

ISLAND PLAN

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE VINEYARD

Forum 2 Proceedings



Held on August 9, 2006
At the Tisbury Seniors Center

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Introduction

The second public forum in the preparation of the Island Plan for Martha's Vineyard was held on Wednesday, August 9, from 5 to 7 pm at the Tisbury Senior Center, 34 Pine Tree Road, Tisbury.

The purpose of this forum was to allow participants to discuss what has been done well and less well over the past thirty years, and what that suggests for the next thirty years. Participants were also asked to weigh in on and prioritize goals for the plan. The aim was to consolidate the results of the first forum and to allow people who could not attend that forum to provide their input. Seasonal residents were especially invited to participate.

About seventy people attended this forum, which started with a tour of the same resources (maps, charts, ideas) that had been displayed at the first forum. Jim Athearn, Chair of the Island Plan Steering Committee welcomed participants and talked about the overall aims of the plan and Mark London, Executive Director of the Martha's Vineyard Commission, gave an overview of the planning process.

Robert Leaver of New Commons took over as facilitator of the forum and explained that it was organized as three conversations:

- Learning from the Past Thirty Years: Conversation one was held in 10 learning cafes where participants discussed three questions: Over the past 30 years what have we done well? What have we done not so well? For the next 50 years, what should we do going forward?
- Learning from the Past Thirty Years - Nuggets: Conversation two was held in plenary where each café table presented their "nuggets" – what rose to the top. The nuggets are organized by topic, and in two buckets, in Section I of this report. Bucket one is keep doing. Bucket two is stop doing, do differently, or start doing.
- Priority Issues/Goals: Conversation three was also a plenary where all participants prioritized 14 issues/goals as well as if they agreed or disagreed with each one.

This summary of the proceedings of the forum was prepared by New Commons with some editing contributions and formatting by Mark London. It consists largely of an edited transcription of the comments written by the participants themselves. The assistance of Sandra D. Polleys in preparing the transcription of comments is gratefully acknowledged.

1. Learning from the Past Thirty Years



These comments are drawn from ten café tables. Participants were asked to discuss and write on tables the responses to three questions:

- *What has Martha's Vineyard done well in the past thirty years?*
- *What has Martha's Vineyard not done so well in the past thirty years?*
- *What does the past say about what we should do going forward?*

Repetition remains to maintain the integrity of the process and for emphasizing the importance of the point.

1.1 What Has Martha's Vineyard Done Well?

Community Character

- Up-Island rural character has been preserved for the most part.
- A remarkable amount of rural feeling has been preserved, although there are such intense pressures on the Island to develop.
- Done well: the creation of Ag Hall as result of community effort.
- MV has done a good job preserving historical character.
- Individual towns have established historical districts, attempting to keep the flavor of the individual neighborhoods.
- Positive: creation of historical districts to maintain atmosphere.
- Maintaining diversity has been a constant asset.

Open Space and Preservation

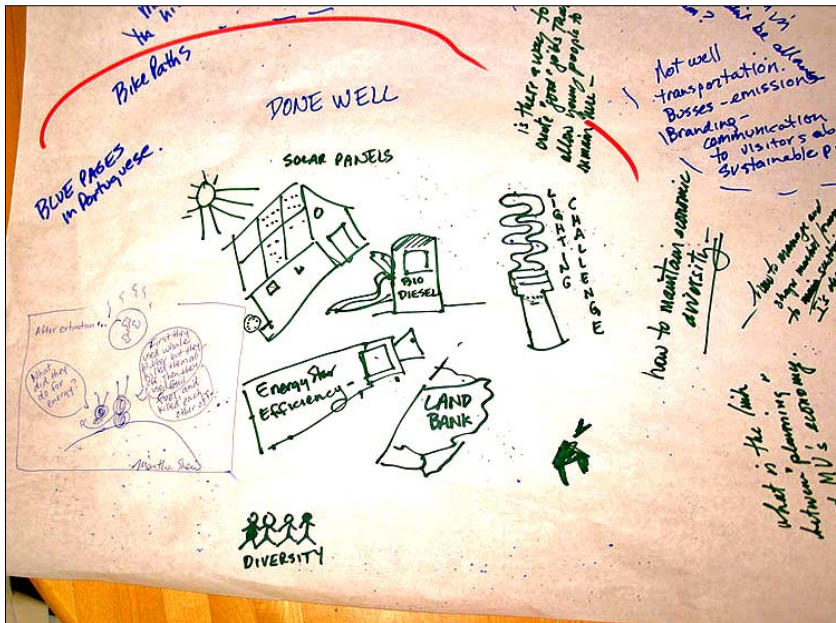
- Creating the land bank is a good thing.
- Preservation of natural land.
- Land Bank has been good.
- Creating the Land Bank is a great thing.
- We made the MVC and the Land Bank.
- Conservation groups have saved a lot of open land that might have been built on.
- The Land Bank and preservation through other conservation groups.
- Keep dong: preserve open/undeveloped land/water bodies (fin fish and shell fish).
- We've developed an assortment of preservation groups. These groups have communicated and cooperated well.

