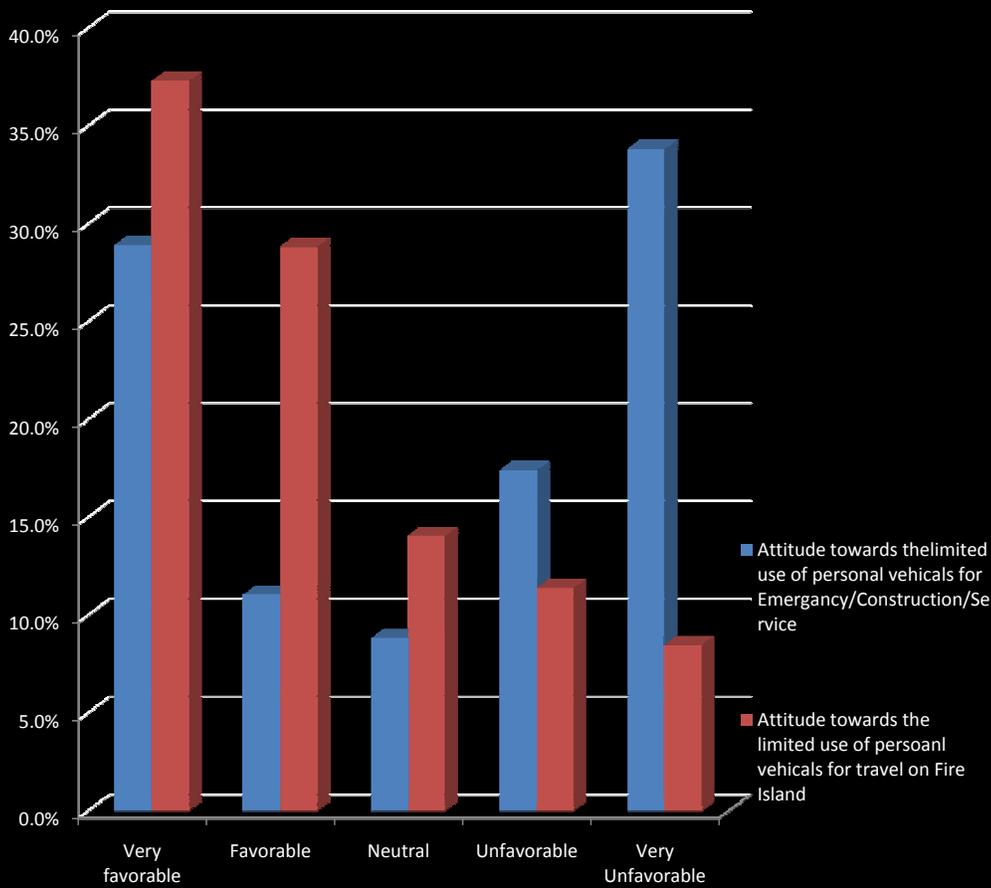
Overall what is your attitude toward the limited use of personal automobiles/vehicles on the Island for emergency/construction/service travel?

56	1	Very favorable	36.8%	154
	2	Favorable	28.5%	119
	3	Neutral	13.9%	58
	4	Unfavorable	11.2%	47
	5	Very Unfavorable	8.4%	35
			98.8%	413

Overall what is your attitude toward the limited use of personal automobiles/vehicles on the Island for travel once on the Island?

57	1	Very favorable	28.2%	118
	2	Favorable	10.8%	45
	3	Neutral	8.6%	36
	4	Unfavorable	17.0%	71
	5	Very Unfavorable	33.0%	138
			97.6%	408

Transportation Usage Title



PEDESTRIAN WAY

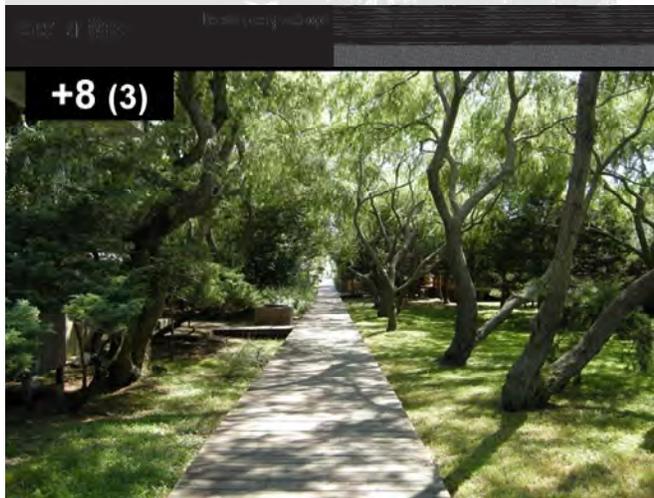
As demonstrated in the set of very positive [+8] images, the pedestrian walkways are a basic and most beloved character feature of Fire Island. This category has the largest number of positive images. In total there are 15 positive images in this subset.

The following set of pedestrian way images reinforces these conclusions. It also indicates the actual layout of the boardwalk, curve versus straight, visually terminated, sequence and the condition and character of its edges.

The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Pedestrian Ways on Fire Island.



Including the previous set of images, reading them in sequence thus far there seems to be a number of basic characteristics which have emerged including the use of colors, the respect and preservation of the natural vegetation and predominant beachhead features.



This is the second-highest positive-rated image in the pedestrian ways category. One of the images in this category received a +9 shown at the beginning of this presentation along with the three other most positive images in the study.



A wooden walkway is visually terminated by a curve.

Pedestrian Ways

Boardwalk, loosely landscaped edge

+7 (3)



Elevated walkway with connections to adjacent homes.

Pedestrian Ways

Boardwalk, loosely naturalized edge

+7 (3)



Boardwalk edged in white with loosely naturalized border.

Integrate existing tree

+7 (3)



Walkway constructed to accommodate existing large tree.

Pedestrian Ways

Boardwalk, densely naturalized edge

+7 (4)



Another highly valued boardwalk – narrow a dense natural edge.

Pedestrian Ways

Boardwalk, loosely landscaped edge

+6 (3)



Here again the narrow walkway is bent to accommodate natural features. A range of vegetation exists.

Pedestrian Ways

Boardwalk, landscaped and natural edge

+6 (4)



This boardwalk with its white painted edges has a more naturalized edge on the right side with a custom-designed fence and landscape treatment on the left side.

Boardwalk, with intense natural edge

+6 (4)



Walkways in the community centers are edged by buildings.

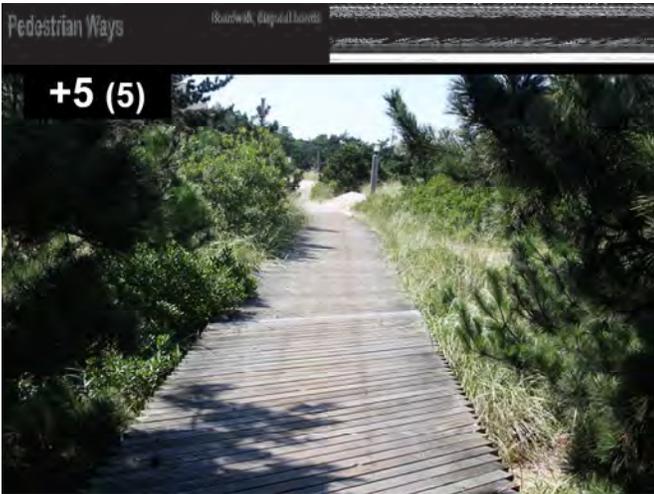
Pedestrian Ways

Boardwalk, with intense natural edge

+6 (4)



In this image the grasses have grown tight to the edge of the boardwalk.



This boardwalk with its diagonal boards and edge vegetation also uses a slight curve to enhance visual termination. The vegetation on this image is slightly more open than the previous images.



This wide walkway is constructed of white concrete and is laid out absolutely straight. It is edged by landscape that is not very dense and is more transparent.



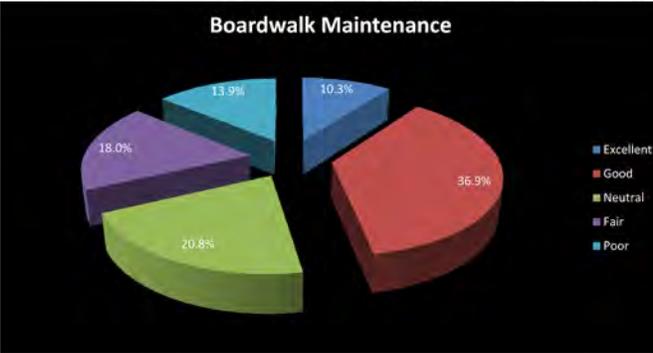
The diagonal walkway in this image is wide and aged.



