PLAN FOR THE
TASHMOO HILL AREA
TISBURY, MA

PRELIMINARY WORKING DOCUMENT
DECEMBER 6, 2011

Prepared by the Martha's Vineyard Commission for the Tisbury Planning Board
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Note to Readers

This document is a preliminary draft of a planning study of the Tashmoo Hill Area – the area around the hill in Vineyard Haven where the Park and Ride is located, including the adjacent commercial area along Upper State Road. The purpose of the study was to look at the possible urban redevelopment that could take place in conjunction of the implementation of the system of Tisbury Collector Roads being proposed by the Tisbury Department of Public Works in collaboration with the Tisbury Planning Board.

It was worked on by urban design intern Thomas Oommen working for the MVC under the supervision of MVC Executive Director Mark London and Tisbury Planning Board Co-Chairman Henry Stephenson.

It was suggested that the plan could be reviewed and approved by the Martha's Vineyard Commission either as a guidance document for future applicants for MVC approval of Developments of Regional Impact and/or for possible changes to the DRI Checklist in order to raise the threshold for which projects need DRI review by the MVC.

This preliminary plan was submitted for discussion to the Tisbury Planning Board, with the intention of making further revisions as needed, before being discussed with other town officials as well as the public. However, when the Tisbury Town Meeting did not achieve the needed two thirds majority to implement the Tisbury Collector Road system, no further action was taken by the Planning Board.
INTRODUCTION

The Tashmoo Hill Sustainable Revitalization Area combines the Island’s most promising area for revitalization as a smart-growth neighborhood and the most promising proposed greenway connection linking dense town settlement to rural open space. It is located on the outskirts of central Vineyard Haven in the town of Tisbury. It was identified as an “Opportunity Area” in the recently completed regional comprehensive plan – the Island Plan.

The Tisbury Planning Board has been working on general conceptual plans for this area for several years. At its 2010 Town Meeting, the people of Tisbury authorized the implementation of a series of connector roads that will serve to structure the redevelopment of this area. Engineering plans for these roads and related multi-user paths were recently completed, and construction is projected to be finished in two years, based on available funding. The objective of this study is to plan for the related infill redevelopment of this area as well as for a network of open spaces, bike paths and trails.

- **Development Component:** The area has great potential for substantial infill redevelopment – combining existing and new businesses with a significant increase in housing – is an area immediately adjacent to one of the town’s main commercial areas. The aim of the study is to identify where development would best be located, to propose guidelines for this development, and to identify possible zoning and other regulatory changes to facilitate appropriate development.

- **Open Space Component:** This is coupled with the preservation of significant areas of open space in the adjacent areas in the towns of Tisbury and Oak Bluffs. The Island Plan proposes to balance sustainable development in smart growth locations with an integrated program of open space preservation, including the creation of an Island-wide greenway network with a series of “green wedges” – greenway connections linking the Island’s central open space, the State Forest, with the three largest towns on the Island.

This plan aims to identify improvements for the public realm and outline urban design parameters for private development. The planning will also identify the main features of proposed open space protection on public and private land as well as proposed multi-user paths and trails, and outline proposed zoning and other regulatory changes.
The study area is primarily made up of the land located between State Road and the Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road, extending to the conservation lands located to the west, and including the north side of State Road.
HISTORY

This map shows the area 1894 when it was totally outside the then small village of Vineyard Haven.

Tashmoo Hill is the historical name for the hill at the center of the study area, though this name is not commonly used today.
This map shows the existing road network – in black – as well as the proposed network of Tisbury Connector Roads in red.

The Connector Roads consist of a combination of existing, upgraded roads and new roads that will link the Edgartown – Vineyard Haven to three outlets on State Road, namely Holmes Hole Road, High Point Lane, and Evelyn Way.
OPEN SPACE OWNERSHIP

The area already has a considerable amount of land that has been protected as open space by conservation organizations including the Land Bank, and by the Town of Oak Bluffs.

An objective of this plan is to ensure that future development takes place in a way that links these properties into an effective network of open space spaces.
EXISTING TRAIL AND BIKE NETWORK

The area has an extensive network of trails, which can be extended to better link with each other and to existing neighborhoods.

The existing network of Shared Use Paths is limited and not well linked.
This map shows the areas identified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program as Priority Habitat for rare and endangered species. An objective of this plan is to ensure that as development of private land takes place, as much of this habitat is preserved as possible and its fragmentation is minimized.
WATER RESOURCES – PUBLIC WELLS

This map shows the protected areas around public wells, namely Zone I areas where development is prohibited, and Zone II areas.
This map shows the boundaries of the watersheds of the two coastal ponds covering the study area.

The Tashmoo Pond watershed, covering most of the study area, the MVC has calculated an interim nitrogen-loading limit of 5.6 kg/acre/year in order to maintain the health of the pond.

