



Synopsis of Past Plans

EXCERPTS Regarding BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Note: This excerpt was prepared by the staff of the Martha's Vineyard Commission. The full document *Synopsis of Past Plans* is available at www.islandplan.org

Methodology

This synopsis was prepared from a set of Vineyard planning documents dating back to 1987. Topics and sub-topics have been organized in the following standard format:

- Issue: a brief statement of the challenge;
- Goal: a broad statement summarizing the overall goal;
- Objectives: a list of more specific objectives, each with a short sub-heading.

This document only includes the broader statements of issues, goals and objectives. Statements about specific implementation techniques or about which entities should be responsible for which actions, were not included.

The following is the list of source documents:

❖ Island-Wide Plans

- ◆ Regional Island Plan – Policy Plan, 1990
- ◆ Regional Transportation Plan, 2003 Update

❖ Master Plans

- ◆ Chilmark Master Plan Supplement, 2003.
- ◆ Edgartown Master Plan, April 1990.
- ◆ Oak Bluffs Master Plan, June 1998.
- ◆ West Tisbury Master Plan, July 1987

❖ Open Space Plans

- ◆ Chilmark Open Space & Recreation Plan Update, June 1996.
- ◆ Tisbury Open Space Plan, 1997.
- ◆ West Tisbury Open Space and Recreation Plan, April 2000.
- ◆ Oak Bluffs Open Space & Recreation Plan, December 2004

❖ Visioning Documents

- ◆ Documents from all six Island towns, 1997.

❖ Community Development Plans

- ◆ Plans from all six towns, July and August 2004.

Community Character

Issues: Each Island town reflects its origins: Edgartown as a historic marine commercial center and seat of county government; Tisbury as a working port and market town; West Tisbury as an agricultural center and mill town; Chilmark with larger agricultural estates; Aquinnah as a traditional native settlement and fishing village, and Oak Bluffs as the first true summer resort town.

Goal: Identify and protect historic, cultural, archeological, and aesthetic resources of Martha's Vineyard. Preserve the individual, peaceful, small-town character of each of the six Island towns.

Objectives

Protect the Vineyard's Physical Character

- Protect historic, cultural and aesthetic resources through overlay districts, site review, design guidelines and restrictions.
- Survey and protect archeological resources.
- Preserve diversity as a principal visual characteristic of Martha's Vineyard.
- Match the use of land to the land's natural and visual qualities. Preserve the appearance of openness and great space.
- Manage change and growth to enhance the traditional and natural landscapes of the Vineyard.
- Require that development plans fit the scale and quality of the inherited landscape so that generations to come will have views and open vistas to enjoy.

Ensure that New Construction Enhances the Vineyard's Character

- Use neighborhood patterns to guide development.
- Design guidelines should include principles to guide site planning, design of structures and architectural detail. They should be flexible enough to allow individual, creative design solutions and specific enough to serve as a useful tool for local review boards.
- Recruit advisory committees composed of design professionals and community experts to propose model design guidelines for specific areas.
- Design guidelines should encourage conservation of energy, water and other resources.

Maintain the Character of Historic Districts

- Review existing historic districts. Determine the existing levels of protection and propose new districts and regulations where necessary.
- Review zoning with regard to encouraging the maintenance of historic streetscapes and Victorian or New England town character.

Scenic Values

Issue: The character of the Vineyard is derived to a great extent from how it looks from public spaces, including major roads and the water.

Goal: Foster the maintenance of existing vistas, creation of new vistas, and restoration of vistas that have been lost over time from plant succession.

Objectives:

Protect Roadside Views

- Encourage the opening of long views of the Island landscape.
- Protect scenic view easements.
- Identify and protect key parcels along roadsides in order to improve scenic quality.
- Review dimensional requirements of the Island Roads District and add design specifications appropriate to enhance the visual experience of the major Island roads.

Limit Light Pollution

- Discourage the proliferation of artificial lighting, which has impacted scenic resources, most notably the dark night sky, and has disturbed night vistas and interfered with small boat navigation in Island harbors.

Preserve the Island's Distinct Character and Environment

Issue: Martha's Vineyard possesses unique natural, historical, ecological, scientific, cultural, and other values and there is a regional and statewide interest in preserving and enhancing these values.

Goal: Protect and conserve the land and water resources that are essential to the Island's economy, character and quality of life. Manage change and growth to enhance traditional and natural landscapes. Preserve and enhance the rural quality of life and the unique, peaceful, small-town character of each of the six Island towns

Objectives:

Protect Critical Lands

- Whenever possible, avoid developing "critical lands" including critical habitats, agricultural land, lands affecting the sole source aquifer, and lands needed for community needs such as health and social services, government, housing, drinking water, waste disposal, education and recreation.

Preserve the Island's Character

- Carefully consider visual factors in order to preserve Island character.
- Preserve diversity as a principal visual characteristic of Martha's Vineyard. Match the use of land to the land's natural and visual qualities.
- Protect and enhance the visual experience of the major Island roads.
- Encourage the maintenance of historic streetscapes and Victorian or New England town character (See also section 6.1 Community Character.)

