

ISLAND PLAN

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE VINEYARD



**Development & Growth Forum
August 27, 2008**

Proceedings

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Readers are referred to a separate appendix to these proceedings, which includes four documents:

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- Appendix 3: Forum Agenda;
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The Island Plan Development & Growth Forum was held in the Agricultural Hall in West Tisbury from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Attendance

A total of 85 people participated in this forum including members of the Steering Committee, the Network of Planning Advisors, town boards, MVC staff, and members of the general public.

<u>Moderator</u>	Jim Athearn
<u>Members of the Steering Committee</u>	Mimi Davisson, Chris Murphy, Ned Orleans, Linda Sibley, Richard Toole, Kerry Scott, Henry Stephenson, Paul Strauss
<u>MVC Staff</u>	Mark London, Bill Veno, Chris Seidel, Christine Flynn, Donna Stewart
<u>Others</u> (of those who signed in)	Susan Goldsmith, Elaine Pace, Dan Pace, Phil Henderson, Nancy Evoy, Tom Wallace, Kit & Ked Dresser, John & Tim Brooks, Kaysea Cole, Myra Stark, Richard Knabel, Kristen Henshaw, Susan & Pete Grilli, Joy Ganapol, Libby Cline, Tim Lasker, Bob Wheeler, Joe Eldredge, Deborah Medders, Terry Appenzellar, Dan Greenbaum, Sally Cross, Barbara Norfleet, Glenn Hearn, Barbara Scherlis, Bill Cline, Susan Silk, Alan Ganapol, John Butts, Sandy Smith, Roland Klyver, Patricia Sands, Melinda Loberg, Julia Humphreys, Andrew Woodruff, Mike Seccombe, Jeremy Henderson, Louise Ames, Sheri Caseau, Kathleen Stoll, Anne Gallagher, Patricia Wheeler, David Caseau, Kaysen Cote, Sarah Nevin, Bruce Nevin, Stephanie Michalcsyk, Joanie Ames, Helen & Arne deKeijzer, Peggy Pinney, L.Holbrook, Dawn Bellante

1. Introduction

Jim Athearn opened the Forum by introducing himself as the moderator and by welcoming members of the public. Mr. Athearn gave an overview of the Island Plan planning process. He pointed out that Discussion Papers are a summary of all of the work that has been done on Development & Growth, and by all the Work Groups. He then gave an overview of the night's agenda.

Mr. Athearn took a poll of the audience members by asking how many were affiliated with the following groups:

- | | |
|--|----|
| • Island Plan Steering Committee | 10 |
| • Island Plan Network of Planning Advisors | 11 |
| • Members of Town Boards | 12 |
| • MVC Commissioners | 11 |
| • Year-Round Residents | 34 |
| • Seasonal Residents | 33 |

Mr. Athearn explained the format for the evening, namely a presentation by Henry Stephenson, a Mini-Survey, and a discussion.

2. Presentation

Henry Stephenson, Member of the Island Plan Steering Committee and Facilitator of the Development & Growth Study Group gave a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the issues and options identified so far, as outlined in the Development and Growth Discussion Paper. The presentation focused on four questions:

- How much should the Vineyard grow?
- Where should growth take place?
- How fast should growth take place?
- Can development fit better?

Please refer to the discussion paper and the PowerPoint presentation in the appendix for the content of the presentation.

3. Mini-Survey

To get a general sense of the opinions of the people in the room, Mark London, Executive Director of the Martha's Vineyard Commission conducted a mini-survey.

Development & Growth Forum - Voting Tally	
1) Should we change the total AMOUNT of potential development and if so, how?	
A. More than the projected 50% is fine, if well done	0
B. The projected 50% is fine, if well done.	3
C. The potential growth should be cut back to 25%.	57
D. There should be no more growth.	5
2) Irrespective of the total amount of growth, should we shift the LOCATION of new development and if so, how?	
A. The present location of potential development is fine.	0
B. We should shift more development in or close to built-up town areas and less in rural areas (sensitive habitat, watersheds, and scenic vistas).	65
3) Should we limit the RATE of growth, and if so, how?	
A. We should let market forces alone determine the rate of development.	2
B. We should endeavor to slow down the rate of development.	61
4) Should we require greater OPEN SPACE protection as development takes place, and if so, how?	
A. Current zoning and market forces should determine the layout of a project.	0
B. We should require greater open space protection (fields, native habitat, scenic vistas) within projects.	61
5) Should we require that new construction FIT better into its surrounding character, and if so, how?	
A. Current zoning and regulations are adequate and we shouldn't interfere further with people's right to do what they want.	3
B. We should require that new buildings in significant older areas and established neighborhoods fit better with character.	62
6) Should there be a requirement to maintain a VEGETATED BUFFER along rural roads, and set back stockade fencing, and if so, how?	
A. Current zoning and regulations are adequate and we shouldn't interfere with people's right to build what they want.	3
B. There should be a no-cut vegetated buffer along rural roads with stockade fencing set further back.	60
7) Should a greater percentage of new buildings be used for AFFORDABLE HOUSING, and if so, how?	
A. Current zoning and regulations are adequate and we shouldn't interfere further with people's right to build what they want.	3
B. There should requirements to ensure that a greater percentage of new homes are affordable.	47