- Learned from some of our and others' (Cape Cod) mistakes.
- In the past 5 years, we have been looking at the big picture.
- Other organizations such as Sheriffs Meadow Foundation have been important too.
- Holding onto rural roads.
- Done well: identification of open space and acquisition (still more needed).
- MV has done well: appreciation of unique habitat.
- Done well: preserved private/public beaches and some areas around them.
- Preserving land with public access.
- Done well: more appreciation now for what makes the Vineyard a special place and the will to preserve it.
- MV has fairly successfully conserved some natural areas, mainly by private initiative.
- MV residents have generally taken an interest in the MV natural history/preservation of habitat for unique, threatened wildlife.
- Positive conservation groups working together. Identification of open space & acquisition (more still needed).

Growth, Development and Housing

- MV has done well: concern and community intention to address affordable housing issue.
- Affordable housing effort is flexible, i.e. rental conversion projects.
- Rent stabilization. (Building owned by year-round people.
- Relative wealth in the community.

Sustainability, Waste and Energy



- Done well: solar panels, bio-diesel, energy star efficiency, lighting challenge, diversity.
- Sewage system has been a good thing
- Comic strip drawn: After extinction...What did they do for energy? First they used whale blubber but they killed them all off. Then they used fossil fuel, and killed each other off.
- Vineyarders generally concerned about aquifer/drinking water.

Local Economy

- Local businesses → less economic leakage but local businesses are limited by seasonality and kinds of goods and services.
- Keeping franchises away - good for our health, better food, and sets us apart from continental US. No "box stores." And let's keep it that way. Keep commercialism at

bay. Continue to keep commercialization at bay. Held the line on franchises (keep them out) and box stores.

- MV has been good with regulating commercial development consistent with MV character but not residential development.
- A good job of keeping essential businesses downtown for the most part. Creating and promoting new town centers.

Traffic and Transportation

- Well-maintained roadside vistas are appreciated.
- Good things: MV did not adjust to increases in traffic. Traffic congestion has not been addressed, but that limits tourism and development (which may be good).
- Good bus system. Done well: public transportation. Public transportation (VTA) is wonderful. Public transportation is a plus. Holding onto rural roads. Bike paths, so far, have been good (but primitive-poor safety).

Fishing

- Promoting "bottom leasing" for fishing industry.
- Sea fearing and working VH waterfront for all but fishing industry.
- Menemsha good!!

