



# WEST TISBURY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN



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# West Tisbury Community Development Plan

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

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### 1.1.1 Martha's Vineyard

West Tisbury is one of six towns forming the Island of Martha's Vineyard, a 100-square-mile island located about three miles off the coast of Cape Cod. The Island is a terminal moraine, marking the southern progression of the last Ice Age. Home to the Wampanoag Native Americans, it was settled by Europeans in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, year-round residents, seasonal residents – many of whom own second homes – and hundreds of thousands of short-term visitors live on or come to the Island, attracted by the unique natural, historical, and cultural values that define the beauty and character of Martha's Vineyard.

As a coastal island, Martha's Vineyard's climate is influenced by warm Gulf Stream waters that moderate the Island's seasons. Summers are a bit cooler than the mainland, providing refuge from nearby hot and humid metropolitan areas such as Boston and New York. Winters are milder and autumn generally lasts longer than on the mainland, providing a more favorable climate for vacationers year-round.

Each of the Island's towns reflects its origins: Edgartown as the historical home of master seamen during the whaling era and still the seat of County government; Tisbury as the Island's year round gateway and market town, Oak Bluffs as the Island's first summer resort and continued concentration of summer activity, West Tisbury and Chilmark as agricultural villages, Aquinnah (formerly called Gay Head) as the Island's remaining Wampanoag Indian settlement and the site of perhaps the Island's most recognizable feature and only National Natural Landmark – Gay Head Cliffs. Three-quarters of the Island's population is distributed equally among the three "down-Island" towns: Tisbury, Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, each with a busy commercial town center. Vineyard Haven, in Tisbury, serves as the Island's main port, seconded by Oak Bluffs in the summertime. The three "up-Island" towns, West Tisbury, Chilmark and Aquinnah are more rural in character.

From 1900 to 1960, the year-round population of the Vineyard increased a bit more than 30%. The population doubled in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, increasing 30% each decade. By comparison, in the 1990s, the year-round population increased only 6% in all of Massachusetts.

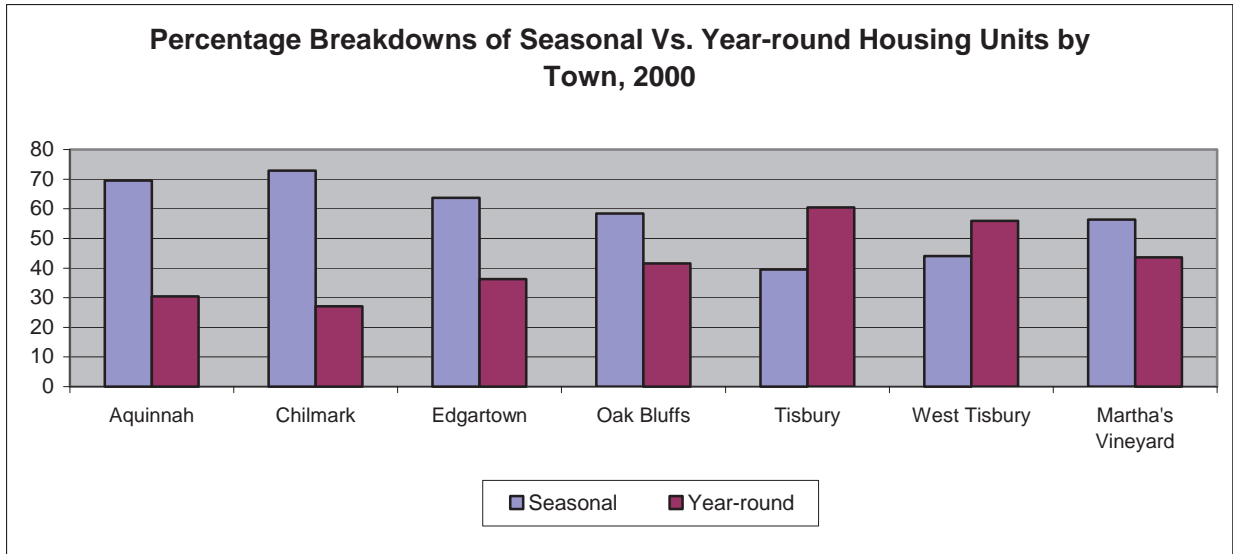
As a seasonal vacation area, the number of people on the Island changes dramatically from one season to the next. The Martha's Vineyard Commission estimates that the nearly 15,000 year-round Vineyard population in 2000 swelled to about 70,000 during the peak summer months of July and August. This summer population is made up of several distinct groups, each with its own influences and needs.

## Estimated Average Summer Population – 2000

	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	West Tisbury	Total
Year Round	344	843	3,779	3,713	3,755	2,467	14,901
Guests of Year Round	141	382	1,582	1,590	1,646	1,034	6,375
Seasonal / Vacationers	1,536	4,894	13,251	10,637	5,123	3,888	39,329
Transients	42	158	2,352	1,696	1,892	190	6,330
lodging rooms	42	158	1,944	1,192	860	<b>190</b>	<b>4,386</b>
on boats			408	504	600		<b>1,512</b>
camping					432		<b>432</b>
Day Trippers			500	5,000	2,500		8,000
Cruise Passengers				1,000			1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,063</b>	<b>6,277</b>	<b>21,464</b>	<b>23,636</b>	<b>14,916</b>	<b>7,579</b>	<b>75,035</b>

- Year-round population as reported by 2000 US Census. Some people have estimated that there are as many as 1,000 additional year-round residents and a total of 3,000 additional summer residents who are undocumented aliens. In the absence of clear data, they are not included.
- Guests of Year-round residents estimated as an average of 1 person for each of the 6,375 year-round households
- Seasonal Residents / Vacationers include second-home owners and renters who visit for a week or more. They are estimated as an average of 4.77 people for each of the 8,246 seasonal housing units, based on the results of a survey carried out by the Oak Bluffs Planning Board. It is estimated that about two-thirds of these are seasonal residents.
- Transients stay on-island for less than a week. Estimations assume two people per room and 100% occupancy for July and August in the Island's 2,200 lodging rooms, hotels, inns and B&Bs. The Edgartown, Oak Bluffs and Tisbury Harbor Masters estimated 3 or 4 people per boat and occupancy rates between 80% and 100% for the 468 boats that can be accommodated on slips and moorings in these three harbors. Camping is based on an average of 3 people per tent and 80% summer occupancy for the Island's 180 campsites in the MV Family Campground.
- Day Trippers arrive and leave the Vineyard on the same day. Estimates assume two-thirds of the peak passenger ferry ridership of 12,000 on peak summer days are day-trippers and the others stay for a longer period. Allocation among towns is based upon port of entry.
- Cruise Passengers are day-trippers. Assumes one cruise ship with a capacity of 1,000 people in harbor on a peak day; in 2002, most cruise ships came in the spring and fall. Allocation among towns is based upon port of entry.

Source: MVC, 2003



Source: U.S. Census

It is easy to understand why the cornerstone of the Island's economy is providing services to seasonal residents and visitors. Island-wide, there are more seasonal homes – houses not occupied in the winter – than year-round homes. Only Tisbury and West Tisbury have more year-round homes than seasonal ones. The tourism and service industry is highly image-conscious, seasonal and labor intensive. Nevertheless, a large majority of the businesses on the Island employs four or fewer workers each. As the year-round population continues to expand, more businesses are needed and supported throughout the year.

Martha's Vineyard is marked by relative seclusion from the mainland, by its highly variable seasonal populations, by its lifestyles and landscapes dominated by the ocean and salt ponds, and by economic constraints unique to island communities.

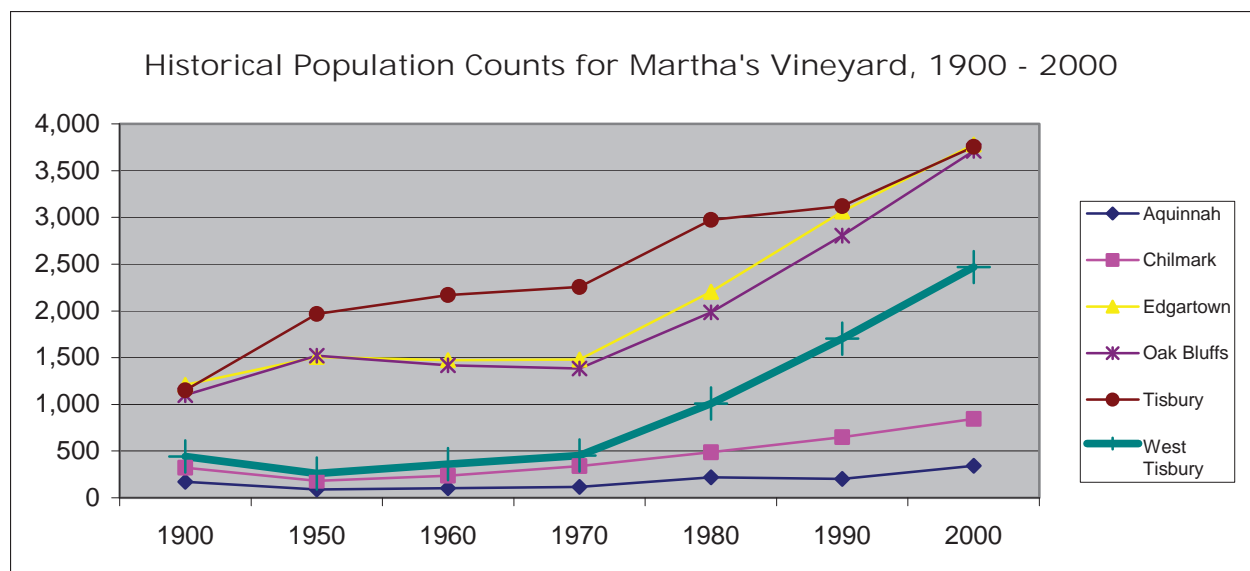
### 1.1.2 West Tisbury

The Town of West Tisbury is a predominantly residential and agricultural community that in 2000 had 2,467 year-round residents. West Tisbury is known for its quaint village center, and its rural landscapes.

Physically, West Tisbury extends from the Vineyard Sound to the Atlantic Ocean along the south shore, lying between the populous down-Island towns and the more-rural up-Island communities. West Tisbury also straddles the Island's two primary geological landforms – the western moraine and the outwash plain. The moraine provides rolling hills and bluffs rising from the Sound, which are starkly contrasted with the flat, expansive outwash plain leading to the Great Ponds and the ocean. West Tisbury's approximately 16,000 acres represents 28% of the Vineyard, second in size to Edgartown (30%). Where these two towns meet at the Island's geographic center, the expansive Manuel F. Correllus State Forest occupies 6,850 acres. The 2,473 acres of State Forest in West Tisbury account for 15% of the town's land area.

### 1.1.3 Population and Income

While occupying more than a quarter of the Island's landmass, with 2,467 residents in 2000 West Tisbury accounted for 15% of the Island's population. Since 1970, the year-round population growth of West Tisbury has been dramatic. Prior to the 1970s, the populations of the three up-Island towns - West Tisbury, Chilmark and Aquinnah - were roughly similar in numbers. Thereafter, West Tisbury grew by 123%, 69% and 48%, respectively, for each of the last three decades, and has pulled away from the two towns farther up-Island. In the 1980s and 1990s, more people moved to West Tisbury than to Tisbury. In the 90s, the Town's growth outpaced Edgartown's, as well.



Source: U.S. Census

According to the US Census 2000, the median age of 41.1 years for West Tisbury is higher than the 36.5 years for Massachusetts but only slightly higher than the 40.7 years median age for all of Dukes County.

Median Incomes for Dukes County, 2000		
	Median Household	Median Family
Aquinnah	\$45,208	\$45,458
Chilmark	\$41,917	\$63,750
Edgartown	\$50,407	\$55,153
Gosnold	\$22,344	\$27,500
Oak Bluffs	\$42,044	\$53,841
Tisbury	\$37,041	\$53,051
West Tisbury	\$54,077	\$59,514
Dukes County	\$45,559	\$55,018

The median household income (based on non-related individuals living in the same house) in 2000 for West Tisbury was \$54,077 -- the highest among the Island towns. Median family income (homes in which everyone is related) was \$59,514, which was the second highest of all of the Island towns. The area median income for a family of four in fiscal year 2000 in Dukes County was \$53,200, as reported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Approximately, 22% of households in West Tisbury were paying over 35% of their gross incomes for housing, while 17% of renters paid more than 35% of gross income for rent. Less than three percent of West Tisbury's population lives in poverty, according to the 2000 US Census, compared to 7.3% for Dukes County and 9.3% for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

#### 1.1.4 Zoning and Land Use

The Town of West Tisbury has two residential zoning districts and two business zoning districts. The residential districts cover more than 96% of the town and both require a 3-acre minimum lot size. The 27-acre mixed-use business district is located near the intersection of State and Indian Hill roads. It allows residential use with a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet. The more than 400 acres of land in the light industrial district are primarily located at the airport, but there is a 30-acre zone in the vicinity of the town landfill.

<u>West Tisbury Land Cover/Use (Acres)</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1999</u>
Agriculture	1,090	1,077	1,218
Open Undeveloped Land	2,371	2,308	1,970
Natural Land/Undisturbed Vegetation	11,217	10,478	9,242
Commercial	9	14	36
Industrial/Transportation/Mining	243	267	291
Urban Open/Institutional/Recreation	147	168	183
High Density Residential	0	0	0
Medium Density Residential	26	26	25
Low Density Residential	898	1,665	3,033

Source: MacConnell Land Use, Umass

Using the interpretation of aerial photography, the University of Massachusetts has tracked land cover or land use data (MacConnell Land Use). The data show that low-density residential acreage in West Tisbury more than tripled between 1971 and 1999, with concomitant decline in open land. Agricultural acreage increased slightly. Increases were noted in commercial and urban open land. Overall, the data show developed land to have been increased by 12% Island-wide during the twenty-eight year period shown. During that time, developed land in West Tisbury increased by 13.4%, with more of that development having occurred between 1985 and 1999.



Development Island-wide 1971-1999						
Town	Change from Undeveloped to Developed Land (acres)			Change as Percent of Total Area		
	1971-1985	1985-1999	1971-1999	1971-1985	1985-1999	1971-1999
Aquinnah	56	218	274	1.5%	5.9%	7.4%
Chilmark	371	502	873	2.8%	3.8%	6.7%
Edgartown	1,133	979	2,111	6.2%	5.3%	11.5%
Oak Bluffs	525	555	1,080	11.0%	11.7%	22.7%
Tisbury	465	314	780	11.1%	7.5%	18.5%
West Tisbury	820	1,431	2,251	4.9%	8.5%	13.4%
Vineyard	3,371	3,998	7,369	5.5%	6.6%	12.1%

Source: MacConnell Land Use, Umass

Using a different methodology, the Massachusetts' Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' 2002 Buildout Study estimated that 30% of West Tisbury is already developed and more than 7,000 acres, or 42%, of land in West Tisbury is protected as open space or is Town-owned. The remaining 27% of the town – 4,609 acres – is potentially available for development or conservation in the future.

2000 Estimated Protected, Developed and Available Land							
Town	AQ	CH	ED	OB	TI	WT	Island
Total (acres)	3,690	13,553	18,184	4,680	4,142	16,878	61,127
Protected Open Space* (%)	15%	29%	39%	30%	20%	42%	34%
Developed/Built** (%)	53%	36%	35%	48%	51%	30%	37%
"Available" *** (%)	32%	35%	26%	22%	29%	27%	29%
"Available" (acres)	1,177	4,792	4,664	1,014	1,214	4,609	17,470

\*Protected Open Space includes municipally owned land not necessarily used for open space.

\*\*Developed/Built includes lands that are prevented from being developed, such as wetland buffers.

\*\*\* Available is defined as land that is neither Protected Open Space nor Developed/Built.

Source: EOEa Buildout Study, 2002

Within the context of the preparation of this Community Development Plan, the Martha's Vineyard Commission revised and updated the analysis of protected, developed and available land. The following table gives the resulting figures.

- 'Protected' areas are lands that, according to the Island's conservation groups, are either under fee ownership or indicated as having a conservation restriction or agricultural preservation restriction. The wetlands displayed are only those that are not currently 'protected.'
- 'Developed' areas were determined by Metropolitan Association of Planning Councils under contract to the MVC during the Buildout Study in 2002 and only those 'developed' areas that do not coincide with 'protected' or 'wetland' areas are displayed.
- 'Available' land is any remaining land.

2003 Estimated Protected, Developed and Available Land							
Town	<i>AQ</i>	<i>CH</i>	<i>ED</i>	<i>OB</i>	<i>TI</i>	<i>WT</i>	<i>Island</i>
Total (acres)	3,510	12,442	17,762	4,735	4,300	16,195	58,963
Protected Open Space (%)	22%	20%	40%	30%	20%	40%	32%
Developed/Built (%)	33%	40%	32%	40%	47%	35%	36%
Wetland (%)	13%	6%	7%	3%	5%	2%	5%
"Available" (%)	31%	33%	22%	33%	29%	22%	26%
"Available" (acres)	1,094	4,079	3,827	1,557	1,245	3,632	15,435

Source: Martha's Vineyard Commission and Conservation Partnership, 2004

## 1.2 CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT

### 1.2.1 Availability of Land

Many factors contribute to determining the supply of land available to be developed and the demand for land. The combination of these two produces a market price for land. The rising cost of land has been primarily due to the tourist and seasonal nature of the Vineyard. Second-home buyers are able to out bid many year-round residents, causing a sharp increase in real estate values. The potential supply of home lots is also constrained by minimum lot size requirements of three acres for both residential zoning districts. Successful land conservation during the 1980's and 1990's -- while helping to preserve natural and cultural community character and values -- has also reduced the supply of land that might be developed, although any direct impact on the cost of land has not been demonstrated.

### 1.2.2 Drinking Water

The Town of West Tisbury does not have a town water system; rather, the development is at very low densities and relies upon private wells. Clay layers in the western moraine create aquifers of unknown extent or connection to nearby wells. Wells in the outwash plain aquifer are more predictable. No plans exist for the installation of a town water system, but the Town acquired 365 acres of woodland adjacent to the State Forest, the 'Greenlands,' to protect the ground water that flows to all of the down-Island towns. The Greenlands are also suitable for future water supply wells, whether for just West Tisbury or for multiple towns.

### 1.2.3 Wastewater and Water Quality

Future development of land is limited by the reliance upon individual septic systems for sanitary waste disposal. As septic systems can contaminate ground water, West Tisbury adopted 3-acre residential zoning to provide adequate separation between landowners' wells and septic systems. Beyond strictly human health concerns, nitrogen loading from septic systems is a serious concern to the vitality of the Island's coastal ponds. A number of these ponds are already at their nitrogen-loading limit, yet their watersheds contain land that could be developed for additional home lots.

In West Tisbury, 90% of the potentially developable land identified by the Buildout Study lies within one of four nitrogen-threatened great ponds; more than 40% of this lies within the Tisbury Great Pond watershed. The 20% of the Town's potentially developable land in the other three sensitive watersheds affects surface water quality for ponds down-Island.

Potential Development in Watersheds of Nitrogen-Sensitive Great Ponds						
Pond	Percentage of Entire Watershed "Available" for Development	Percentage of Watershed's "Available" Land Within Town	Percentage of Town's "Available" Land Within Watershed	Proportion of Town's Potential Additional Lots Within Watershed		
				Number	%	
Edgartown Great Pond	27.3	2.4	0.7	1	0.1	
Lagoon Pond	24.8	17.6	3.7	49	3.8	
Lake Tashmoo	37.3	26.2	4.5	61	4.7	
Tisbury Great Pond	27.2	42.6	42.6	574	44.5	
West Tisbury Total	na	na	89.6	982	76.2	
West Tisbury Non-Pond	na	na	10.4	307	23.8	

Source: 2002 EOEa Buildout Study; MVC

All new homes, and all existing homes when they are sold to new owners, have to adhere to the State's Title 5 regulations, which for individual septic systems are enforced by the Town Board of Health. This restricts many developable lots to a development density of one bedroom per 10,000 square feet of lot area, despite the zoning for much of these areas allowing a minimum lots size for an entire house of 10,000 or 20,000 square feet. If developable lots are located within wetlands or nitrogen sensitive areas, there are further limits to the development's size and density. Additional demand for, or stricter regulations requiring, advanced de-nitrification systems or other alternative treatment systems pose installation cost and maintenance issues. Additional development for much of West Tisbury under existing land use regulations, let alone possibly allowing increased density of development – for the purposes of affordable housing, for example, or for increasing the density of activity in the business district – is constrained by nitrogen loading of the coastal ponds.

### 1.3 PLANNING CONTEXT

#### 1.3.1 The Island Plan - Martha's Vineyard Regional Plan

In 1991, the MVC published the Regional Island Plan, the result of several years of concerted community effort. It sets out a series of policies for growth management. Following the publication of the Island Plan, the MVC published a series of action plans outlining specific policies and a series of actions for implementing them. These plans are:

- Island Transportation Plan – 2003
- Martha's Vineyard Housing Report – 1994
- Economic Base Study -- 1994
- Open Space Action Plan – 1991

The goals and strategies of the Island Plan have continued to guide the MVC, both in pursuing planning activities and in deciding on development proposals.

### 1.3.2 The West Tisbury Master Plan

The West Tisbury Master Plan was adopted in 1987 and several of its objectives have been implemented, including efforts to protect and better understand the hydraulics of the Island's sole source aquifer, protection of public rights to ancient ways and increasing the area covered by the Special Coastal Overlay District. One objective from the Roads and Ways section of the plan not implemented but that has great potential significance to the future development pattern of land in West Tisbury is: "Explore the feasibility of laying out a public way to provide better access between Old County and State roads and of interconnecting other public and private ways." The Planning Board conducted a follow-up questionnaire of citizens in 1992. An update to the Master Plan is currently underway.

In 1997, the Town conducted a visioning effort producing the 1997 Community Profile Report that provided an opportunity to re-examine the community's goals, updating and clarifying suggestions for addressing townspeople's concerns. This broad community effort resulted in the formation of several active citizen committees assigned to implement the report's suggestions. Among the results have been a complete overhaul of the Town's zoning bylaws incorporating a village district, preparation of an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan, creation of ways the Town can facilitate the creation of affordable housing units and the installation of hard surfaced walkways along growing business district along State Road.

### 1.3.3 The West Tisbury Open Space and Recreation Plan

The current West Tisbury Open Space and Recreation Plan was prepared in 2000, updating plans from 1980 and 1991. The plan is far ranging – focusing on such traditional issues as water quality, habitat, recreation and public access to open space, but also addressing subdivision roads, Town services and viewsheds.

### 1.3.4 The Buildout Study

In 2002, the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs released its studies of each town's potential capacity to accommodate additional growth and development. The 'Buildout' study categorized all of the towns' land as developed, permanently protected open space, or developable – potentially available for development. EOEА relied on the MacConnell Land Use identification of land cover from aerial photography to determine developed areas and used the Division of Conservation Services records of permanently conserved lands. Land neither developed nor conserved was considered potentially 'developable.' From West Tisbury's existing land use zoning codes underlying the developable lands, and considering the lot density of

## Buildout Study Projections

Town	AQ	CH	ED	OB	TI	WT	Island
Households (seasonal & year-round)							
1990	82	953	3,053	3,172	2,387	1,320	10,967
2000	141	1,409	4,360	3,820	2,720	1,849	14,299
Additional Projected	265	1,341	2,316	820	1,001	1,289	7,032
Buildout Total	406	2,750	6,676	4,640	3,721	3,138	21,331
Population (year-round)							
1990	201	650	3,062	2,804	3,120	1,704	11,541
2000	344	843	3,779	3,713	3,755	2,467	14,901
Additional Projected	194	889	1,937	768	1,370	1,692	6,850
Buildout Total	538	1,732	5,716	4,481	5,125	4,159	21,751
Students							
1990	37	53	473	422	440	432	1,857
2000	48	120	569	664	571	483	2,455
Additional Projected	27	126	292	172	475	331	1,423
Buildout Total	75	246	861	836	1,046	814	3,878
Water Use (thousands of gallons/day)							
2000	25,800	63,225	789,000	857,000	609,000	185,025	2,529,050
Additional Projected	25,835	117,846	821,960	86,137	780,805	385,759	2,218,342
Buildout Total	51,635	181,071	1,610,960	943,137	780,805	570,784	4,138,392

Source: EOEa Buildout Studies, 2002, adjusted for corrected calculations by MVC, 2004

properties subdivided over the 1990s, EOEa calculated the number of additional homes that could theoretically be built on the remaining developable land in the Town. The Town's zoning bylaws were also used to identify areas that had partial constraints on the development of lands, such as buffers to wetlands. Once the number of new residential units was estimated, projections of the increases in year round and seasonal populations – and their impacts upon schools, roads and solid waste – were also calculated.

The purpose of the Buildout study was to prompt each of the Commonwealth's municipalities into re-evaluating whether its current zoning controls give the kind of direction to its pattern of development that is appropriate and to assess whether the town wishes to take steps to better direct future development and conservation of open space. While there may be questions about some of the specific assumptions and methodology of the Buildout studies, the premise is sound of the community taking stock of the lands that remain open to either development or conservation and to determine what are the best uses of those lands from a community standpoint. This was the impetus to conduct this Community Development Plan.

## 1.4 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS

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In April 2003, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts awarded grants – under Executive Order 418, the Community Development Planning Program – to each of the six towns of Martha's Vineyard. The grants allowed the towns to prepare Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping to aid in the evaluation of land suitability that will help to plan for appropriate growth management within each town. The Martha's Vineyard Commission worked with the towns to obtain these grants and was selected by each town as its consultant to conduct the planning work and assist in completing its Community Development Plan. Working with all six Island towns simultaneously, the MVC staff was able to develop a single methodology for determining land suitability, thereby facilitating comparable analysis on lands adjacent to another town's boundaries as well as coordination of future Island-wide planning efforts.