This wide wooden boardwalk passes through one of the small commercial centers. The wooden boardwalk extends from the central boardwalk to the front of the store, providing a place for people to gather and for bicycle parking.

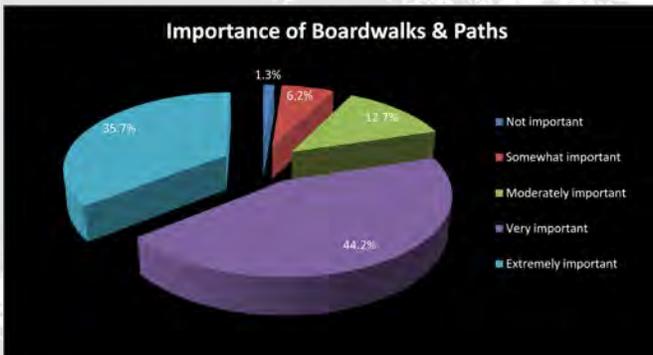
Pedestrian Ways

		# of responses	478
35	How would you rate the general maintenance of Boardwalks in your community?		
1	Excellent	10.0%	48
2	Good	36.0%	172
3	Neutral	20.3%	97
4	Fair	17.6%	84
5	Poor	13.6%	65
		97.5%	466



Please rate the importance of the following qualities/resources to you. Please mark one response for this quality/resource.

36	Boardwalks and paths		
1	Not important	1.3%	6
2	Somewhat important	6.1%	29
3	Moderately important	12.6%	60
4	Very important	43.5%	208
5	Extremely important	35.1%	168
		98.5%	471



ENTRANCES

Entrances were defined as the visual and spatial connection between the main walkway and the house or business.

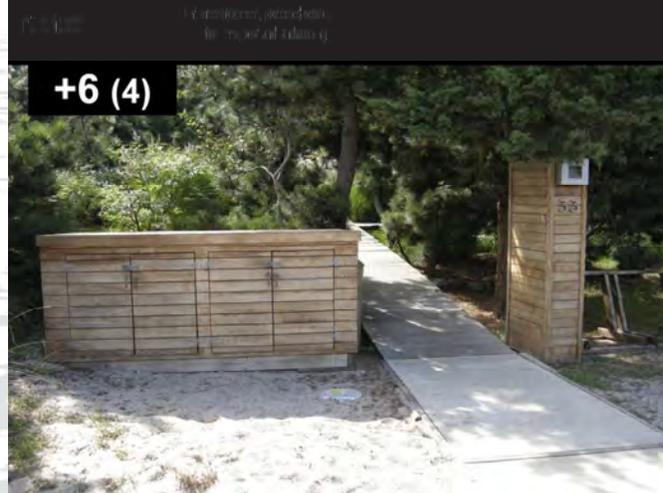
The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Entrances on Fire Island.



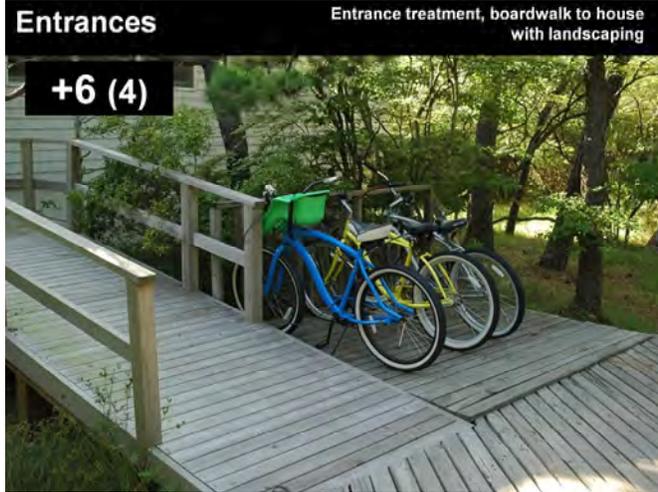
This walkway is also not directly connected to the house but it goes through a series of turns. It floats above the landscape. The house in the background is partially obscured by vegetation.



This was the top-rated entrance photo. The narrow, elevated boardwalk bends as it approaches the home's entrance.



This entrance way is composed of a combination of concrete and wood with a gateway defined by two wooden volumes.



This positive image shows a combination of the wooden main walkway with its wood ramp connection to the house. It has a simple 2 by 4 wooden railing. The bike parking area is also in wood.



This positive image shows a combination of the wooden gate with a metal fence and a loose stone walkway with a natural landscape. Even though this image has a positive value it is controversial due to the (5) standard deviation.



This image shows a private entry indicated with wooden post and hand painted signs and a wooden boardwalk. Even though this image has a neutral value of (0) it is controversial due to the (6) standard deviation.



This image shows a closed poorly maintained private entry walkway of 2x4 and wooden post. This image has a negative value and is controversial due to the (6) standard deviation.

Entrances

Entrance treatment with exposed waste facilities

-2 (6)



Entrances

Entrance treatment, exposed waste facilities

-3 (6)



A wooden elevated walkway between a private deck and a wooden boardwalk with exposed propane tanks and waste receptacle adjacent to boardwalk. Even though this image has a negative value due to its standard deviation of (6) it is considered controversial.

This is the lowest rated image in this sub-set that shows a plywood exposed waste storage adjacent to a raised boardwalk. Even though this image has a negative value due to its standard deviation of (5) it is considered controversial.

39 How do you feel about current methods of waste disposal and standards governing waste disposal throughout the Island (ie; exposed garbage cans, daily pick-up, etc.)?

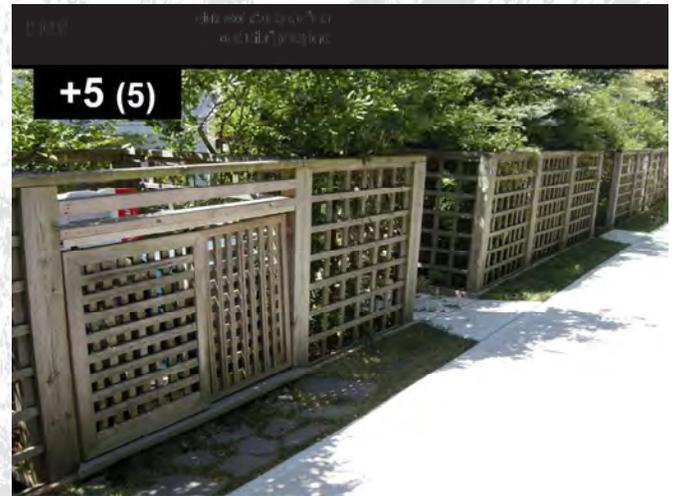
1	Exposed garbage cans don't bother me, we don't need tighter standards.	7.7%	34
2	Exposed garbage cans don't bother me, as long as they are protected from wildlife and scavengers.	37.9%	167
3	There should be standards so that all garbage cans and utility facilities are screened from the boardwalk and protected from wildlife.	52.6%	232
		98.2%	433



FENCES

The old adage, "Good fences make good neighbors" seems to be quite apparent on Fire Island. There is an extraordinary range of fences that not only separate the walkways from the front yard but also define the property edges. In many examples the fences are the extension of the architecture of the house.

The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Entrances on Fire Island. The lowest rated images in the study can be found in this sub-set.



Slightly less positive, but still non-controversially positive, is this fence/ garbage can screen. It is a low wooden fence using a combination of vertical poles filled in with a square wooden grating.



This is the highest rated of the fence images. It is almost a non-fence and more of a hedge. The fence is embedded between the hedge planted on either side.



Slightly less positive, but still non-controversially positive, is this fence/ garbage can screen. It is a low wooden fence using a combination of vertical poles filled in with a square wooden grating.

Fences

Wooden picket fence, low

+4 (4)



This fence is a simple natural colored vertical wooden fence, with its narrow spacing between pickets. And green lines in the background provide an interesting contrast.

Fences

Natural wood privacy fence with vertical boards and landscaping

+3 (5)



Wooden vertical slat fence heavily landscaped and adjacent to a wooden boardwalk. Even though this image has a positive value due to its standard deviation of (5) it is considered controversial.

