

*This Discussion Paper is a work-in-progress based on previous plans, on results of forums and surveys, and on the ongoing efforts of the Island Plan Steering Committee. Please see the last page for how you can join this conversation.*

## How Should We Manage Development and Growth?

Most people on the Vineyard say they want growth to be limited, and development in critical natural areas to be carefully managed or restricted. But present zoning would allow construction of 50% more buildings, half in the countryside.

To resolve this mismatch between what the community desires and what we will be getting, we should answer four interrelated, but distinct questions:

- **How much** should we grow?
- **Where** should we grow?
- **How fast** should we grow?
- Can growth **fit in** better?

This Discussion Paper includes information about past growth and where current trends might lead us, namely the:

- Present Trends Scenario.

Also, the Steering Committee has outlined three alternative scenarios based on the possibility of shifting some development from the countryside to town and fringe areas (see map on page 3) and of having various

alternative total amounts of development, namely:

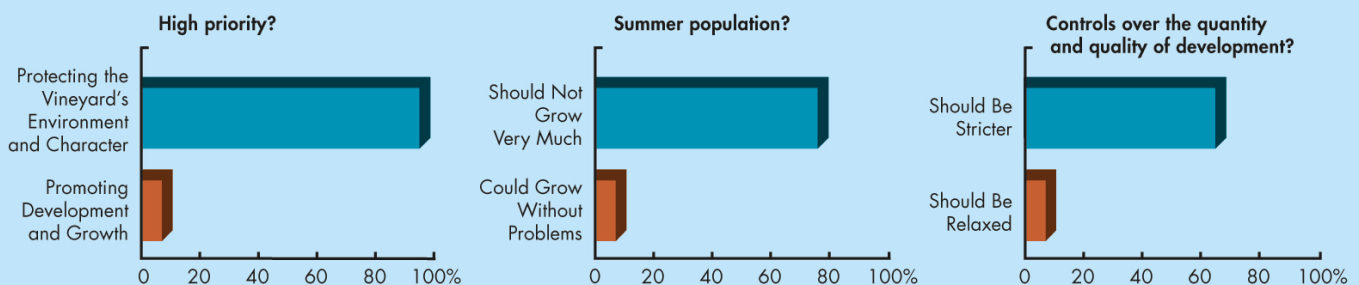
- Scenario 1 – 50% of present trends,
- Scenario 2 – 100% of present trends,
- Scenario 3 – 150% of present trends.

The Steering Committee also plans to look at other possible scenarios that emerge during this process.

A few years ago, the Martha's Vineyard Commission carried out a series of surveys that shed light on people's views about the Vineyard and highlight the dilemma mentioned above. On one hand, most people favored limiting growth. On the other hand, over half the seasonal residents and about a fifth of one-week visitors anticipate living here in five years. Is it possible to accommodate everyone who wants to be here and still maintain those characteristics of the Vineyard that people want to preserve?

The Steering Committee has outlined a series of Overall Goals for the Island Plan; those directly related to development and growth are shown on page 7. Last year, the first five Work Groups outlined a series of promising initiatives which were discussed with the community last summer. The Steering Committee adopted a consolidated list at the end of the year. Those related to development and growth are listed on page 7.

### Survey Results (3000 Vineyarders and Visitors)



# 1. AMOUNT

## HOW MUCH SHOULD WE GROW?

- With current zoning and available land, the number of houses could grow by 50%, from about 18,000 to 27,000.
- Even with no change in the percentage of seasonally-occupied homes (57% Island-wide), the year-round population could grow from about 16,000 to 24,000. That likely means 50% more traffic and nitrogen pollution in coastal ponds.
- Also, if present trends continue, about 80% of the available land would be developed, and only 20% preserved as open space.