In evaluating the best or most appropriate uses of each town's remaining land that is not yet either developed or protected as open space, the Community Development Plan was required to address three areas:

1. Open Space and Natural Resource Protection,
2. Housing, and
3. Economic Development

The housing and economic development elements were required to specifically address improving the conditions and opportunities of low, moderate and middle-income families and individuals. A fourth required area, transportation, was waived for all Island towns due to the MVC's 2003 updating of the Regional Transportation Plan for Martha's Vineyard.

The breadth of issues addressed in developing a Community Development Plan also provides materials a town can apply to other planning efforts such as a town's Affordable Housing Strategy, the update of a town's Open Space & Recreation Plan and the possible preparation or update of a town's Master Plan, as well as updating the Martha's Vineyard Commission's Regional Island Plan. Towns with approved CD plans receive bonus points for competitive State grant programs, including the popular self-help grants. Community Development Plans also help in the updating of town records and the provision of digital maps and a database available to all town departments.

In the early Fall of 2003 a Steering Committee of West Tisbury officials and residents was established to work with the MVC staff on the Community Development Plan. At the initial meetings, the Committee reviewed land use/development goals and policies from existing Town plans and the 1997 Community Profile Report, affirming the majority of them to still be appropriate enough to proceed with the CD planning effort. The Committee met monthly with the MVC staff and, occasionally among subgroups of the Committee. Committee members compiled additional data layers for the computer-generated suitability analysis models. The Steering Committee helped identify project goals, assumptions and suitability criteria. In addition, the planning effort benefited from a series of meetings of All-Island Planning Boards at which various aspects of the plans were discussed.

On May 5, 2004, a public meeting was held at which the Steering Committee outlined the preliminary results of the Community Development Planning effort and citizens broke into topic groups to discuss and provide feedback. The final draft of this Community Development Plan was presented to the Town of West Tisbury on June 30, 2004.

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY FOR DETERMINING SUITABILITY

The basis of the Community Development Planning effort is organizing and, in some cases, updating pre-existing information for the Town in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) format, that is, as computerized maps reflecting information that is easily manipulated and updated. Existing maps were compiled and reformatted. They were also checked for accuracy as much as possible. In addition, a limited amount of data gathering was carried out, notably the preparation of a Scenic Value layer for the Town.

A major focus of the effort was a series of suitability analyses, i.e. the preparation of a series of maps that indicate the suitability of various areas for each of the three functions – open space and natural resource conservation, housing, and economic development – based on a number of criteria chosen by the Steering Committees and at several joint meetings of the Island’s planning boards. All the Steering Committees agreed to use the same set of criteria for all Island towns in order to facilitate getting an Island-wide analysis and perspective. Thus, some criteria do not apply or are of less importance to some towns (e.g. “served by Town sewer” in Aquinnah or “working farm” in Oak Bluffs) but are retained for all towns to maintain consistency.

Each of the criteria was given a point value between 2 and 20, based on how significant it was in determining the suitability of a given piece of land for the land use function under consideration. For example, a working farm was given a value of 20 for open space preservation whereas being within 1000’ from year-round shopping was given a value of 8 for housing development.

The next step was to prepare a map for each land use function that compiled the overall rating, combining all the criteria that applied to that function. The result was the overall suitability of using land for that function, based on those criteria and weightings. The specific criteria and weightings are described in their respective chapters.

Subsequently, the housing and economic development maps were combined to give an overall “development” map and then this map was combined with the open space preservation map to indicate which parts of the Island were most suitable for preservation, for development, or for both. This synthesis is described in more detail in section 6.

It is important to note that the suitability maps do not take into consideration the present zoning, the present ownership, or how the land rates for other types of suitability. For example, an area may be indicated as “suitable for economic development” merely because it is close to an existing commercial area, even though it is not presently zoned for business and it might also be

very highly suitable for open space preservation. This does not suggest that the Town should change its policy to allow for commercial development in this area.

Note that the suitability maps and the plan itself are not zoning maps, nor do they impose any restriction on either landowners or Town decision makers. The plan and maps are one assessment of the suitability of land for different uses based upon certain assumptions and goals. As any of these assumptions or goals change, likely so would the conclusions. Indeed, as the Island communities continue to work with the mapped data and increase their understanding of the implications and potential limitations of the information, the weighting of individual data layers is expected to change. It is even likely that, over time, whole data layers may be dropped or added to the suitability analysis.

With that said, it is also important to underline the limits of this kind of planning effort:

- On Martha's Vineyard, available land is so scarce and property values are so high that decisions on acquisition, say for open space preservation or the creation of affordable housing, will probably depend more on opportunity than on suitability. That is, if a piece of land is available, it might well make sense for a town or another entity to use it for open space or for affordable housing, even if it does not rate in the highest category in the suitability analysis.
- This large-scale analysis is very useful to give an overview for the Town and the Island for planning purposes; however, it is not accurate enough to provide specific information about a particular parcel of land.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the methodology for evaluating the suitability of land on Martha's Vineyard for different land activities, the suitability maps provide an additional tool available to citizens and decision makers when evaluating existing circumstances and potential development in their communities.

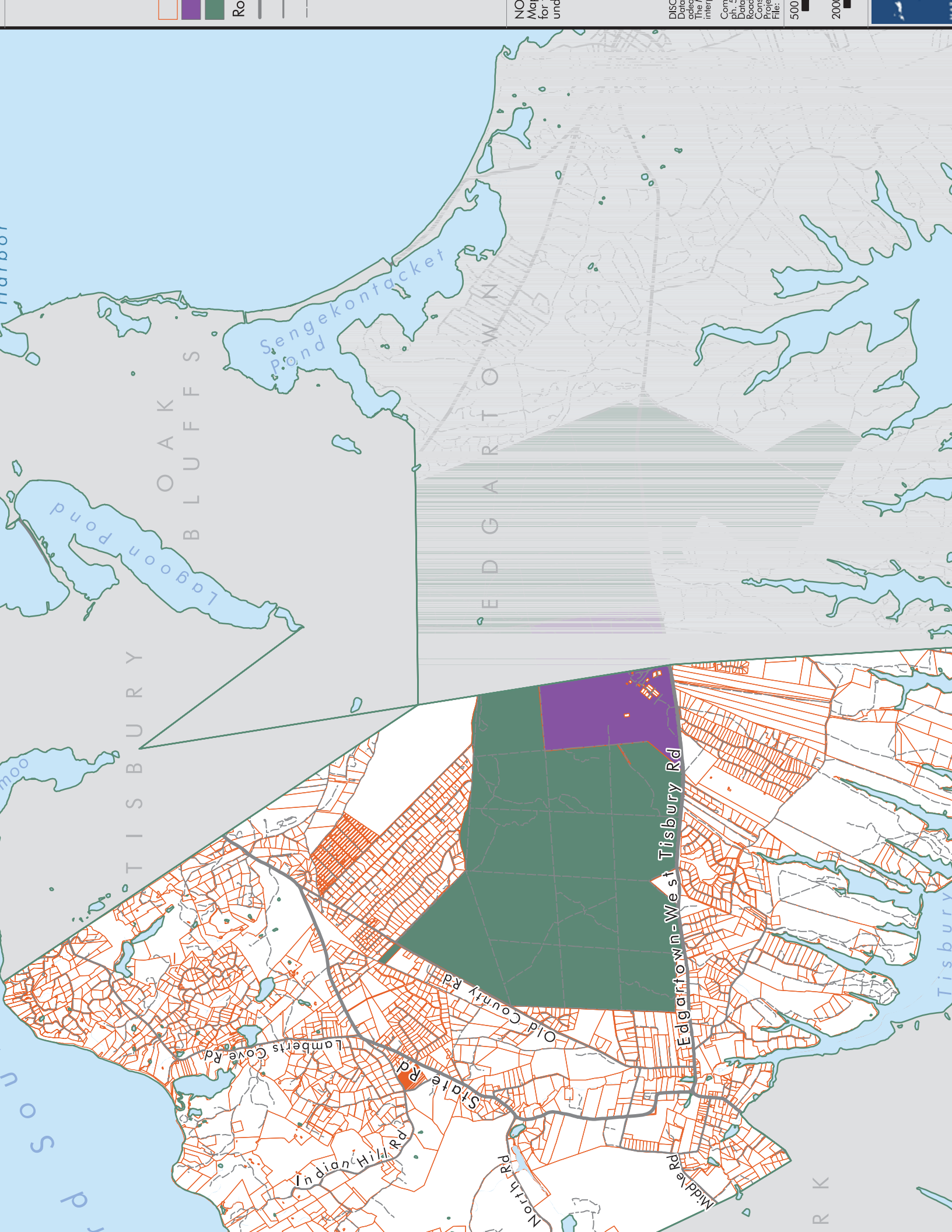
## 1.6 MAPS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

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This section is completed with a series of maps of existing conditions in West Tisbury, namely:

- Existing Settlement
- Land Use Cover
- Water Resources
- Wetlands
- Habitat
- Soils
- Slopes
- Cultural Resources
- Developed, Protected and Available Land





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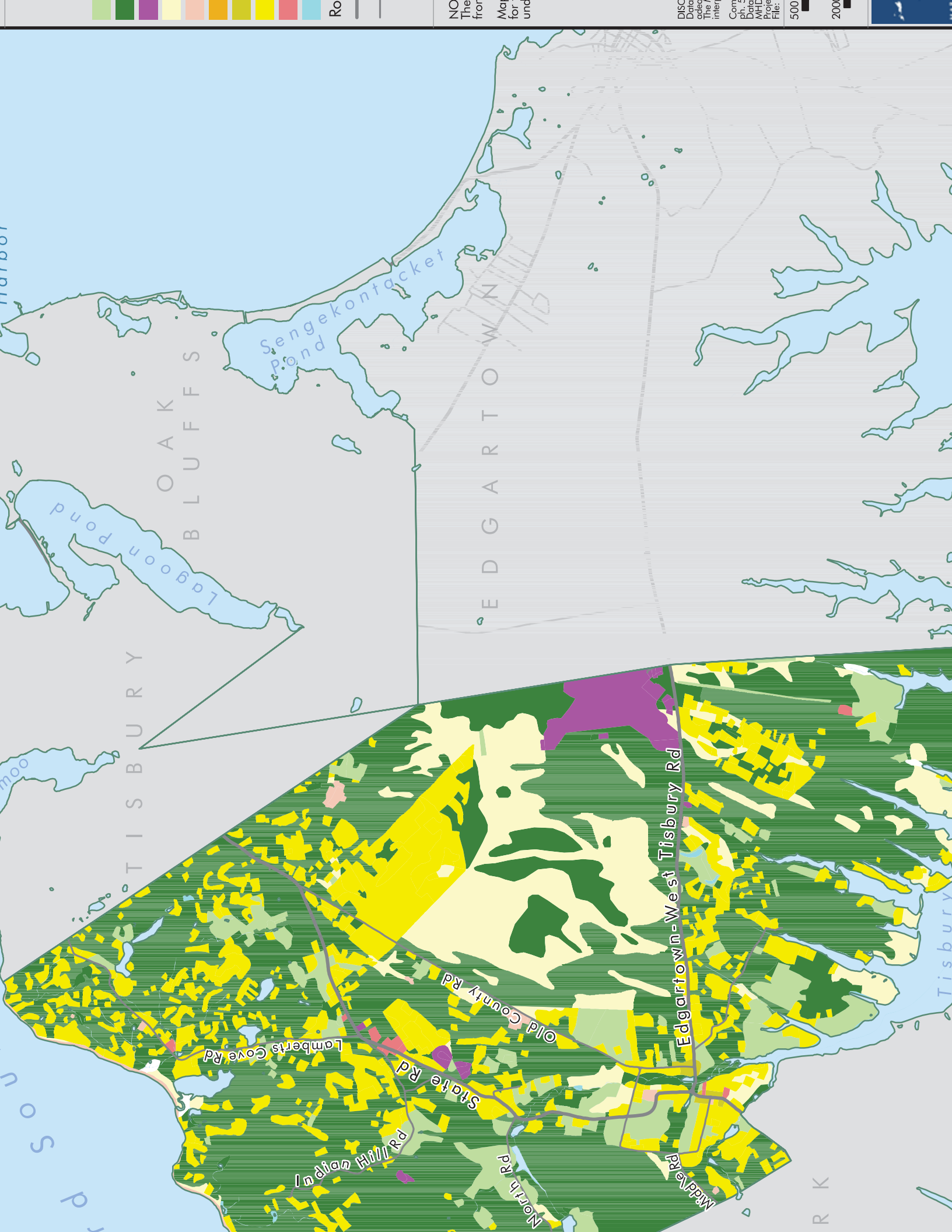
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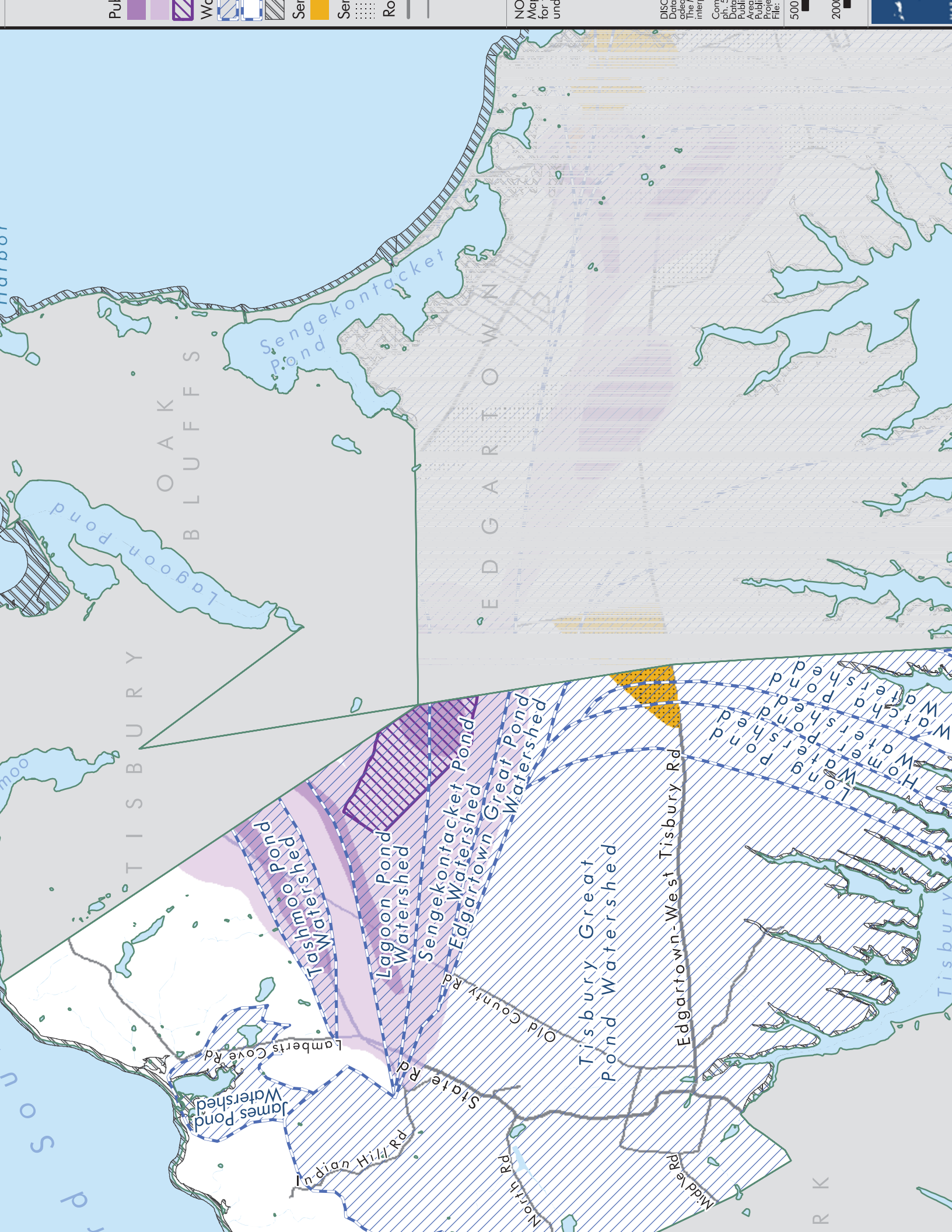
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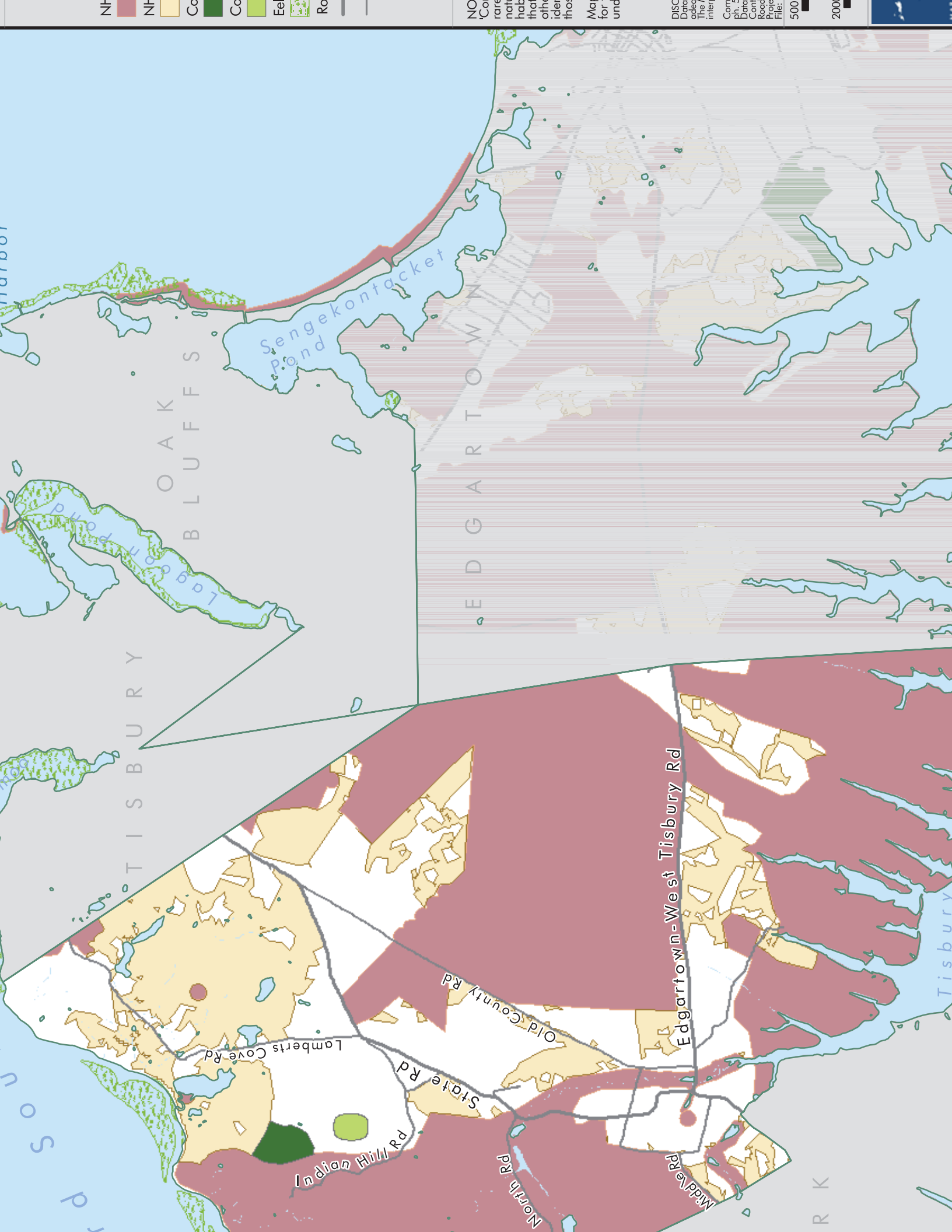
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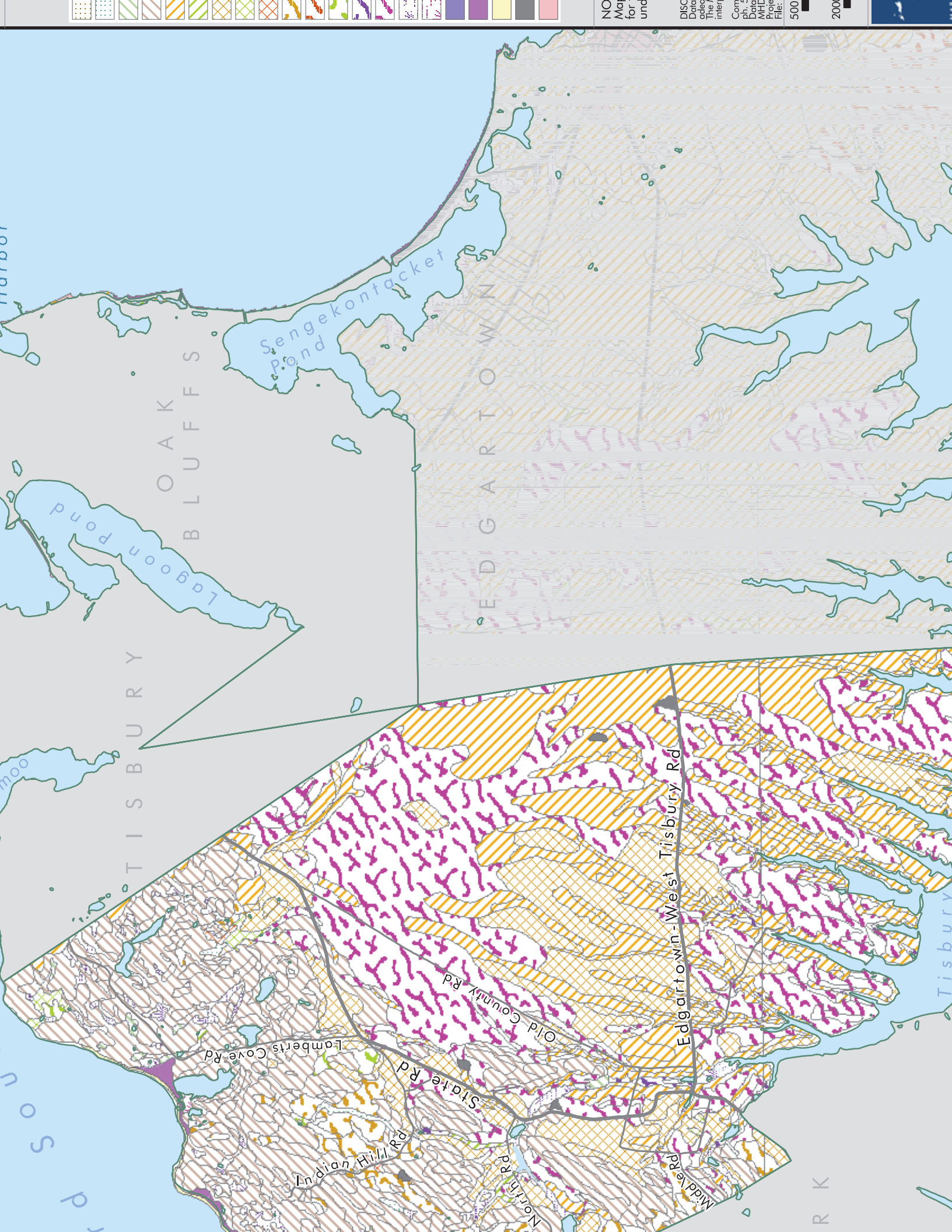
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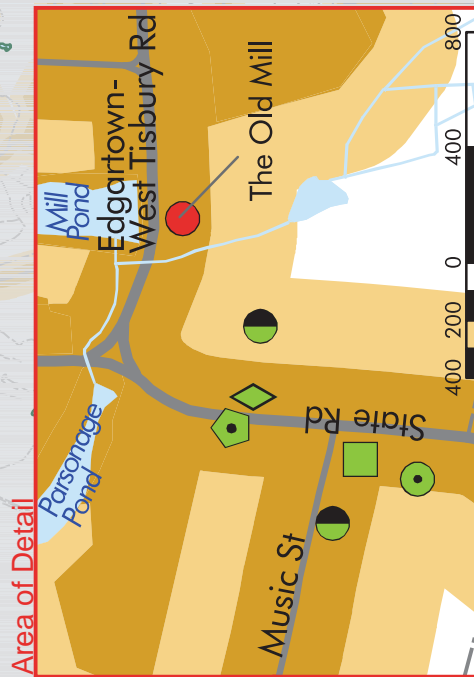
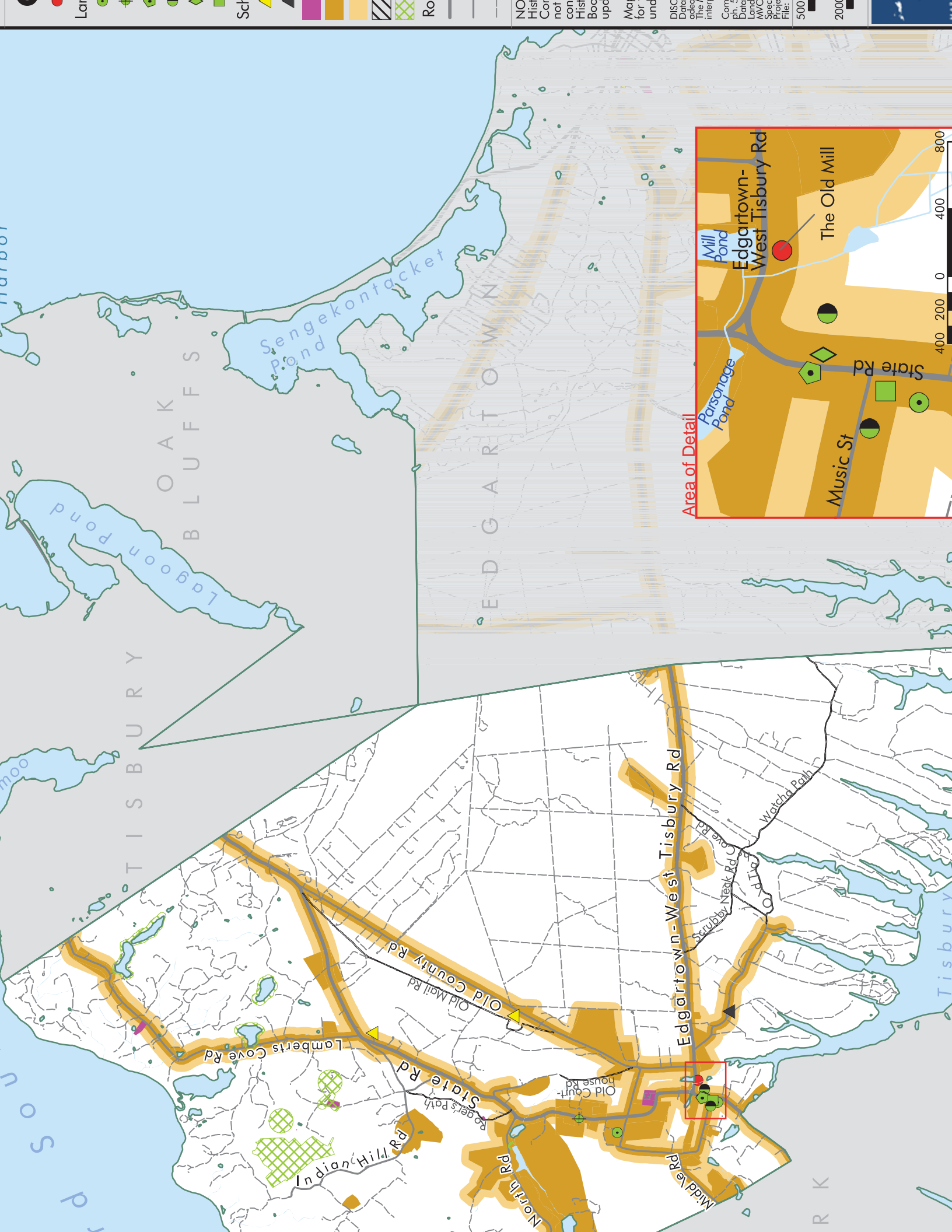
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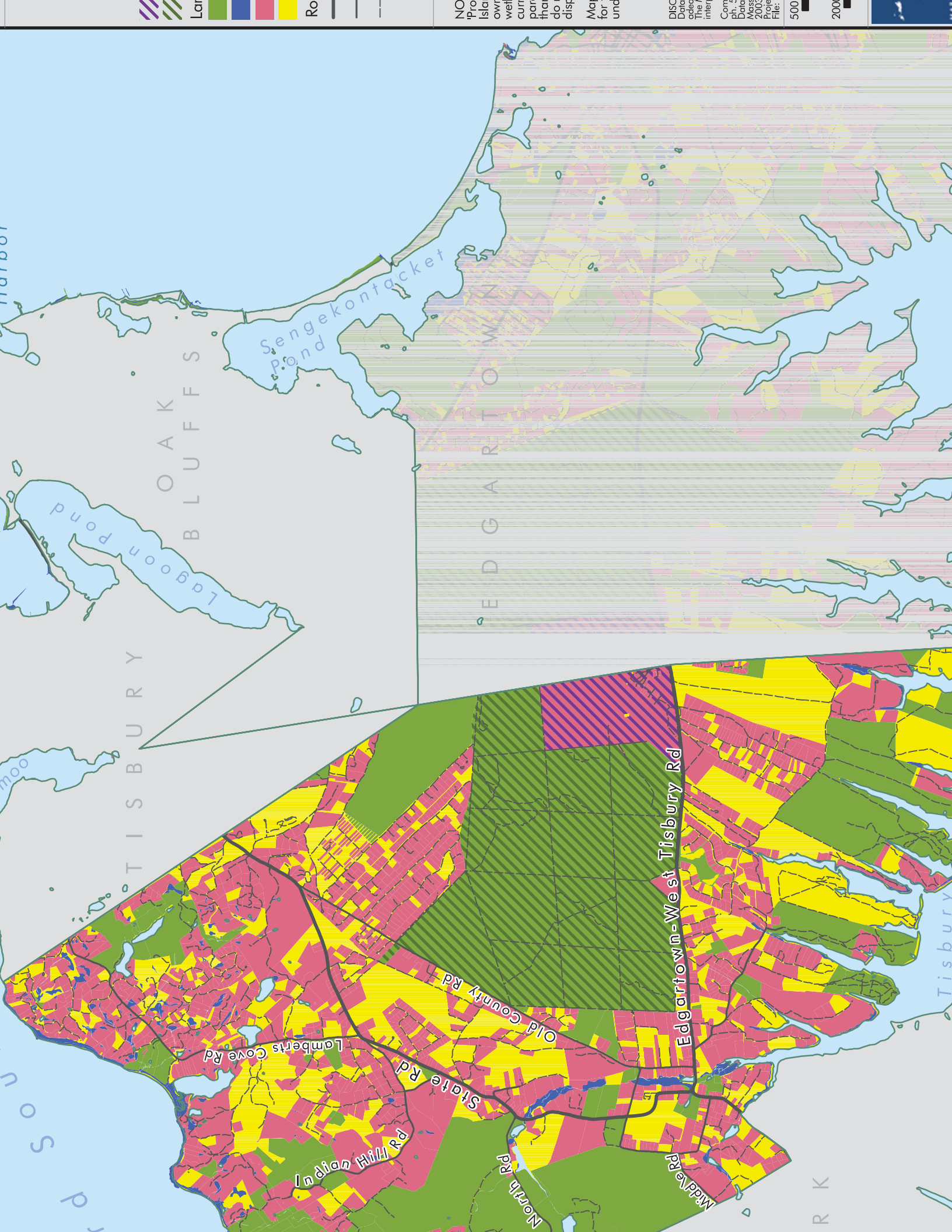