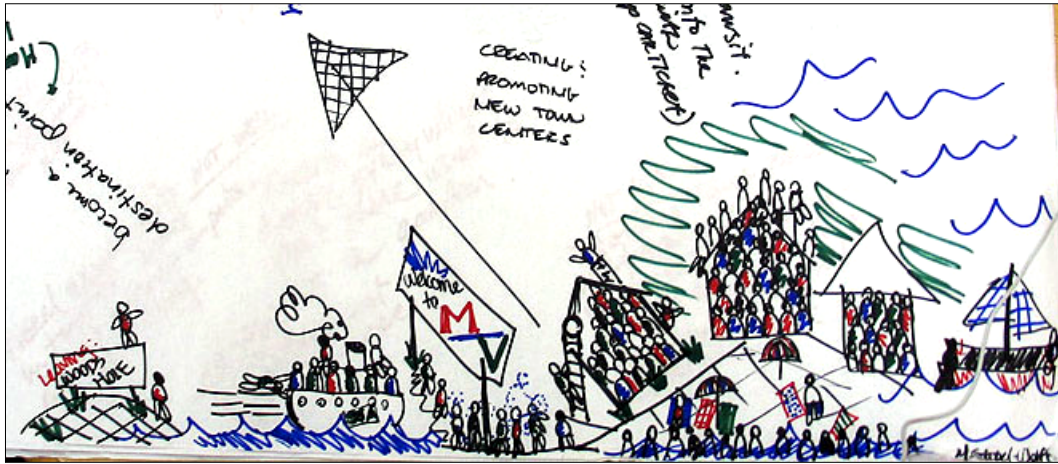
Community Services

- We do well with culture in summer-need to do more in winter.
- To have so many non-profits that promote the welfare of the community.
- Good hospital, health services, EMT services.
- Community services are good.
- Good schools and choice of schools.
- MV has done a comparatively good job in maintaining community, civic involvement, sense of place.
- Done well: maintained 'free' public access to large beaches: South, State.
- Programs for children are diverse.

Collaboration/Regionalization

- Island-wide DCPC. We have identified some problems and are taking action.
- Groups are looking at whole picture – e.g., energy, housing.
- Some of these island wide initiatives are relatively recent.
- Done well: creation of MVC - Island-wide aspect and override local regulations. Island-wide DCPC.
- MVC only regional body handling long-term planning.
- Done well: we have identified some problems are trying to take action.
- Groups are looking at the whole picture, e.g. energy, housing.
- Some of these Island-wide initiatives are relatively recent.
- Creation of MVC Island wide aspect ← override of local regulations.

1.2 What Has Martha's Vineyard Not Done So Well?



Community Character

- People are the problem. Too many of them.
- Strongly disagree: diversity benefits all of us, values are important.
- Not restricting honky tonk in Oak Bluffs (e.g. new game room)
- Has not done well: Great affluence, more disparity. MV has economic disparities.
- MV food and meals too expensive (keeping franchises away is good for our health and better food, sets us apart from continental USA-encourages local businesses, less waste, less traffic).
- Not enough encouragement for young people to return/remain. There are not a lot of activities for teens. Not enough focus on youth (YMCA)
- Brazilians not in the census (this should not be the case entirely as immigrants are counted and Census Bureau does not report results to immigration)-nobody knows how many. Out of communication and involvement. In hiding. Are Portuguese-Brazil over 25% of population?
- Not done well: rehashing the same old issues for years but nothing has changed. Not well: We haven't been pro-active enough. We haven't followed through on some of our worthy plans. We've "stuck our heads in the sand" on some issues/problems. We've opted to make money instead of preserving MV.
- Seasonal landowners are disenfranchised. Have no voice/vote. Have lots in common with those who live here year round. Not enough interaction between seasonal people and locals. Tax-paying, land owning long term residents would most often agree about and back same issues as permanent residents.

Open Space and Preservation

- The island has not provided public access to beaches. Beaches too restricted. Open the beaches to all!! Trend toward privatizing much of the land, resistance to access.

Growth, Development and Housing

- Zoning is wasteful of land, too expensive. Builders/developers using Island for excess personal profit. Values: conflict.
- Tearing down houses to build trophy houses - out of place.

- Not well: allowing not enough accessory housing to house young and elderly. Houses that are now summer properties cost out the residents. Have not controlled price of housing for those who live here year-round.
- Have not limited growth enough. Have not controlled suburban sprawl e.g. Edgartown to Vineyard and Edgartown to Katama. Large lot zoning has not been effective in controlling growth. Zoning laws not restrictive enough, e.g.: 10,00 square foot lots are crowded beyond setbacks, etc. Re-think zoning: manage growth in a different way (limit size, cluster house, villages as opposed to sprawl) There's a house everywhere there used to be a garden.

Sustainability, Waste and Energy

- Limited recycling efforts: Limits in materials allowed, in home pick up, in business pick up.
- Not well: Branding-communication to visitors about sustainable practices.

Local Economy

- Economy too-tourist oriented. There is a lack of planning toward stabilizing a "year-round" economy. We have not really been effective in developing year-round businesses.
- Salaries: work 2 to 3 jobs just to make ends meet.
- We're not protecting the New England character that attracts tourists and is good for business.
- We have not done a good job of keeping essential businesses in the downtown. Poor at keeping anchor businesses in towns. Not well: allowing "urban sprawl" in Edgartown triangle area, State Road, (VH abominable!) and VT State Road (North Tisbury). Not well: upgrade VH waterfront - from the water and road - plus public access/walkways, etc.