Fences

Deer fence

+3 (5)



Wooden posts with a light gauge metal fence wrapped in ivy and adjacent to a wooden boardwalk. Even though this image has a positive value due to its standard deviation of (5) it is considered controversial.

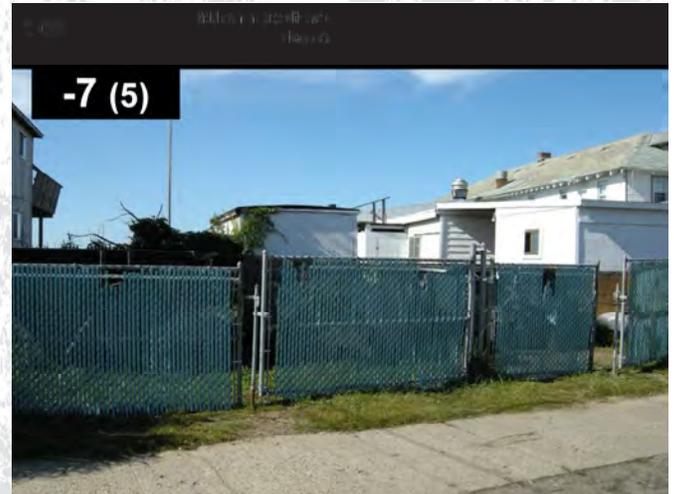
Fences

Rustic wooden post and rail fence

+2 (6)



Wooden split rail fence with missing pieces along a concrete sidewalk.. Even though this image has a positive value due to its standard deviation of (6) it is considered controversial.

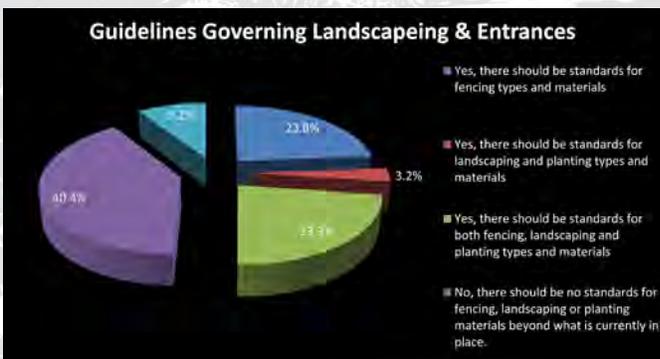


Another poorly rated image in the Visual Preference exercise.

This fenced complex rated as the least favorable image in the Visual Preference exercise.

38 Do you think there should be standards/guidelines governing landscaping and entrances (fence materials, plant materials and types) to properties/buildings in your community?

1	Yes, there should be standards for fencing types and materials	23.4%	103
2	Yes, there should be standards for landscaping and planting types and materials	3.2%	14
3	Yes, there should be standards for both fencing, landscaping and planting types and materials	22.9%	101
4	No, there should be no standards for fencing, landscaping or planting materials beyond what is currently in place.	39.7%	175
5	Don't Know	9.1%	40
		98.2%	433



LANDSCAPING

Landscaping can be both natural or deliberate. Landscaping complements and enhances the value and location of the built environment. We have already seen that the natural landscape is highly valued. It is the treatment of the landscape, both the natural and the deliberate relationship between the structures that shall be evaluated in this section. The two highest images in this category portray the landscape treatment of the side yards and the distance between the sides of the buildings.

The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Landscaping on Fire Island. The images in this sub-set are some of the most controversial images in the study due to the the high standard deviation values.

Landscaping Naturalized landscape, "beach-tolerant", indigenous vegetation

+7 (4)



This side yard, like the previous image, is also naturalized with beach tolerant indigenous vegetation.

Landscaping Naturalized landscape, "beach-tolerant", indigenous vegetation

+7 (4)



This is the highest-rated image in the landscaping category. The wide side yard, between these two low structures, is a naturalized "beach tolerant" landscape treatment.

Landscaping Natural materials, stone, wooden pylons, plantings

+5 (4)



This yard, includes a combination of wood piles, stone and shrubs.

Landscaping

Driftwood "fence" as sculptural element

+4 (6)



Stacked drift wood mixed with low vegetation. This image is positive but due to the standard deviation of (6) this image is considered controversial.

Landscaping

Fish pond as landscaping element

+3 (5)



This yard, complete with a water feature, stone and low vegetation is surrounded with a light metal fence and wood posts. This image is positive but controversial because of the (5) standard deviation.

Landscaping

Natural materials, "beach-tolerant" plants, driftwood, low fencing

+3 (6)



This yard edged with a combination of vertical and horizontal wood elements along with low vegetation and grasses. This is a controversial image. due to the high standard deviation.

Landscaping

Grass yard, landscaped planting beds

+2 (6)



Low mowed grass, shrubs and trees in planting boxes running along a wooden boardwalk. This image is still positive but controversial due to the high standard deviation of (6).

Landscaping

"Kitsch" as landscaping elements

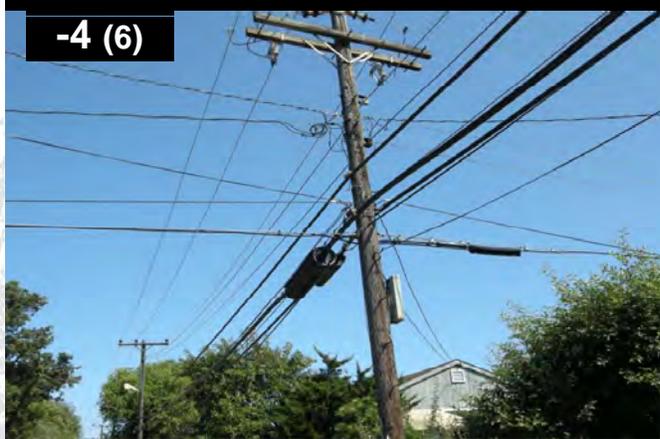
-1 (7)



Landscaping

Overhead utility poles and wires

-4 (6)



These two image are negative and are considered controversial due to the high value of standard deviation.

40 Use of indigenous and/or "beach-friendly" vegetation in landscaping

1	Not important	5.4%	24
2	Somewhat important	11.6%	51
3	Moderately important	23.1%	102
4	Very important	31.7%	140
5	Extremely important	26.5%	117
		98.4%	434



RESIDENTIAL

Residential structures are the primary building type on Fire Island. The analysis of the building types include massing, materials and colors. It also includes the roof form material in color as well as the design of the façade and the skirting. The images in this sub-set share multiple common characteristics and also includes a few anomalies.

The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to “ How appropriate is the image you are seeing, now and in the future, for residences on Fire Island. The images in this sub-set are some of the highest rated images in the survey with two (+8) each representing very different typologies and styles which reflect the tolerances of individuality.



Although these two highest rated residential structures are very different in architectural character, they complement each other very well in their form, use of materials, colors and landscaping.



This is one of two of the top rated images in the residential category. Each of the two represents different architectural styles, but have many complementary features. This top-rated image is a modern house with a flat roof, set inside a yard of beach grass. It is composed of several volumes attached and angular in form complemented by the wood deck with the light almost completely transparent railing. The angles of the location of the windows frame and emphasize specific views. The façades have a high percentage of glass. The material is wood that seems to be aging to a natural brown/grey. The trim and roof emphasis is white.



This, the second of two top-rated images, is also new construction. This one has an expansive front porch and low gable roof, and is designed in a more traditional, classic shingle style. The two top images shared some common elements – brown wood stain with complementary white trim; two stories; exterior living areas; framed windows and naturalized landscapes.



This small beach cottage has weathered shingles, white trim, double hung windows with divided lights, low pitched pale green gable roof, simple skirting and a combination of beach grass and wind sculpted trees in the front and side yard.



This image is another example of contemporary architecture.



This house is contemporary in its architecture with long horizontal inset windows and regular box volumes. The natural landscape and scale of the structure as it relates to the adjacent trees highlights the positive attributes found in other positively rated images. The façade is a natural wood that has been left to age and gray which integrates it into the surrounding landscape.



This two-story, gambrel-roofed house is not as highly ranked as the previous images but it shares many of their characteristics including the natural landscaping, scale, materials, and colors.

Residential Raised beach house, beach front, painted siding

+5 (4)



This image appears to break with the trend set by previous images in this section.