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## 2. VISION

At the onset of the actual planning effort by the Town of West Tisbury, on November 5, 2003, an informational meeting was held with a broad representation of Town boards, Town citizens and Martha's Vineyard Commission personnel. The group reviewed the land use goals and policies contained in the Town's current planning documents and initiatives and found them largely to be unchanged and suitable with which to proceed with development of the Community Development Plan. Subsequently, a Steering Committee of West Tisbury officials and residents was established to work with the MVC staff on the Community Development Plan. The Steering Committee also reviewed goals and policies from the Town's existing plans and the 1997 Community Profile Report, affirming the majority of them to still be appropriate for proceeding with the CD planning effort.

The phrase that always comes up when describing West Tisbury is "rural character." The 2000 Open Space Plan defines rural character as: *The existence of large and small areas of woodland, field, ponds, streams, and wetland, especially along State- and Town-owned roads, which give the passerby the feeling of openness.* The preservation of West Tisbury's rural character is the preeminent value that is an undercurrent in all community decisions.

### Open Space Issues

- Protection of ground and surface water resources
- Protect key habitats; restore Sandplain habitat
- Scenic vistas and roadside greenbelts
- Recreational access to natural resources, bike paths and ancient ways
- Strengthen viability of agriculture

### Housing Issues

- Lack of affordable housing even for upper-middle income families
- Preserve small-town rural qualities
- Combat suburban sameness
- Encourage neighborhoods, village-like clusters and open spaces

### Economic and Development Issues

- Encourage economic activity that is in harmony with the rural character of the Town
- Allow for a diversity of home-based businesses, with a permitting process to ensure minimum conflict with surrounding land uses
- Encourage new or redeveloped businesses that provide year-round support for people of different socio-economic levels
- Encourage agricultural activity to strengthen agriculture as an economic base and, more broadly, create new businesses that use our natural resources responsibly.
- Encourage low-impact businesses such as those based on art, agriculture and technology.

- Do not extend the boundaries of the business and light industrial districts along State Road Support, with proper environmental controls, the airport as the best location for the commercial development that is desired to stabilize the Island's economic base
- Maintain existing civic and community functions in the historical village center

## 3. OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### 3.1 PROFILE

Despite the distinct physical characteristics and different patterns of land use, the people of the six towns of Martha's Vineyard share a deep appreciation for the natural beauty of their surroundings and the connection between the Island's open, undeveloped spaces and water quality, habitat protection, scenic vistas, recreational opportunities and access, and overall enjoyment of a unique quality of life. In addition to notable efforts by the six towns, the Vineyard is graced with private conservation organizations, both local (Sheriff's Meadow Foundation, Vineyard Conservation Society, Vineyard Open Land Foundation) and Mainland-based (Trustees of Reservations and The Nature Conservancy). Over the decades, the vision and dedication of these organizations have resulted in the successful protection of especially choice parts of the Island.

The creation and implementation of the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission illustrates the breadth of this appreciation among Islanders and citizens of each town. Established by the Commonwealth in 1986, the Land Bank uses a surcharge on each transfer of real estate for the purpose of acquiring, holding and managing land and interests in land such as (a) land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas; (b) agricultural land; (c) forest land; (d) fresh and salt water marshes and other wetlands; (e) ocean and pond frontage; beaches, dunes, and adjoining backlands, to protect their natural and scenic resources; (f) land to protect scenic vistas; (g) land for nature or wildlife preserves; (h) easements for trails and for publicly owned lands; and (i) land for passive recreational use. Through 2003, the Land Bank had preserved 2,275 acres, complementing the efforts of the other conservation groups. The Land Bank is an effective tool for towns to target and realize their open space objectives.

The West Tisbury 2000 Open Space and Recreation Plan identified 6,536 acres, 42% of the town, as having some degree of conservation protection. Thirty-nine percent of the town is protected permanently. Of this, the State Forest accounts for 41% of this. If the State Forest acreage were excluded from consideration, the nearly 3,900 acres with at least some protection would be 29% of the town's (non-State Forest) total area.

Owner	Land Protected Permanently – 2000		
	Acres	% of Total	% of Town
State	2,475	41%	16%
WT Conservation Commission	375	6%	2%
MV Land Bank	336	6%	2%
Private	1,989	33%	13%
Private-Nonprofit	925	15%	6%
Total	6,100	100%	39%

Source: WT 2000 Open Space and Recreation Plan; MVC 2004

Often overshadowed, but evident from the ownership of conserved land, private landowners play a significant role in efforts to conserve portions of the town. In 2000, privately owned protected land exceeded the amount held by the Town's Conservation Commission, the Land Bank and the private non-profits combined.

In the four years since the 2000 Open Space Plan, considerable additional acreage has been conserved for the future, much of which is slated to have public access. These additions address many of the Town's open space goals, as elaborated in the following three examples:

Four separate Land Bank purchases specifically targeted roadside areas either to protect existing scenic views or to create them for public enjoyment. These four acquisitions alone have conserved nearly 8,500 linear feet, or 1.6 miles, along four different public roads. Three of these purchases also included placing agricultural conservation restrictions on adjacent acreage. Two of these transactions include trails that will eventually be connected to similar trails on adjacent properties and link significant conservation properties with one another.

The Land Bank's purchase of a 77-acre, long-abandoned cranberry farm, now called Blackwater Pond Reservation, doubling an abutting area extending into Tisbury already protected by three different conservation entities. The purchase completed the protection of the Black Water Pond water basin; preserved several of the remaining forested wetlands in this part of the Island; conserved former meadows for possible return to agricultural use; and will provide trail connections to three adjoining existing conservation properties open to the public.

The Sheriff's Meadow Foundation acquired the 52-acre property northeast of Indian Hill to add to other conserved parcels in the immediate vicinity linking to the foundation's 250-acre Cedar Tree Neck Sanctuary, conserving an expansive and varied area for wildlife.

West Tisbury sets as the Town's highest priorities (in no particular order):

- Active or fallow farmland, particularly if visible from a public road or water body.
- Vacant or virtually vacant pond front or coastal parcels, including beaches, dunes, bluffs and adjoining backlands
- Forest land
- Hilltops and other scenic vistas
- Any vacant or virtually vacant property bordering existing protected open space
- Other environmentally sensitive areas such as fresh and salt water wetlands, sandplain grasslands and other wildlife habitat
- Any trail easement connecting or potentially connecting other protected open space or conservation land

## 3.2 SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

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The following are the criteria used in the Open Space and Natural Resources suitability analysis using the methodology described in section 1.3.

1. Agricultural Land: Working Farm, Prime Agricultural Soil
2. Water Resources – Coastal and Surface Water: Proximity to Wetlands and Flood Hazard Area; Coastal District; Surface Water Bodies
3. Water Resources – Groundwater: Zones of Protection Around Public Wells; Nitrogen-Sensitive Watersheds
4. Habitat and Woodlands: Core and Supporting Habitat; Other Large, Unfragmented Woodlands;
5. Scenic and Cultural: Viewsheds and Vistas from Island Roads; Cultural Landscapes
6. Recreation and Access: Beaches

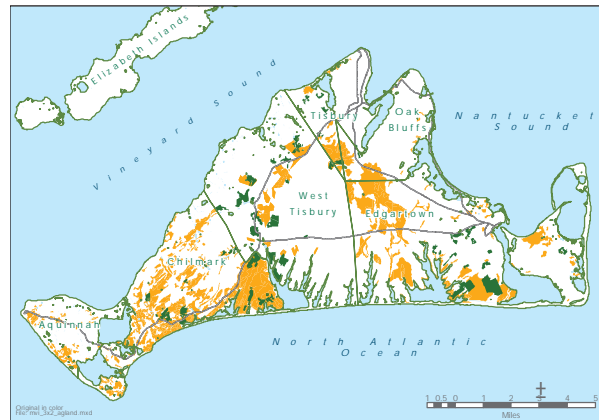
On the following pages, each of these criteria was mapped for the town as well as the entire Island, accompanied by an explanation of the criteria and how they were used in the suitability analysis.

The results of the analysis are in section 3.2.7.

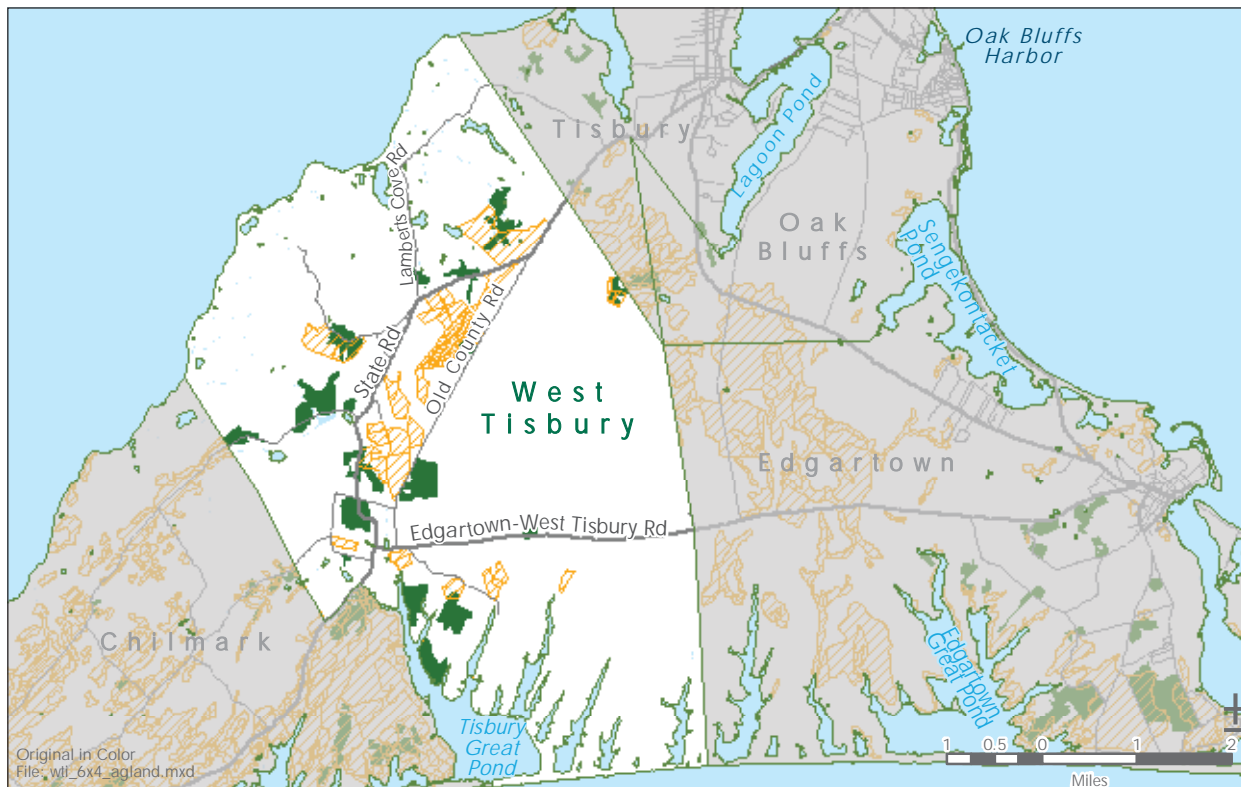
### 3.2.1. Agricultural Land

Although representing just a fraction of the land from previous generations, many areas of the Vineyard are still strongly associated with farming. Farming represents scenic and economic cultural sensibilities. The selection of these criteria reflects the desire to preserve the remaining working farms and to provide for the possibility for prime agricultural land to be returned to farming. West Tisbury has 40% of the area farmed on the Island, the most of any town.

Criteria for Open Space Suitability Agricultural Land in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
Working Farm	20	701
Prime Agricultural Soils	6	1412



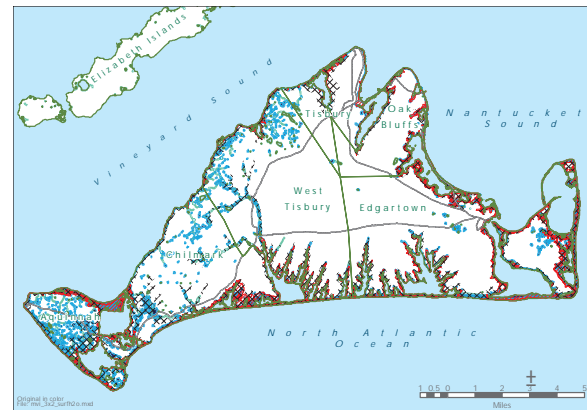
Source: Farms - MassGIS (1999 ground cover) and MVC 2004; Natural Resources Conservation Service / Mass-GIS 2003 and West Tisbury Steering Committee



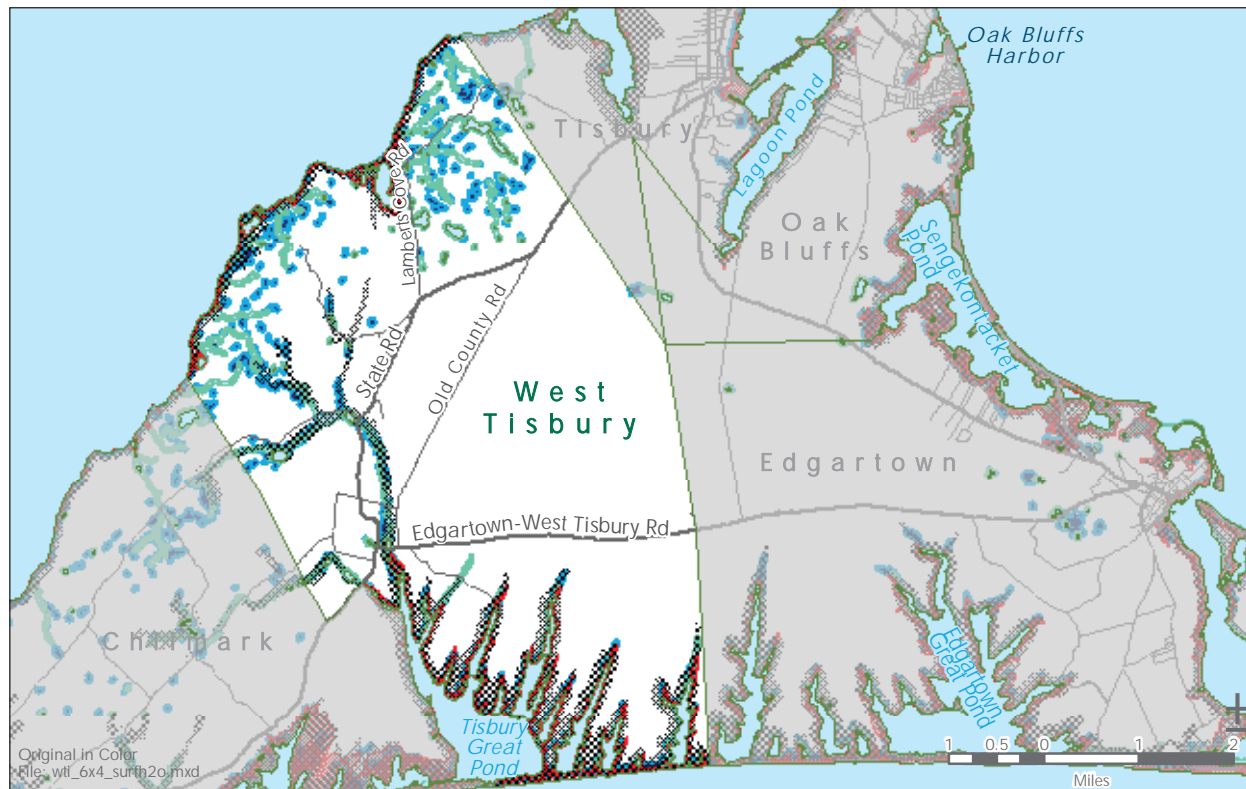
### 3.2.2. Water Resources – Coastal and Surface Water

The presence of the ocean, ponds or streams makes land more desirable for preservation as open space, both from ecological (water quality, habitat) and cultural (scenic, recreational) perspectives. Wetlands may not be built on but they and the adjacent areas offer resources of interest for preservation of open space or natural resources. Similar considerations apply to ponds and streams and their adjacent areas. The Coastal District of Critical Planning Concern identifies the natural areas along the sea's edge, great ponds and their tributaries. Higher weighting was given to the criteria that were most restrictive to development.

Criteria for Open Space Suitability Coastal and Surface Water Resources in West Tisbury			
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)	
Wetlands	20	478	
Within 200' of wetlands	6	2,820	
Flood Hazard Area	10	532	
Coastal DCPC	8	2,317	
Surface water	20	877	
Within 200' of surface water	6	2,153	



Source: DEP/MassGIS 2003; FEMA/MassGIS 1997; MAPC 2000; MassGIS 2003

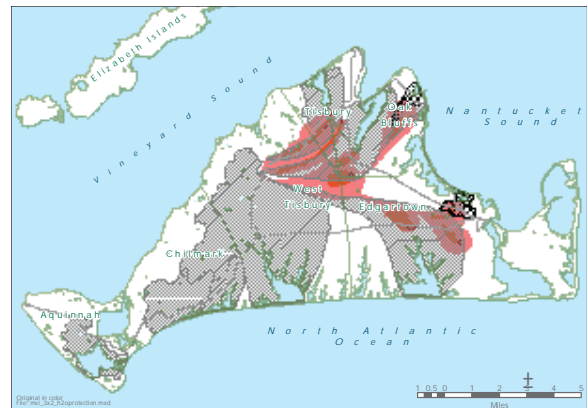




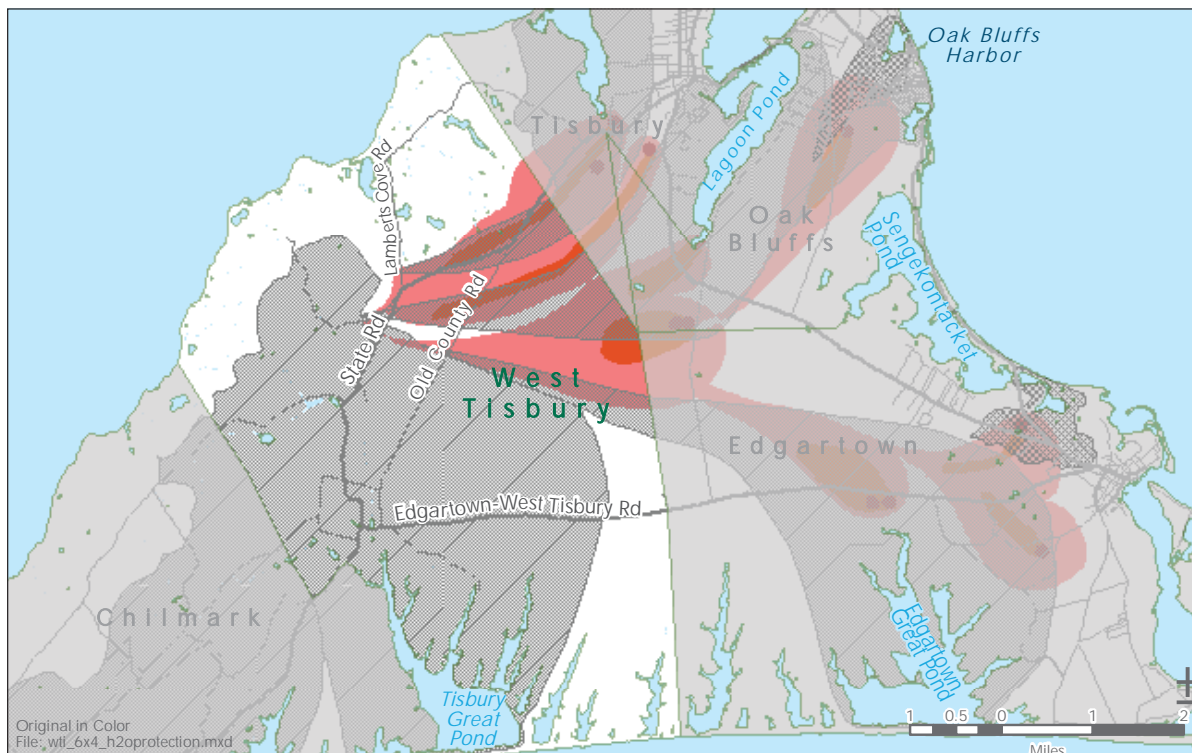
### 3.2.3. Water Resources – Areas of Protection

Development places stress on groundwater resources and ideally, would be located outside areas highly sensitive to ground water contamination. Preserving lands within the areas of protection of public wells – Zone I, operational zone of influence, and Zone II – protects public health as well as public investment in infrastructure. The operational zones of influence were determined by the MVC as areas more likely to infiltrate to public water supplies than the rest of Zone II. The vitality of the Island’s great ponds also affects human health, but also involves habitat, cultural, scenic and recreational values. Identified are the pond watersheds that are already at or beyond nitrogen limits, or are projected to reach those limits.