4. Discussion

Note: The following is a summary of comments made by individuals at the forum. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all the people in attendance or of the Island Plan Steering Committee.

Jim Athearn first called on a few people who had been invited to make introductory remarks.

- Bob Wheeler, Executive Vice President of the Martha's Vineyard Financial Group and the Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank, commented from the point of view of a banker and as someone who is closely involved with the business community, as well as being involved in affordable housing. He said that bankers like to see increases in the value of the collateral they hold. Restrictions on the number of houses and the laws of supply and demand should make prices go up and make him happy as a banker. But this would also lead to a wave of teardowns at the loss of our beautiful housing stock. Bankers will have lending opportunities as old owners move out and new seasonal residents move in. However the resulting loss of the year-round community and of the people who make the Island work would lead to prices dropping again as the disillusioned new owners move on to the next Nirvana, with no one to replace them. Then the bankers will be really unhappy. So as we put in place measures to limit overall growth, we need to also put in place specific measures for affordable housing such as: 1) increasing the permissible density specifically for affordable housing, especially in areas that can environmentally cope with it, especially if sewerred, because low density is the death knell of affordable housing; 2) building employee housing and freeing up the houses they now rent for year-round housing, and 3) using 40R zoning, e.g. on Upper State Road. With good planning, we can conserve both environmental resources and people, but we need foresight, political will, and a willingness to compromise.
- Tom Wallace, owner of Wallace & Company, said that, from a real estate perspective, growth is double-edged sword. We need a community to support the Island. People want to live here first and make a living second. It is easy to step on the Island and say keep it as it is; it is easier to be reactionary than visionary. But it is also important to keep the community. As we lose older teachers, it is a remarkable challenge to attract young ones. We also need to look at the next generation, our talented youth needs a place to live and work. From a growth perspective, there are things we want to see happen and things that frighten us. We need case-by-case, neighbor-by-neighbor, town-by-town solutions. Looking at the natural environment, there are some areas that clearly need protection. He is not an advocate of no growth. This kind of forum is crucial for prioritizing our needs.
- Terry Appenzellar is Vice-President and Treasurer of the Vineyard Conservation Society and the Friends of Sengekontacket, as well as an Oak Bluffs Conservation Commissioner. Heathland, watersheds, farmland, wetland, native habitat, clean water in our Great Ponds, and barrier beaches . . . these are why we came and why we stay. Is it really so detrimental for business and real estate interests to preserve the country, using the definition used here today – the ecoregions, from further development of the country areas? We can't do this with six towns, we have to do it on an Island-wide basis, but the structural way for doing this is missing. We would like to

encourage thinking about what will remain of the Vineyard if we don't act in unity, and don't act now.

Jim Athearn said that the results of the mini-survey held earlier, as well as the very extensive surveys that the MVC conducted several years ago, all point in the same direction. Before moving onto what seems to be the majority opinion, he invited those people who voted for the minority options in the mini survey to explain their reasons. There were no responses.

Jim Athearn then suggested that we move the whole Island Plan discussion about Development and Growth from asking what we want to do, to discussing how we can achieve what most people seem to want. He asked for specific proposals about:

- How can we cut back on the total amount of development, especially in the countryside and in sensitive natural areas?
- For the new development that does take place, how can we put measures in place to make sure that it fits better into neighborhood and Island character?
- How can we make a higher proportion of those houses that are built, affordable?