Residential Contemporary cottage, dune side, natural siding

+5 (5)



The structure is separated into two distinct volumes straddling a passage to a central entry. The buildings have gabled roofs and are clad with natural wood siding and the windows are large. The boardwalk terminates between the two structures is flanked by natural vegetation and provides a place for bicycle parking.

Residential Low cottage, dune side, natural siding

+5 (4)



This cottage style house has a steeply gabled roof, and the characteristic white trimmed windows and natural wood cladding. It is setback from the public right of way and is surrounded by natural vegetation.

Residential Contemporary home, dune side, natural siding

+5 (5)



A contemporary home with large expanses of glass complemented with white trim and aging wood.



Residential

Island condominiums, contemporary style, dune side

+3 (5)



This contemporary multi-family housing unit has large windows and natural wood cladding. It adjacent to the public right of way and is surrounded by low natural vegetation.

Residential

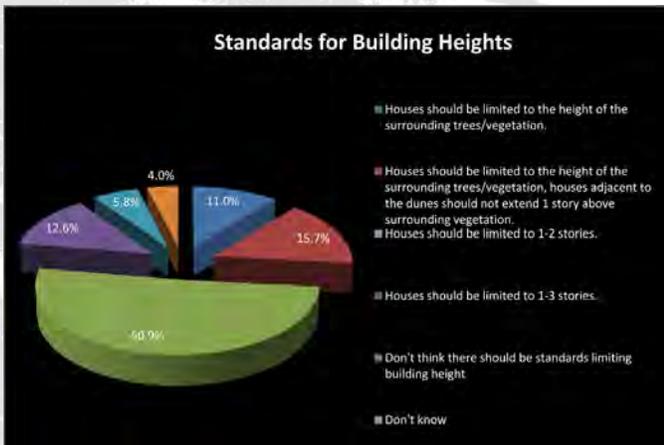
"Triple-decker", natural siding

+1 (6)



This elevated three level building has wrap around porches on all levels with wood diagonal siding with small windows and attached adjacent secondary structures. This image is positive but due to the high standard deviation it is controversial.

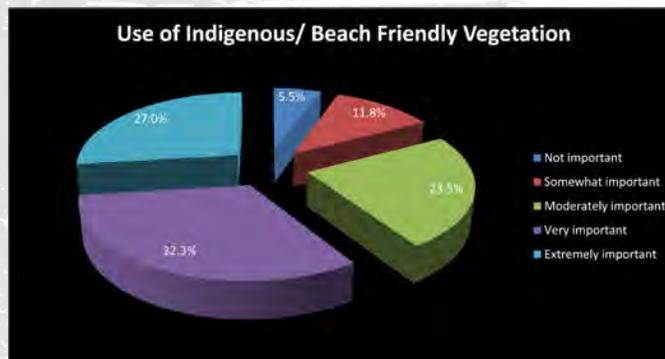
Question	Percentage	Count
43 Do you think there should be standards governing building heights on the Island?	98.4%	429
1 Houses should be limited to the height of the surrounding trees/vegetation.	10.8%	47
2 Houses should be limited to the height of the surrounding trees/vegetation, except adjacent to the dunes, where houses should not extend above one story over the surrounding vegetation.	15.4%	67
3 Houses should be limited to 1-2 stories.	50.0%	218
4 Houses should be limited to 1-3 stories.	12.4%	54
5 Don't think there should be standards limiting building height	5.7%	25
6 Don't know	3.9%	17



42	How do you feel about "infill" construction of new housing?	97.0%	423
1	New property owners should be allowed to construct whatever they want, as long as it meets local code.	27.5%	120
2	New property owners should not be allowed to construct whatever they want, new housing should fit into the existing character of the community.	62.2%	271
3	Don't Know	8.7%	38



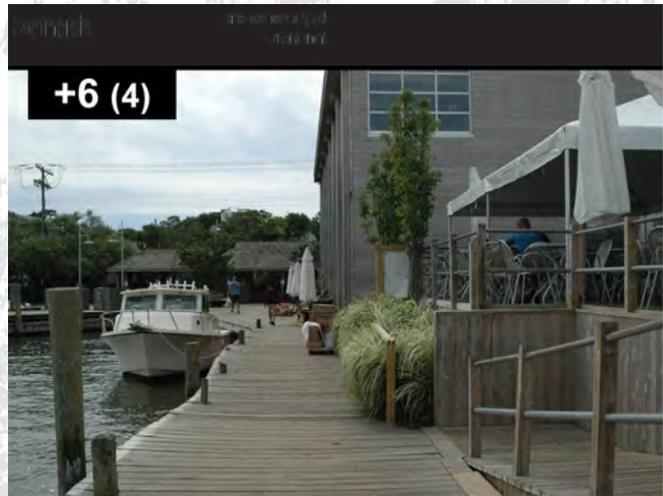
41	How would you rate the maintenance and upkeep of most housing in your community?	# of responses	436
1	Most if not all housing is well maintained in my community	25.2%	110
2	Generally well maintained	37.2%	162
3	Generally well maintained but with isolated housing in substandard or poor condition	26.1%	114
4	Mostly well maintained, but with numerous housing in substandard or poor condition	7.1%	31
5	Some well maintained, but most housing is substandard or in poor condition	1.4%	6
		97.0%	423



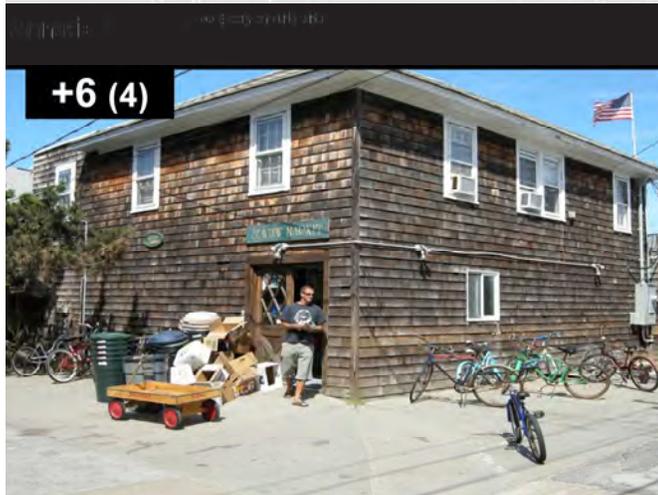
COMMERCIAL

Commercial structures on Fire Island include structures that are non residential and that are both privately and publicly operated. The analysis of the building types include massing, materials and colors. It also includes the roof form material in color as well as the design of the façade and adjacent public right of way

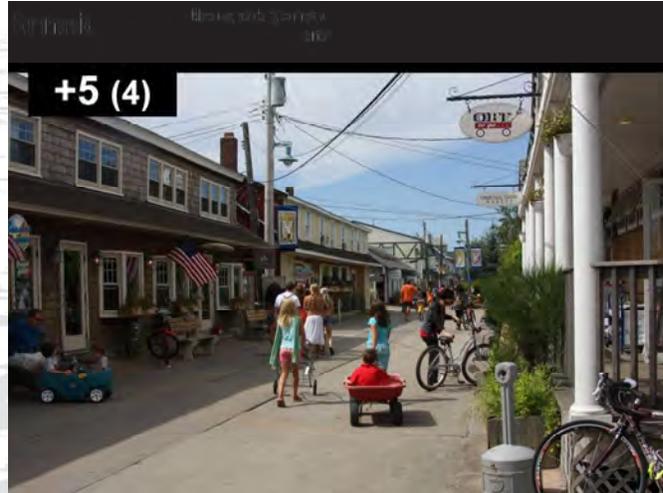
The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for commercial buildings on Fire Island.



This commercial center shares the highest value for commercial character.



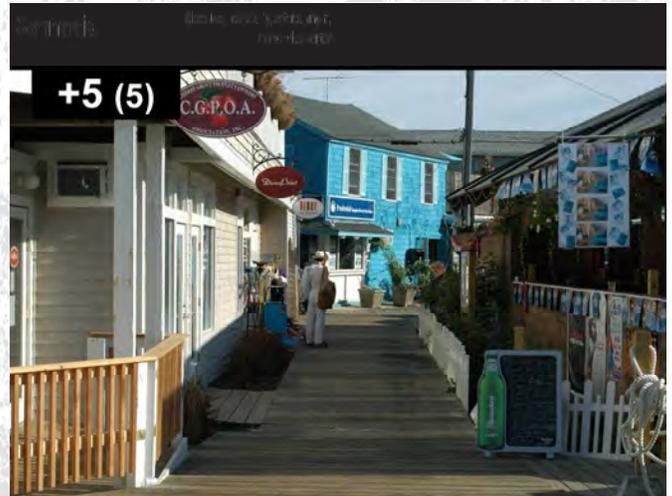
This grocery/ community store is one of two images that received the highest values for commercial character.



