

ROBERT HUGHES

Vincent House
Herring Creek Farm
Edgartown MA 02539

February 9, 2021

Commissioners
Martha's Vineyard Commission
The Stone Building
33 New York Avenue
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

VIA EMAIL ONLY

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RE: Harbor View Hotel, Edgartown;

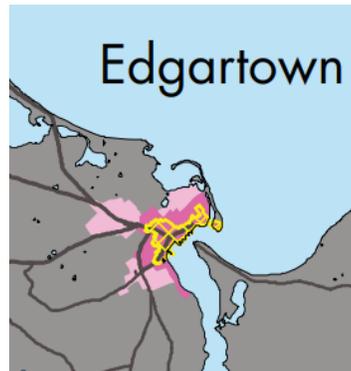
Dear Commissioners,

In my earlier correspondence (1/18/2021) on this matter, I mentioned that, "...we have an opportunity to demonstrate engagement...remind owners that we are all stakeholders...", their interests, ours and, the other way round. The discussion, process and testimony observed during the meeting of January 21st, was just that kind of "engagement" our Island community relishes. This, my opinion informed by personal experience, i.e., commencing with MVC's formation (the Michael Wild days), through the Herring Creek Farm epoch of the 90's and today, the weighing *benefits and detriments* viz the matter at hand. During the Jan. 21 meeting, it was wonderful to see the zoom-meeting faces of Commissioners Christina Brown and Linda Sibley who's in-person presence I well remember during those "countless Thursday nights" (as Julie Wells called them) of the 90's. The continuing depth of your commitment astounds.

This letter is to draw even keener focus on the, "...*today's experience of North Water Street* ...the easy, natural views of our beautiful harbor ... quiet glow of gas lamps...rich whaling-period history..." mentioned in my earlier letter. The attached "Island Plan Overview Pages 8 & 9" – an excerpt from MVC's 2010 "<https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/islandplanoverviewwebversion.pdf>" – should well illuminate our thoughts and deliberations about *today's experience of North Water Street*.

Martha's Vineyard Commission
Harbor View Hotel
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Clearly, this *is* a critical DRI protecting an “historic area” of the Island’s Built Environment.



I can think of no better example of MVC’s stated purpose, i.e., “...to protect the quality of people’s streetscapes and neighborhoods, and their property values.”; can others?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rob Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Hughes

Attachment: MVC 2010 Island Plan Overview Pages 8 & 9

maintaining the Island's distinct **built environment**



THE VINEYARD'S HISTORIC AND COHESIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENT is among the most remarkable in the country. It is an important part of the scenic beauty at the heart of the Island's character, identity, and visitor-based economy.

The character of our neighborhoods and towns is threatened by demolition of significant older buildings and construction of new buildings that are oversized, that don't fit their surroundings, and that violate environmental building practices.

The Island Plan recommends measures to ensure that each neighborhood and streetscape is reinforced, not undermined, by new development. These measures are intended to strengthen our historic downtowns, to modify our newer commercial areas with preservation and careful infill echoing the successful townscapes of the past, and to make environmental building practices ubiquitous.

CASE STUDY

Providence Revolving Fund

Since 1980, the Providence Revolving Fund has invested \$15 million to leverage over \$125 million in projects to preserve the city's architectural heritage and stimulate community revitalization in historic commercial areas and neighborhoods. One program purchases endangered properties that are then developed for owner-occupied affordable housing, and makes rehabilitation loans to owners who cannot get conventional financing. Funds are committed on a short-term basis and are "revolved" back into the capital fund when a building is resold or as loans are repaid.

For more information, see section 4 Built Environment of the Island Plan.

facts

- There are 2,000 buildings more than 100 years old on the Vineyard and another 1,500 built prior to the end of World War II. Only a quarter of these are protected in historic districts.
- The percentage of homes over 4,000 square feet has increased from 3 to 5% in Tisbury and from 8 to 19% in Chilmark since 1990.



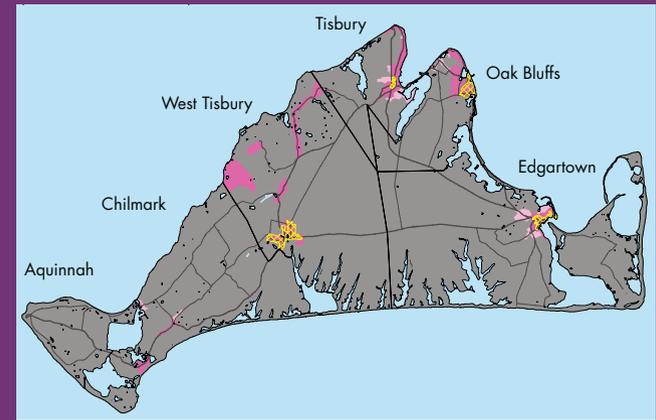
Much of what we most appreciate about the Island is the subtle and complex interplay between the natural and man-made elements. To ensure that the delicate dance of these varied elements is properly balanced, we need greater effort to ensure that buildings and neighborhoods are preserved and built to reinforce the Vineyard's special character.

Bruce MacNelly, architect, West Tisbury

strategies

Here are 4 of the 27 recommended strategies addressing the Built Environment.

- **Enlarge historic districts to protect all historic areas and traditional neighborhoods:** We should enlarge existing districts and create new ones to protect the parts of historic areas and traditional neighborhoods with no protection. It is the most effective way to protect the quality of people's streetscapes and neighborhoods, and their property values. This would provide for review of proposals to demolish or modify buildings.
- **Produce a publication on *Building the Vineyard Way*.** A guidebook for property owners and building designers would explain what defines the Vineyard's distinct historic areas, older neighborhoods, buildings, roadscapes, public spaces, and landscaping. It should include guidelines on how to protect existing buildings and features, and how new development can fit in, as well as information about green building and ways to reduce environmental impacts such as using dark-sky-compliant lighting.
- **Set up a review process for high-impact buildings based on size or other criteria.** A design review process at the town and/or MVC level for critical buildings, such as those much larger than a neighborhood average, would help ensure that new or enlarged buildings harmonize well. This would complement zoning revisions to reflect each neighborhood's existing character.
- **Set up a program to encourage energy/green-building standards for existing buildings.** A program of education and technical assistance can provide advice to owners about possible energy savings and other advantages of environmental building design, and can help with access to grants, materials, products, and expertise. This would be a complement to new Commonwealth and local regulations for energy-efficient construction.



Historic Areas and Traditional Neighborhoods: Only a small fraction of historic areas (concentrations of hundred-year-old buildings, shown in dark pink) or traditional neighborhoods (concentrations of sixty-year-old buildings, shown in light pink) are protected with historic district designation (yellow hatching).

	Pre-1905	1906-1945	Since 1946	Total Buildings	Total Area (acres)
Historic Districts	806	128	139	1,073	502
Historic Areas	888	556	828	2,272	2,135
Traditional Neighborhoods	52	394	493	939	545
Remainder of Island	225	464	10,278	10,967	53,859
Total	1,971	1,542	11,738	15,260	57,040



Tisbury Urban Design: The MVC is working with the Tisbury Planning Board on a design study to identify existing defining characteristics as guidance for future development.