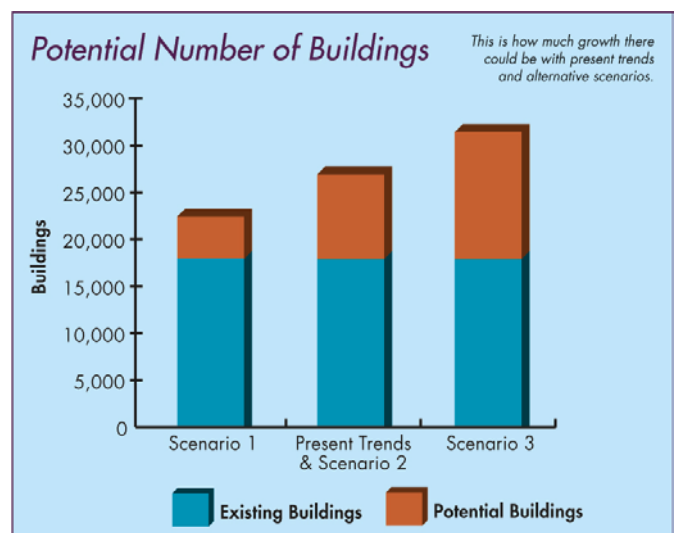
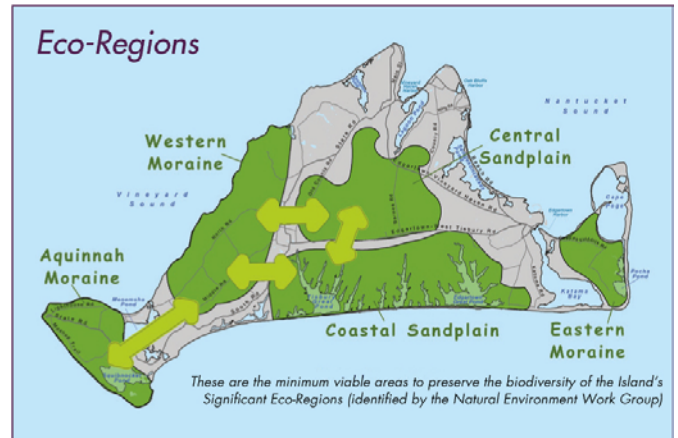
## Should we change the total AMOUNT of potential development and if so, how?

### Change in Number of Buildings

- There are now about 16,000 main houses and other main buildings, and 2,000 guest houses. Current zoning would allow about 6,000 additional main houses.
- If the proportion of houses with guest houses doubled from the current 11% to 22%, this would add 3,000 guest houses. In the past decade, the number of guest houses here went from 8% to 11% of all residential parcels and as we run out of available land, the percentage here could increase significantly. (Provincetown has 20% and Nantucket has 22 %.)
- There is presently no inventory of accessory units (i.e. a second dwelling unit within a house).
- Note that these estimates are based on the assumption that the number of buildings in the buildout projection that are unlikely to be developed (e.g. protected by association covenants and MVC decisions, golf courses, large estates) will be offset by the increase in accessory units, and by other additional dwelling units such as in multi-family buildings, in 4OB projects.

### Change in Land Use

- Of the 57,000 acres of land on the Island:
  - 16,980 are fully developed (30%),
  - 22,889 acres (40%) are protected open space,
  - 17,181 are "available" (30%).
- The available land includes:
  - 10,977 acres (19%) on parcels with no development and
  - 6,204 acres which could be subdivided off from partially developed parcels.
- Each year, about 800 acres of land are developed and 200 are protected as open space. If this proportion continues, 80% (13,745 acres) of the available or potentially available land would be developed, and 20% (3,436 acres) protected.