The structures have commercial on the ground floor and residential apartment above. The character of the architecture is in keeping with the characteristic of the Island including the natural wood siding the large porches and overhangs that provide shade and protection from summer thunderstorms and the white trim around the windows. The street is a combination of paving surfaces and concrete the street is wide to allow for an ease of circulation of both bikes and pedestrians. The stores have small entries and the signs are small and discrete.



This restaurant structure has many architectural characteristics in common with other positively-rated images.



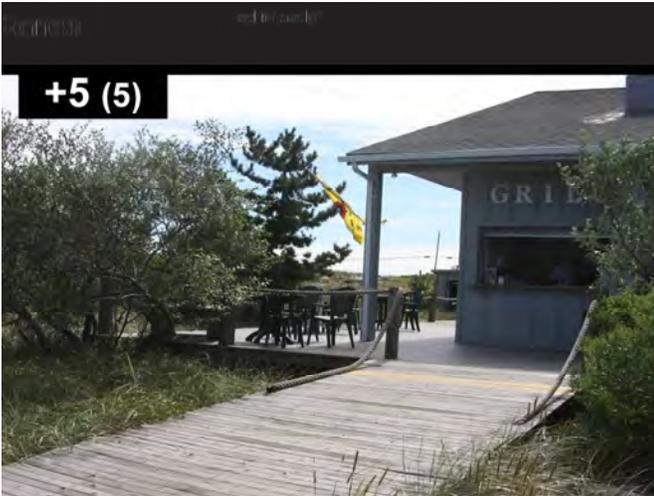
A number of diverse commercial uses converge in this area



A number of commercial uses and public activities coincide in this area.

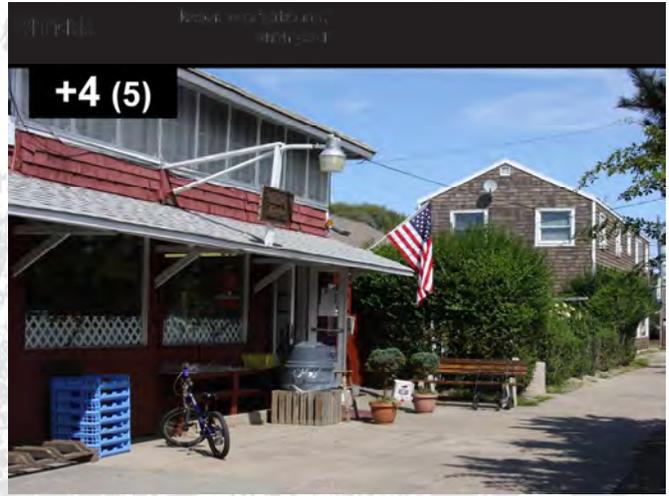


Harbor side restaurants share public space and provide bicycling parking nearby.



+5 (5)

The structure has a large overhang and has wood siding painted in a neutral gray in keeping with the other positively rated images. The exterior seating area has no umbrellas the walkway is wide and is flanked by vegetation.



+4 (5)

This general store has the large overhang and the structure is clad in wood siding. Its façade has large storefront windows and its front walkway is dominated by packaging and a trash receptacle.



+5 (5)

Bayside restaurant/ café/ outdoor meeting place.



Commercial

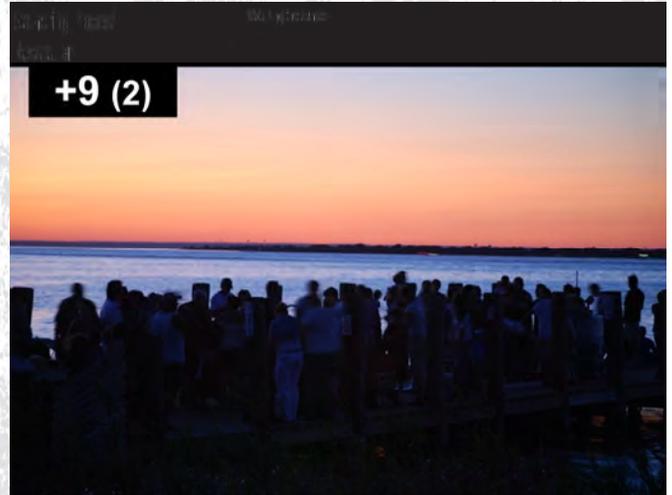
Beachfront snack bar

+4 (5)

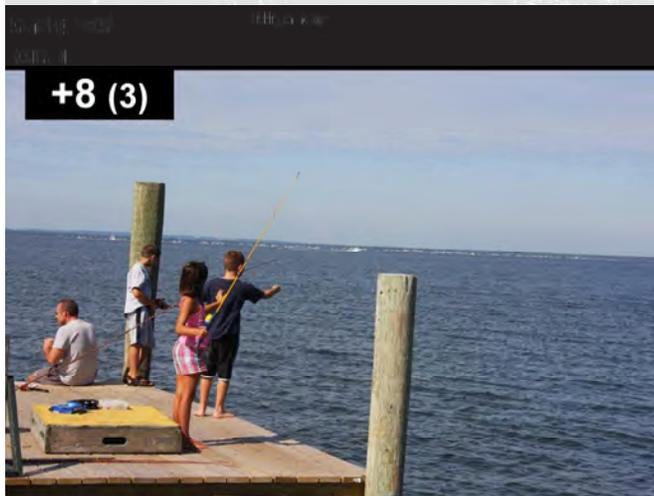
GATHERING PLACES & RECREATION

Throughout this study it is clear that gathering places and recreation are very important to the residents of Fire Island. In this sub-category the images are overwhelmingly positive and noncontroversial. One of the highest rated images from the entire study is from this section, reiterating the importance of these images to the character of Fire Island.

The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Gathering Places and Recreation facilities on Fire Island.



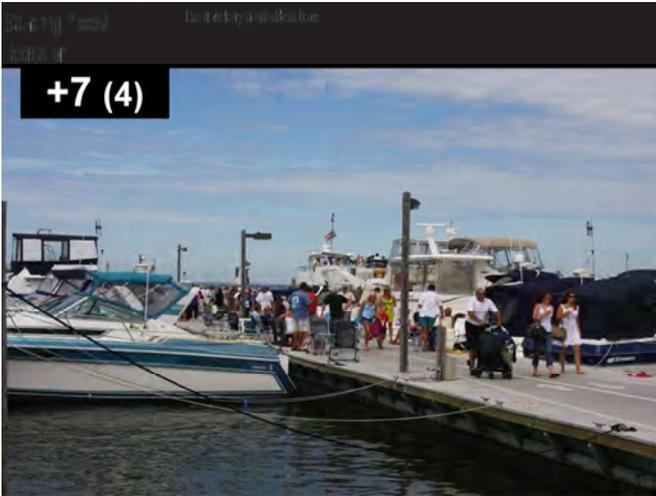
This is one of the highest rated images. This gathering at sunset is cherished.



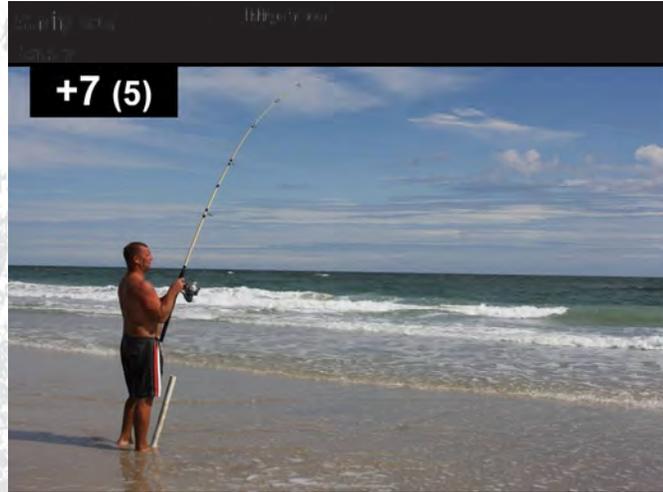
Island wide the images that show people engaged with ocean and the bay are consistently the highest rated.