Protect Open Space

- Preserve and increase public and private common lands.
- Preserve the appearance of openness and great space, which is appreciated by Islanders and visitors.
- Require that development plans fit the scale and quality of the inherited landscape so that generations to come will have views and open vistas to enjoy.

Protect Man-Made Resources

- Identify and protect historic, cultural, archeological and aesthetic resources of Martha's Vineyard through overlay districts, site review, design guidelines and restrictions.

Protect the Aquifer

- Land uses affecting the Island's sole source aquifer should be managed to preserve the purest possible groundwater and surface water.

Protect the Social Landscape

- Foster a diverse Island housing stock in order to have a healthy and economically diverse community.

Manage the Pattern and Rate of Development

Issue: Some types of growth are welcome, necessary and unavoidable.

Goal: Ensure that new development fits the land – respecting and reinforcing traditional land use pattern and uses – and manage growth rates in the best interest of all Vineyarders.

Objectives:

Reinforce Existing Development Patterns

- Ensure that new land uses conform to the traditional land use pattern and enhance traditional uses.
- Guide development to fit into neighborhood patterns, based on settlement pattern, functional relationships, and character.
- Ensure that development proposals contribute to the rural quality of life on Martha's Vineyard. Reject qualities that are "suburban" and "urban."

Concentrate and Cluster Development

- Direct growth to locations that have the capacity to absorb the impacts of development.
- Channel residential development into neighborhood hamlet areas with green zones between (neighborhood clusters with services). Use the hamlet concept to increase open space, create commons and maintain rural character.
- Where private development of critical lands is unavoidable, preserve the capacity of the land for agriculture, water supply, habitat or community needs to the greatest extent possible through cluster development and by limiting the intensity of uses.

Manage Growth Rates

- Use growth rates to manage the pace of development and to ensure that buildout does not lead to economic stagnation. Developments which offer overwhelming positive social or economic benefits to the Island should be allowed to develop rapidly. Proposals whose detriments to the community as a whole are only slightly outweighed by the advantages should be made to grow slowly. Different growth rates are needed for different sectors of the economy: business growth, construction growth, vehicles, SSA foot passengers, housing.
- Encourage affordable housing development, as well as development that results in public access to recreation and to the water.
- Justify growth rates based on impacts and capacity of services and infrastructure.
- Rates should be based on percentages of the remaining capacity of resources so that no single development consumes too large a portion of remaining capacity.
- Tie growth management programs to capital planning to link the pace of development to the capacity of support systems.

Manage Growth in Relation to Carrying Capacity

- Ensure that development does not exceed road capacity. Use the Island Road District as planning unit to estimate capacity for increases in traffic and identify critical corridors.
- Use watersheds as planning units for estimating carrying capacity for water quality impacts such as nutrients and runoff. Predict buildout and set targets for levels of development within sub-watersheds.

Use an Island Development Plan to Manage Development

- Develop an Island land use plan for future development of remaining land. Include areas for commercial and industrial growth, housing, community facilities, infrastructure, open space, agricultural use, etc.
- Guide development so that more of the characteristics that Vineyarders feel have high value are protected and promoted, and that those characteristics considered to have lower value are avoided.
- Review use and management of publicly owned lands including designated open space.
- Plan sufficient land for community needs including health and social services, government, housing, drinking water, waste disposal, education and recreation and dedicate lands for those uses.
- Develop guidelines for appropriate locations for types of housing, commercial and industrial development. Set criteria for optimum densities and layout.

Balance Six Towns and One Island

Issue: The six Vineyard towns each have their own character and traditions, but are vitally interdependent since many issues are regional in nature.

Goal: Seek a balance between best interests, the home rule, preservation of the special character of each town, and regional cooperation to deal effectively with Island-wide issues.

Objectives:

Deal with Regional Issues in a Regional Way

- Define issues that have regional impact, including but not limited to: issues which affect the health, safety or general welfare of more than one town, issues which affect the public use of State, Federal, or County-owned resources, any action affecting the quality of public drinking water or marine waters, actions affecting the public's use of Mass. State Highways, actions with negative effects on natural (and particularly coastal) resources, cultural or historic resources of statewide significance, other actions deemed regionally important by local or State agencies.

Coordinate Regional and Local Actions

- Ensure that the towns and Commission act jointly to strengthen efforts of the towns to provide for their futures.
- Bring local and regional plans into agreement. Amend zoning by-laws, subdivision rules and regulations, and board of health regulations so that they comply with master plans.
- Towns should use the tools available to them through the MVC (including DRI, DCPC and master planning) to accomplish local and regional planning goals.
- Regional agencies should take the initiative to involve town boards in regional decision-making.
- The MVC should assist towns and other agencies in defining their planning needs. Town officials should make use of the planning tools available to them through regional agencies.
- Regional agencies should coordinate grants, funding and capital planning as a service to towns including start-to-finish grant assistance including grant-writing, administration and follow-through.

Coordinate with Related and Off-Island Entities

- Strengthen communication between regional agencies and the Steamship Authority (SSA). Coordinate with towns on the other side of the water.
- Develop working relationships with the Cape Cod Commission and its member towns, the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District, its member cities and towns, and Nantucket on issues of mutual concern.

Foster Civic Engagement

- Increase public involvement and participation in local government.
- Encourage participation in town boards.
- Boost voter registration.