## 2. LOCATION

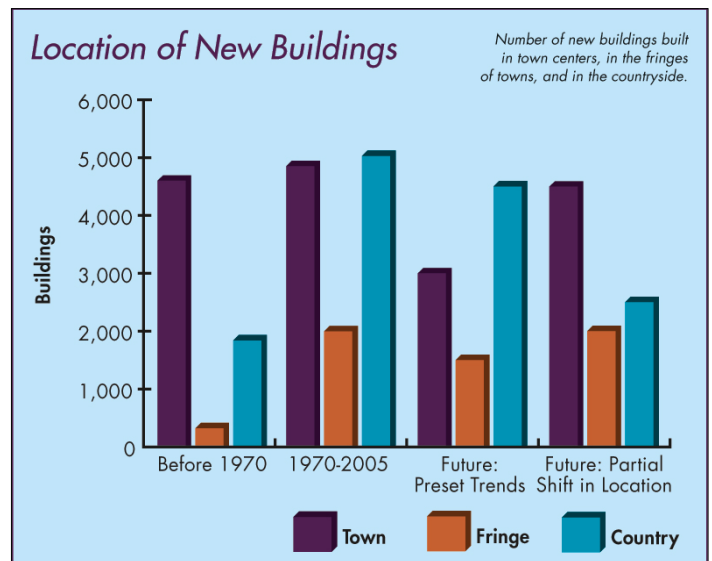
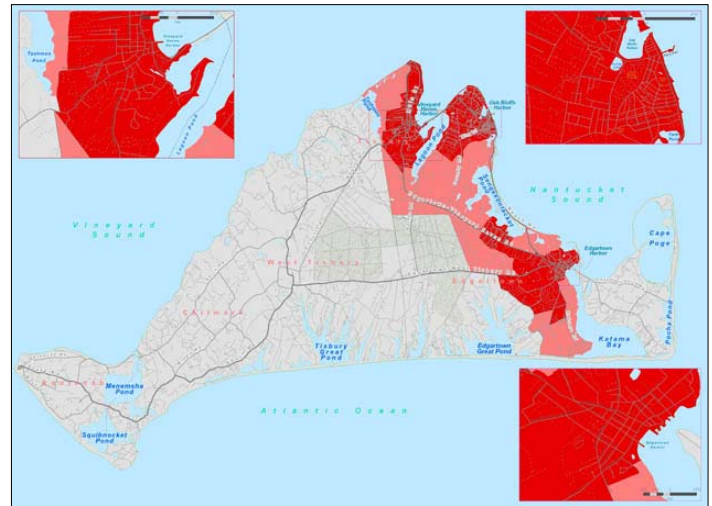
### WHERE SHOULD WE GROW?

- Development is increasingly occurring in the countryside. With currently available land and zoning, almost half (48%) of new development would be scattered across the countryside (compared to 24% before 1970 and 34% from 1970 to 2005).
- Based on present trends, development in town would drop to 34% (compared to 70% before 1970 and 43% from 1970-2005).

### Should we shift the LOCATION of new development and if so, how?

- Building in or close to town offers many advantages.
  - It uses existing infrastructure such as roads and town water.
  - It allows for connecting to sewers (which removes most of the damaging nitrogen) – existing ones or new ones that might become economically feasible possible in higher-density areas.
  - It makes it easier for people to walk, bike, or take a bus to most destinations, increasing mobility for those with limited car access, and reducing car use and related congestion, energy use, and pollution.
  - It reduces the impact on significant natural areas.
- Of the 6,000 projected new main houses in the Present Trends scenario, 54% would be within the significant Eco-Regions identified by the Natural Environment Work Group. 49% would be in Priority Habitat for rare and endangered species identified by the State. Existing zoning also means that a high proportion of the 3,000 projected new guest houses would be in these significant natural areas.

Growth Scenarios - New Buildings				
	Town	Fringe	Country	Total
Present Trends	3,000	1,500	4,500	9,000
Scenario 1	2,250	1,000	1,250	4,500
Scenario 2	4,500	2,000	2,500	9,000
Scenario 3	6,750	3,000	3,750	13,500



### TOOLS

To **reduce the total amount** of development – overall or in certain areas – we could:

- Require a larger lot to build a house, guest houses, or accessory units.
- Reduce the areas where guest houses or accessory units are permitted
- Conserve additional open space at a faster rate
- Limit further subdivision of existing parcels

To **increase the total amount** of development overall or in certain areas, we could:

- Allow houses, guest houses, accessory units, or multi-family buildings in more areas and on smaller lots.
- Reduce acquisition of open space.