Traffic and Transportation

- Downtown central business did not concentrate: Post office, hardware, grocery (need anchor businesses) so have to travel to get goods. "The feeling is gone." Location of Stop and Shop is bad as too much traffic infringes on neighbors (noise, smell, light). Traffic everywhere is a nightmare:
- Chappy, State Road, Tisbury, 4-way stop, 5-way stop, Edg. Traffic in areas: Edg. Triangle, 5 corners, State Road (Tisbury), 4 way stop, Edg/VH Road/State Road - all across Island, Chappy Ferry.
- Traffic issues, in particular down-Island have not been controlled. Not well: traffic, transportation - realistic limits. Traffic out of control in summer. Have added a lot to traffic. 4%-5% increase in registered cars every year. Volume of traffic, speed of traffic, familiarity, translations=need more. Every family has many cars but it is a general trend. Failure of public transportation to alleviate traffic. Poor at limiting cars
- Short term and day trippers are different in needs/views. .
- Not well: transportation, busses-emissions. Vineyarders are not adapting to public transportation. Not enough bike paths...but busses do have racks. Limited bus schedule. Arriving at :01 or :02 after the hour makes one late every time (or makes one to choose to take car instead).

- Bike paths are inadequate in certain areas and therefore discourage biking as an alternative to driving a car (Tisbury, W. Tisbury...)
- Metal barriers on state highways-ugly.

Fishing

- Not well: loss of waterfront access for our fishing industry.

Community Services

- We haven't made sufficient provisions for long-time residents and their families.
- We have not done well with consolidation of safety and health services. Libraries excellent but we need to regionalize. We have not cooperated as well as needed (towns compete, argue, etc.).

Collaboration/Regionalization

- Has not managed growth well. Not well: allow construction in places should not be allowed because of erosion. Done poorly: MV has failed to do good planning for growth, where development should go. Poor planning for growth and use of zoning and other methods to create rational growth patterns and recognize limits to growth.

1.3 What Does Looking at the Past Thirty Years Say About What We Should Do Going Forward?

Community Character

- Set limits to MV population, housing, cars.
- Feel the short-term renter adds stress, cars, overcrowding without adding to quality of life. Tax on this type of visitor.
- We're asked to do more and more volunteer activities. It's difficult.
- Improve communication of everyone, especially Brazilian (translators). Need incentive to learn English and to learn Portuguese. Blue pages in Portuguese.

Open Space and Preservation

- Need enforcement of current laws. Zoning laws not well enforced.
- Public access to nature, water, and beauty. A better access for trail easements. Public access to salt ponds: Chilmark Pond, Tisbury Great Pond.

Growth, Development and Housing

- Protect the integrity of the type of houses we have appropriate to the Island vs. McMansions. Island character changing. More suburban. Maybe more village character- "walking" communities? Village infrastructure.
- More clustered housing and apartments who live here. Future?: more cluster zoning and apartments for people who are here already. Needed: all the elements of a small town in the town center of VH. Bring back the post office, a food store like the old Cronigs, a clothing store, movie theater. People need to stop and "visit" with one another. Maintain core businesses down with pedestrian access. More attention to pedestrians like post

office alley in Oak Bluffs. Restrict “noisy” business away from residential areas. Sprawl- we have to be intentional about avoiding continued sprawl.

- Curb residential development. Institute limits: building lot to size ratio.
- Need affordable housing for seniors and others alone. Keep cost of living affordable.

Sustainability, Waste and Energy

- Have we protected the land that provides the greatest environmental diversity?
- More sewers and use of Nitrogen removing systems but do not use sewerage to allow more density near wetlands. Do not use sewerage to allow more density near wetlands. Protect water sources and quality (aquifer and ponds).
- We should develop/expand on-Island energy production and food production. Increase our on-Island food production. More farming-sheep, berries,. Local sustainable.
- Keeping franchises away encourages local businesses, less waste, less traffic.
- Create energy systems. More harnessing of renewable energy. Turn off heat in winter by seasonal people.
- We need to establish recycling programs. Compost facility needed to keep materials and process here. Need a composting facility
- Reduce use of toxic substances e.g. pesticides, herbicides, agricultural and antibiotics.