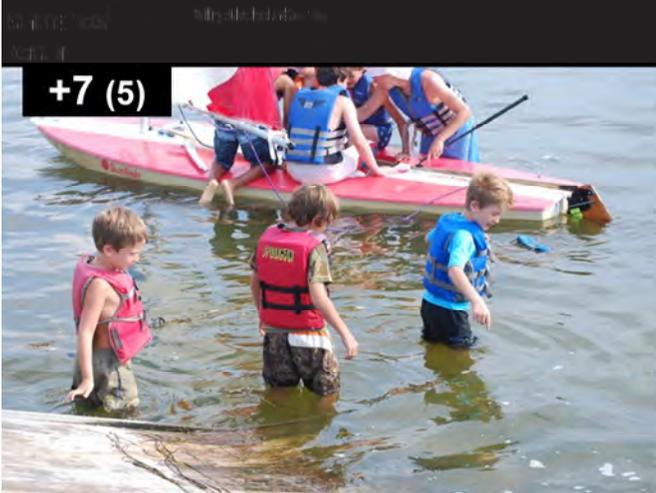
This image of clamming is another activity directly related to the water that ranked high.



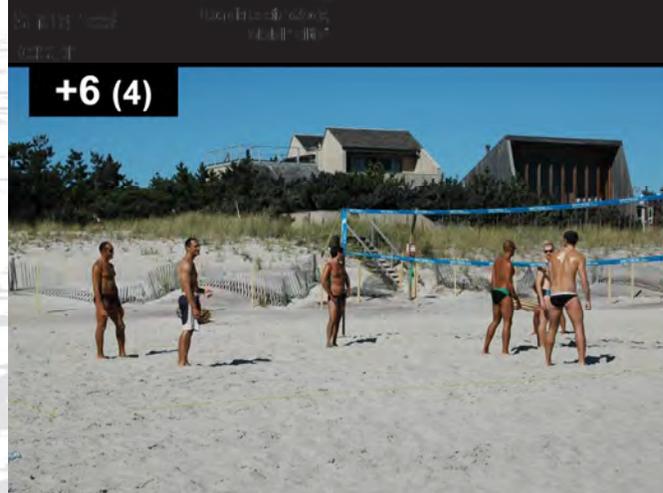
As the primary means of access to the island, ferries and private boats are very important as demonstrated by the very high values consistently assigned to images of the ferries.



Activities on the beach that involve the ocean were consistently highly rated.



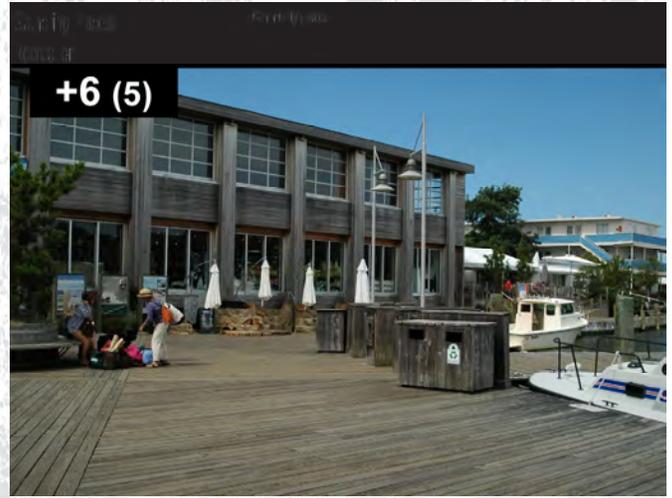
Water-based and family-oriented activities occur across the island.



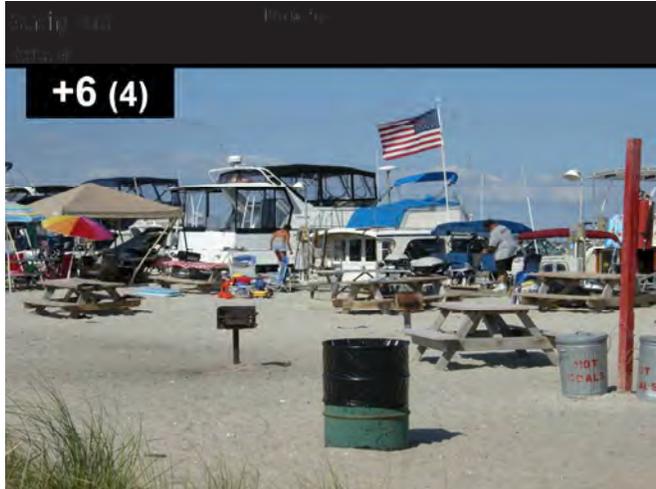
A temporary volley ball pitch on the beach.



Summer concerts and community events.



This image is a repeat from the commercial subset. As a community space its value increased from +5(5) to +6(5).



Picnic area located near boat dock.



The beach crowded with people and their gear. Houses appear behind the dune.



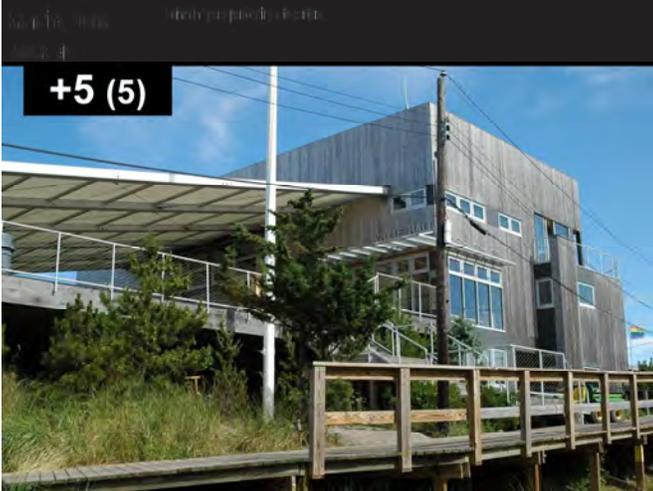
+5 (4)

A community bulletin board.



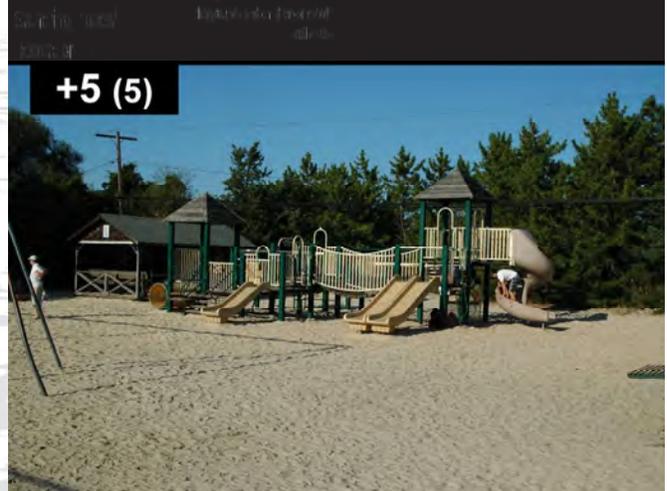
+5 (5)

This street sale is another positively rated image.



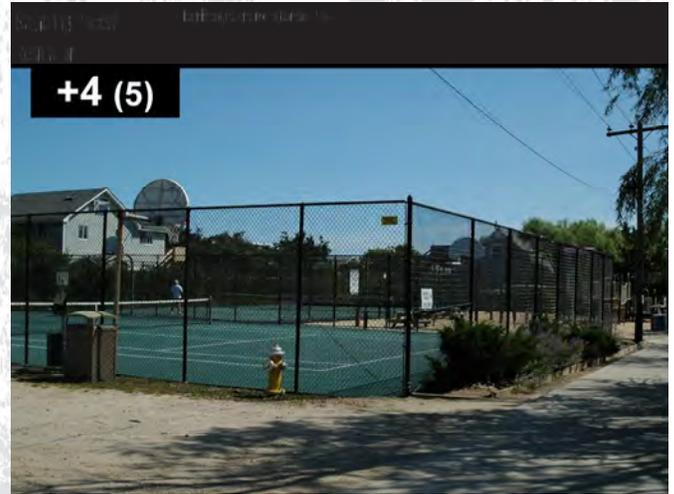
+5 (5)

The architecture of the building has many of the characteristics found in previous highly rated images. The siding is made of natural wood the windows are trimmed in white and the building is a single simple volume. The building also has a large outdoor covered space and has natural landscaping.