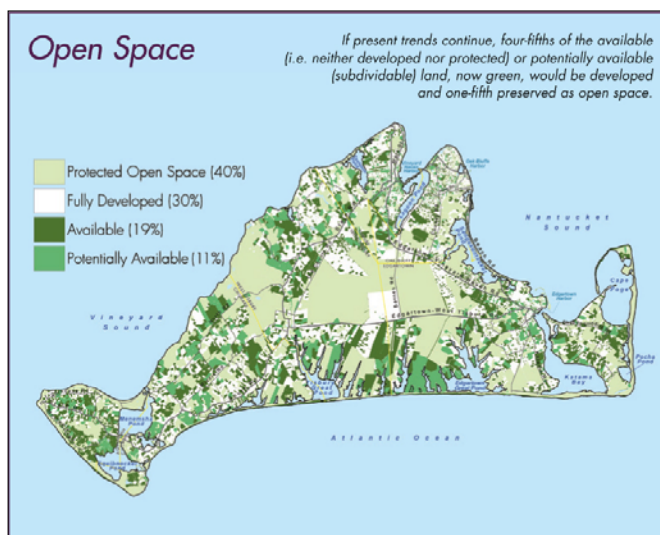
### 3. RATE

#### HOW FAST SHOULD WE GROW?

- Currently, about 200 permits for new main homes are issued each year. There was an average of almost 400 in the 1980s and about 250 in the 1990s.
- There are potential advantages of slowing down how fast we grow, or at least limiting growth to its current rate.

#### Should we limit the rate of growth and if so, how?

- From the 1970s to 1990s, the Vineyard routinely used build-out rates for large subdivisions to temper the rate of community change, but current development is mostly on single lots or small subdivisions.
- The Vineyard has also used building caps – a set number of home building permits allotted per year – intended to stabilize building activity by leveling out peaks.
- There are 400 addition/alteration permits, and 30 demolition permits issued each year.
- If we continue to build about 200 new main houses each year, it would take about 30 years to build all 6,000 potential new main homes. (This does not include the replacement of existing buildings with new ones.)



- If the rate of development were slowed down, it could:
  - Keep more construction work for residents, by building at a rate that the local workforce can handle.
  - Allow for more open space, by allowing the community more time to acquire land, even at the current rate.
  - Allow for incentives for some projects – such as affordable housing or locations on town water and sewer – by giving them priority within an annual quota.
  - Give the community time to absorb and adjust to the impacts of development and, if necessary, to modify growth management policies to deal with problems as they emerge.

#### Construction Industry

- The construction industry, once dependent almost exclusively on new development on undeveloped land, is increasingly involved with additions, renovations, and replacements of existing buildings.
- While the number of new home starts has declined over the past two decades, the number of construction jobs has increased. The number of Vineyarders working in construction has remained constant since 1985 at about 15% of all jobs, suggesting that increased construction leads to more construction workers coming from off-Island.

#### TOOLS

- To **slow down the rate of development**, we could:
- Use building caps to limit construction to current rates or less. These could exempt certain kinds of development, such as affordable housing and/or smart-growth locations. (Though usually used as a temporary measure during adoption of new zoning measures, they could be considered on an ongoing basis.)
  - Time public construction projects, when possible, to be built when private development slows.