Criteria for Open Space Suitability Groundwater Resource Protection in West Tisbury			
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)	
Public well – Zone I	20	0	
Public well – operational zone of influence	6	403	
Public well – Zone II	4	2,048	
Pond watershed at or beyond nitrogen limit	6	9,403	
Pond watershed projected to reach nitrogen limit	4	0	



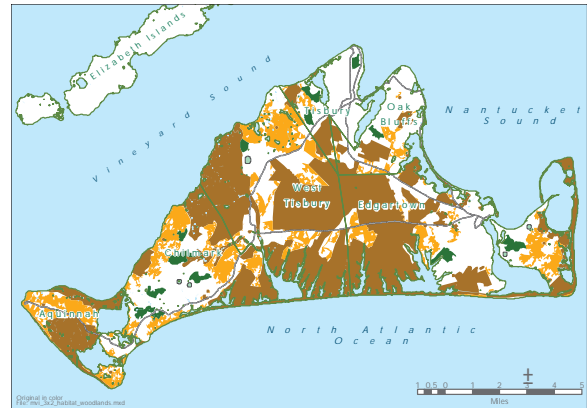
Source: DEP/MassGIS 2003; MVC 2003



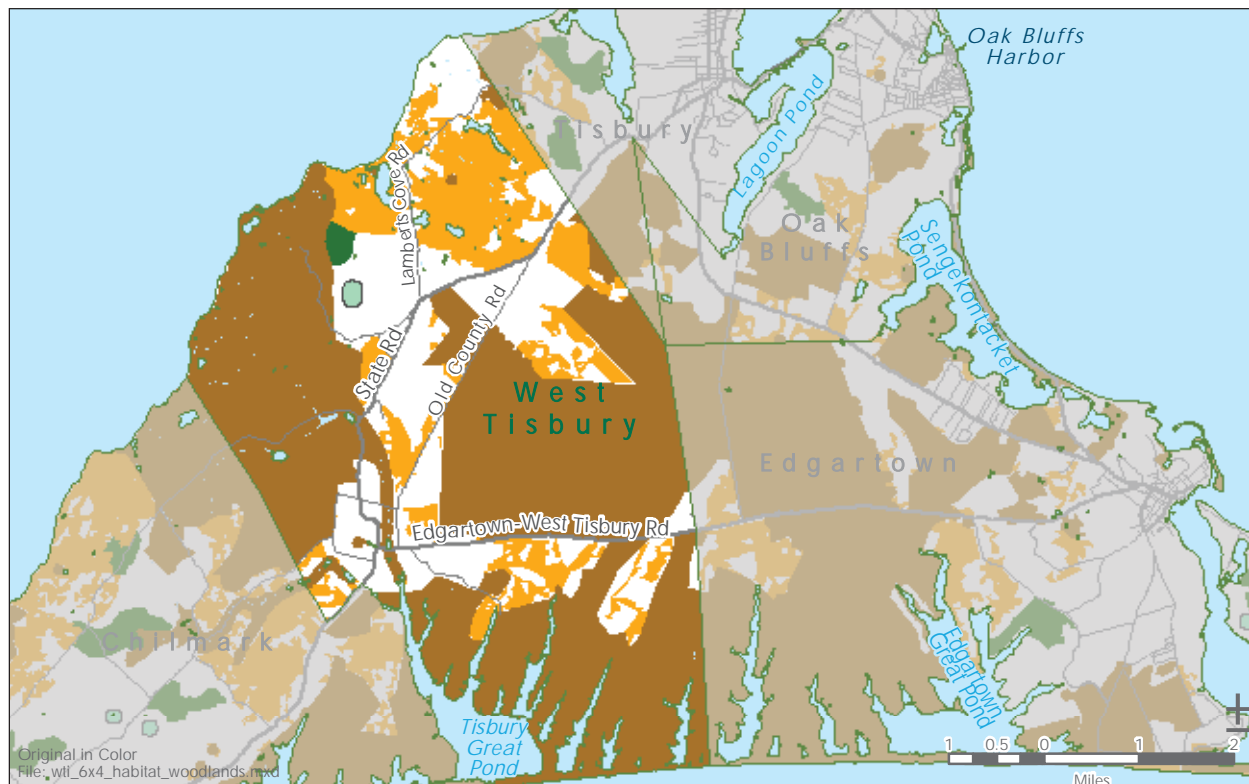
### 3.2.4. Habitat and Woodlands

Martha's Vineyard is the site of some globally important habitats such as the distinctive sandplain grasslands. Core and Supporting Habitat are areas identified by the Commonwealth that provide habitat for several species that are Endangered, Threatened or are of Special Concern, including the Harrier Hawk and various types of moths. This is evident from the extent of significant "core" and supporting habitat. In addition, large unfragmented woodlands not already included in the habitat criteria are identified because they may still be potentially important open spaces from a scenic or recreational standpoint.

Criteria for Open Space Suitability Habitat and Woodlands in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
Core Habitat	10	9,504
Supporting Habitat	6	2,508
Additional Unfragmented Woodland (50+ acres)	8	70
Additional Unfragmented Woodland (10-50 acres)	4	32



Sources: Habitat - Natural Heritage/MassGIS 2002  
Woodland - MacConnell 1999 ground cover



### 3.2.5. Scenic/Cultural

The character of the Island is derived to a great extent by how it looks from public spaces, including major roads and the water. A preliminary identification of views from the main Island roads includes:

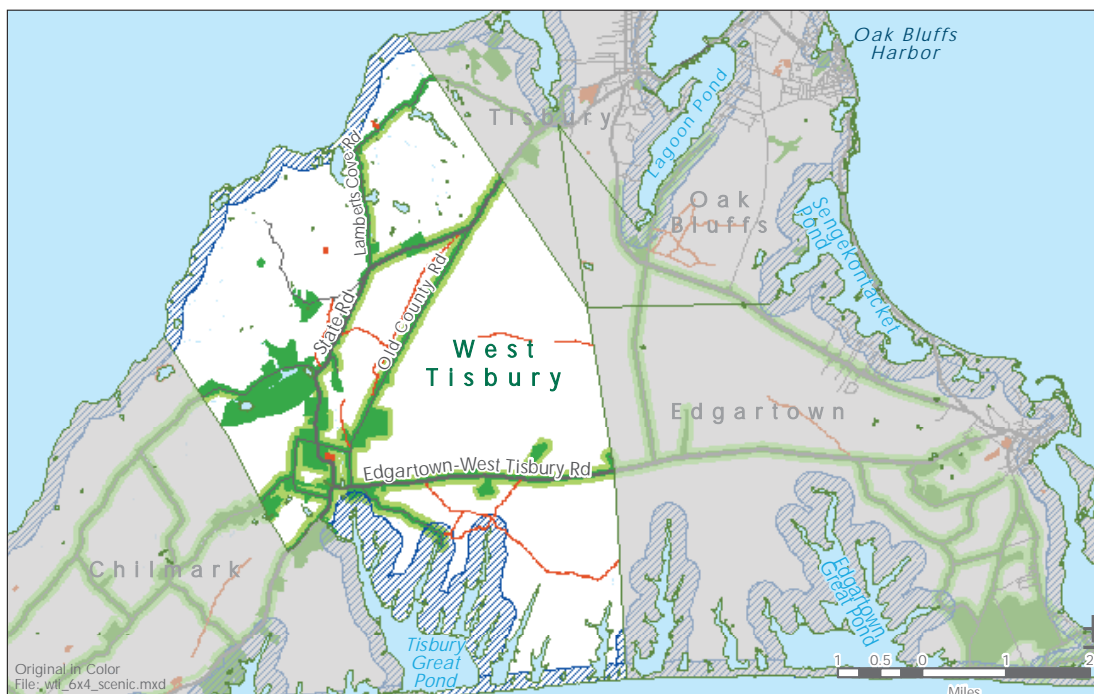
- wooded areas within 200' from roads as well as adjacent fields and ponds;
- larger vistas from public overlooks and particularly scenic roads and,
- the axis of view corridors at the ends of certain roads.

A secondary buffer area, generally an additional 300' from roads, was also identified as was the coastal viewshed made up of land within 1000' from the coast and of other navigable waters. Also included are cultural landscapes that towns have previously designated as Special Places. This analysis in particular will likely be subject to future refinement by the towns and MVC.

Criteria for Open Space Suitability Scenic/Cultural in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Primary Vista/Viewshed	20	1,788
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Secondary Vista/Viewshed	4	1,372
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Cultural Landscape	20	192
<span style="color: blue;">▨</span> 1000' from Coast/Great Pond	6	2,036




Sources: Viewsheds - MVC/Steering Committees 2004  
Cultural landscapes - Town DCPCs/MVC 2004

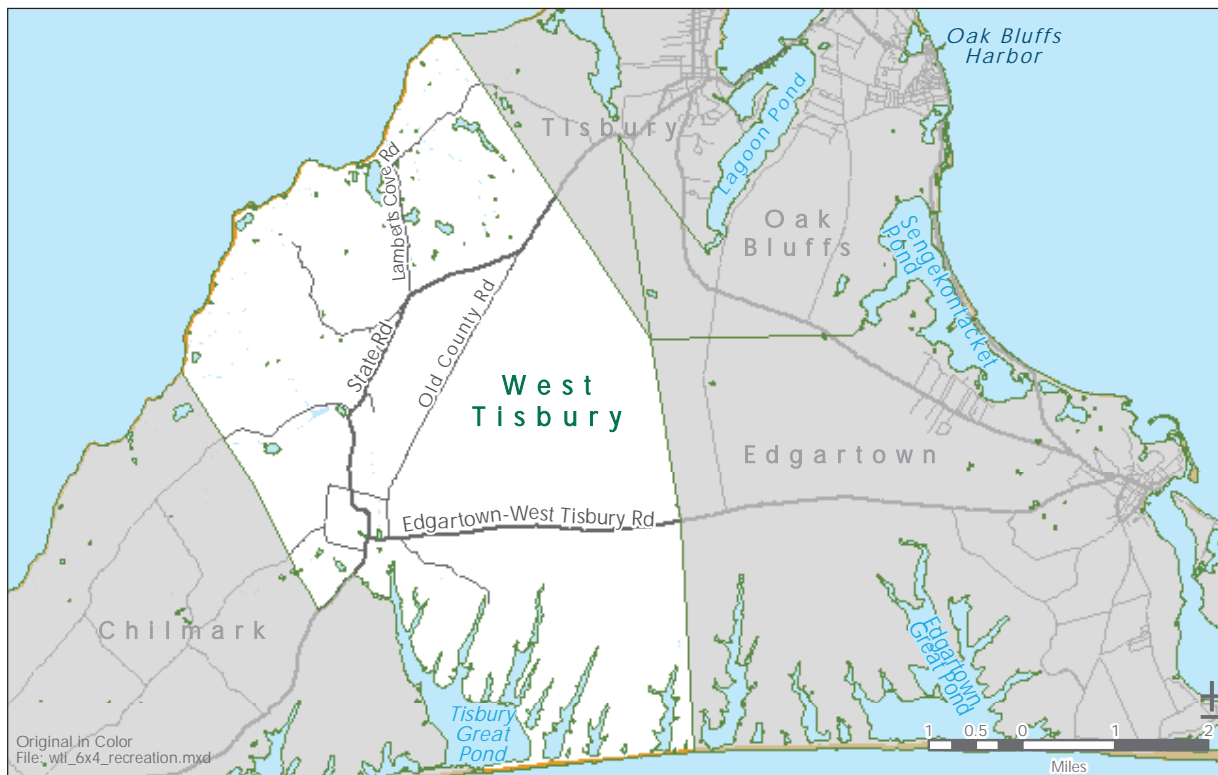
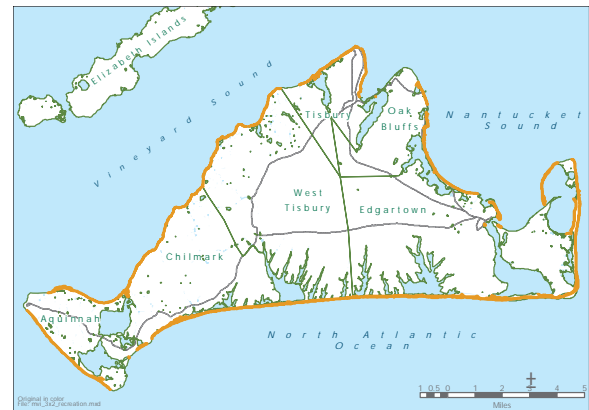


### 3.2.6. Recreation and Access

In addition to their indispensable role of buffering the Island (and Great Ponds) from the sea, beaches are, understandably, the most used recreational spaces on the Vineyard. Public access to beaches varies greatly among towns but is generally less available to the public up-Island (where there are also fewer people). Other existing recreational areas such as golf courses and ball fields should be mapped in the future. Mapping the bike paths and walking trails would help identify gaps in the town and Island-wide network of trails and paths.

Criteria for Open Space Suitability Recreation and Access in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
 Beach	20	110

Sources: MacConnell 1999 ground cover



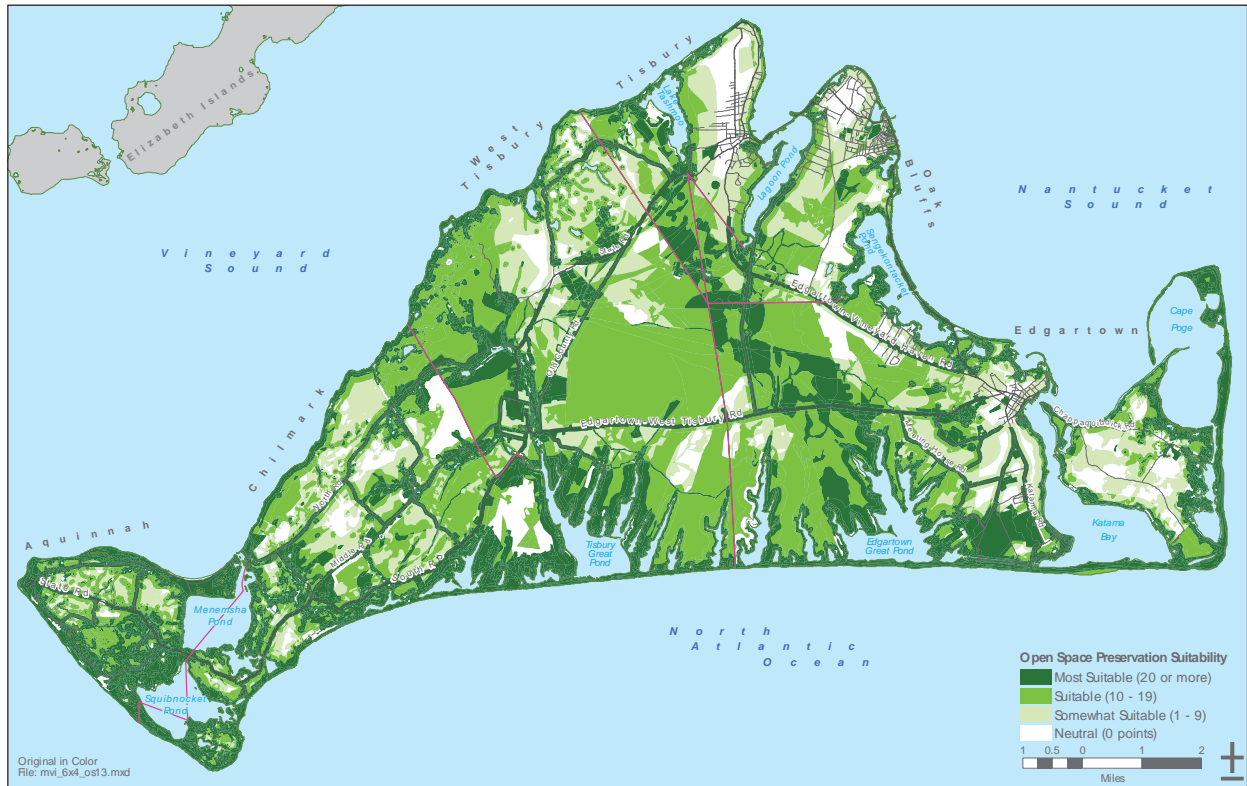
### 3.2.7 Open Space and Natural Resources Suitability Map

The following maps show the overall suitability of land for preservation of open space and natural resources based on a combination of the criteria described in this section. Land across the Island was divided into four categories based on the total 'points' accumulated from all the mapped features. In illustration, the higher intensity of color or shading reflects a higher degree of suitability, according to the criteria measured and the weighting of values. Lands that are already preserved or developed are overlaid with a diagonal crosshatch.

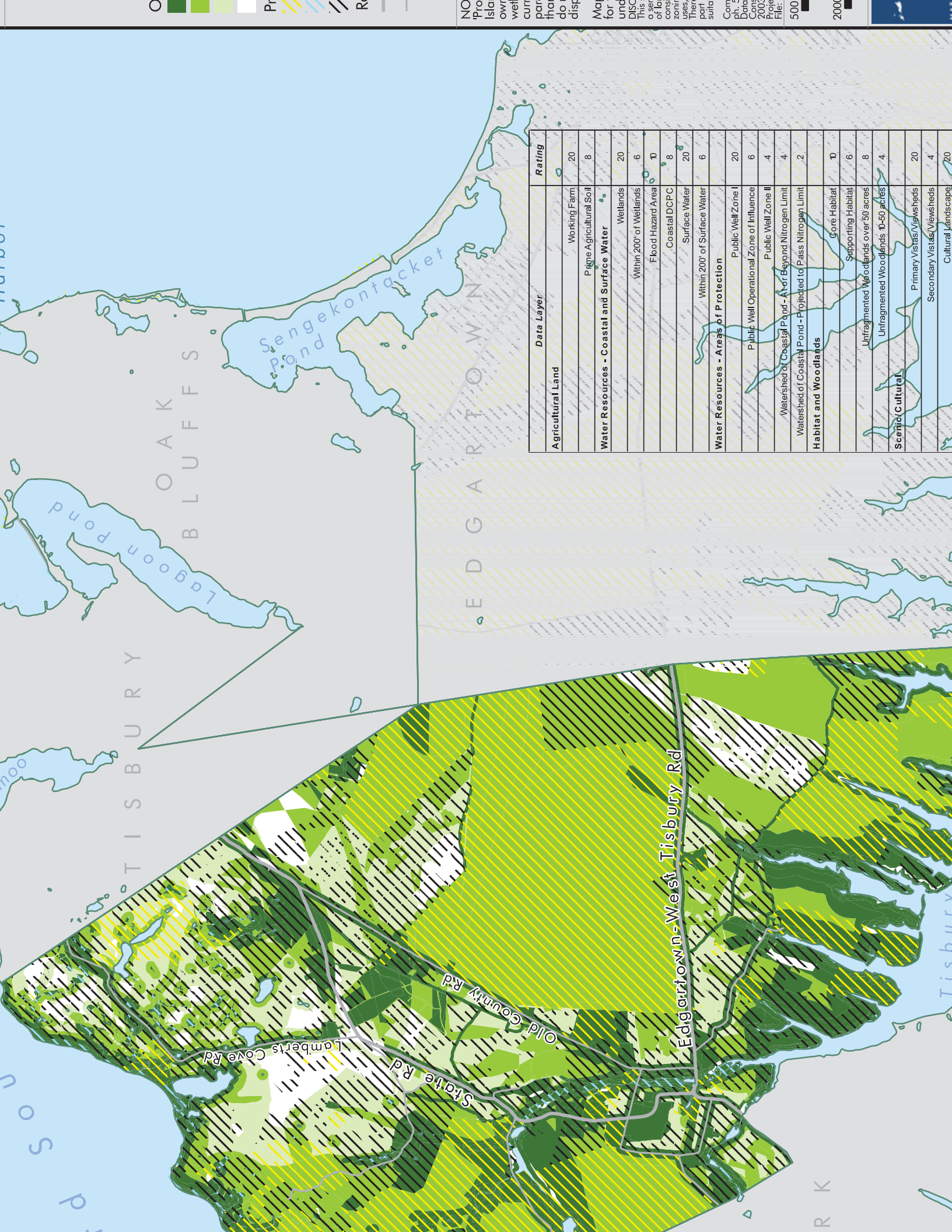
On Martha's Vineyard as a whole, the map indicates that lands close to the ocean are particularly important to preserve as open space. In general, there is a narrow beach or bluff that serves as storm damage prevention for the interior wetlands and built areas, as recreation, scenic vistas, and in some cases, habitat. Serving a variety of functions, these areas tend to score highly when points are summed. On the map below, these areas tend to appear as colored the darkest green, the equivalent of a high score. These shore areas form a relatively narrow fringe, extensive in total area only because they surround the entire Island. The scenic vistas afforded by the rural roads constitute another narrowly focused resource, extensive in total area only because of the extensive length of this grid network. Working farms and prime agricultural soils constitute very little of the total area of the Island. Much more extensive in area are the habitat and water resource areas. Core habitat, primarily in the form of the globally rare sandplain grassland, covers much of the total area of the Island. The watersheds of the great ponds cover large land areas. Many of the great ponds are projected at or near their nitrogen loading limits, and lands within those watersheds are targeted for open space protection. Zones of contribution for public water supplies cover large areas of lands in the down-Island towns and also in West Tisbury, although that town does not pump for its own municipal water service.

Within West Tisbury, working farms are marked as highly suitable for open space protection. Several rural roads are marked as highly suitable, for scenic vistas. Waterfront areas are marked along the shore and beside the great ponds. Larger land areas are marked as well, including the vast watershed of Tisbury Great Pond. Much of the land area of the Town is designated as core habitat, and much of the Town is included within the zones of contribution for the water supplies of the three down-Island towns. Where these large areas overlap with one another, or with the smaller scale areas marked, suitability is heightened.

<b>Open Space and Natural Resource Protection Suitability</b>		
	<i>Martha's Vineyard (% of Island)</i>	<i>West Tisbury (% of Town)</i>
Most Suitable	23,722 acres (40%)	4,978 acres (31%)
Suitable	20,267 acres (35%)	8,101 acres (50%)
Somewhat Suitable	9,500 acres (16%)	2,402 acres (15%)
Neutral	5,205 acres (9%)	821 acres (5%)



It bears repeating that, in West Tisbury as on all of Martha's Vineyard, virtually all land has some degree of suitability for open space preservation – whether for environmental, health, economic or cultural reasons. Due to the scarcity and extraordinary cost of land on the Vineyard, the decision to preserve a particular piece of land will likely be based far more on opportunity than on suitability; in other words, if a parcel of land becomes available, it might well be worth preserving as open space, even if it has not rated highly in this suitability analysis.



Data Layer	Rating
<b>Agricultural Land</b>	
Working Farm	20
Poign Agricultural Soil	8
<b>Water Resources - Coastal and Surface Water</b>	
Wetlands	20
Within 200' of Wetlands	6
Flood Hazard Area	10
Coastal DCP	8
Surface Water	20
Within 200' of Surface Water	6
<b>Water Resources - Areas of Protection</b>	
Public Well Zone I	20
Public Well Operational Zone of Influence	6
Public Well Zone II	4
Watershed of Coastal Pond - At or Beyond Nitrogen Limit	4
Watershed of Coastal Pond - Projected to Pass Nitrogen Limit	2
<b>Habitat and Woodlands</b>	
Core Habitat	10
Supporting Habitat	6
Unfragmented Woodlands over 50 acres	8
Unfragmented Woodlands 10-50 acres	4
<b>Scenic/Cultural</b>	
Primary Vistas/Viewsheds	20
Secondary Vistas/Viewsheds	4
Cultural Landscape	20

### 3.3 ORIENTATIONS

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The goals & objectives of the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan remain valid in 2004, but are modified below based on the information gathered, work done, and discussions had by the Steering Committee and MVC regarding the 418 project & the ongoing work on an updated open space plan for West Tisbury:

- Protect water quality (surface water, watersheds, public well zones); identify areas of land with the greatest sensitivity and seek to preserve the land for water quality protection; educate public water quality issues (nitrogen reduction, run-off, Title V, vegetation management, etc.); update Oak Bluffs Wetlands Protection Bylaw Regulations
- Increase open space to protect woodlands, habitat protection, wetlands, well zones, agricultural lands, water access, parcels in existing neighborhoods; identify areas where public access to the water is limited (for swimming, beaching, boating, walking) & seek additional public coastal access; identify & prioritize those areas most significant to watershed & habitat protection & seek protection; review need for additional open space in underserved areas; educate public on value of open space to community quality of life, economy
- Ensure that open land stays open; obtain Conservation Restrictions on parks, neighborhood common lands
- Protect scenic vistas, wildlife habitat & historic areas
- Plan for future land use in "triangle" area; develop priorities, strategies for the large areas of undeveloped, unprotected land in the "triangle"
- Provide walking trails; reactivate Trails & Byways Committee; seek to protect trails & ancient ways, possible Special Ways Bylaw, identify areas where new trails would be suitable



## 4. HOUSING

The seasonal and tourist-based economy of the Vineyard has greatly affected the home rental and ownership market in West Tisbury. Rapidly escalating property values have made affordable housing a critical issue for all of Martha's Vineyard and housing costs in West Tisbury have traditionally been higher than in other parts of the Island. This section of the West Tisbury Community Development Plan deals with the issue of housing development and especially the provision of affordable housing.