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- Someone asked what is the impact of water issues – the availability of fresh water and the treatment of wastewater – as a constraint on development? Henry Stephenson replied that we generally have enough fresh water in most parts of the Island, provided we keep the water pure; however, treatment of wastewater is increasingly problematic, mainly because of very serious problems of nitrogen loading on ponds.
- Tom Wallace noted that the Mass Estuaries Project is addressing the issue of what is the acceptable nitrogen level and still have a viable ecosystem. The project will likely say that we can only accept a certain level of nitrogen in certain areas. Sewers could help deal with this, but could also open up the possibility of more development. Nitrogen loading will be a key issue in determining how much development we can support.
- Joe Eldridge said that historic districts and zoning are tools to make development fit better. We need to harness community creativity to come up with new tools. We could use incentives to encourage god roadside development, such as offering a ten-year real estate tax break if a house is set house back, to compensate for the need to have a longer roads and more infrastructure. We need to understand architectural controls as a tool. He ran the Beacon Hill Commission, made up of three architects; they ran it as a clinic, helping people to achieve their goals in a way that fits into the area. Market forces are not a tool, they are like the weather. I like what the MVC has been doing with affordable housing. We need to be more inventive. We

don't have unqualified property rights; for example, Chapter 30 gives Conservation Commissions elements of public control on private property. Let's focus on tools.

- Bruce Nevin said there are new septic systems like sand traps which have potable water coming out, which should be mandated. About property rights and the invisible hand of the market, this was a rhetorical device Adam Smith used; but actually, markets are always regulated either collectively or by the most powerful.
- Chris Murphy said that we should plan together and regulate independently by town. The Island is made up of six very different towns. What works in Edgartown doesn't necessarily work in Chilmark. The Island Plan should come up with a whole series of possible by-laws and let them choose which they want to use. There are some things that towns can't do that the MVC can. We shouldn't apply top-down, off-Island solutions. The solutions that really work are the ones the towns want to pursue, whether septic, schools, or roads. How can we present the towns with tools that they can go forward with, rather than trying to impose solutions?
- Holly Stephenson has the opposite view. She worked on the Charter Commission that looked at how to deal with six separate towns. She agrees that growth should be in towns and not in natural areas, but there should be agreements between all towns so everyone can enjoy the natural areas. Also, with higher density building in town areas, we need to protect quality of life with regulations on regulations light, noise, and smoke.
- Sarah Nevin said that there in the early days of the MVC, there were discussions of public versus private rights. The MVC isn't empowered to do something Island wide. For her, dealing with car use and the boat is important. We should think about limits on how many cars someone can have and how often cars are taken on the ferry, perhaps a number of times per family per year. For her, transportation is a bigger issue than houses. The only people who use the bus is those without cars. How can we have fewer cars so we don't have to widen roads or build new roads, which no one wants? How can we deal with congestion, not only in the summer, when it is unbearable, but all year long?
- Paul Strauss said that it could be troublesome directing more growth towards towns. They are already crowded, at some point the quality of life could be impacted negatively.
- Bob Wheeler said that John Abrams had brought Ross Chapin from Whitby Island to speak about Pocket Neighborhoods, cluster housing with 8-10 units per acre. These could be created out of the way of views. They were well accepted in the marketplace, and the people living there love them. This would be a better use of land and a better way of building. Road, sewage, and other costs are much lower. They are not necessarily permitted in most areas. This is much better

than ten houses spread over ten acres. Though the clusters were dense, they were designed so you couldn't see into your neighbors' houses. They were organized around a common green, so there is a social space, but people are able to retreat to the private spaces around every house. He urged towns to look at this concept in their zoning regulations.