## 4. FIT

### CAN GROWTH **FIT IN** BETTER?

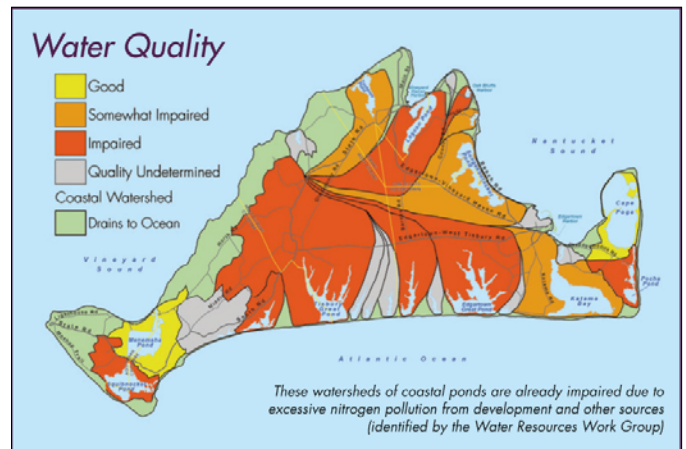
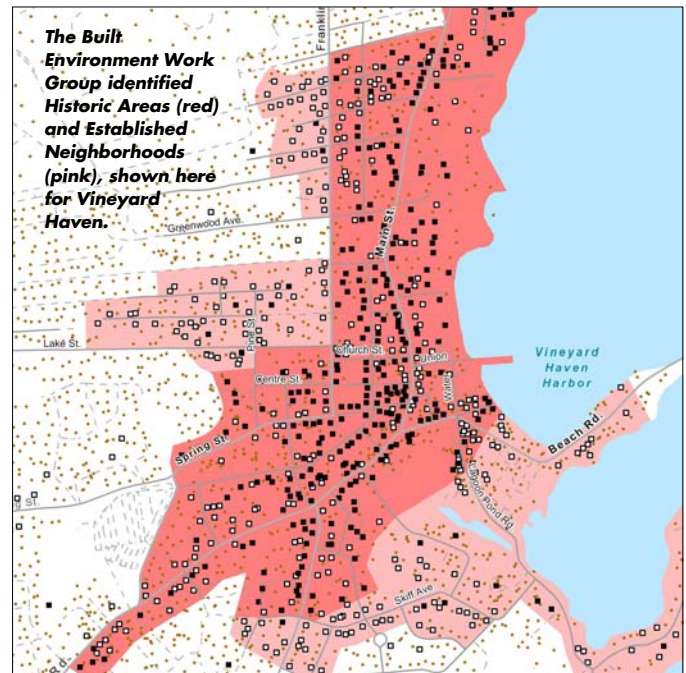
- Whatever the community decides in terms of the amount, location, and rate of development, there are many ways to make any new development – and replacements of teardowns – more compatible with historic areas, neighborhoods, and environmentally significant areas.

### Can we do better in making new development **fit** into natural areas and neighborhoods and if so, how?

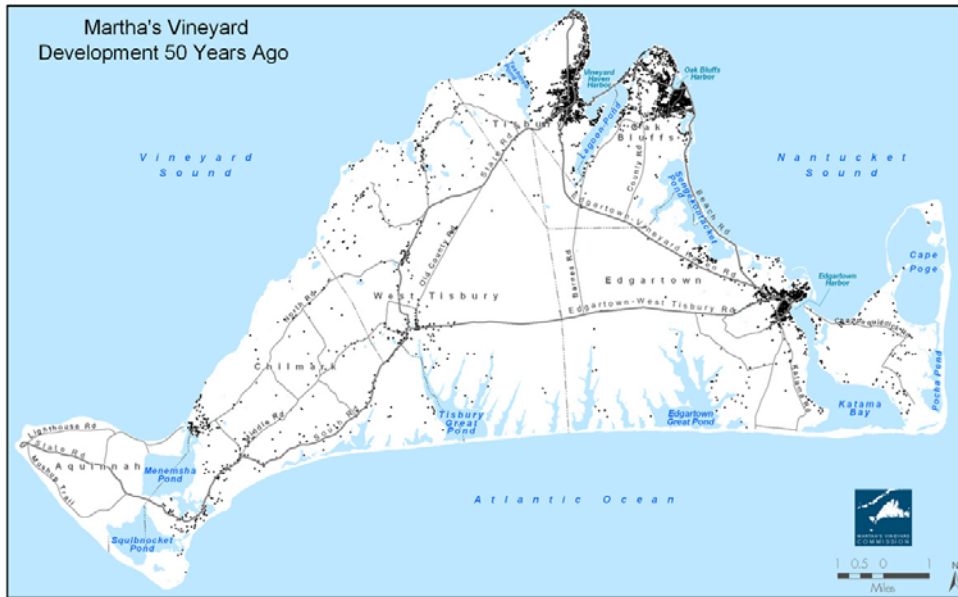
The other Island Plan Work Groups are identifying what the most critical natural and built resources on the Island, and have made recommendations about how they could be better protected when development takes place.