### 4.1. HOUSING PROFILE

#### 4.1.1 Existing Housing Stock

Housing Characteristics - West Tisbury			
	1980	1990	2000
Total Households	418	687	1,034
Total Housing Units	913	1,320	1,849
Owner Occupied	306	539	773
Renter Occupied	112	148	261
Seasonal Units	422	377	768
Vacant Year-Round	73	256	47
Vacancy Rate for Year-Round Housing Units: Ownership	na	1.8	0.8
Vacancy Rate for Year-Round Housing Units: Rental	na	6.7	4.0
Total Units	913	1,320	1,849

Housing Characteristics - Martha's Vineyard			
	1980	1990	2000
Total Households	3,963	4,955	6,375
Total Housing Units	8,700	11,439	14,621
Owner Occupied	2,708	3,541	4,560
Renter Occupied	1,135	1,414	1,815
Seasonal Units	4,084	5,278	7,829
Vacant Year-Round	773	1,206	417
Vacancy Rate for Year-Round Housing Units: Ownership *	na	3.6	1.3
Vacancy Rate for Year-Round Housing Units: Rental *	na	8.7	3.6
Total Units	8,700	11,439	14,621

\* For Dukes County  
Source: U.S. Census

According to the 2000 US Census, the town of West Tisbury has a total of 1,849 housing units, of which 1,774 (96%) were single-family homes. The remaining four percent of West Tisbury's

housing stock is either 2 or 4-unit structures or with a detached dwelling unit on the property. Statistically there is not a lot of housing diversity such as multi-family housing units or apartment complexes in West Tisbury. In terms of seasonal and year-round housing there has been a shift within the housing dynamic for West Tisbury.

Seasonality: West Tisbury is only one of two Vineyard towns in which there has been a gradual increase in the ratio of year-round to seasonal housing occupancy for the past three decades. According to the US Census in 1980, West Tisbury had a ratio of 46% year-round housing occupancy to 54% seasonal occupancy, but in 1990 there was a ratio of 52% year-round to 48% seasonal occupancy. For seasonally-oriented communities such as West Tisbury, housing occupancy is an important factor to consider when projecting future growth scenarios – particularly population projections – should the year-round occupancy ratio shift sizably in either direction.

Building Permits: The Town granted 224 residential building permits from 1999 to 2003. In 1999, the Town enacted a two-year residential building permit cap intended to slow down the rate of development. Despite the building cap for new homes and an economic recession in 2000, the construction industry continues to be a strong element of the economy due in large part to the remodeling and renovation of existing homes.

Residential Building Permits Issued for New Construction							
	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	West Tisbury	Total
1999	13	43	139	66	60	59	380
2000	5	20	95	30	33	53	236
2001	7	19	74	31	23	31	185
2002	4	16	93	29	26	33	201
2003	9	16	88	46	27	48	234

Source: Town Reports; Building Inspectors

Rental Registration: The Town of West Tisbury does not regulate the rental of housing units. There is growing concern Island-wide for the health and safety of tenants particularly in overcrowded housing situations. The Town has not created a bylaw that would require homeowners who rent their property to register with the Town Clerk. Should they do so, the Board of Health would then determine the maximum occupancy of the property to ensure that overcrowding of a home is prevented.

#### 4.1.2 Impact of the Real Estate Market on Housing

From 1997 to 2003, the real estate market in West Tisbury has seen the median price for a home increase from \$282,250 to \$670,000. Between 1997 and 2003, a total of 337 homes sold in West Tisbury. In 2002 there were 56 homes sold but only two houses sold for less than \$250,000. None of the 37 West Tisbury home sales in 2003 was for less than \$250,000. According to a 2001 housing needs assessment study for Martha’s Vineyard, the number of

homes selling for less than \$200,000 from 2000 to 2001 dropped from 35 sales to just 9 sales. The number of homes selling for under \$250,000 dropped from 82 to 39 over the same period.

Median Home Sale Prices, 1997 - 2003							
Year	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	West Tisbury	Martha's Vineyard
1997	\$380,000	\$505,000	\$192,372	\$170,000	\$220,000	\$282,250	\$205,000
1998	\$457,500	\$764,250	\$225,000	\$186,170	\$220,000	\$279,000	\$231,750
1999	\$520,000	\$955,000	\$275,000	\$200,000	\$236,750	\$339,000	\$260,000
2000	\$900,000	\$1,300,000	\$379,000	\$275,000	\$292,500	\$425,000	\$369,500
2001	\$962,500	\$885,000	\$467,500	\$279,000	\$350,000	\$549,000	\$395,000
2002	\$1,027,000	\$1,237,500	\$517,500	\$325,000	\$357,100	\$500,000	\$400,000
2003	\$1,200,000	\$1,487,500	\$547,500	\$419,125	\$432,000	\$670,000	\$506,013

Source: Martha's Vineyard LINK

The current market indicates that there is a serious gap between what the market rate home costs and what families can afford. The median household income for West Tisbury was \$54,077 as reported by the US Census. According to Housing and Urban Development's income limits the median family income for a family of four was \$61,100 in FY 2003. Individuals or families earning \$61,100 could not afford a home that cost more than \$230,000 or should not pay more than \$1,530 per month on rent. According to HUD guidelines, individuals or families who either own a home or rent should not pay more than 30% of their gross income for housing cost, which includes principal, interest, insurance, taxes, and/or utilities if renting. The 2003 median sales price of a home in West Tisbury is \$670,000, which amounts to an affordability gap of \$440,000 for someone earning \$61,100.

One aspect of the housing dynamic on the Vineyard is that year-round residents, especially first time homebuyers, are competing with second-home buyers who, due to higher incomes, are often in the position to outbid them. The same also holds true for those renting a housing unit. As a seasonal community, year-round residents renting oftentimes do not have stable year-round housing. The seasonal rental market on the Vineyard provides a lucrative opportunity for landlords to rent their homes on a weekly or monthly basis during the summer months. As a result, year-round residents renting that housing unit are given a short-term lease and are then forced to compete with vacationers and seasonal workers for summer housing at sharply higher rents. This results in the all too common "island shuffle" of having to move two or more times each year, which has physical and sociological impacts in addition to economic effects.

Another aspect of the strong seasonal demand for rental housing is that year-round owners can also benefit from renting out space for vacationers or summer workers. In fact, the prospect of this income stream from rentals is such that lending institutions will take it into account in determining a mortgage limit. Island towns, West Tisbury included, provide for guest-houses or even detached bedrooms to help Islanders to supplement their incomes. One downside to this practice, with

respect to housing affordability, however, is that the income-generating potential of housing is one more factor pushing up the value of property.

#### 4.1.3 Affordable Housing Needs

The rising cost of housing on a statewide level has posed serious challenges to State and local governments to address the issue of affordable housing more aggressively, particularly as it threatens the stability of local and State economies to retain an adequate workforce. Since 1999, there has been a grassroots effort on the part of town governments, non-profit, religious / ecumenical organizations, private businesses and residents to address the issue of affordable housing on the Vineyard.

In 2001, the Island Affordable Housing Fund hired consultant John Ryan to conduct a housing needs assessment. *"Preserving Community: An Island-wide Housing Needs Assessment"*, highlighted options for the towns when addressing the issue of affordable housing. One of the prominent conclusions of the study was the need for additional rental housing. Other aspects of the study included the rising affordability gap between what an individual can afford and the actual cost of a home on the Vineyard. The decline of homes sales below \$250,000 was also a key element of the study. The report recommended the number of housing units each town would need to produce within the next five years to have a solid affordable housing base.

Recommended Affordable Housing Targets – Ryan Study				
	Below-Market Rental	Market Rental	Ownership (for Qualified 10- Year Residents)	Total
Aquinnah	6	0	24	30
Chilmark	12	2	45	59
Edgartown	48	14	47	109
Oak Bluffs	48	12	40	100
Tisbury	56	10	61	127
West Tisbury	20	2	20	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>467</b>

Source: Preserving Community: An Island-wide Needs Assessments by John Ryan, 2001

The Town of West Tisbury has worked toward addressing its affordable housing needs primarily through its zoning bylaws and its Resident Homesite program, which allows substandard lots to be used for the purposes of providing a substandard buildable lot to a West Tisbury resident. Currently, West Tisbury has 0.37% of its year-round housing stock that qualifies for the state's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory. Projecting the number of units created over the next five years that meet the Executive Order 418 Housing Certification criteria is difficult. Despite development constraints, the Town of West Tisbury does not regulate free market units; therefore, the target for newly created units for the next five years was set at the number ten.

## 4.2 HOUSING SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

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The preparation of this Community Development Plan has allowed for the preparation of a Housing Suitability Analysis, identifying which parts of the town are most suitable for the development of housing and especially affordable housing. The criteria are based largely on Smart Growth principles of favoring development that uses existing infrastructure and consolidates existing neighborhoods rather than sprawling into environmentally sensitive and other rural areas. As much of Martha's Vineyard is rural – indeed, much of the Island has a minimum lot size of two or three acres -- the identification of suitability criteria was difficult. Some of the Smart Growth principals, such as proximity to public transit, when applied as a suitability criterion on the Vineyard, produced distinctly un-Smart Growth results. A half dozen potential suitability criteria in addition to those listed below were tried in more than a dozen trial models of the analysis and were ultimately discarded as being inappropriate for evaluating housing suitability on Martha's Vineyard.

The following are the criteria used in the housing suitability analysis.

1. Existing Neighborhoods: In or Near Existing Neighborhoods
2. Access to Services: In or Near Village Center; Close to a Grocery
3. Municipal Services: Served by Town Water; Served by Town Sewer; Close to School
4. Water Resources: Not in Nitrogen-Sensitive Watershed

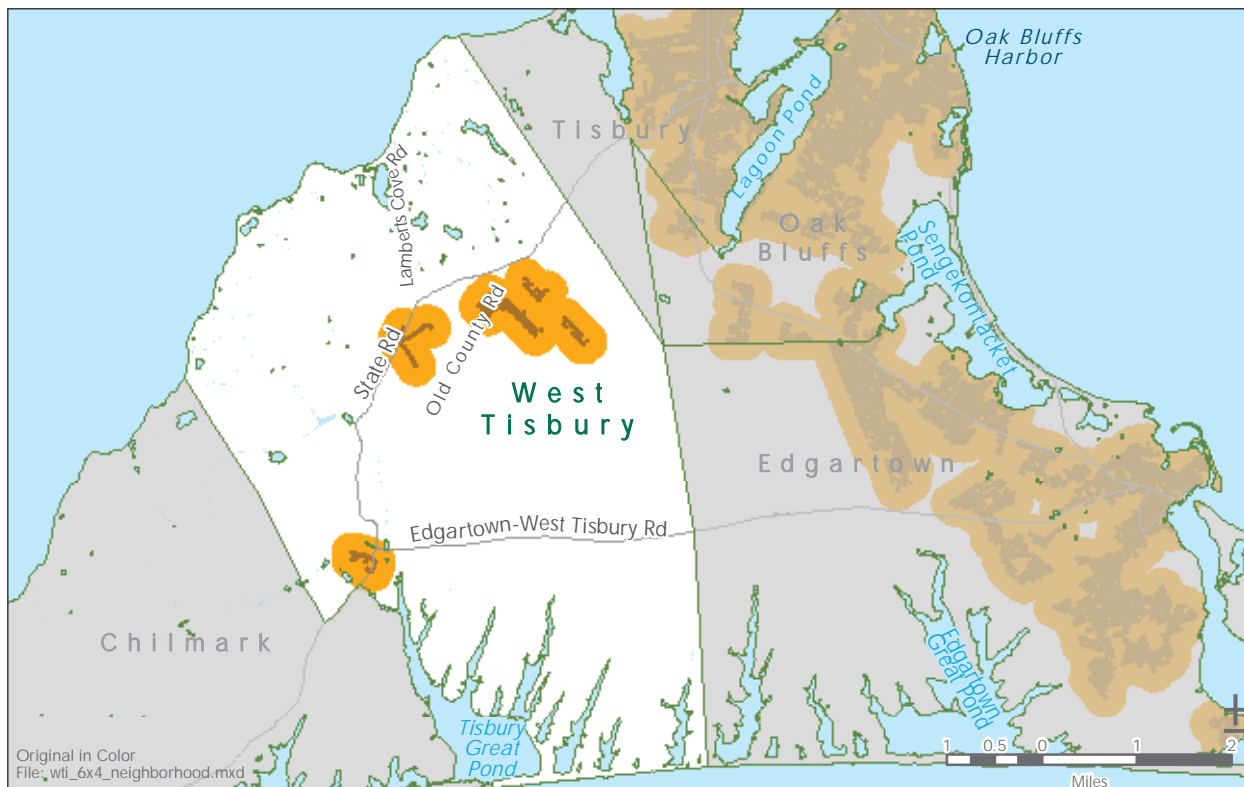
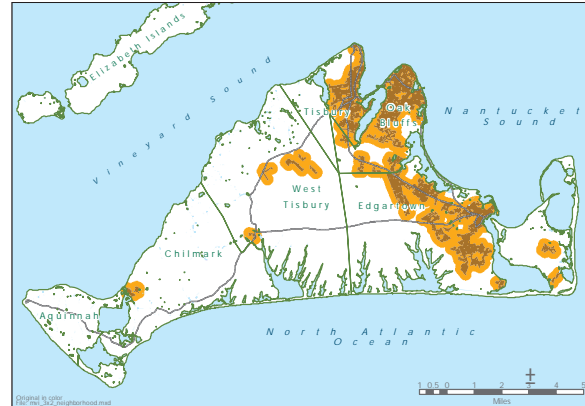
These are explained in more detail in the following tables, followed by the resulting housing suitability map.

### 4.2.1. Existing Neighborhoods

The principles of smart growth suggest the desirability of building new housing in or near already existing neighborhoods where the physical and social infrastructure already exist, rather than sprawling into rural areas. An existing 'neighborhood' for this analysis is defined as an area of ten or more adjoining properties (with houses) of less than 1.5-acre parcel size. The effect of this definition removed most residences up-island, where minimum lots sizes generally start at 1.5 acres, from being classified as 'neighborhoods.'

Criteria for Housing Suitability		
Existing Neighborhoods in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
Infill within Existing Neighborhood	20	148
Within 1000' of Existing Neighborhood	10	1,016

Source: Towns' Assessor s/Cartographic Assoc. 2003;  
MV Conservation Partnership 1999



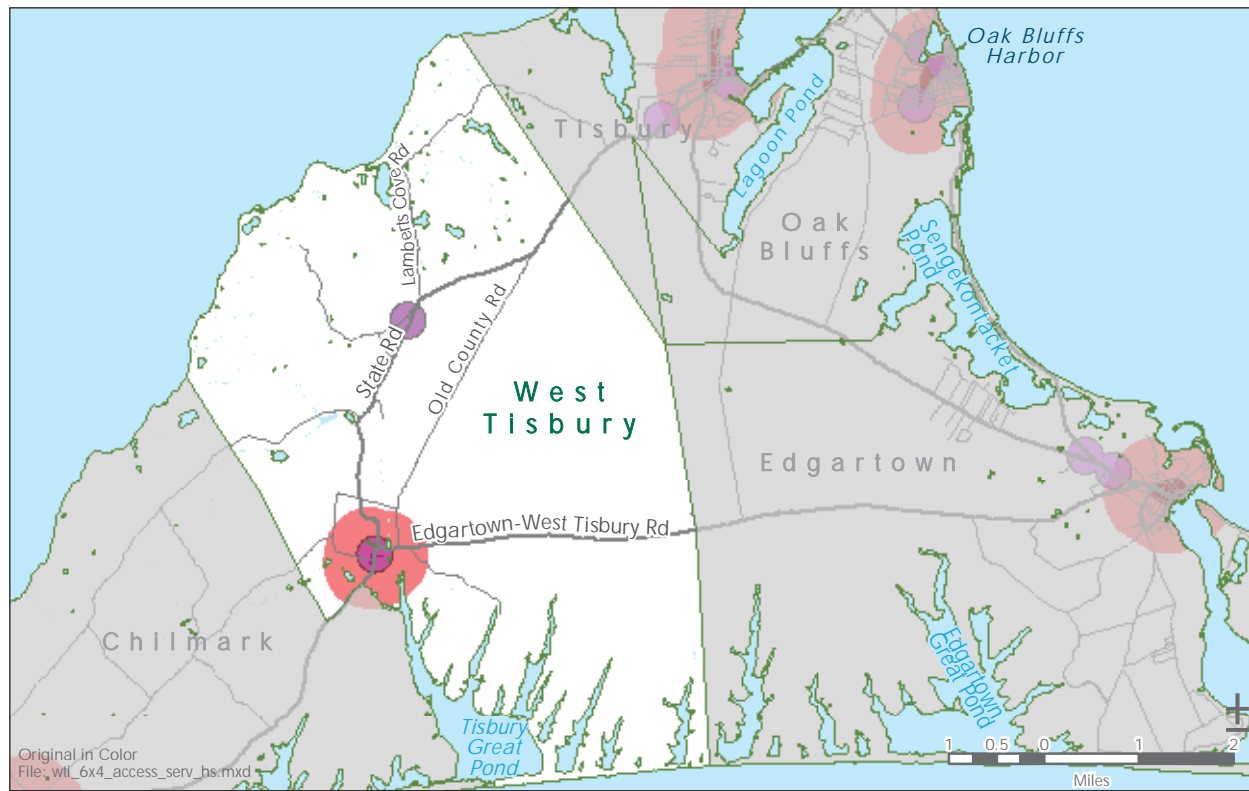
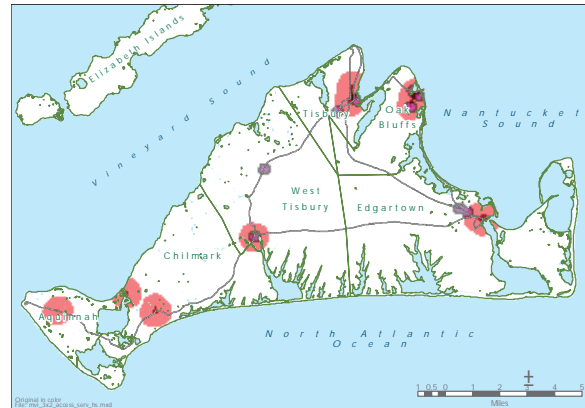
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#### 4.2.2. Access to Services

Locating new housing close to village centers -- defined here as the areas where Town Hall, libraries and post offices are typically clustered -- or close to service shopping -- identified here by the existence of a grocery store -- means that residents have easy access to services, reducing the amount of driving for errands or employment. This also helps create lively mixed-use neighborhoods.




Criteria for Housing Suitability		
Access to Services in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
Within 2500' of village center	10	562
Within 1000' of grocery	10	144

Source: Towns' Assessors/Cartographic Assoc. 2003;  
MV Conservation Partnership 1999; MVC 2004

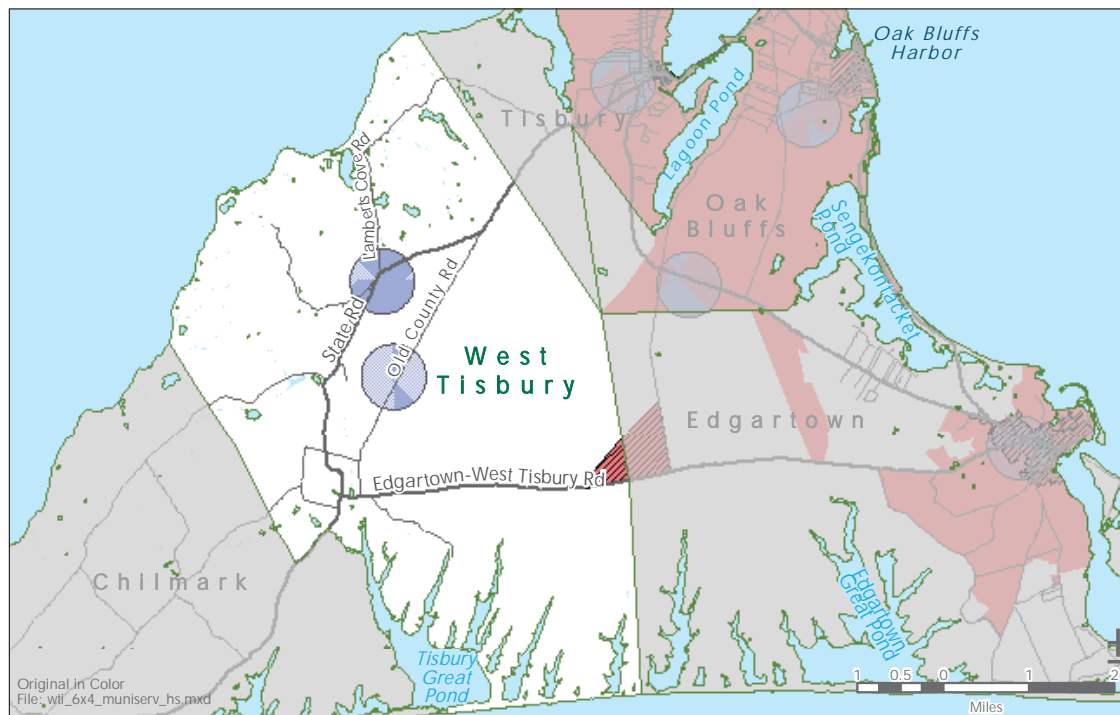
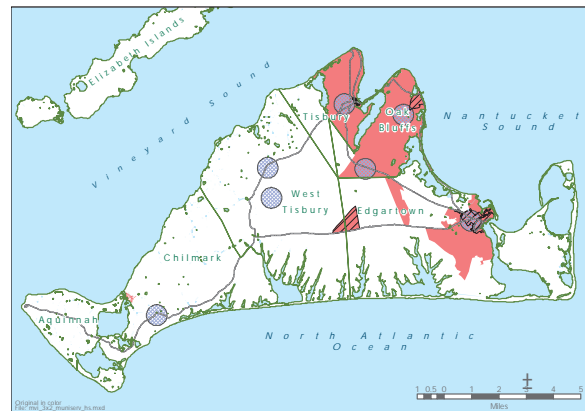


### 4.2.3. Municipal Services

From a public health perspective as well as from an environmental standpoint, it is preferable to locate housing where it can be served by community water and sewer services. Routine but necessary maintenance of homeowners' individual wells and septic systems frequently goes undone, leading to problems. Putting new housing in areas already close to schools facilitates access without necessarily having to drive. These access issues are especially appropriate in consideration of the needs of low, moderate and middle-income individuals and families who may have less access to private automobiles. (Note that an attempt to use public transit as a criterion resulted in a land use pattern of strip development, contrary to other objectives for directing future development and, thus, was discarded as a criterion for this analysis.) Future refinements of this suitability analysis may reintroduce transit as a criterion, as well as additional criteria such as proximity to recreational open space.

Criteria for Housing Suitability Municipal Services in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
 Served by Town Sewer	6	96
 Served by Town Water	6	96
 Within 2000' of school	6	577

Source: Towns' Assessors/Cartographic Assoc. 2003;  
MV Conservation Partnership 1999; MVC 2004



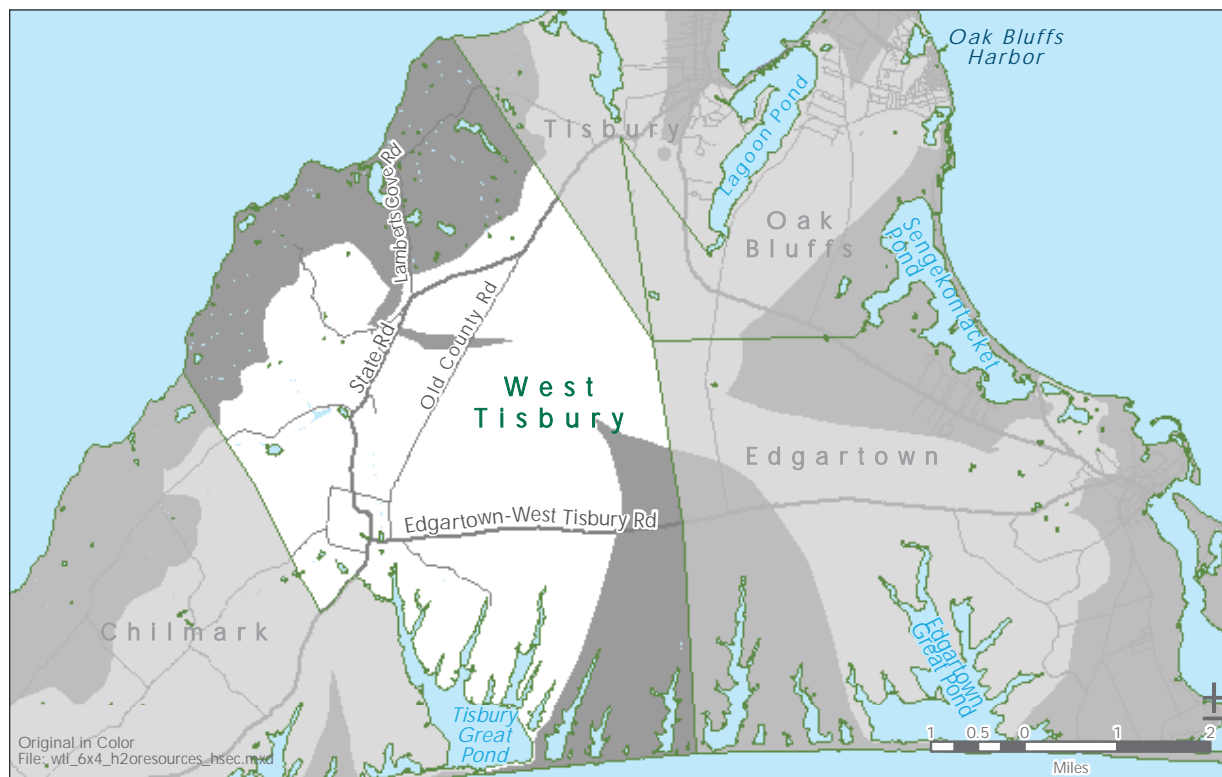
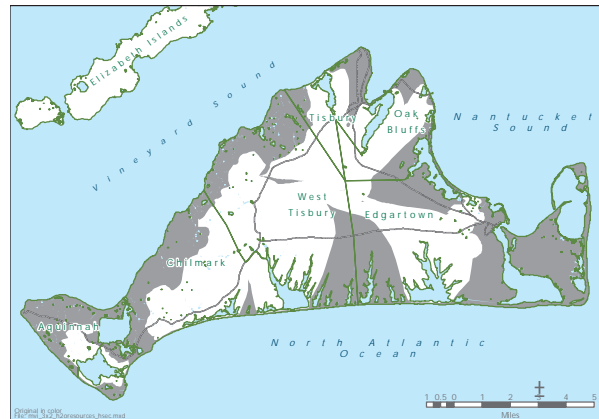


#### 4.2.4. Water Resources

In order to limit the impact of development on precious water resources, it is preferable to limit development in water-sensitive areas. This criterion identifies those locations that are not in the areas of protection of public wellheads (Zone I, Operational Areas of Contribution, and Zone II), as well as outside the watersheds of coastal ponds at or beyond their nitrogen limits. Despite the potential impact to water quality, not a great number of points were given to this criterion, because there are a variety of options to mitigate the potential impacts of development in these areas.