+5 (5)

This large playground is surrounded by large trees which mask it and create a natural perimeter. The playground equipment is also in keeping with the natural colors and blend into the environment.



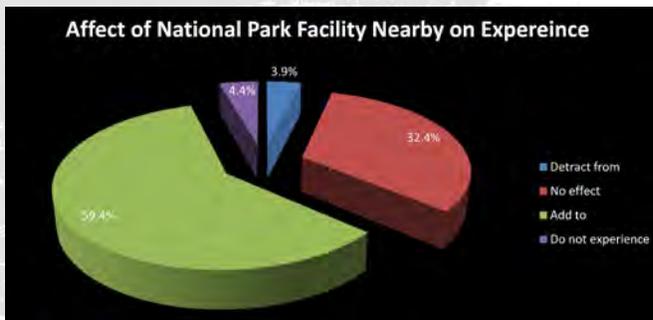
This image is a repetition of a an image used in the commercial sub-set however this image is pulled back view so the image value went from +5(6) in the commercial sub-set to a +5(5) here.

The tennis and basketball courts are surrounded by chain-link fencing with no masking landscape features.

How do the following elements affect your experience on Fire Island?

54 **Nearby National Park facilities**

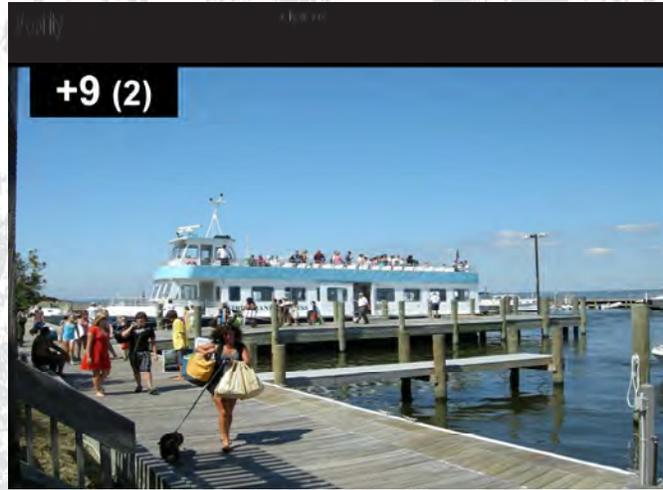
1	Detract from	3.8%	16
2	No effect	31.7%	133
3	Add to	58.2%	244
4	Do not experience	4.3%	18
		98.1%	411



MOBILITY

Reflective of how important mobility is to the character of Fire Island three of the highest rated images from this study come from this sub-category. Mobility includes all forms of transportation for both private and commercial uses on Fire Island.

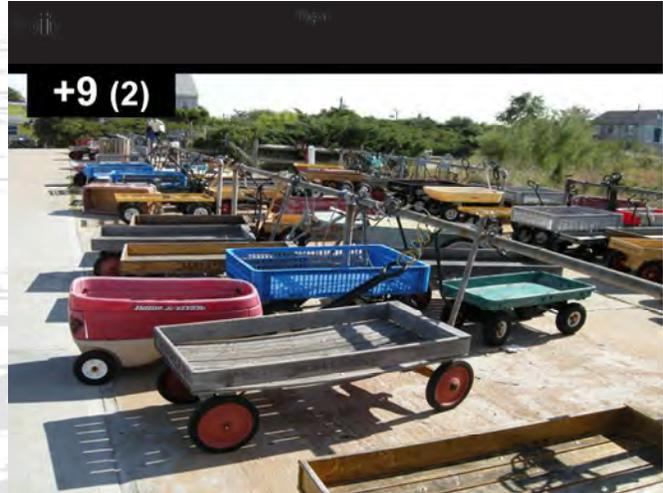
The resultant image values are the calculated values as a result to the participants response to " How appropriate is the Image you are seeing, now and in the future, for Mobility on Fire Island.



See earlier notes.



See earlier notes.



See earlier notes.

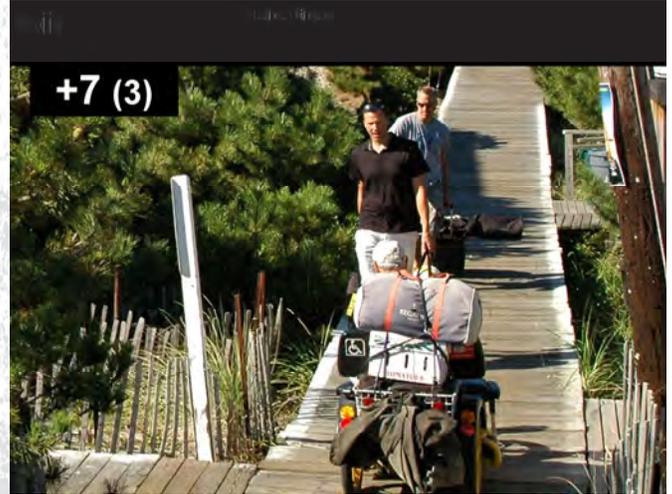
Mobility

Hand-pulled cart

+8 (3)

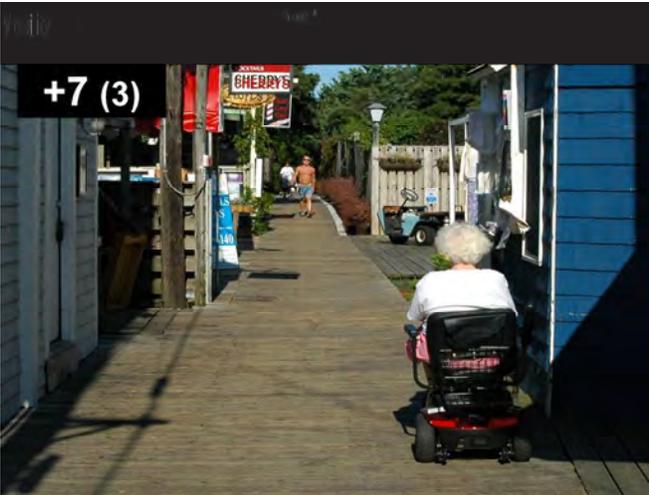


Transporting luggage by hand-pulled cart.



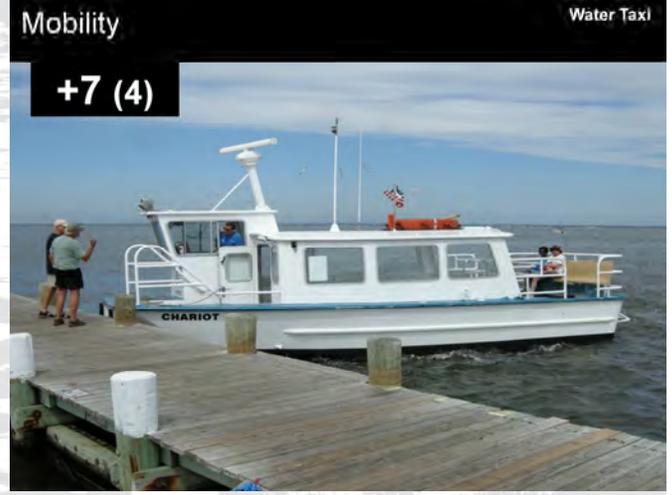
+7 (3)

Another form of access to assist those who have difficulty walking.



+7 (3)

“Scooter” providing access for those who have difficulty walking.



Mobility

Water Taxi

+7 (4)

The water taxis and ferry system that serve the island was highly rated.



Bicycling is another type of non-motorized form of transport is also highly rated.



Gas powered carts are motorized form of transport that is negatively rated, but due to the (6) standard deviation this image is considered controversial.