The following are some of the measures that have been identified.

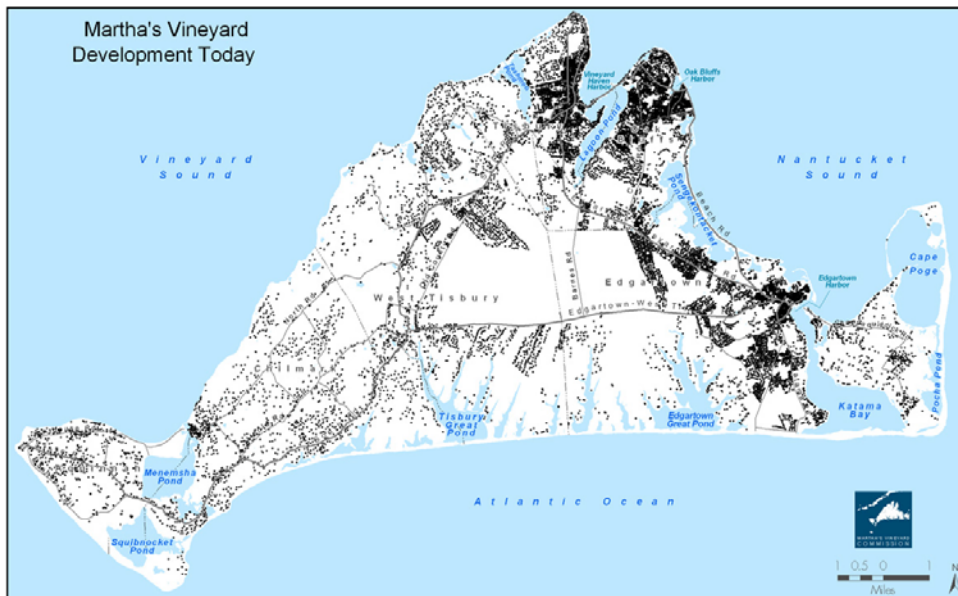
- We could encourage or require that development in significant habitat areas protect native habitat, notably the eco-regions shown on page 2. This is already being done for Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) reviewed by the MVC and for projects in priority habitat for rare and endangered species (already done for larger projects by the Commonwealth and the MVC).
- We could encourage or require better wastewater management, particularly in watersheds where water quality is already impaired (see map to the right) or is projected to be impaired. This is already done for projects reviewed by the MVC, which has adopted interim nitrogen-loading limits for reach watershed pending results of a more detailed analysis by the Mass Estuaries Project.)
- We could encourage or require development in historic areas and established neighborhoods to fit in better with their existing character. This could include zoning revisions and for individual project design review.
- We could encourage or require that development in significant viewsheds and vistas minimize its impact. This could involve project design review in visually critical areas.