Criteria for Housing Suitability		
Water Resources in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
Lower-sensitivity water area	4	5,568

Source: DEP/MassGIS 2003; MVC 2003



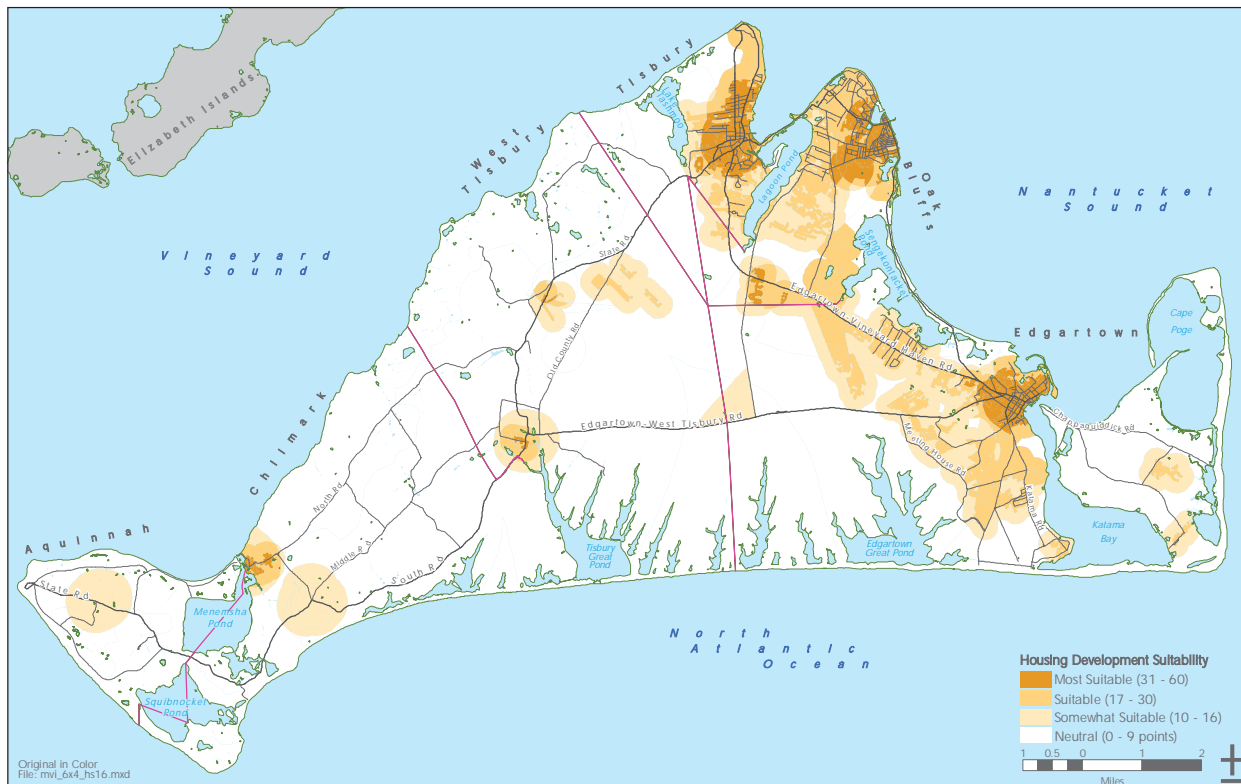
#### 4.2.5 Housing Suitability Map

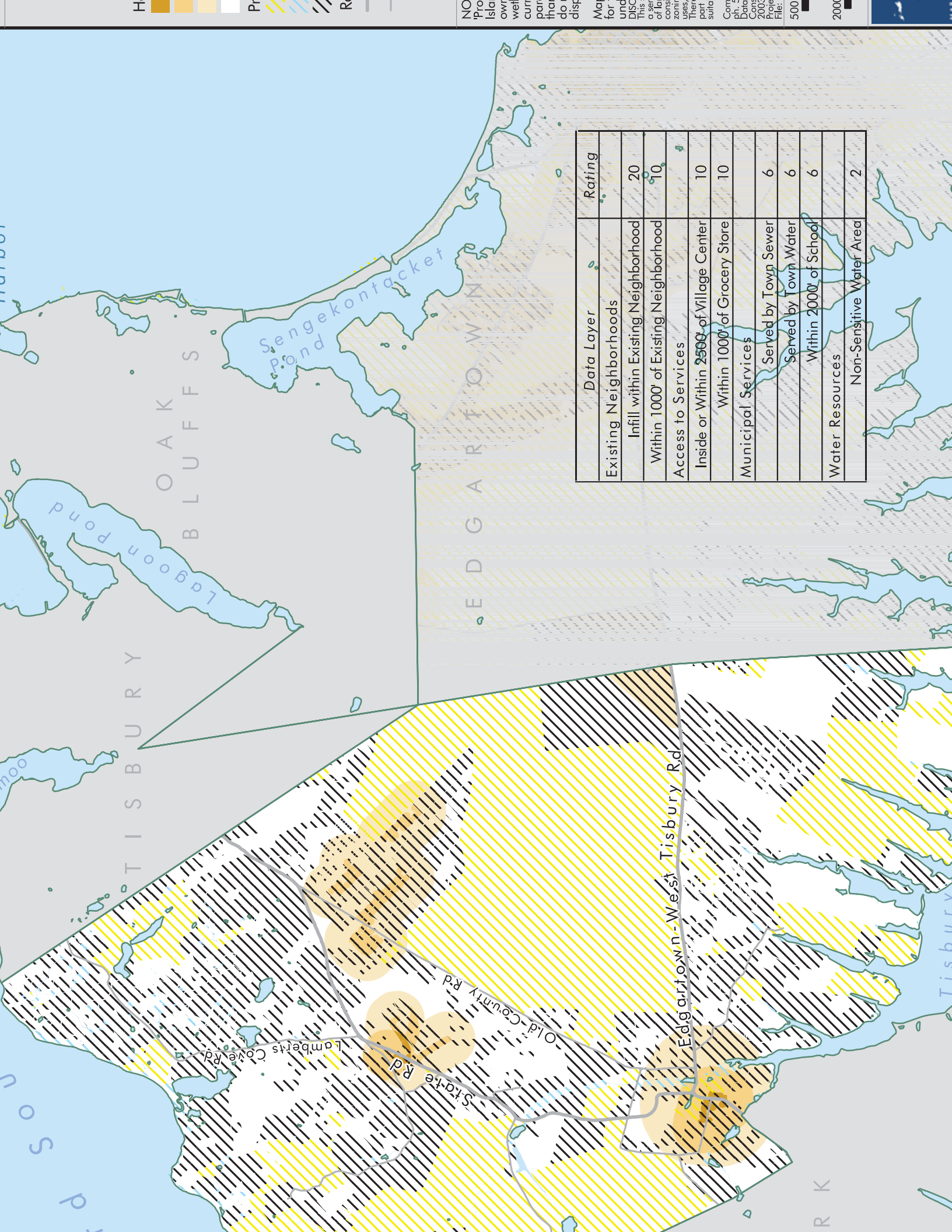
This map shows the overall suitability of land for the creation of housing, based on a combination of all the criteria described in this section, with the intensity of the color reflecting the degree of suitability. Lands that are already preserved or developed are overlaid with a diagonal crosshatch.

On Martha's Vineyard as a whole, the map indicates that the most suitable areas for housing development, and particularly for affordable housing that is likely to be higher density, are in and close to the centers of the three down-Island towns as well as infill areas within and near existing subdivisions.

Within West Tisbury, the lands that emerge as having the some suitability for housing are in and around the town center and the business district, both of which offer proximity to services, as well in and near the housing subdivisions located off the north end of Old County Road.

Housing Suitability		
	<i>Martha's Vineyard</i>	<i>West Tisbury</i>
Most Suitable	1,984 acres (3%)	27 acres (0.2%)
Suitable	5,627 acres (10%)	373 acres (2%)
Somewhat Suitable	7,374 acres (13%)	1,205 acres (8%)
Neutral	42,190 acres (74%)	14,424 acres (90%)





Data Layer	Rating
Existing Neighborhoods	
Infill within Existing Neighborhood	20
Within 1000' of Existing Neighborhood	10
Access to Services	
Inside or Within 2500' of Village Center	10
Within 1000' of Grocery Store	10
Municipal Services	
Served by Town Sewer	6
Served by Town Water	6
Within 2000' of School	6
Water Resources	
Non-Sensitive Water Area	2

T I S B U R Y

O A K B L U F F S

E D G A R T O W N

Edgartown-West Tisbury Rd

State Rd  
Old-County Rd  
Lamberts Cove Rd

Sengekontacket Pond

Lagoon Pond

NO  
Pro  
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## 4.3 HOUSING ORIENTATIONS

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### 4.3.1 Goals

West Tisbury is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the hopes of allowing current residents the opportunity to continue to reside within the community. It further recognizes the need to have a diverse housing stock in order to have a healthy and economically diverse community particularly as the escalating rise in property values will continue to challenge affordable housing initiatives.

The Town of West Tisbury hopes to produce at least 10 affordable housing units for the next five years. West Tisbury will continue to participate in workshops and housing forums regarding innovative ways of addressing affordable housing. The Town will also continue to work with the other island towns, the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority, and the Martha's Vineyard Commission, as well as other affordable housing groups to address the need for affordable housing.

### 4.3.2 Objectives

- A. The Town will continue to work toward the state's goal of designating 10% of its year-round housing stock for affordable housing, as defined by DHCD, to be counted towards the state's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory.
- B. The Town will conduct an inventory of developable vacant Town owned land. The Town will then work to designate a percentage of developable vacant Town-owned land for the purposes of addressing the need for both rental and homeownership units for families and individuals earning 30% up to 150% of the area median income.
- C. The Town will continue to seek monetary funding from the State, local, or private resources for the development or rehabilitation of homes for the purposes of affordable housing initiatives that include both rental and homeownership for households earning 30% up to 150% of the area median income.
- D. The Town will continue to refine its zoning bylaws for the purposes of encouraging affordable housing by allowing new development of multi-family housing units, duplex housing units, and condominium housing units.
- E. The Town will encourage public or private development of affordable housing by allowing a percentage of increased density that is not currently allowed by zoning within certain areas of the town.
- F. The Town will continue to participate in the Small Cities Program, which assists in financing and rehabilitation of existing homes.
- G. The Town will continue to support its Affordable Housing Committee. The Town would like to encourage the Affordable Housing Committee to consider income eligibility requirements and encourage that these lots remain affordable in perpetuity by deed restriction or other mechanism as deemed reasonable by the Town.

### 4.3.3 Ongoing Affordable Housing Efforts

The Town of West Tisbury is active in several fronts:

- In, 2000 the Town established an Affordable Housing Committee that will work to create affordable housing opportunities that include both rental and home-ownership for households earning 30% up to 140% of the area median income
- In 2000, the Town adopted a zoning bylaw that allows substandard lots to be developed for the purposes of affordable housing
- In 2000, the Town adopted a zoning bylaw that allows mixed-use, multi-family, and accessory apartments for the purposes of affordable housing
- In 2003, the Town designated certain funds to hire an administrator to assist the Affordable Housing Committee
- In 2003, the Town participated in a regional housing rehabilitation program funded by DHCD Small Cities Program
- The Town has participated in the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority's Rental Assistance Program
- In 2003, the Town designated \$40,000 in funding for the Affordable Housing Committee
- In 2003, the Town allocated 3 lots to the Resident Homesite Program

# 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## 5.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROFILE

The economies of all the towns of the Island are intimately interconnected. A large number of the commercial services – shopping, offices, and other commercial and industrial activities – used by the citizens of West Tisbury are located in other towns. Therefore, this section gives an overview of the Island’s economy as a whole and then calls out the specifics related to West Tisbury within this overall context.

### 5.1.1 The Seasonal Nature of Martha's Vineyard's Economy

For decades, Martha’s Vineyard has been a classic seasonal economy. With the exception of some remaining commercial fishing, which employs only a very small number of people, and a number of art galleries, there are no significant exports of Island goods. People come to the Vineyard for the sun, sand and natural beauty and to get away from the mainland’s hustle and bustle. The Martha’s Vineyard Commission estimates the number of people on the Vineyard in the peak summer months swells to five times the number of year-round residents. Aside from the economic boon these visitors bring by way of purchasing goods and services during their stay, the real estate taxes from second homes across the Island, and the philanthropy of the seasonal residents, allow for a much higher level of services on the Vineyard – both government and private – while also keeping tax levels low.

Population, Jobs (Workforce), Labor Force and Number of Employers by Location

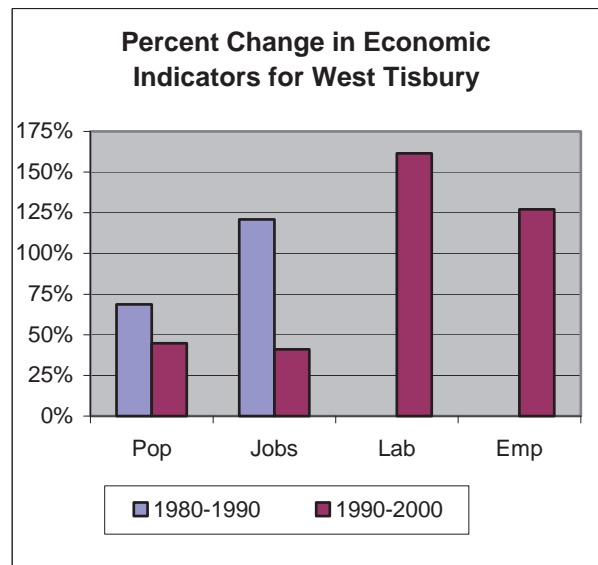
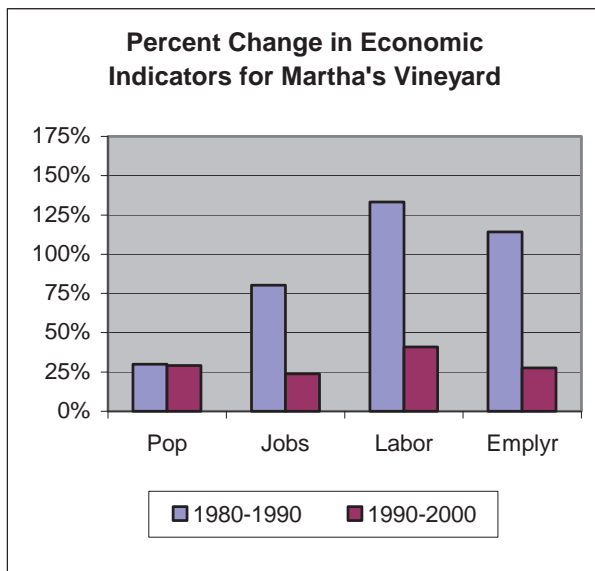
	1980				1990				2000			
	Pop	Jobs	Labor	Emplyr	Pop	Jobs	Labor	Emplyr	Pop	Jobs	Labor	Emplyr
AQ	220	85	na	na	201	85	59	12	344	102	77	14
CH	489	228	na	na	650	359	152	35	843	448	303	59
ED	2,204	1,011	na	na	3,062	2,039	1,451	226	3,779	2,581	2,004	308
OB	1,984	764	na	na	2,804	1,700	1,210	173	3,713	2,027	1,849	193
TI	2,972	1,383	na	na	3,120	1,870	1,971	324	3,755	2,145	2,327	361
WT	1,010	509	na	na	1,704	1,124	221	48	2,467	1,584	578	109
MV	8,879	3,980	2,172	382	11,541	7,177	5,064	818	14,901	8,887	7,138	1,044

Source: U.S. Census; MA Dept. of Employment and Training

There are many layers to the economic structure of any tourist and seasonal community. Identifying the makeup of the seasonal population is essential to understanding the overall complexities of the Vineyard economy. The ratio between year-round and seasonal housing occupancy is a vital component of the dynamics of the Island economy. The driving force of the island’s economic base is the second homeowner. Vineyard towns are financially dependent on seasonal residents and second-home owners because they pay property taxes and they do not require the most costly of public services – education of children. However, visitors do require

higher levels of some Town services, emergency services in particular. The extreme fluctuations from peak season to the winter season place severe strains on Town infrastructure for water, sewer, solid waste, and especially the Island's road network. The source, levels of consumption, and reliability of supply of electricity are also important infrastructure considerations. The tourist and seasonal nature of the Vineyard poses significant challenges to the Island towns to balance the needs of a growing year-round population while accommodating the seasonal population.

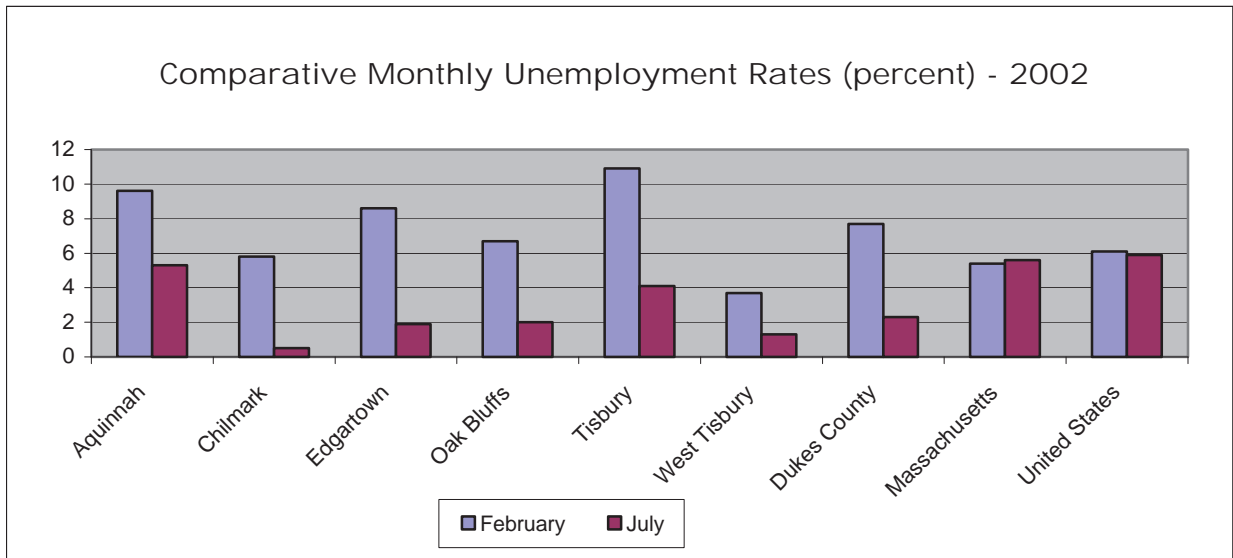
Looking at the changes in a few selected economic indicators over the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the large increases in jobs, labor force and employers from 1980 to 1990 reflect the national economy and Island building boom of the mid-80s. In all categories, the Island-wide growth ranged from 30% (population) to 133% (labor force). Between 1990 and 2000, the same categories grew at a markedly slower, and much more uniform, pace. West Tisbury surpassed the Island-wide growth rates for all periods but growth in the labor force and number of employers through the 1990s was more reflective of the high rates of growth experienced in the 1980s.



Source: U.S. Census; MA Dept. of Employment and Training

The consumer spending of the seasonal population, whether by a year-round resident, seasonal resident, vacationer, or day-tripper is an essential part of the economy and can vary widely among the sub-groups. The popularity of the Vineyard within the past twenty years has allowed seasonal retail and service businesses to extend their operations to broader and broader shoulder seasons.

The average annual unemployment rate for Dukes County has been slightly better than the State and national averages since 1990. However, the average annual unemployment trends mask the monthly unemployment fluctuations due to the seasonal and tourist-based economy of Dukes County. The monthly unemployment rates for February and July throughout the years demonstrate dramatic fluctuations for the County and Island towns.



Source: MA Dept. of Employment and Training

As mentioned in the section on housing, perhaps the most significant challenge posed by the seasonal nature of the Vineyard has been the adverse impact on the housing availability and affordability for both year-round residents and seasonal workers. One key to a stable community is its ability to maintain an adequate workforce by providing housing opportunities, particularly for low and moderate-income residents who perform many of the jobs necessary for businesses, government and organizations to operate. In addition to having a majority of their dwellings occupied seasonally (except for Tisbury and West Tisbury, which have more year-round dwellings than seasonal ones), the additional demand for housing by temporary workers filling the approximately 5,000 additional summer jobs creates a seller's market and escalates the cost for all housing.

The seasonal effect on year-round residents is graphically evident when looking at unemployment rates on a monthly basis rather than annual. While there is not much difference in the unemployment numbers in July and February for the mainland, on-Island they increase in the off-season from two to more than four times the July rate.

### 5.1.2 Geographic Structure of Economic Activity

The primary economic activities, both seasonally and year round, on Martha's Vineyard take place predominantly within the down-Island town centers of Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and Tisbury. Each town center is located around its own harbor and waterfront areas that are surrounded by dense commercial, mixed-use, and residential development. The waterfronts of Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, and to a lesser extent Tisbury, are comprised of primarily seasonal-oriented establishments that typically close in the off-season. Most year-round retail and office activities are still located in these down-Island areas but have grown away from the historical commercial centers, most notably on Upper Main Street in Edgartown and Upper State Road in Tisbury. Although seasonality is particularly pronounced in Oak Bluffs, historically the most tourist-oriented



town, it has managed to contain its seasonal and year-round businesses in a relatively unified area.

The concentration of tourist-oriented commercial activities such as shops, restaurants and inns, is related to the location of ferry terminals. The only year-round port of entry to Martha's Vineyard by ferry is the Steamship Authority (SSA) in Vineyard Haven. The SSA, the only ferry that carries vehicles, also operates seasonally in Oak Bluffs from May to October. Other seasonal passenger ferries operate predominately out of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury and to a much more limited extent in Edgartown. Within the past five years, cruise ships have been allowed to anchor just outside of Oak Bluffs Harbor (and occasionally, Vineyard Haven Harbor) for the day, usually twice a week, bringing anywhere from 800 to 1,600 passengers for a single day. For most visitors, their first and last impressions of the Island usually will occur in either Tisbury or Oak Bluffs.

Other retail and office activities are located in smaller centers up-Island. The West Tisbury village center and the village centers of Chilmark -- Menemsha and Chilmark Center -- are small areas of limited commercial activity. A cluster of businesses at North Tisbury, along State Road north of North Road, while not a formal business district of the West Tisbury, is an area of mostly seasonal activity.

The newest and largest of the -Island business areas (and most down-Island) is West Tisbury's business district. The attraction for locating in the Business District may, in part, be due to the less available land down-Island, but the fact that one-quarter of the Island's year-round population now resides up-Island provides a greater potential market for businesses at a location more convenient for up-Islanders. Adding to the convenience factor is the absence of traffic congestion relative to the traditional down-Island business centers.

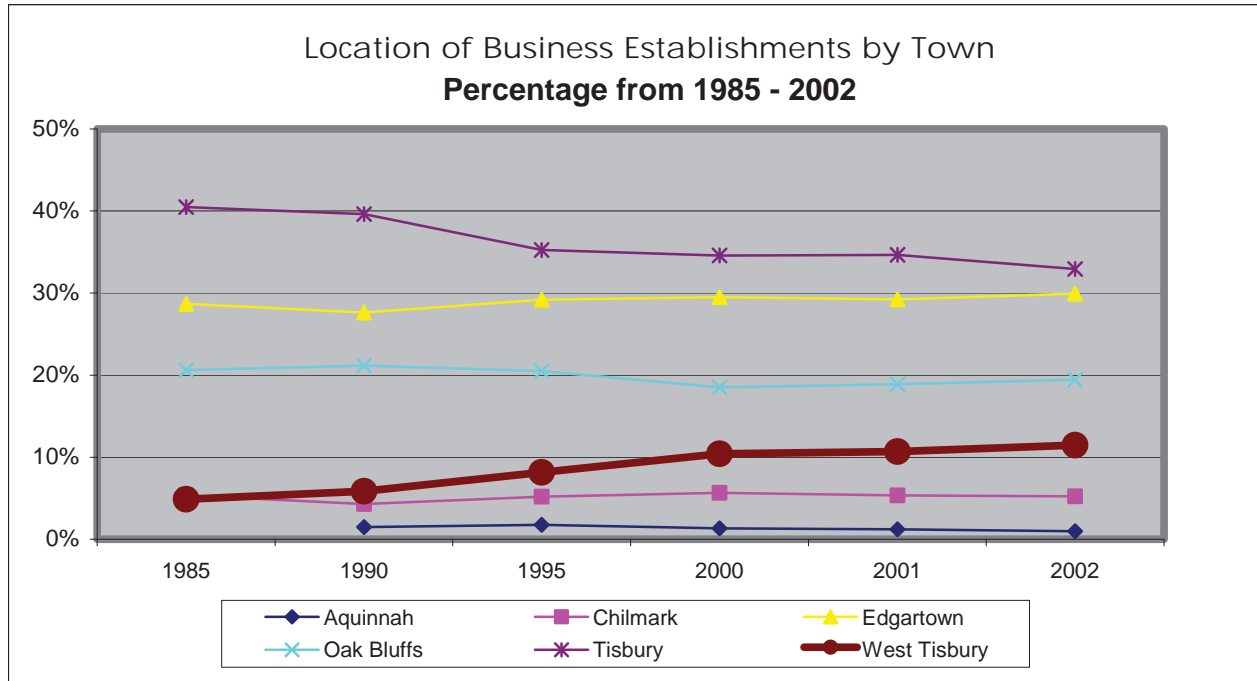
Industrial activities are found in various in-town and rural locations scattered in different parts of the Island, notably in the Airport Business Park. The park, which was specifically designed in the 1980's to be used for warehousing and other industrial uses, is nearing its capacity.

Martha's Vineyard has a considerable number of home businesses throughout the Island. Also dispersed are the businesses providing the construction, renovation, maintenance and landscaping of residential properties. Combined, such home-based businesses likely represent a greater share of businesses than those in business zones. This is especially true for the up-Island towns. As the population increases and home-based businesses become more successful and larger, conflicts with other neighborhood residents have also increased in the down-Island towns and in West Tisbury.

### 5.1.3 Business Establishments

The Island of Martha's Vineyard has seen continued growth in the total number of business establishments (employers reporting payroll withholding taxes) between 1985 and 2002. The percentages of establishments in the up-Island towns of Aquinnah and Chilmark have remained constant. The number of establishments in West Tisbury has grown at an accelerated rate since

1990 and represents an increasing percentage of the Island's businesses. As for the down-Island communities of Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and Tisbury, the total number of establishments has increased within each town. On the basis of percentage of establishments Island-wide, Tisbury and, to a much lesser extent, Oak Bluffs have lost their proportional share of the Island's business establishments to West Tisbury.



Source: MA Dept. of Employment and Training

Approximately two-thirds of the establishments on Martha's Vineyard employ between one and four individuals, according to the US Census County-to-County Business Patterns. The 2003 Business Survey conducted jointly by the MVC and the MV Chamber of Commerce indicated a somewhat larger size (possibly because there was an under-representation of home businesses) with an average of five to six full-time employees in retail businesses and eight to ten full-time workers in non-retail businesses. The survey figures did not include part-time workers or seasonal workers.

The difference in demand for seasonal workers is evident in the employment fluctuations during the months of July and August. Balancing needs such as housing for workers, parking, transportation, and the market demands of the year-round and seasonal economies is a challenge to the Island communities.

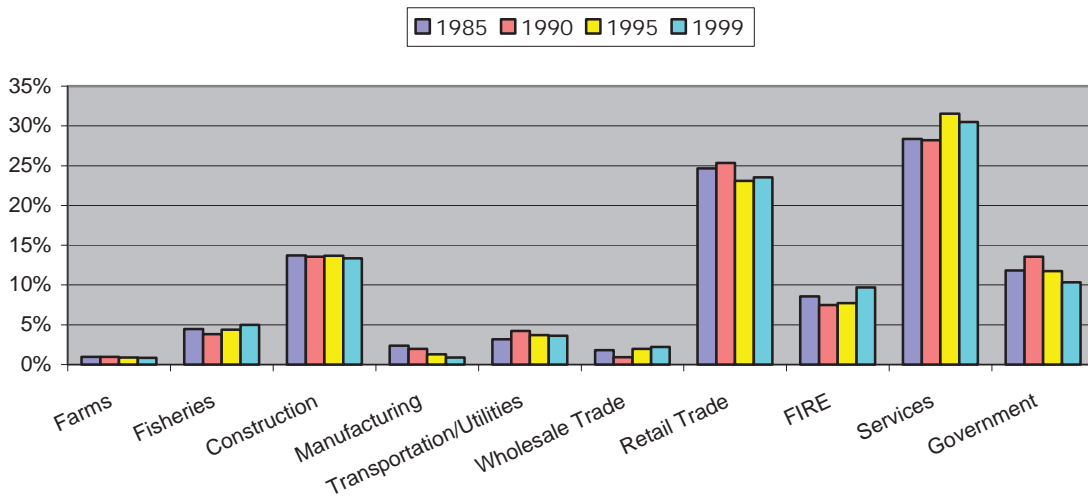
#### 5.1.4 Types of Jobs and Wages

Island-wide, retail and services (health care, landscapers, lodging, etc.) jobs have, combined, consistently accounted for more than half of all reported employment. (Note: 'Reported' employment is an important distinction to make in evaluating employment figures. Most

employment numbers from federal sources come only from employers required to file withholding taxes for their employees. Sole proprietors, of whom there are many on the Island, are not counted in these employment numbers.) Construction and government jobs account for another quarter of total employment. Perhaps most surprisingly, construction jobs have consistently represented between 13 and 14% of total employment for the five-year intervals measured between 1985 and 2000. Although seasonal tourism requires a lot of retail, service, and construction jobs, the magnitude of these numbers also reflects the growing and stabilizing year-round Island economy in response to the continued strong growth in year-round population.

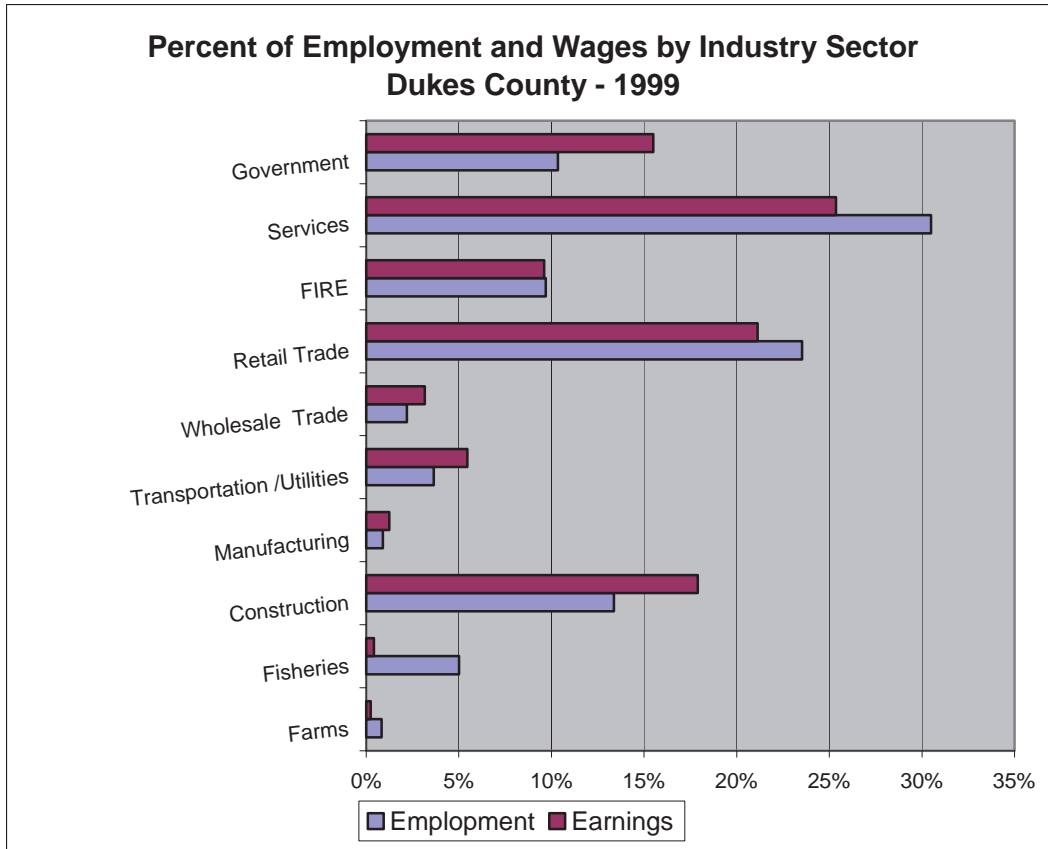
The growth of West Tisbury's Business District seems to reflect such an orientation to the needs of year-round residents. Land used primarily for business in the district increased more than 80% from 1995 to 2004, doubling the number of business establishments. All the new businesses are service or office-related and open the entire year, such as banks, doctors, surveyors and Realtors.

**Percent Change in Employment Sectors  
Dukes County**



FIRE is Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Because not all jobs pay comparable wages, examination of the total wages represented by each employment sector provides another perspective of the local economy. While retail and service jobs represented 54% of employment in 2000, they accounted for only 49% of the total Island wages. Conversely, the 25% of Island jobs in construction and government actually provided 31% of all wages.



FIRE is Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

### 5.1.5 Workforce

Reviewing the comparisons of workforce employment – the number of jobs in a town – for all of the towns on Martha’s Vineyard from 1985 to 2002, the workforce trends varied from the business establishment findings for the down-Island towns. From 1985 to 2002, there has been an increase in the number of workers working within each town except for Tisbury where there has been a decrease in the number of workers from 2001 to 2002. Nevertheless, Tisbury still had the largest number of workers, followed by Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, West Tisbury, Chilmark, and Aquinnah. The workforce differential among the three down-Island towns is equalizing – much like their year-round populations. Island-wide percentages of the workforce figures within four of the towns, particularly Tisbury and West Tisbury, were more similar with the percentage trends in the number of business establishments.

From 1985 to 2002, Tisbury had the greatest share of the Island’s workforce compared to the other five Vineyard towns. The magnitude of this lead role has gradually declined since 1990, when Tisbury represented almost 40% of the Island’s jobs, but as of 2002 the town still accounted for one of every three Island jobs. It is clear that West Tisbury has picked up Tisbury’s lost percentages. From 1985 to 2002, the percentage of Island jobs that were in West Tisbury rose from 4% to 10%. In 1985 Edgartown had 32% of the island workforce while Oak Bluffs had

23%. Over the following next ten years there was a shift between the two towns. Edgartown experienced a 4% decline while Oak Bluffs experienced a 5% gain. Since 1995, Edgartown has led Oak Bluffs by a margin no greater than two percent. Chilmark and Aquinnah have a combined total of no more than 5% of the Island's workforce.

#### 5.1.6 Issues Related to Economic Activity

The Town of West Tisbury is in the process of updating its Master Plan. Economic development is a key component of that plan and of primary concern is that the rural character of the town be maintained. Within this context, concerns raised within this Community Development Planning process include:

- encouraging mixed-use development for commercial and housing,
- economic growth should be oriented to serving year-round residents,
- accommodate growth within the boundaries of the existing business-zoned districts by making better use of those districts
- making the Business District more "village-like"
  - improving the appearance
  - improving pedestrian and vehicular circulation
  - increasing the density of businesses
  - encouraging mixed-use development incorporating residential use
- dealing with concerns about the growing numbers and size of home businesses and increasing conflicts with surrounding residences,
- the possibility of designating areas for other types of service businesses and light industrial uses such as contractor storage
- creating satellite parking to better serve commercial areas

## 5.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

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The economic development suitability analysis uses the same methodology as previously described for open space and for housing. The criteria are based largely on Smart Growth principles of favoring development that uses existing infrastructure and consolidates development rather than sprawling into environmentally sensitive and other rural areas. As much of Martha's Vineyard is rural, with some towns unreceptive to any additional commercial activity, the identification of suitability criteria was difficult. Some of the Smart Growth principles, such as proximity to public transit, when applied as suitability criteria on the Vineyard, produced distinctly un-Smart Growth results, namely strip roadside development. A half dozen potential suitability criteria in addition to those listed below were tried in more than a dozen trial models of the analysis and were ultimately discarded as being inappropriate for evaluating economic development suitability on Martha's Vineyard.






The following are the criteria used for evaluating the suitability of land for economic development.

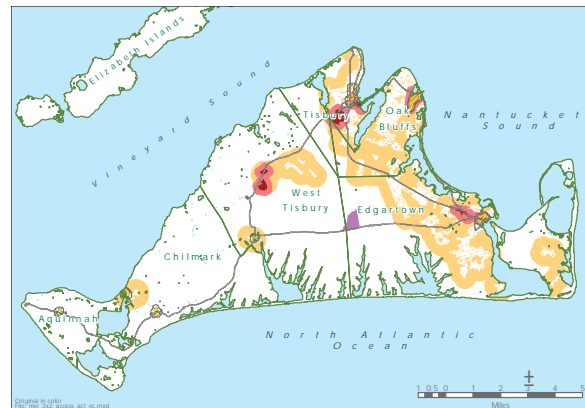
1. Access to Activities: In or Near Village Center; In or Near Existing Commercial Areas; In Airport Business Area, Near Existing Neighborhood
2. Municipal Services: Close to Major Road; Served by Town Water; Served by Town Sewer
3. Water Resources: Located in Coastal Pond Watersheds that are less sensitive to nutrient overloading from development

These are explained in more detail in the following tables, followed by the resulting economic development suitability map.

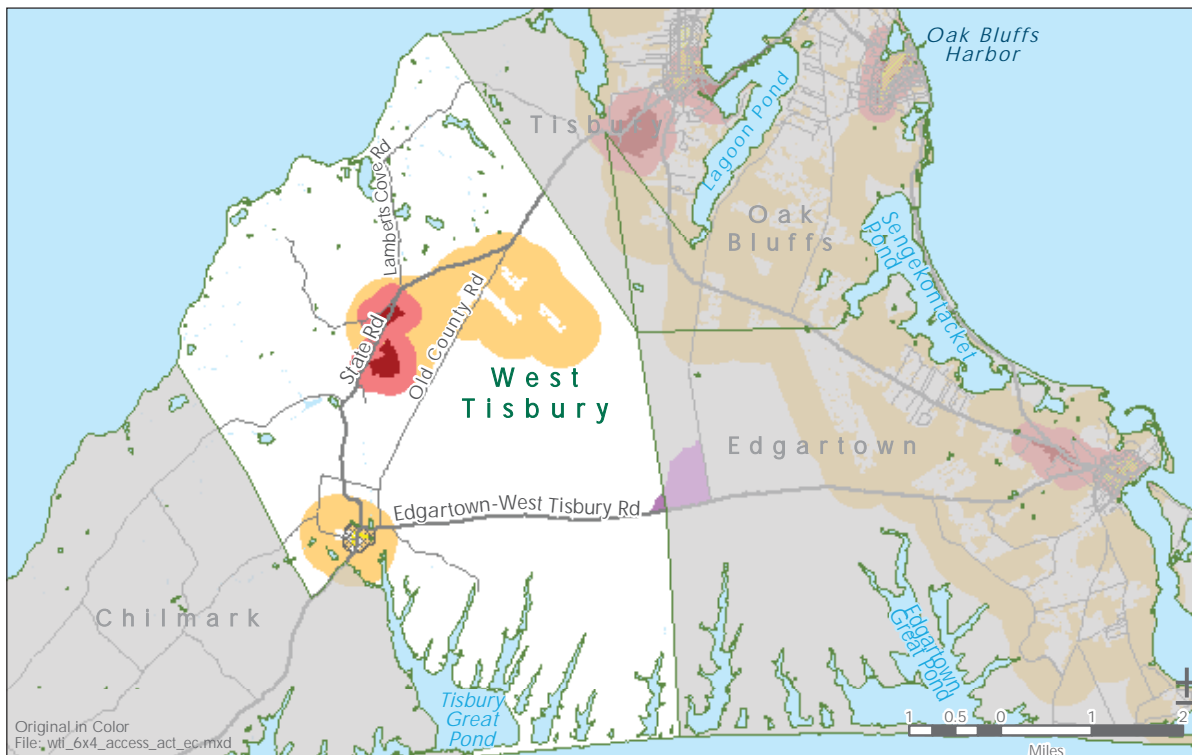
### 5.2.1. Access to Activities

Consolidating development in or near existing commercial areas allows for creating concentrated and vital commercial areas while limiting the negative impacts of commercial development on residential and rural areas. These are primarily down-Island. It is also desirable to reinforce existing village centers, which even down-Island may not be the same area as the principal commercial area. So, these centers were given more points. This explains the differences in the point weighting given to the respective criteria. An additional criterion was given to lands proximate to existing neighborhoods in order to provide access for jobs and use of these services by residents.

Criteria for Economic Development Suitability Access to Activities in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
 Inside commercial area	20	83
 Within 1000' of commercial area	10	364
 Inside village center	8	6
 Within 500' of village center	6	49
 Within 2000' of neighborhood	2	2,216



Source: Towns' Assessors/Cartographic Assoc. 2003; MV Conservation Partnership 1999; MVC 2004  
Note: The Airport Business Park was given 10 points.



### 5.2.2. Municipal Services

These criteria were mapped and discussed in section 4.2.2. Note that the acreage in West Tisbury served by Town water and sewer is located at the Airport, where water service is provided by the Oak Bluffs Water District.

Criteria for Economic Development Suitability Municipal Services in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
Served by Public Sewer	6	95
Served by Public Water	6	95
Within 200' of major road	6	430

Source: Towns' Assessors/Cartographic Assoc. 2003;  
MV Conservation Partnership 1999; MVC 2004

### 5.2.3 Water Resources

This criterion was also used in the housing suitability analysis and is mapped and discussed in section 4.2.4

Criteria for Housing Suitability Water Resources in West Tisbury		
Criterion	Points	Area (acres)
■ lower-sensitivity water area	2	5,568



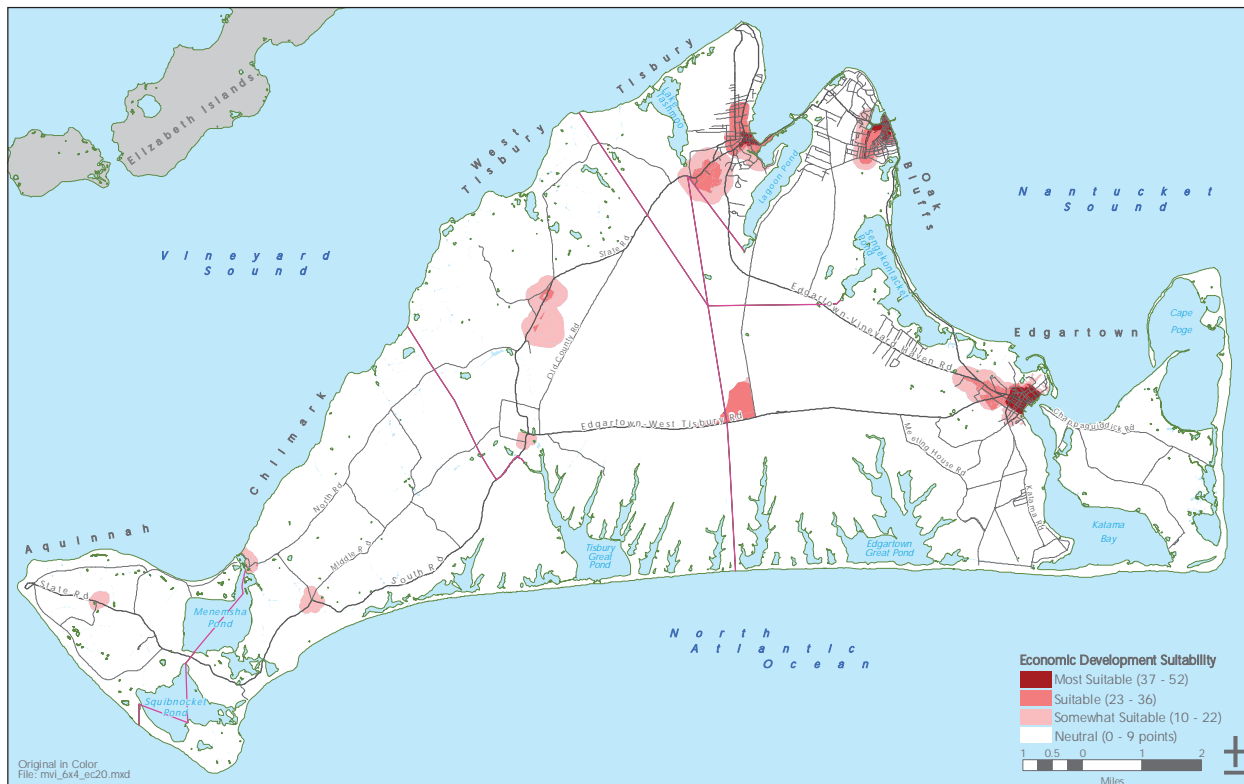
### 5.2.4 Economic Development Suitability Map

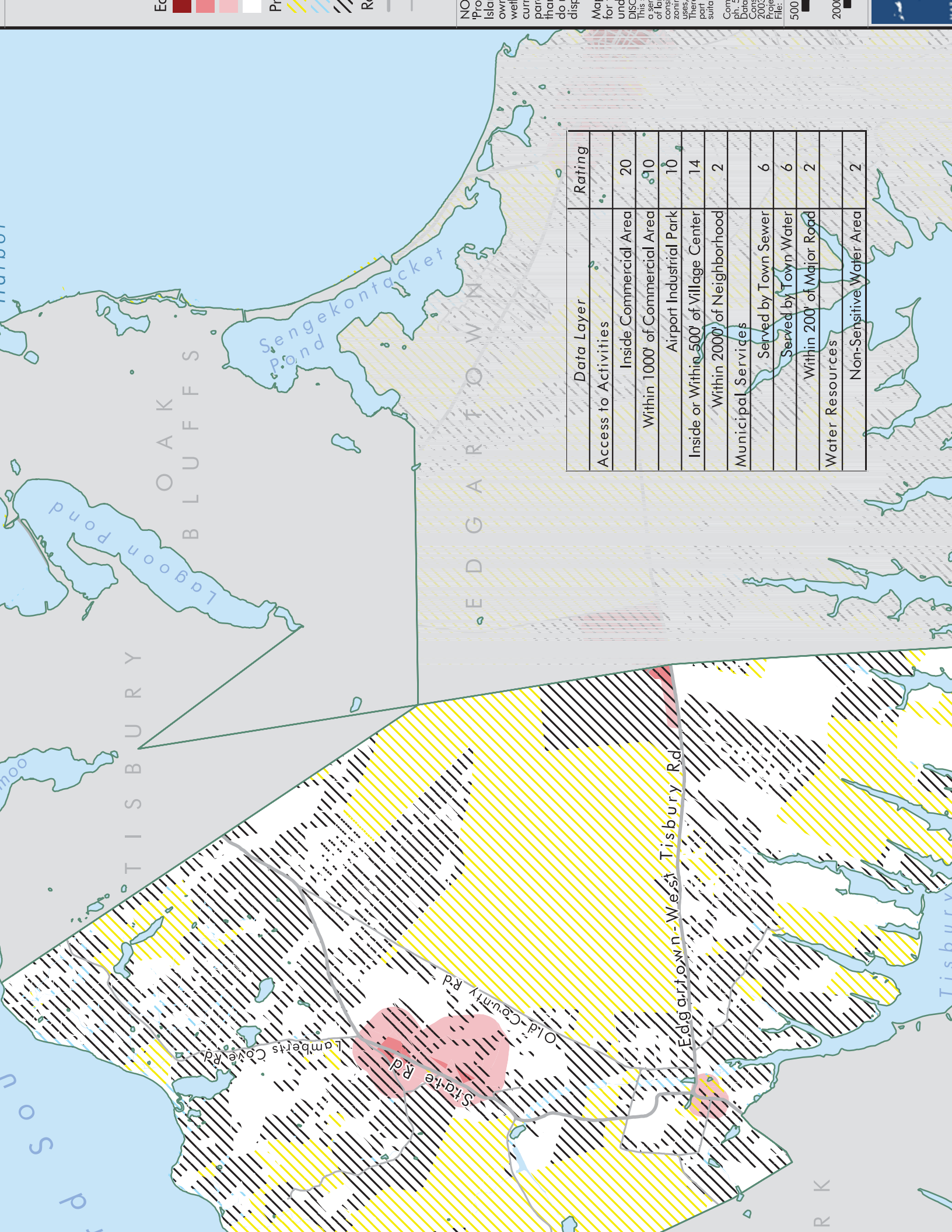
As in the previous sections, this map shows the overall suitability of land for economic development, based on a combination of the criteria described in this section, with the intensity of the color reflecting the degree of suitability. The Neutral category does not necessarily mean that the area is unsuitable for development – just an absence of the criteria used here to evaluate the degree to which land is suited for economic development.

On Martha's Vineyard as a whole, the map indicates that the most suitable locations for additional commercial development are in and near the existing commercial areas, notably in the down-Island towns.

No land in West Tisbury accumulated enough points to rate in the highest category of suitability for economic development. Even land at the airport that has public water and sewer only ranked as Suitable. Some of the Business District on State Road also ranked Suitable, but the majority of the surrounding area, as well as the village center, rank as Somewhat Suitable.