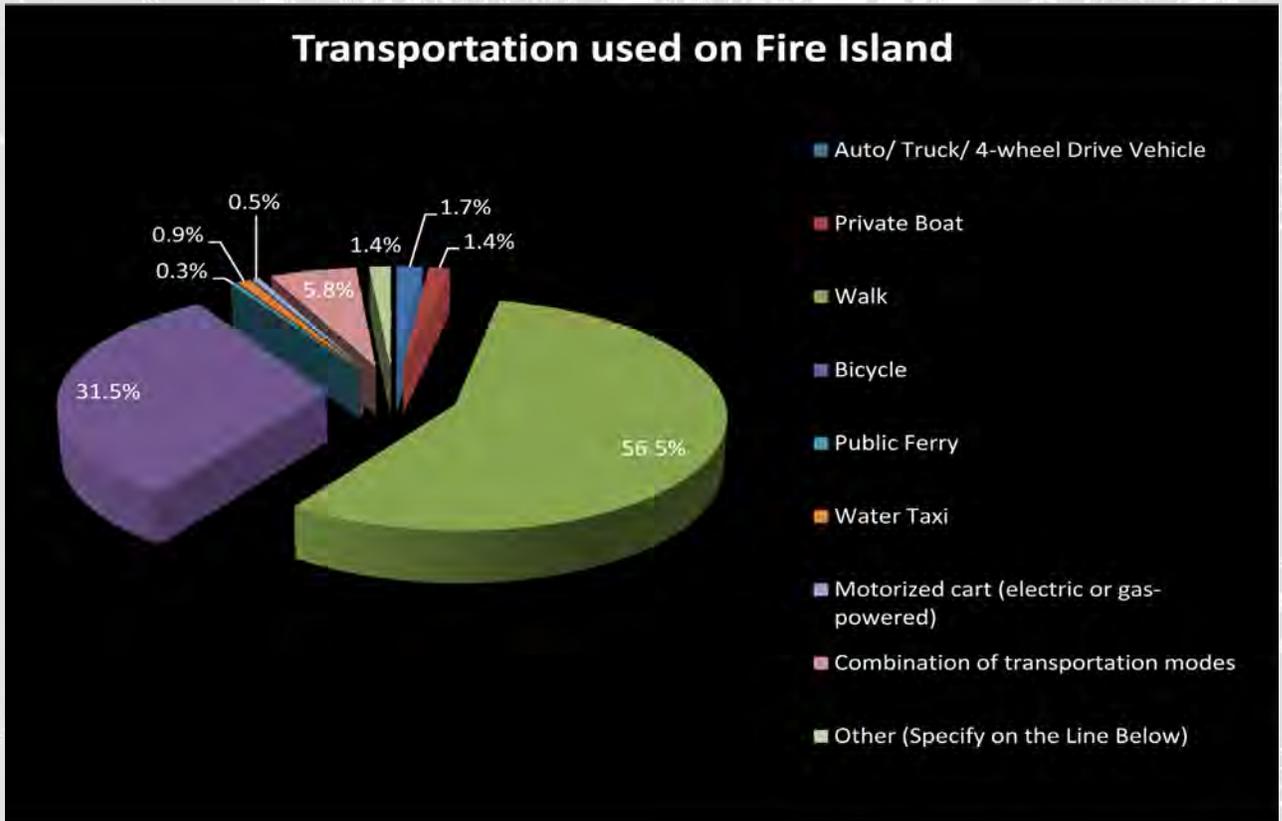
Private boats are the last of the positively rated non controversial images in this sub-set.



Private vehicles as of transport is the lowest rated image in this sub-set. This image is negatively rated, but due to the (6) standard deviation this image controversial.

12 What form of transportation do you use most often for travel once on the Island?

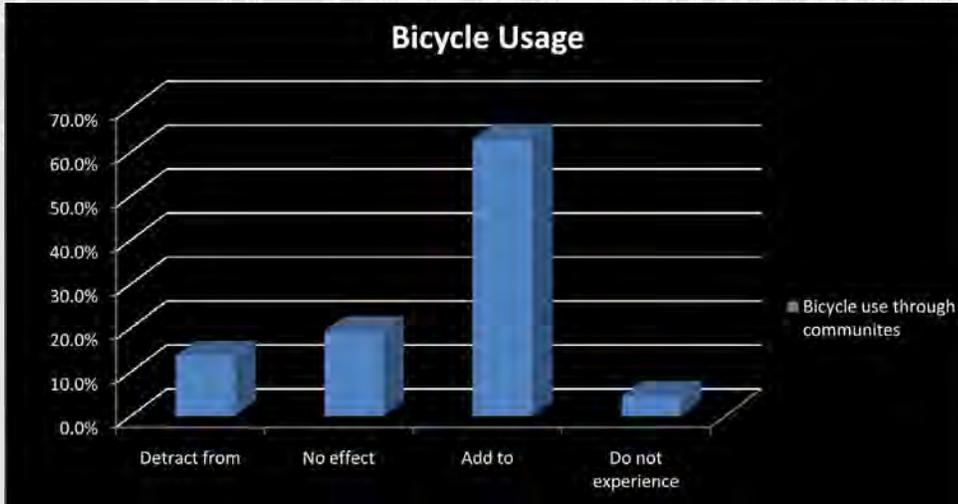
1	Auto/ Truck/ 4-wheel Drive Vehicle	1.7%	10
2	Private Boat	1.4%	8
3	Walk	56.5%	323
4	Bicycle	31.5%	180
5	Public Ferry	0.3%	2
6	Water Taxi	0.9%	5
7	Motorized cart (electric or gas-powered)	0.5%	3
8	Combination of transportation modes	5.8%	33
9	Other (Specify on the Line Below)	1.4%	8
		100.0%	572



How do the following elements affect your experience on Fire Island?

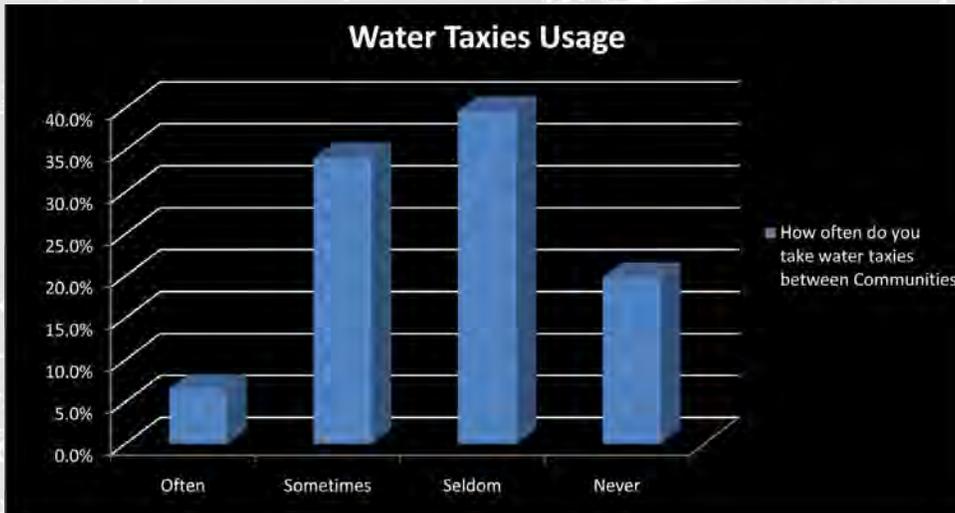
58 Bicycle use through communities

1	Detract from	13.4%	56
2	No effect	18.9%	79
3	Add to	62.2%	260
4	Do not experience	4.3%	18
		98.8%	413



59 How often do you use the water taxi between communities?

1	Often	6.5%	27
2	Sometimes	33.7%	141
3	Seldom	39.2%	164
4	Never	19.6%	82
		99.0%	414





4. POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

A CHARACTER VOCABULARY

The character of place is determined by positive and negative responses from a holistic set of visual and spatial features, sounds and smells. These visual and spatial features, captured in a moment of time, were divided into 10 categories or subsets. Together they best compose the character of Fire Island. The values placed on each of these images provide the basic data to understand which images contribute and enhance the character and which detract from the character. By incorporating and maintain the features that are the highest rated, while limiting and controlling the features that received the negative values, the experience, value and uniqueness of Fire Island will be enhanced now and in the future.

Incorporating features shown in the positive images of a single category when combined with other positive images in multiple categories, an even richer and complementary character vocabulary is generated for this unique place.

The results of this character vocabulary when considered in the GMP and/or incorporated in a community plan can act as a guide. If a picture is worth a thousand words, these images provide a book of a recommendations and suggestions.

The best way to use the results of this character study is to:

1. Have easy access to the images and values from all categories either in this report form or on the net
2. Use the character vocabulary for planning and zoning guidelines - it could be adopted formally or as a non-binding resolution
3. Use the character vocabulary when in the pre design or design ideas phase or when reviewing construction permits for new or exterior remodeling, fencing and skirting.
4. Use when reviewing, designing or rebuilding public facilities
5. Use it when considering new infrastructure or landscaping

Notes:

