

Development and Growth

Meeting Minutes of May 8, 2008, noon, MVC Offices

Present - Members: Henry Stephenson, Chair; Tom Chase, Christina Brown, Jim Athearn, and Ned Orleans

Present – MVC Staff: Mark London, Jo-Ann Taylor, Chris Seidel, Bill Veno and Chris Flynn

Mark London reviewed the schedule for the groups to present draft recommendations to the Steering Committee at the end of the month, in order to be prepared with summer outreach materials by late June, noting that the Development and Growth material is the critical part.

1. Resources

The latest drafts of key maps were reviewed with a view to seeing what could be presented to the public this summer.

- Natural Environment
 - Biodiversity: The map is based on striving to provide a more-or-less continuous area of each of the main ecoregions of at least 5,000 acres, such being the minimum patch size to provide viable habitat for native species and ecosystem services to humans, including connectors and buffers. Text for this will soon be included in an updated Synthesis document. Settled areas within the cores are noted as transition areas, where we could work with owners over time to encourage reduction of lawns and restoration of native vegetation. The most critical areas could be "undeveloped".
 - Working Landscapes: Based on discussions with farmers, the priorities in order are: 1) preserve existing working farms, 2) reestablish former farms lying fallow, or use existing fields for farming, 3) create new farms, particularly on prime agricultural soils. It was suggested that perhaps the most critical of those farms to protect are those using leased land. Farming should be compatible with the buffer, and transition areas, outside of the most highly critical biodiversity areas. The patch size of the cores is large enough to absorb some uses like farmland.
 - Recreation: The existing network of publicly accessible open spaces, and major and minor trails is shown, as well as a dashed illustration of potential greenway extensions.
 - Natural Character/Scenic: The map of the views from the major roads has been completed, showing its nature (natural/lightly settled) and depth of open view. We still have to tackle the view from the coast.
- Built Environment
 - Historic Areas and Established Neighborhoods. Because age of buildings is a good first indicator and is readily available, that was used to show settlement patterns. Areas of high concentrations of buildings more than 100 years old (and their 100' buffers) are shown as Historic Areas, and those from before the end of World War II as a Established Neighborhoods.

- Opportunity Areas: These areas, which could probably benefit from some development, have been identified.
- Water Resources
This map hasn't changed.
- Town/Country
Various maps identifying town and country areas were reviewed. The "town" areas reflect existing zoning for smaller lots, thereby indicating what the people of the Town intend to be developed more densely. Outlying subdivisions with large-lot zoning are included in the "country" area. High-density neighborhoods close to town areas could be included as part of either town or county, or could be kept for now as a separate category. MVC staff will analyze past, current, and potential future development by type of area.

2. Scenarios

- The basic scenario is Present Trends, a projection of what would happen if the current pattern and rate of growth continue.
- In June, we could prepare an alternative Smart Growth or Sustainable Development scenario based on some simple assumptions, such as density in *town* increased by 25% and density in *country* reduced by 25%. The initial presentation should include a list of possible implementation techniques.
- Over the course of the summer, and in time for an August forum on the topic, we could test out various possible implementation techniques and see which might be most effective for achieving the targets (e.g. if zoning in some rural areas for a new house or guest house were changed from 3-acre to 5-acre; or if the minimum lot size in the historic areas of Oak Bluffs or Edgartown could revert back to the historic areas for year-round housing).
- We can also present a slowed-down growth alternative, which assumes that building caps or market forces mean less development. We should look at the economic impacts on this, particularly on construction.
- We still have to look at commercial needs and the maps to zoom in on a particular spot, which might form the basis of a charette.

No new meeting date was set.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Notes prepared by Jo-Ann Taylor