Economic Development Suitability		
	<i>Martha's Vineyard</i>	<i>West Tisbury</i>
Most Suitable	217 acres (0.4%)	0 acres
Suitable	765 acres (1.3%)	42 acres (0.3%)
Somewhat Suitable	1,487 acres (2.6%)	495 acres (3%)
Neutral	55,203 acres (96%)	15,492 acres (97%)





Data Layer	Rating
Access to Activities	
Inside Commercial Area	20
Within 1000' of Commercial Area	10
Airport Industrial Park	10
Inside or Within 500' of Village Center	14
Within 2000' of Neighborhood	2
Municipal Services	
Served by Town Sewer	6
Served by Town Water	6
Within 200' of Major Road	2
Water Resources	
Non-Sensitive Water Area	2

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### 5.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATIONS

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Future land use patterns related to economic development in West Tisbury are driven by the goal from the Town's Master Plan to encourage economic activity that is in harmony with the rural character of the town. The Town of West Tisbury recognizes that the town's population and business activity continue to increase at a fast pace. Recognizing, also, that the attraction of the town's rural character is a significant factor in the town's growing economy, the Town chooses to direct new business facilities to three areas presently zoned for business activity. There is potential to double the amount of area within the State Road Business District currently used for business. Even more land is potentially available in the district at the landfill. For the near term, these areas should not need to be expanded.

There is less opportunity for increased business use at the airport. The light industrial and warehousing activities once directed to the airport area may have to be accommodated at the landfill area. Home occupation businesses that have overgrown their "home occupation" definition may be likely prospects for this area. As the airport business park serves the entire island, there may be a regional need to identify another area for these uses. West Tisbury does not seem to be an appropriate or desirable consideration for such a potential area.

## 6. SYNTHESIS – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

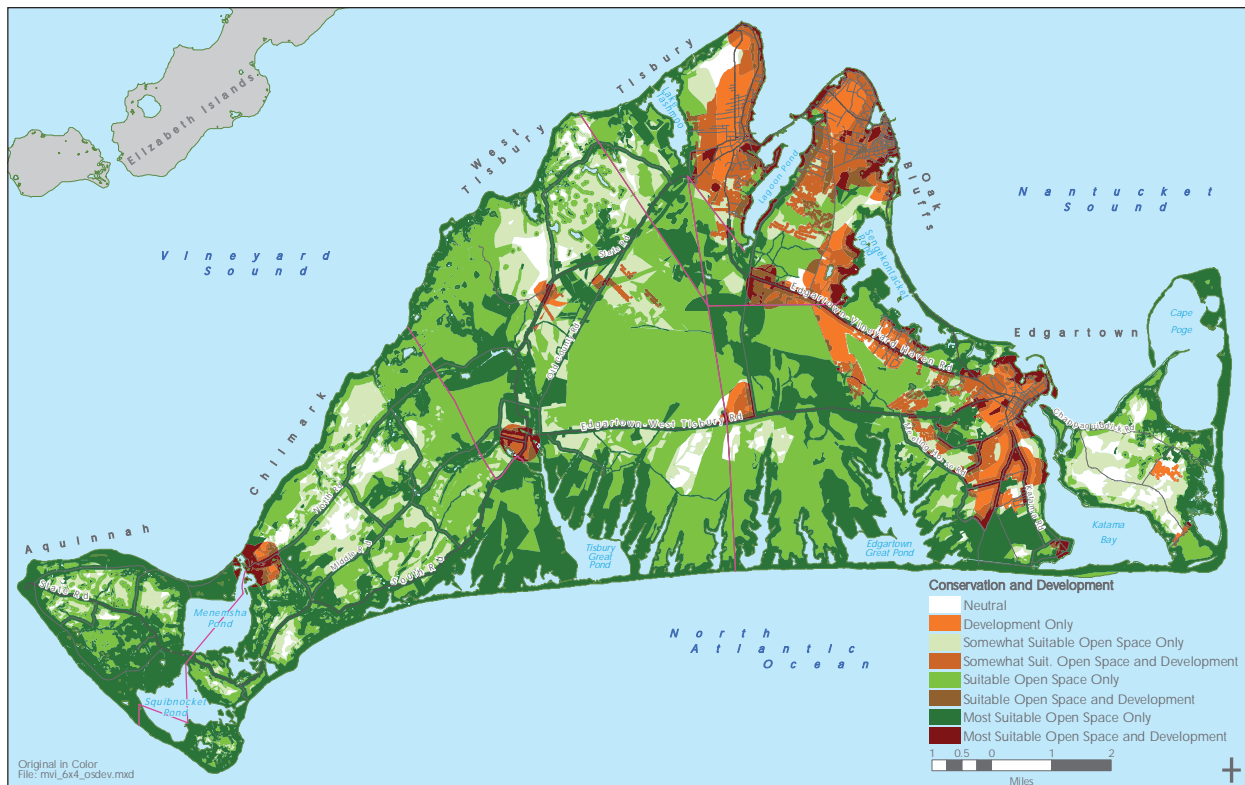
The final step in the suitability analysis was to combine the three suitability maps.

### 6.1 Development

The foldout map on the opposite page represents the combination of the Housing and the Economic Development Suitability Maps into an overall Development Suitability Map. Remember that this exercise is without considering zoning, ownership or the suitability of land for open space or natural resource protection that, in many cases, could have a higher priority in determining the most appropriate use of the land.

### 6.2 Development versus Conservation

The map below represents the combination of the Open Space and Natural Resource Preservation Suitability Map with the Development Suitability Map. This map indicates those areas where the suitability for preservation and development are complementary and where they conflict. The accompanying foldout map provides a larger view of West Tisbury.



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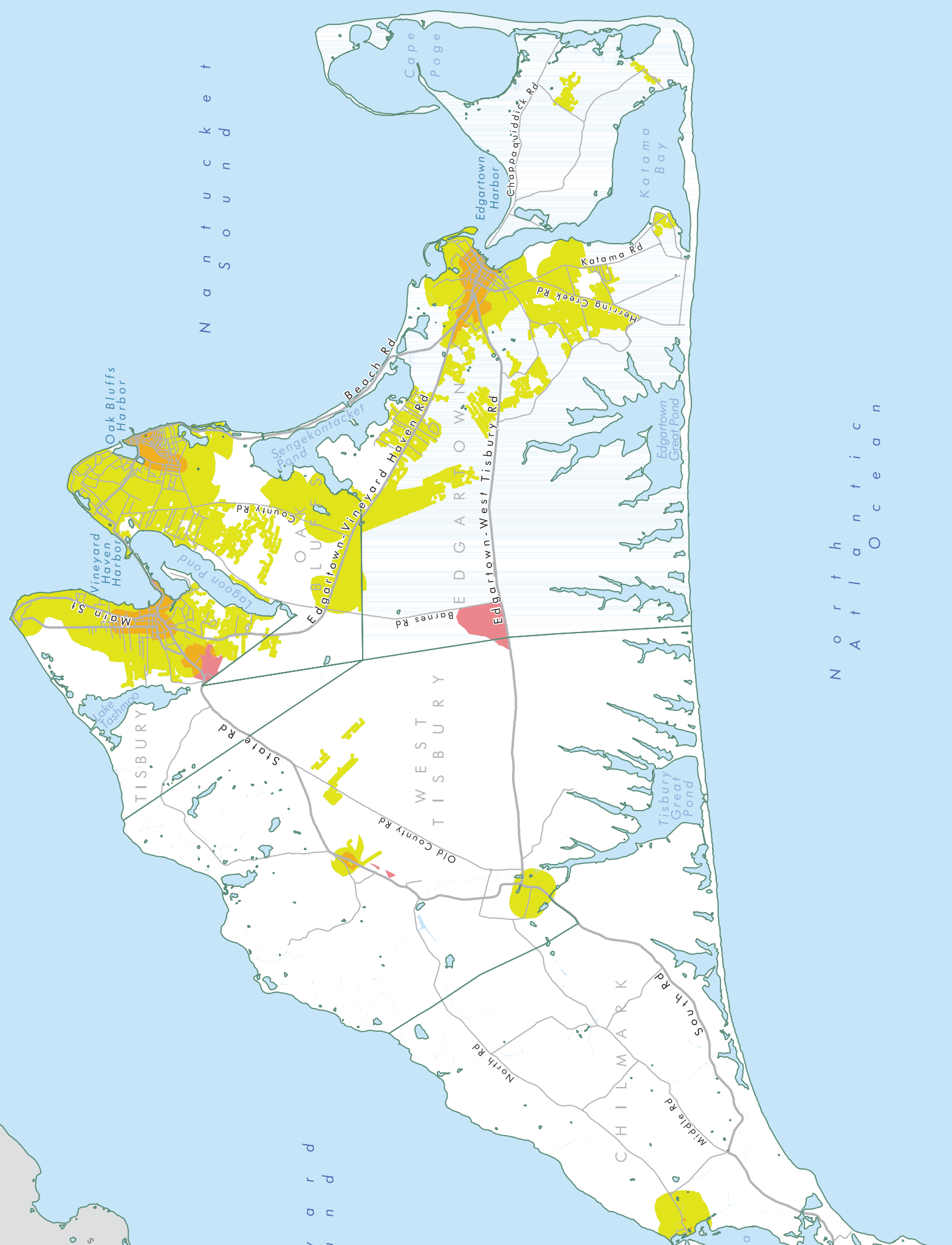
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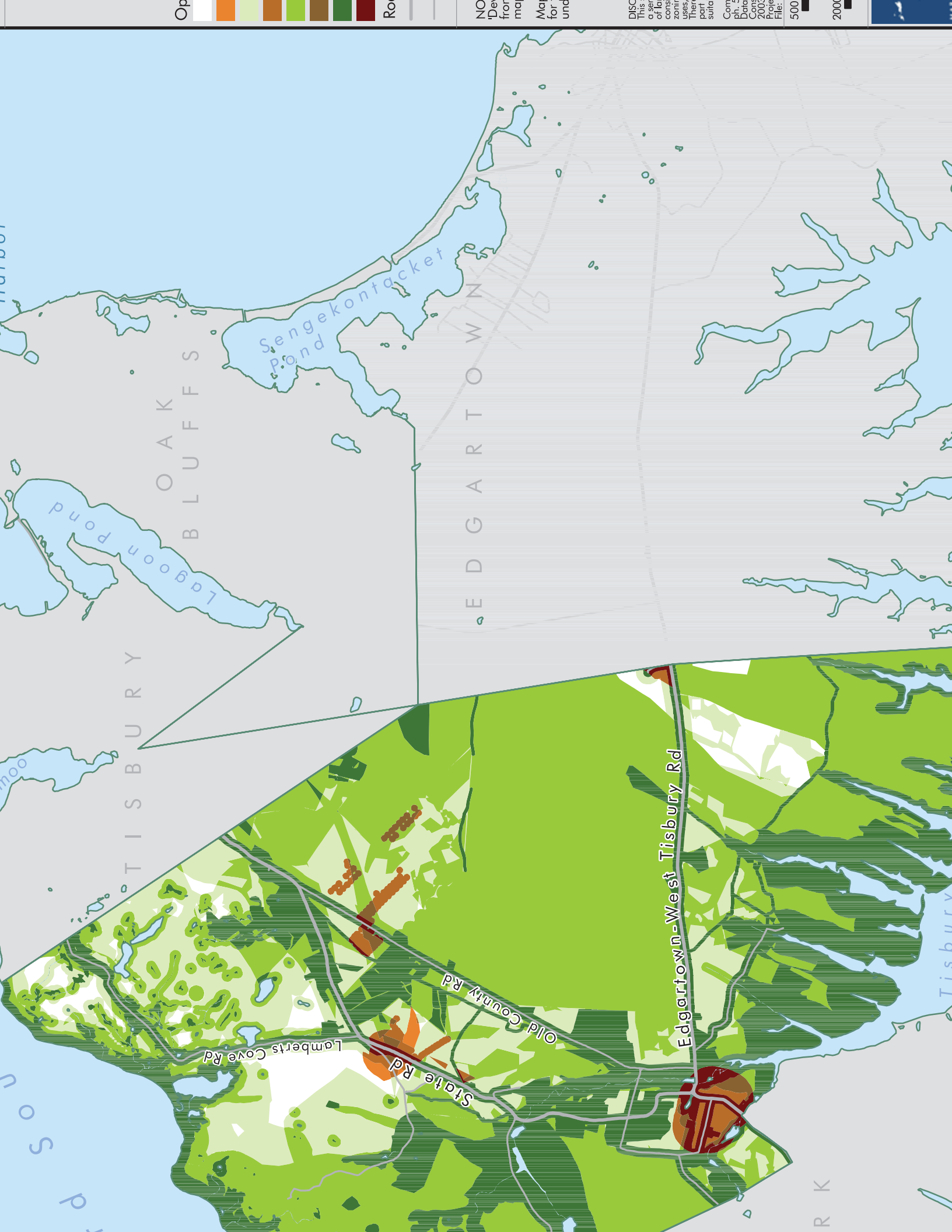
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Lagoon Pond

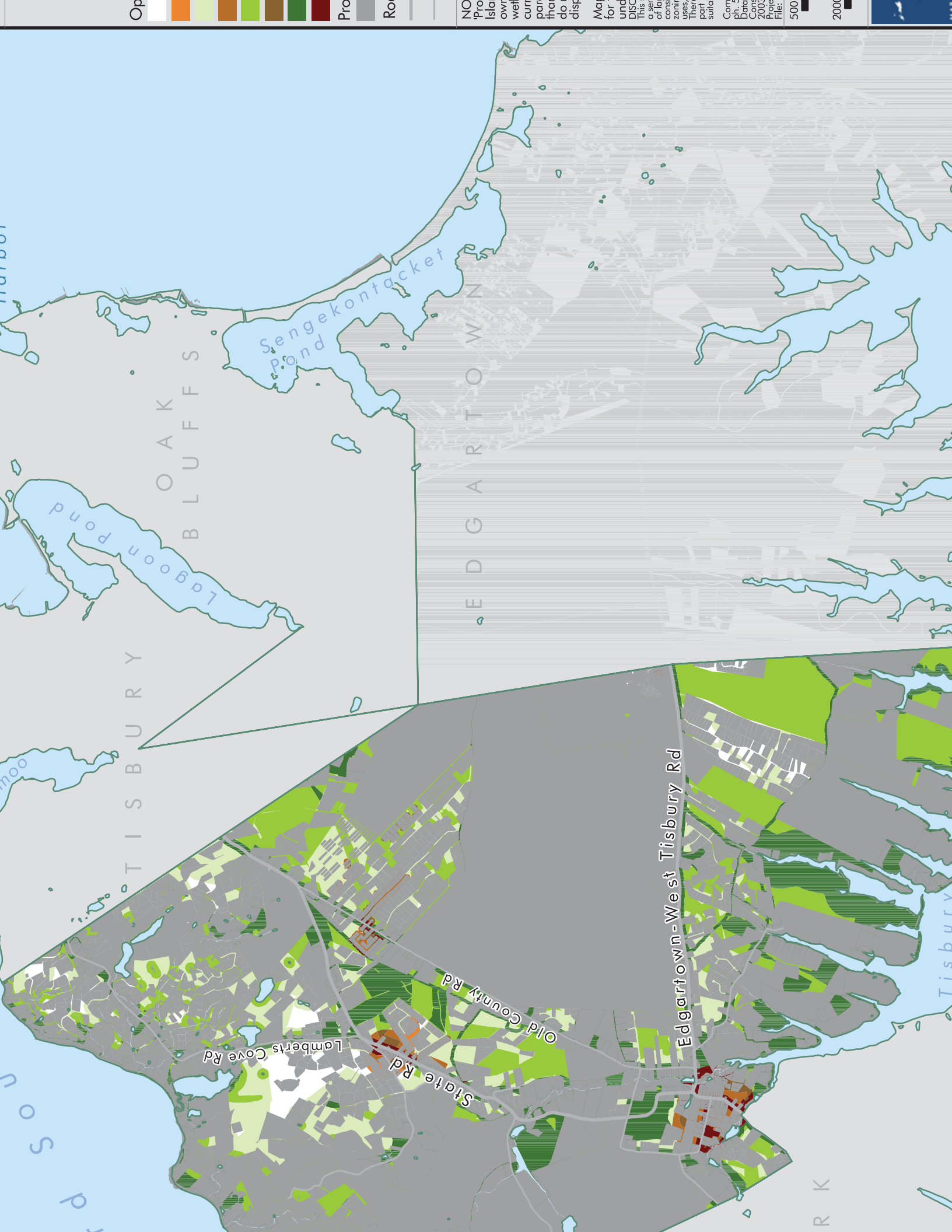
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Sengekontacket Pond

Lagoon Pond

Lamberts Cove Rd

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Edgartown-West Tisbury Rd

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Suitability for Development versus Conservation		
	Martha's Vineyard	West Tisbury
Neutral	1,827 acres (3%)	519 acres (3%)
Development Only	1,750 acres (3%)	28 acres (0.2%)
Somewhat Suitable Open Space Only	6,547 acres (11%)	2,249 acres (14%)
Somewhat Suitable Open Space & Development	2,952 acres (5%)	153 acres (1%)
Suitable Open Space Only	18,993 acres (33%)	8,019 acres (50%)
Suitable Open Space & Development	1,271 acres (2%)	83 acres (0.5%)
Most Suitable Open Space Only	21,864 acres (38%)	4,822 acres (30%)
Most Suitable Open Space & Development	1,861 acres (3%)	157 acres (1%)

### 6.3 Zoning and Implementation Policies

The results of the suitability analysis were compared to the Town's existing zoning to identify areas where the community might wish to consider changes to make the zoning correspond more appropriately with the suitability of various parts of the town for various uses.

West Tisbury, and in fact all of Martha's Vineyard, has put considerable effort into thinking about what it wants to be. Therefore, not surprisingly, all of the Island towns have largely reaffirmed their existing policies with respect to land use.

### 6.4 Next Steps

The results of the suitability analysis suggest that West Tisbury's current zoning is appropriate. The Town might consider acquisition of land for open space and natural resource protection, particularly those most highly rated in the suitability analysis; especially if said lands also rated low in the development suitability analysis.

The Martha's Vineyard Commission might also use the results of the suitability analysis in the following ways:

- Consider a policy to require mandatory clustering in areas of highest open space and natural resource suitability when reviewing proposed Developments of Regional Impact;
- Consider the development and open space preservation suitability when reviewing proposed Developments of Regional Impact;
- Consider enlarging or creating Districts of Critical Planning Concern to protect those areas that rated in the highest categories in the open space and natural resource suitability analysis.

The Island's conservation organizations are also encouraged to use the open space and natural preservation suitability map as a guide to identifying properties for possible preservation.

The Community Development planning process has proven to be extremely valuable in many ways. It has allowed the towns and the MVC to gain a much clearer understanding of the various



factors involved in land use decisions through the compilation and validation of GIS mapping and other data related to land use, housing and economic development. The open space and natural resource preservation suitability map can serve as a guide for public agencies and conservation organizations by highlighting the land most important to preserve through acquisition of property and conservation restrictions, or through the permitting process by the MVC and town boards. Affordable housing committees can use the housing suitability criteria and maps to focus in on properties for possible projects.

The process has also led the steering committees of all six towns to conclude that this planning effort should serve as the basis for a comprehensive Island-wide planning effort to re-articulate the broader community's vision for the future growth of the Vineyard. This effort should be a collaboration between the Martha's Vineyard Commission and all six Island towns.

Certain issues can only be dealt with on an Island-wide basis, such as how much additional commercial development there should be and where it should take place. In the Community Development Plans, most communities reaffirmed the extent of the present business districts, with the possible exception of Tisbury, which wished to explore a possible expansion of the Upper State Road business area into a presently underused area, to create a mixed-use neighborhood. It is believed that more efficient use of existing commercial districts will accommodate future growth. However, the Martha's Vineyard Commission and the towns should work together to test this hypothesis in more detail by estimating how much additional commercial development can be absorbed in existing commercial areas. A significant limiting factor to more concentrated development is the limited community sewer capacity for two of the three down-Island towns and all of the up-Island towns. Ideally, this testing could be done by preparing sketch plans for each of these areas. If it is anticipated that additional commercial space will be needed, several options can be explored:

- enlarging existing commercial districts,
- creating a large new commercial district in a new location (e.g. the airport),
- creating small commercial districts dispersed in various Island locations.

Other issues that could be dealt with in this comprehensive planning effort are:

- rate of growth;
- affordable and moderate housing;
- wastewater management;
- preservation of scenic values including a re-visitation of the Island Road DCPC and the Coastal DCPC with a view to strengthening their effectiveness;
- traffic and transportation;
- dealing with economic changes in the community;
- open space protection;
- implementation of smart growth principles of concentrating development in compact, mixed-use neighborhoods and preserving rural and other natural areas.

## APPENDIX – WATER RESOURCES

### West Tisbury Surface Water Resources

There are two significant coastal water bodies in the Town of West Tisbury. Tisbury Great Pond is shared with the Town of Chilmark and James Pond, wholly within the town. Based on water quality analyses, the growth of phytoplankton and marine wrack algae, both systems are clearly limited by the availability of nitrogen during the growing period. When James Pond becomes fresher in late winter and spring, this may not be the case.

The total watershed for the Great Pond is estimated at 12,250 acres. About half of the area lies within the Western Moraine where soil is less permeable and supports two significant streams that drain to the pond. Some groundwater flow to the pond may occur but the amount is unknown. The 6,214-acre outwash plain area of the Tisbury Great Pond is split with 5,483 acres in the Town of West Tisbury and 731 acres in Chilmark (MVC, 2000). Over 4,600 acres of the watershed are open space. There were 841 dwelling units and 16 commercial units at the time and 2,399 acres with potential for further subdivision.

The area that contributes fresh water to James Pond within the Town of West Tisbury is estimated as 435 acres (MVC, 2002). It is entirely within the Western Moraine. The exact number of residences and projected dwelling units at buildout was not contained in the MVC pond study, but the EOE's Buildout studies for the towns of Martha's Vineyard projected 64 more dwellings could be built under existing zoning regulations.

### Buildout and Related Water Quality Concerns

The greatest threats to water quality are the man-made nitrogen loading from septic systems and acid rain. Disposal of wastewater from existing dwellings adds nitrogen to the groundwater and eventually to the coastal pond to which that groundwater discharges. The ability of a coastal pond to process nitrogen is dependent on how quickly tidal exchange carries the nitrogen out of the system. The longer the nitrogen is resident in a coastal pond, the more times it can be passed on to stimulate the growth of new generations of phytoplankton and wrack algae. The water quality in both coastal systems is impacted by the nitrogen loading from their watersheds, because marine plant growth in these systems is limited by the availability of nitrogen. The degree of the impact and its acceptability can be assessed by determining the nitrogen-loading limit for the desired water quality goal.

In the Tisbury Great Pond evaluation, the water quality goal selected was the "good quality" standard. Based on the tidal exchange for the pond system that is estimated to require at least 12.6 days to remove 95% of the nitrogen entering the system on any given day, the recommended loading limit for the Great Pond is 15,000 kilograms of nitrogen per year. Fortunately, the pond often remains tidal for that period of time or longer during the summer. The present-day load is approximately 13,400 kilograms and will exceed the interim limit by over 4,000 kilograms under the MVC's moderate growth buildout scenario. Wetlands along the two streams that drain out of the moraine may remove a substantial portion of the nitrogen and are crucial components of the system.

Tisbury Great Pond shows symptoms of nitrogen loading including decrease in coverage of eelgrass beds, low water column transparency, low oxygen levels in the deeper water and growth of wrack algae. Primary fish resources include oysters, and soft shell clams, as well as blue crab, herring and sport fish.

In James Pond, the nitrogen loading evaluation has not yet been done. Data from one summer of water quality sampling only indicates that the Pond was naturally eutrophic, experiencing low oxygen levels related to the die-off of rooted aquatic vegetation. The pond is breached to the Sound in the spring and becomes tidal for a limited time, subject to wave action at the channel mouth that can block it with sand. The tidal exchange is limited, as the tide range is 0.2 to 0.3 feet, and 95% removal of nitrogen entering the system will require weeks. It appears that there is only a limited potential to obtain better tidal flushing as the Pond level remains above the mid-tide level during the time when it is open to the Sound. Primary fish resources include soft-shelled clams (in the past) and herring.

Options to address water quality impacts are limited but include:

- Create nitrogen management area(s) where denitrifying technology is required.
- Educate the public to continue to keep landscape areas small and fertilizer inputs low.
- Aquatic vegetation management.

#### Freshwater Resources

Growth of aquatic plants and phytoplankton in these resources are usually not limited by nitrogen but instead are affected by phosphorus loading from the surrounding watershed. Because much of the Town is within the Western Moraine, there are numerous surface freshwater resources. Fortunately, phosphorus does not travel through the soil as freely as nitrogen. The primary fresh water resources (over 5 acres in surface area) in the Town of West Tisbury include:

Seth's Pond	11 acres
Old House Pond	11 acres
Big Homers Pond	38 acres
Crocker Pond	8 acres
Daggett's Pond	10 acres
Duarte's Pond	20 acres
Fisher Pond	10 acres
Middle Point Cove	20 acres
Long Cove Pond	79 acres
Watcha Pond	61 acres

Of these, Big Homers, Long Cove and Watcha are south shore barrier beach ponds that may be subject to irregular saltwater invasion during storms causing significant die off of fresh water species.

Of the inland fresh water ponds, only Seth's Pond has been studied in detail (during 2001). The data available during that summer for chlorophyll, water column transparency, total nitrogen and total phosphorus indicate a eutrophic pond. The pond had heavy growth of pondweed. Pond samples indicated large amounts of dissolved organic and particulate nitrogen as well as particulate carbon indicative of algae blooms. Road runoff has been reduced by creating a detention swale but runoff still adds both nutrients and bacteria to Seth's Pond and needs further reduction.

Long Cove Pond has a large stand of pondweed. During 1995, the water column had moderate levels of chlorophyll and particulates indicating modest phytoplankton populations. At that time, primary

productivity appeared to be concentrated with the large rooted plants. Water column chemistry in 1995, indicated that plant growth in the system is not limited by the availability of nitrogen.

Water quality in fresh water ponds may be maintained by treating sewage within a fixed distance of the shoreline to remove both nitrogen and phosphorus. The typical distance for a wastewater management area ranges from 300 to 500 feet. Elimination of stormwater runoff directly into the system will reduce a phosphorus source. Encouragement of a natural plant buffer around the pond will help remove nutrients running off from residential landscapes.

PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF WEST TISBURY  
BY THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