Local Economy

- What is the link between “planning” and MV’s economy. How to maintain economic diversity-how to manage and shape market forces to sustain the Island’s character? Not clear that Islanders will hold firm against too many visitors to make possible the preservation of the very place they came to enjoy for its unique characteristics. Can MV resist the market forces that seem to threaten an alternative “way of life?”
- Become a destination point. [Someone else added]: maybe we have done this too well- lots more people. Creating healthy vacation economy that works for everyone (eco-tourism and history-oriented). Can we build a niche tourism that focuses on environment, history, culture instead of t-shirts? Future: attract the green, Internet set to create year-round economy.
- Screen the type of businesses.
- Public ownership of commercial districts might be modeled on farming and affordable housing districts. The goal would be to preserve small local businesses operated by year-round residents who struggle with rising rents. Forward future: limit rentals, assess lodging tax. Tax incentives. Fiscal responsibility in towns. Don’t always explain impacts before acting.

Traffic and Transportation

- Keep roadside vistas.
- Going forward: Is there any way to “soothe” the summer hectic-ness, traffic, etc. It’s alright to modernize traffic solutions. Nothing has changed in 45 years. We should make special improvements for traffic.
- More busses. No more cars: access to rentals-bikes. We need free, high frequency transit paid for by cars brought to the Island (include with SSA car ticket). How to create a transportation system in light of increased usage and demand. More frequent bus

service, late night services on weekends to limit DUI. How can we better inform tourists as they leave the boats about they public transportation; rather than tour busses?

- Improve and expand bike paths. Improve and extend bike paths. Few bike paths on major roads. Need connections between major sections.

Community Services

- Take the Capowock Theater by eminent domain! We need the Capowock Theater in VH.

Collaboration/Regionalization

- Island needs to protect itself from encroaching mainland values: hold firm to its beliefs. Islanders need to set the tone for the way they want their Island to be, not let others from outside determine their future. [Someone else wrote] strongly disagree. Diversity benefits all of us.
- Island-wide DCPC – We should develop/expand energy production. Develop/expand on-island food production. Apply town-wide DCPC for rest of Vineyard. Aquinnah town-wide DCPC, north shore, etc. Is MV's political fragmentation + conducive to Island-wide thinking, accomplishment-can broad issues such as new construction be done as business as usual. Apply town-wide DCPC's for the rest of Vineyard. Looking forward: more regional solutions. Need better coordination between organizations.
- MVC spends too much time on regulatory. Not enough on planning. It's a matter of resource priorities.

2. Learning from the Past Thirty Years – Nuggets Going Forward



After the café on Learning from the Past Thirty Years (see section 2), one representative from each café table summarized the key conclusions at a plenary session in response to two questions:

These “nuggets” were grouped by topic, and are transcribed below.

2.1 Going Forward, What Should We Keep Doing?

Community Character

- Maintain a sense of community: diversity history – folklore – heritage.
- Maintain/strengthen community character and diversity (including with affordable housing)
- Community Preservation: affordable housing, farms, historic preservation, community centers.
- Keep using zoning to site businesses appropriately and to retain character of island.

Open Space and Preserving Land

- Preserve as much land as possible, underdeveloped – for as long as we can.
- Open space – maintain impetus to make open space high priority (land bank).
- Sustain or increase rate of land conservation.
- Environmental protection – more, better, nature conservation, diversity.
- Preserve open space.
- Keep open land acquisition programs strong with public access (educate our young people about what we are doing.)
- Encourage continued acquisition of valuable property for public use.

Growth, Development, and Housing

- We need to continue to shape on development (particularly commercial) to be consistent with Martha’s Vineyard character.
- We need to continue to preserve natural land and public access to nature, water, and beauty.

Traffic and Transportation

- Public transportation has improved and should continue to be improved (i.e., schedule frequency). We need bus designs that will allow access to smaller roads.

- Expand public transportation.

Community Services

- Maintain high quality of social services.

Collaboration/Regionalization

- Keep this active conversation about Island Issues.
- Expand on cooperative efforts. If issue grows there is a mechanism in place so there is useful interchange of ideas to solve Island-wide problems.

2.2 Going Forward, What Should We Stop Doing/Do Differently/Start Doing?

Growth, Development and Housing

- We need to adopt stronger principles for growth control. Institute limits of building to lot size ratio. Better planning with limits to growth, incentives for cluster housing, better zoning, enforced planning location of limited growth. Re-Do zoning (villages, clusters, not sprawl, community centers). Provide incentives to encourage responsible building (size, green, location, and style/vernacular for both commercial and residential).
- Enhance village character and reinforce the distinction between village and rural. Maintain core businesses in downtowns with pedestrian access and a housing component. Use the “village concept” to manage development issues. Attend to planning-zoning by using village concept in planning.
- Take Capawock Theater by eminent domain!

