



LIVELIHOOD AND COMMERCE WORK GROUP SUMMARY

Note: This compilation of possible goals, objectives, strategies, and other materials related to this topic was prepared by the Core group and staff. Everything in it is in draft form. This working document will be constantly evolving, based on the latest information and discussions in the Work Group and Core. Among other changes, we will be adding short, medium, and long-term targets for each objective.

This winter and spring, each Work Group will pull out one or two Short-Term Strategies and one or two Bold Initiatives to focus on and to flesh out in more detail.

We invite your comments on this document. Please go to the website – www.islandplan.org – click on “Discussion”, then “Livelihood and Commerce”, then “COMMENT ON THE DRAFT SUMMARY DOCUMENT”, and finally, “Reply to this Post”. Alternatively, e-mail your comments to london@mvcommission.org or mail them to MVC, Box 1447, Oak Bluffs, 02557.

MISSION (*What the Work Group is Doing*)

The Mission of the Livelihood and Commerce Work Group is to identify community values, to articulate a vision for the future of the Martha's Vineyard economy, and to design and recommend strategies to achieve that vision.

OVERALL PURPOSE (*What We Hope to Achieve for the Vineyard*)

To encourage a diverse, year-round Island economy that is flexible, self-reliant, durable, and prosperous, that enhances our community and environment, that respects our character and history, and that achieves the following goals:

1. Generates year-round jobs with real living wages so the Vineyard is a good place to live and work;
2. Creates a practical, healthy business climate for employers and entrepreneurs;
3. Provides a full range of effective, convenient services and goods for residents and visitors.
4. Maximizes economic multipliers by a) producing locally as much food, energy, and other import-substituting products as possible, and b) by stimulating local buying, investment, and ownership;

5. Locates commercial activities appropriately and ensures sufficient commercial land for all needs.

GENERAL DISCUSSION *(Overview of the Topic Today)*

To come: How the topic has evolved, where it is today, where it seems to be going if current trends continue, what the main challenges are.

1: IMPROVE JOB QUALITY & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

GOAL *(What We Want to Achieve Long-Term)*

Generate year-round jobs with real living wages so the Vineyard is a good place to live and work.

CURRENT STATUS *(Where We Are Now):*

Due to our high cost of living, wages are too low, and many of the higher paying jobs are seasonal. Wages are rising far slower than housing costs and cost of living (see *John Ryan's "Housing Needs Update 2005"*).

OBJECTIVE *(The Issue and the Aspiration):*

Due to our high cost of living, wages are too low, and many of the higher paying jobs are seasonal. Therefore, we hope to make most or all jobs year-round with real Living Wages, so the Vineyard is a good place to live and work. If those jobs result in import substitution as well, it will strengthen our economy in many ways (see *"Maximize Economic Multipliers" below*).

UNDERLYING OBSTACLES *(What's In The Way)*

Higher wages may be a hardship for the business community unless, at the same time, we take steps to make a healthier business climate.

STRATEGIES *(How To Do It)*

1.1: Ensure that all Vineyarders have the opportunity to earn a real living wage.

- Enact a Living Wage Ordinance. According to the Economic Policy Institute, +/- 70 have been enacted. *[Possible Short-Term Strategy. See http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/issueguides_livingwage_livingwagefacts.]*
- Make exceptions when businesses create new year-round jobs, which result in import substitution.
- Provide workforce development training.

1.2: Reduce seasonal unemployment

- Optimize under-utilized resources and infrastructure in the "other three seasons" by
 - Creating a strong eco/cultural tourism program *[Possible Short-Term Strategy – Sherm Goldstein; see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eco-tourism>];*
The tourist season is short. Our island has much to offer in the other three seasons, especially if we assemble a program that resonates. A well-marketed program of educational, ecological, recreational, spiritual, physical, historical, social, and psychological activities that could run mainly off-season (roughly Mid-

October through April), to attract participants primarily from off-Island, but open to our local population. It would be a partnership between the Island's hospitality industry and the Island's rich not-for-profit sector. The aims would be to increase the activities of the community's organizations, to increase off-season visitation and spending by tourists and seasonal visitors, and to increase the appeal of the Vineyard to an aging population. The program would be financed with a modest users' fee on participating inns, restaurants, and other businesses.

- Promoting post-secondary educational activities - "the Vineyard as campus";
- Identifying other off-season commercial and work activities.

1.3: Ensure that all Vineyard workers have good working and living conditions.

- Consider ways to reduce the cost of living.
- Consider ways to make a healthier business climate.
- Consider ways to improve worker's benefits, such as group insurance.

INFORMATION (What We Need To Know):

- What is the cost of living here?
- What is a Vineyard living wage?
- What is our cost of living/average wage ratio in various sectors?
- How does it compare to other locations?

INTERDEPENDENCIES (Primary Relationships With other Topics):

- Affordable Housing Work Group;
- Healthy Business Climate;
- Strong Local Economy

EMERGING CONCEPTS (Ideas Not Yet Ready for Prime Time.

To come

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED IDEAS (Proposals That Were Tabled or Rejected)

To come

2. FOSTER A HEALTHY BUSINESS CLIMATE

GOAL (What We Want to Achieve Long-Term)

Create a practical, healthy business climate for employers and entrepreneurs.

CURRENT STATUS (Where We Are Now):

The cost of doing business is high. There are perceived obstacles to doing business. Property values and rents are high.

OBJECTIVE (The Issue and the Aspiration):

Make it easier for businesses to do business, especially when they satisfy identified community needs and goals.

UNDERLYING OBSTACLES *(What's In The Way)*

We don't know which complaints about the difficulties of doing business are truly warranted. It's hard to do much about the high property values.

STRATEGIES *(How To Do It)*

- Tax credits for property owners and/or business owners who satisfy all or some of the following criteria: create year round living wage jobs; create anchor businesses in downtown centers; create import substitution businesses; live here. This approach also helps to promote several of our other goals;
- Establish local buying cooperatives and alliances to help share and bring down costs;

INFORMATION *(What We Need To Know):*

- To what degree does the cost of doing business differ from other locations, and do prices charged for goods and services offset this difference (Is this a non-issue?)
- Do we need more space for businesses to locate, and more affordable rents?
- Is lack of wastewater treatment an impediment to doing business?
- Is the tax system (including the differential tax rates in Tisbury) harmful to business?
- Are there specific zoning and regulatory impediments that are inappropriately harsh or complex?
- What is the profile of our economy by sector and what are the trends?
- What kind of educational efforts are needed – for the public and for business owners – to make a stronger, healthier business climate?

INTERDEPENDENCIES *(Primary Relationships With other Topics):*

- Zoning and Land Use

EMERGING CONCEPTS *(Ideas Not Yet Ready for Prime Time.)*

To come

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED IDEAS *(Proposals That Were Tabled or Rejected)*

To come

3. PROVIDE NEEDED GOODS AND SERVICES

GOAL *(What We Want to Achieve Long-Term)*

Provide a full range of effective, convenient goods and services for residents and visitors

CURRENT STATUS *(Where We Are Now):*

Many goods and services that people want are only available off-island. In other cases, they are available on-island but people think they are not, or that they are too expensive.

OBJECTIVE *(The Issue and the Aspiration):*

Our economy should provide the services that are needed by residents, but also those that are needed by seasonal residents, and by short-term visitors, so that they can successfully experience the beauty and authenticity of the Vineyard.

UNDERLYING OBSTACLES *(What's In The Way)*

The pressures of economic survival may cause us to disregard important needs.

STRATEGIES *(How To Do It)*

- Hospitality training to foster a more welcoming attitude toward visitors;
- Through user fees, finance improved visitor facilities: beaches, parking, rest rooms, attendants, signs, markers, maps & guides, brochures, historic plaques and markers, transportation symbols;
- Improved public transportation and a seamless way to move people and their possessions from the mainland to their accommodations.
- Increase family camping areas.

INFORMATION *(What We Need To Know):*

- Is the Chamber of Commerce already doing all this and are their efforts sufficient?
- Why do people come and what keeps them coming?
- Are there types of visitors that offer more to the economy with less negative impacts that we can attract?

INTERDEPENDENCIES *(Primary Relationships With other Topics):*

- Transportation.

EMERGING CONCEPTS *(Ideas Not Yet Ready for Prime Time.*

To come

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED IDEAS *(Proposals That Were Tabled or Rejected)*

To come

4. BUILD A MORE LOCAL ECONOMY

GOAL

Maximize economic multipliers by a) producing locally as much food, energy, and other import-substituting products as possible, and b) by stimulating local buying, investment, and ownership.

CURRENT STATUS

To come

OBJECTIVE

Too much Vineyard money is spent off-island and too little is produced here. By increasing local production of food, energy, and other essentials, and by maximizing local buying, investment, and ownership, we can minimize economic leakage, increase economic multipliers, assure reliable supplies, control costs, and have access to higher quality goods.

UNDERLYING OBSTACLES

- Low-cost off-island goods are attractive;
- Local energy production is capital intensive and complex;
- Harvests from the sea have diminished;
- High property values makes food production and manufacturing expensive;
- There may be competition for land between agricultural use and conservation/ecological services uses.