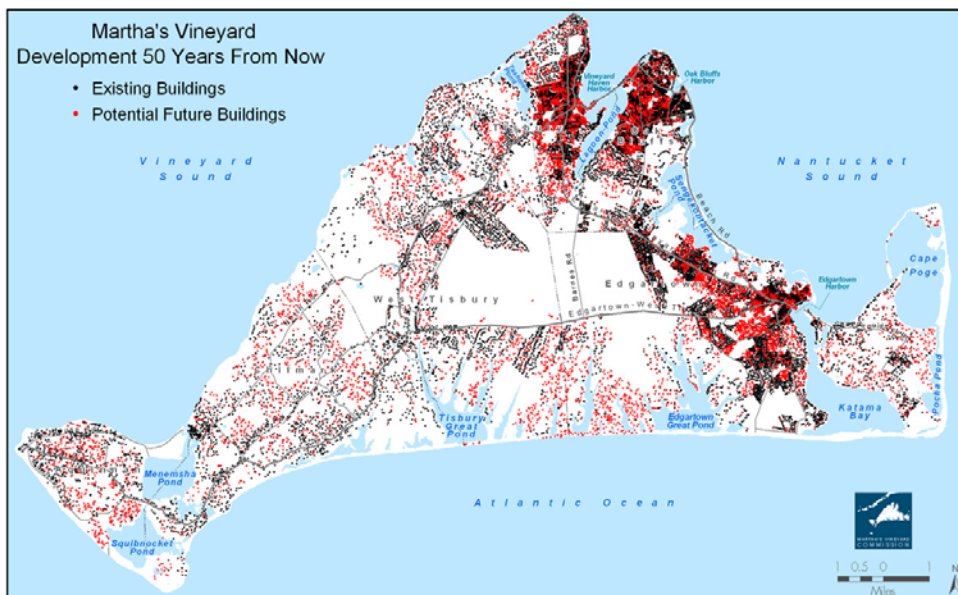
## Vineyard Buildings



**Fifty Years Ago**  
*(of those standing today)*



**Today**



**Fifty Years From Now**  
*if current zoning is maintained  
and past rates of construction  
continue.*

## Best Practices

Here are a few of the techniques being used in other areas to promote goals similar to those which have been identified for the Vineyard to build on the tradition of village life and to better protect natural areas.

### **Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND):**

Neighborhood design that accommodates a mix of residential and commercial uses within in a compact walkable area using traditional town-planning principles such as: a range of housing types; a network of well-connected streets and blocks; humane public spaces; amenities such as stores, schools, and places of worship within walking distance of residences. TND may occur in infill settings and involve adaptive reuse of existing buildings, but often involves all-new construction on previously undeveloped land. Part of the overall approach of New Urbanism. When located around a transit stop, it is often referred to as Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

**Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU):** An ADU is a self-contained apartment in an owner occupied single-family home/lot that is either attached to the principal dwelling or in a separate structure on the same property. On the Vineyard, we usually refer to detached ADUs as guest houses, and use the term accessory unit for those within the house or in an addition. Adding ADUs is a way to increase density without making a major change to a neighborhood's character. The additional units could be targeted for specific uses such as year-round housing, moderate-income housing, and/or family housing.

**Transfer of Development Rights (TDR):** TDR involves transferring development rights from a "sending district" a "receiving district". It seeks to use private market forces to protect open space in environmentally sensitive areas by making it possible to sell development rights to an area where development is desired or, at least, more acceptable. Though in theory this solves many problems, it has been difficult to put into practice. On the Vineyard, there would be challenges related to inter-town transfers, and drastically different property values between potential sending and receiving districts.

**Low Impact Development (LID):** LID is a land planning and engineering design approach to managing stormwater runoff that emphasizes conservation and use of on-site natural features to protect water quality. This approach implements engineered small-scale hydrologic controls to replicate the hydrologic regime before development, through infiltrating, filtering, storing, evaporating, and detaining runoff close to its source

Sources: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit, New Jersey State Agriculture Development Commission; Wikipedia

## Goals and Initiatives Impacting Growth

### **Island Plan Goals Related to Development and Growth**

*The Island Plan Steering Committee adopted these development-related goals to reflect public input from surveys and forums.*

- Use the Island and manage its development in ways compatible with the long-term sustainability and carrying capacities of our environment and community.
- Conserve the Vineyard's natural environment, water quality, open spaces, scenic beauty and habitat.
- Concentrate development in town and village areas and limit building in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Reinforce compact, mixed-use, walkable town and village centers.
- Ensure that new building is compatible in its scale, siting and design.