Sustainability, Waste and Energy

- Start planning with a longer view and sustainability in mind.
- Create greater sustainability through energy independence and saving.
- Need a more comprehensive recycling and composting program. Make it easier for Homeowners and businesses.
- Stop polluting ground and pond water.

Local Economy

- Stabilize a year-round economy, developing sustainable living.

Traffic and Transportation

- Transportation/traffic/congestion
- Limit number of cars, better traffic regulation, limit car access to town centers, increase public transportation.
- Shift the emphasis from accommodating cars to providing for alternative rides – transit, bikes, and pedestrian zones.

Collaboration/ Regionalization

- We have not done well with consolidation (regionalization) of safety and health services (police, fire, ambulances).
- Foster more town collaboration Island wide (dare we say regionalization).

3. Priority Issues/Goals



The last activity involved having participants react to a preliminary compilation of issues/goals that have emerged in the process so far, namely in the first forum, in an on-line survey, and in a synopsis of previous plans. People were asked to prioritize the Issues/Goals and to indicate their level of agreement with the statements.

First, a preliminary list of 14 Issues/Goals was distributed and participants were invited to propose modifications to the formulation of the statements or to propose additional Issues/Goals.

There was a discussion of whether the goal/issue dealing with the economy should

propose favoring a more year-round economy less dependant on tourism or a more sustainable economy less dependent on growth.

It was agreed to add two Issues/Goals to this list, namely:

- Promoting fishing and farming,.
- Promoting smart growth development.

There was a discussion of the wording of the goal/issue dealing with smart growth, in that it could be interpreted to have two substantially different meanings, namely:

- Encouraging more development, with the proviso that it be done in a smart growth way, and
- Not necessarily favoring development, but wanting any development that does take place to be done in a smart growth way.

Time did not permit clarification of this issue and it was left to the Steering Committee to grapple with this question. The subsequent voting indicated a diverging level of agreement with this issue/goal, probably reflecting the lack of clarity with its intent.

After this discussion, participants indicated their level of agreement with the statements and their priorities by placing dots next to the various statements. People indicating the priorities were asked to identify whether they were year-round or seasonal residents.

Issue/Goal	Priority			Agreement					
	Year Round	Seasonal	Total	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree (total)	Disagree (total)
<i>(Shading indicates highest priorities and highest levels of agreement.)</i>									
Natural Environment: Preserve the Vineyard's natural environment, open spaces, scenic beauty and habitat.	21	8	29	3	0	3	49	52	3
Affordability: Deal not only with housing affordability at all income levels, but also with the overall high cost of living.	16	5	21	0	0	16	51	67	0
Year-Round Economy: Move towards a vital but more balanced year-round local economy, less dependent on tourism.	16	3	19	1	3	10	35	45	4
Water Quality: Protect the water quality in coastal ponds.	14	5	19	1	0	3	50	53	1
Pace of Development: Slow the pace of Island development and building, and concentrate it in certain areas.	15	3	18	3	3	11	36	47	6
Energy/Solid Waste: Promote energy independence and the recycling and composting of solid waste	13	2	15	1	1	9	51	60	2
Traffic Congestion: Reduce traffic congestion without "improving" roads, and promote alternate means of transportation.	9	6	15	3	0	15	36	51	3
Sustainability: Promote the sustainability of the Island.	10	4	14	1	0	3	48	51	1
Rural/Small Town: Maintain the rural, small-town quality of life	7	5	12	0	3	6	44	50	3
Distinct and Diverse Character: Protect the distinct and diverse character of the Island's six towns, especially the compact, mixed-use, walkable, historic village centers.	7	5	12	1	5	14	38	52	6
Regional: Forge a stronger regional perspective for dealing with issues and providing services.	8	1	9	2	1	16	37	53	3
Health and Education: Ensure adequate health and educational facilities and services.	7	2	9	2	0	17	38	55	2
Smart Growth: Encourage smart growth development.	7	2	9	12	8	5	31	36	20
Fishing/Farming: Promote fishing and farming.	7	1	8	1	2	8	43	51	3



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