STRATEGIES

4.1: Reduce the leakage of Islanders' and visitors' spending by increasing the percentage of goods and services that are produced and obtained on the Vineyard. *[Possible Bold Initiative; John Abrams]*

- Begin an on-going Buy Local campaign that emphasizes the community value, the authenticity, and the economic advantages of local production and buying;
- Establish a local currency or credit card that reduces costs (the Island Card is a first step);
- Start a local social venture capital fund or underwriting firm to help establish essential food, energy, and building material producers and a local Vineyard stock exchange so people can invest in local business;
- Design the essential components of an "new export economy" which includes electronic and craft-based enterprise;
- Become a chapter of the Business Alliance for Living Local Economies to learn from other communities.

4.2: Improve the local fishing and agricultural economies for the benefit of the Island's economy, quality of life, and character.

- Design agricultural deed restrictions that are equivalent to affordable housing deed restrictions and work to create a growing pool of agricultural land; work with conservation organizations to determine which land is best for agriculture and which is best for habitat;
- Design and implement (once we know more) essential agricultural infrastructure needed (example: slaughterhouse); *[Possible Short-Term Strategy; Jim Athearn]*
- Promote aquaculture to replenish diminished stocks of seafood.

4.3: Begin a long-term effort to make a community-owned utility to produce and distribute our electricity. *[Possible Bold Initiative; John Abrams]*

As an island, we could improve things in many ways if we had a community-owned electric utility. We could use renewable energy to generate a part (and even, over time, a large percentage) of our power; the utility could sponsor aggressive energy conservation programs to reduce demand; we could control the rate-structure; we could keep significant funds within the Island economy instead of allowing it to leak (flood) off-Island; and we could make high paying, rewarding year-round jobs, and keep them here.

This will not be easy. Acquisition from N-Star, for one thing, will be a challenge. It's a highly complex undertaking altogether, and it is likely to take a long, long time.

Nationwide, and in Massachusetts too, many municipalities have their own utilities (think of Hull, not far from here, which is beginning to generate part of its power with wind, with great success).

INFORMATION

- The Leakage Issue: what leaks, how, and what impact does it have? How strong is the impact of the multiplier effect?
- How much food and energy do we use and how much of each could we produce here?
- What are the essential changes necessary to restore fishing as a livelihood and encourage widespread aquaculture? (*Meet with Warren Doty, Chris Murphy, and Rick Karney*);
- What are the steps toward making a community-owned utility? (*Cape and Islands Self-Reliance Corp is exploring for Cape Cod*).
- What building materials could be produced here and how could we encourage establishment of Used Building Materials Exchange? (*Convene small group of John Abrams, Tom Turner, Kirk Briggs, etc.*)
- How we might take best advantage of the Internet as an opportunity to build our year-round economy (*Convene small group of Susan Goldsmith, Holly Stephenson, who else?*)
- What would be the effect of high-end chain stores beginning to come to the island? Should we discourage, and, if so, how would we do this before it even happens? Are there places that have?

INTERDEPENDENCIES

- Natural Environment
- Energy and Waste.

5. ENSURE APPROPRIATE COMMERCIAL LOCATIONS AND LAND

GOAL (What We Want to Achieve Long-Term)

Locate commercial activities appropriately and ensure sufficient commercial land for all needs.

CURRENT STATUS (Where We Are Now):

There is very limited commercial land for the range of commercial activities that are needed.

OBJECTIVE (The Issue and the Aspiration):

Vibrant, walkable, easily accessible commercial districts, each with the anchor businesses that are necessary for the conduct of daily life, are essential components of a healthy community and a strong economy. We also need space for wholesale activity, marine business, etc.

UNDERLYING OBSTACLES *(What's In The Way)*

- Sprawl is easier
- Re-zoning is difficult.

STRATEGIES *(How To Do It)*

- Tax credits for property owners and/or business owners who satisfy all or some of the following criteria: create year round living wage jobs; create anchor businesses in downtown centers; create import substitution businesses; live here. This approach also helps to promote several of our other goals.
- Zoning incentives for greater density in the commercial districts;
- Establishment of new commercial districts in key locations;
- Transfer of Development rights with appropriate incentives;
- Design efforts as needed in key commercial areas (North Tisbury, Edgartown Triangle and Upper Main Street, State Road Tisbury, etc.)

INFORMATION *(What We Need To Know):*

- What is the list of essential anchor businesses and secondary anchor businesses?
- How much commercially zoned land, in each town, is not presently being used for commercial purposes? What's available?
- Is the airport business park sufficient? Does it work right? Are there other uses that should be permitted? Does it need to expand?
- Do we have enough commercial centers or do we need more?
- Have we done as much as possible to design and/or re-design our commercial centers so that they work as well as possible?
- How could tax credits, zoning changes, and transfer of development rights help?

INTERDEPENDENCIES *(Primary Relationships With other Topics):*

- Zoning and Land Use

EMERGING CONCEPTS *(Ideas Not Yet Ready for Prime Time)*

To come

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED IDEAS *(Proposals That Were Tabled or Rejected)*

To come