### **Island Plan Promising Initiatives Related to Development and Growth**

*The Island Plan Steering Committee and Work Groups have identified the following Promising Initiative.*

- Adopt a Vineyard Energy Code requiring new construction to be more energy efficient
- Allow an additional accessory affordable housing unit on any property where other regulations can be met
- Allow multi-unit community housing in limited areas
- Adopt demolition delay bylaws to encourage house preservation or reuse
- Seek Island-wide cost-sharing methods for infrastructure and services
- Use incentives and other mechanisms to secure commercial land
- Map critical areas for Habitat Protection and Restoration
- Establish a program allowing long-term voluntary Undevelopment of critical natural properties
- Streamline regulatory review to coordinate affordable/community housing projects with permanent affordability.
- Identify high-density residential areas for nitrogen management
- Require stormwater operating and maintenance plans for all projects.



## NEXT STEPS

### You are invited to give your comments!

Over this summer and fall, the Steering Committee will explore the questions posed here in more detail.

You can be part of this effort by joining the Network of Planning Advisors. Keep checking the website to keep up with the latest progress.

## THE ISLAND PLAN

The Island Plan is charting a course to the kind of future that the Vineyard community wants and is outlining a series of actions to help us navigate that course. It breaks new ground while incorporating the best lessons of the present and the past. It is not something to wait for, but something to work with, now and in the future.

The planning process began in 2006, and still has a long way to go. The summer of 2008 is time for the second mid-course correction, to get feedback from the broader community on the ongoing work of the Steering Committee and Work Groups.

Presently, there are eight Work Groups: Built Environment, Energy & Waste, Housing, Livelihood & Commerce, Natural Environment, Social Environment, Transportation, and Water Resources.

The Steering Committee is coordinating the overall effort and the efforts dealing with development and growth.



## USEFUL RESOURCES

The following document is available in town libraries and can be obtained from the website or from the MVC.

- **Results of Surveys of Martha's Vineyard Residents and Visitors:** Summary published in March 2006 of surveys carried out in 2003 and 2004.

Updated: July 12, 2008

## GET INVOLVED

### PARTICIPATE IN THESE FORUMS!

All forums are at 7:30 pm

- **Transportation**  
Monday, July 14 Katharine Cornell Theatre, Tisbury
- **Built Environment**  
Monday, August 4 Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs
- **Development & Growth**  
Wednesday, August 27 Agricultural Hall, West Tisbury

The Island Plan is a community effort to confront the issues that will shape our future. Here are some of the ways you can join in.

- **FORUMS:** Come to the Development and Growth Forum on August 27. There will also be a forum on the Built Environment and Transportation.
- **NETWORK OF PLANNING ADVISORS:** Join over 500 Vineyarders actively participating in the process.
- **WEBSITE:** The Island Plan website offers you many ways to give your input or to find more useful information including:
  - A feedback survey about these proposals,
  - A survey about Development and Growth.
  - Discussion papers about the other topics,

- A way to join the Network of Planning Advisors and Work Groups, or to get on the mailing list,
- Background documents, results of forums and surveys, meeting minutes, etc.

Much of the same information can be viewed in Island public libraries or obtained directly from the MVC.

*The Facilitator of the Steering Committee's Development & Growth Study Group is Henry Stephenson. The primary staff contact is Mark London 508-693-3453 ext 11 or london@mvcommission.org*

*The Island Plan is an initiative of, and is coordinated by, the Martha's Vineyard Commission.*

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