- Tom Wallace said we need a variety of tools to provide incentives such as: an increased density bonus for putting houses in a cluster, a tax incentive if land is not developed, transfer of development rights, undevelopment, the "how" should include lots of tools for different towns and neighborhoods. We need creative, out-of-the-box solutions.
- Henry Stephenson said that a lot of the discussion has been about how to build, but we should also focus on the existing housing stock. We could take advantage of this economic downturn to buy lower-cost houses, perhaps with an additional apartment, instead of building new ones. This could be in existing neighborhoods with adequate park space, or by developing in older business districts. Every house on the Vineyard is going to need major work in the next fifty years, and we need to address the issue of re-building in environmentally sensitive way.
- David Caseau talked about the meeting that had recently taken place in Tisbury about municipal building needs. One of the key needs people talk about is parking, but this is something we need to back away from. We need to slow the cars down, to connect the bike trails, provide more bike racks, and to make it viable to bike Up-Island. We need to get away from cars. Can we outlaw Hummers on the Island? Mopeds are fuel efficient; can we make a moped trail.
- Phil Henderson raised the issue of the infrastructure needed to support new development. If we build 5000 or 6000 new homes, we will need to pave and widen dirt roads, we'll need new parking areas, and we'll have to expand fire and police departments and schools. There have been many studies done showing that new houses cost towns \$1.25 for every \$1.00 they generate, so to build all this means raising taxes for everyone. There are a lot of red dots (projected new houses) in the green areas (environmentally sensitive areas). Our environment will be under incredible pressure. This needs to be done Island-wide; the towns have had 200 years to figure out how to control development; now we need an Island-wide solution.
- Joanie Ames said that she's been out on the Edgartown Great Pond and saw great rafts of wrack algae never seen before, and threatening commercial shellfishermen and recreational fisherman. It was frightening. It doesn't distinguish between affects rich and poor. Block Island, with the help of the University of Rhode Island, has done an amazing job of putting in measures to deal with wastewater; we can do what they did. This includes fixing septic systems. Some people don't know where their systems are. There, they flushed a device called a "mouse" to locate their systems, they provided financial aid for upgrades to people of limited income, working especially on systems close to bodies of water. The Title 5 systems don't work with nitrogen. We can start with areas around water bodies, but ultimately, all the water in the watersheds will end up in the pond. However, we have to be careful because nitrogen-removal systems could be used to allow more development on a property.
- Nis Kildegaard asked how many people were under forty (there were four), how many were secondary home owners (there were eight), how many primary homeowners on the Vineyard

(about fifty), and how many were looking to buy their first house (there were two). He said that this is why it is easy for the people attending this forum to be against development. Many of the tools discussed this evening could have an upward effect on prices. He said the cheapest currently advertised lot is going for \$260,000 in Edgartown and if we changed the minimal lot size, that lot would be off the market and we would have prevented someone, perhaps a schoolteacher, from buying it. More acquisition of open space, building caps, larger minimum lot sizes, more design review could have an upward effect on cost. We have to balance these goals with the effect on the human ecology of this place, on the ability of our sons and daughters to buy a home and raise a family here, as we have done. Its tough.

- Linda Sibley said that an existing parcel would not be taken off the market; it is already subdivided and is grandfathered. Housing is already unaffordable, and if the price went up, it would still be unaffordable. The only way to get affordable housing is to create it with community effort. We already have the problem and it is not because the lots are large; it is because rich people from around the world – California to Saudi Arabia – are competing with us in the market place. We need good zoning to protect the character of the place, and passionate efforts to create affordable housing. It cannot be done with the market, it has to be done by commitment. She said that much implementation has to be town-by-town, because they have the zoning authority. After doing visionary planning for the Island, we need to have a passionate education and recruiting effort with the towns.
- Tim Lasker said that the Island Plan process has been remarkable, the number of people who have participate is remarkable, and has been incredibly healthy for the Island at large. We are preaching to the converted here. People are very concerned about the environment, affordable housing, but it won't happen in this room. We need to talk to our neighbors about this. We are creating communities that are no longer diverse. More than 60% of Chilmark is over 60. There have been lots of great ideas, and there is no panacea. We need to continue this dialogue on routine basis and reach people outside this room so they appreciate how important it is to preserve the Island we love.
- Chris Murphy said that we have tried building caps, with varying success. The problem is that if a town reaches build-out, they just change the zoning. He suggested a system whereby a building cap is set at, say, 1% of remaining number of buildable lots. This way, you never reach build-out; it spreads the pain over many years
- Bruce Nevin suggested building underground parking with clustered housing, so it is invisible.
- Kerry Scott said we should honor the past and our human capital. She has no doubt that we will invent solutions. We should look back at what brought us here and how we have adapted. The identity of the six towns is important. There is a huge hunger for small-town America; this is why people come here. Oak Bluffs has the first cluster development in the country; it is celebrated in architecture and planning circles. The Campground shows that it's not a problem to live close together. We should look back at what was done so well in the past, how they lived wisely and well together, how they managed resources. We have to determine how many people can live here sustainably, without our killing the Vineyard with kindness.

- Joe Eldridge said he tried to get the Commission to put in architectural controls when it was created. The fact that project like the Triangle cropped up might have saved the environment of the Vineyard because got saw what could happen and people got concerned. Now is the time to bring in design review, and we should put out a book about ways to build so it blends into the natural environment and neighborhoods, not just a set of rules but as incentives and inspired instructions.

These proceedings were prepared by Mark London.

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