



# Synopsis of Past Plans

## EXCERPTS Regarding HOUSING

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

### Methodology

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

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

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

The following is the list of source documents:

#### ❖ Island-Wide Plans

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

#### ❖ Master Plans

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

#### ❖ Open Space Plans

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

#### ❖ Visioning Documents

- ◆ Documents from all six Island towns, 1997.

#### ❖ Community Development Plans

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

### Housing Affordability

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**Issue:** There is a serious affordability gap between the actual cost of a home on the Vineyard and what families can afford. It is beyond the free market's ability to provide for permanent year-round affordable housing for sale and rent for young singles, couples, families and elders.

**Goal:** Foster a diverse Island housing stock in order to have a healthy and diverse community.

#### **Objectives:**

##### Increase Affordability of Housing

- Work toward the state's goal of designating 10% of year-round housing stock for affordable housing, to be counted towards the state's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory.
- Seek funding for the development and rehabilitation of homes for affordable housing for both individuals and families earning at or below 80 percent and up to 140 percent of the area median income.
- Pursue programs to dedicate permanent affordable year-round rental housing.
- Identify obstacles to home ownership and secure rental housing for low/moderate income residents. Review town regulations and by-laws (including residency requirements) for potential improvements.
- Encourage employers to offer employee housing to assist in placing summer employees in housing. Design specific housing for summer use to free up year-round stock for year-round residents.

##### Refine Zoning to Encourage Affordable Housing:

- Encourage public and private development of affordable housing at increased densities in certain areas, provided that water resources are protected and nitrogen-loading goals are met.
- Support refinements to zoning to encourage accessory units and enhance housing potential where appropriate.

##### Require Permanent Affordability

- Affordable units should be permanently dedicated for low- and moderate-income use.
- Continue to support resident homesite programs and refine them to ensure that these lots remain affordable in perpetuity by deed restriction or other mechanisms.

##### Provide Housing for People With Special Needs

- Ensure that elderly, handicapped and special needs residents have the choice to stay in housing on the Island near family, friends and community.
- Promote the construction of congregate housing that will provide some degree of independence and care, particularly for the elderly and for those of all ages with mental and physical handicaps.

##### Design Affordable Housing to Fit the Vineyard

- Tailor housing to what people can afford and find desirable, and integrate it into the community.
- Meet housing needs imaginatively while preserving the character of the Vineyard.

- Maximize the year-round housing potential within the Island's existing housing stock. Encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction for affordable housing. Create new units within existing structures and within existing developed land.
- Identify and designate developable vacant town-owned land that is appropriate for affordable housing.
- Encourage the development of prototype designs for affordable housing in character with the Island.
- Develop standards to ensure that affordable housing is designed to allow conservation of energy, water and other resources.

**Preserve the Island's Distinct Character and Environment**

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

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

**Objectives:**

Protect Critical Lands

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

Preserve the Island's Character

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

Protect Open Space

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

Protect Man-Made Resources

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

Protect the Aquifer

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

Protect the Social Landscape

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

## **Manage the Pattern and Rate of Development**

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

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

### **Objectives:**

#### Reinforce Existing Development Patterns

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

#### Concentrate and Cluster Development

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

#### Manage Growth Rates

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

#### Manage Growth in Relation to Carrying Capacity

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

### Use an Island Development Plan to Manage Development

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

### **Balance Six Towns and One Island**

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

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

### **Objectives:**

#### Deal with Regional Issues in a Regional Way

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

#### Coordinate Regional and Local Actions

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

#### Coordinate with Related and Off-Island Entities

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

#### Foster Civic Engagement

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