The Lagoon Pond watershed, located at the southeast corner of the study area, the interim nitrogen-loading limit was 3.4 kg/acre/year. However, information released in December 2011 by the Mass Estuaries Project indicates that the pond is already beyond the limit allowable to maintain the health of the pond.
WATER RESOURCES – WASTEWATER

Although the existing Tisbury wastewater treatment facility is located in the study area, it presently only serves downtown Vineyard Haven. This map shows possible extensions of the sewer service area.
As suggested by its name, the study area is quite hilly. Tashmoo Hill itself rises to a height of about 157’ above mean sea level at its summit, located just east of the park-and-ride.
SLOPE ANALYSIS

This area shows the steepness of the topography. Ideally, development will be avoided on the steepest areas.
CURRENT ZONING

The central part of the study area is zoned B2 – Commercial. The rest of the area is various categories of residential zoning.
EXISTING BUILDING PATTERN

This map shows the building pattern in the area. It shows larger buildings in the commercial area along State Road, and smaller residential buildings in the surrounding neighborhoods.
EXISTING BUILDING USE

The commercial area includes mainly retail and office buildings along State Road and light industrial and warehouse buildings further off the road.
This plan shows the main features in the study area and its surrounding neighborhoods.
FUTURE ROAD NETWORK

This plan shows the proposed additions to the open space network in order to propose the network of Connector Roads is shown in red, namely:

- Existing roads to be upgraded, shown in solid red, and
- New roads to be created in dashed red.

In addition, additional local roads could be added later in order to improve access and visibility to adjacent properties to further enhance their development potential.
This plan shows the proposed additions to the open space network in order to link the existing open spaces into a coherent network of spaces. This would provide for a continuous greenway allowing people to move in a rural-like environment from close to the heart of town to the large area of conservation land on the southwest of the map, which subsequently links to the State Forest. The continuous greenway network would also provide for linked habitat for wildlife.

On private property, the plan shows (in green crosshatching) which areas would ideally be preserved as open space, assuming that about half the property would be protected as part of the review process at the town and/or the MVC. The aim is to ensure that the protected areas on each property join together to provide the most useful overall open space network. Not all these open spaces would be open to the public, but should preferably include a trail that provides the key linkages.
PROPOSED OPEN SPACE NETWORK

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TRAIL NETWORK CONCEPT

This plan shows the proposed extensions to the existing network of trails and bicycle accommodation, in order to provide complete networks that allow people to get from one area to another.

For Shared Use Paths, the map shows:

- Existing SUPs,
- Proposed SUPs, where there is a specific proposal in a given location,
- Potential SUPs, where it would be desirable to provide a linkage in the future (in some cases, alternative routes to provide the same link are shown).

Bike routes are used where it is not possible to provide a separate, off-road, Shared Use Path.

Similarly, for Trails, the map shows:

- Existing trails,
- Proposed trails,
- Potential future trails.
This map shows the presently vacant lots in the area close to the connector roads.
DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

This plan shows the ratio between the assessed value of buildings to the overall assessed value of the property. If the value of the existing buildings is relatively low – or zero for vacant land – it indicates that there is a greater likelihood that the property might be subject to a major improvement in the future, either upgrading the existing building/use or changing the building/use.
ENHANCED DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

This plan shows those properties in the immediate vicinity of the connector roads which would have an enhanced development potential due to the construction of the connector roads. It highlights those lots which are presently vacant or whose building values represent less than 25 percent of the total property assessment, both of which are indicators that there is a greater likelihood that the property might be subject to a major improvement in the future, either upgrading the existing building/use or changing the building/use.
DEVELOPMENT PER EXISTING ZONING
The existing and proposed new roads were classified into three categories, in order to allow tailoring the design characteristics of the road and the design guidelines for adjacent construction.

These categories are:

- Rural Road,
- Village Center Road – Major, and
- Village Center Road – Minor.
ROADWAY CHARACTER – PROPOSED ROAD SECTIONS

Note that these are initial suggestions by the intern who worked on this, which are being put forward for discussion purposes.

The Rural Roads pass through conservation land or presently undeveloped land. It is proposed that a significant no-cut zone be maintained along these roads in order to preserve their natural, rural character.

The Village Roads – Major are the main roads of the connector road network. It is proposed that buildings be set back 15 feet from the edge of the right of way, with the possibility of porches or other minor extensions into part of this setback. The maximum height of the main façade along the road should be 24’, with the possibility of taller portions set farther back.

The Village Roads – Minor are the secondary roads that might be built in the area. It is proposed that buildings be set back between 5 and 15 feet from the edge of the right of way. The maximum height of the main façade along the road should be 18’, with the possibility of taller portions set farther back.

In all cases, there should be mandatory gable roofs for all portions of a building within 60’ from the roadway.
The area now has a combination of traditional buildings, typically two stories high with gable roofs set back about 20 feet from the road.

The current zoning allows, or even requires, new buildings that are not compatible with the traditional character of the area, or of Martha's Vineyard in general, in that:

- It allows large, flat-roofed buildings close in highly visible locations,
- It allows three-story high vertical walls directly abutting major roads,
- It allows large, undifferentiated building facades,
- It requires minimum setbacks greater than the traditional building line,
- It allows roadside parking, more appropriate for an off-Island, suburban location.

It is proposed that the zoning be revised to allow smaller setbacks, to require gable roofs, to require a certain amount of vegetation along the road, to require that parking be at the side or rear, and to set building heights appropriate for each type of road.
ROADWAY CHARACTER – UPPER STATE ROAD - VIEWS

These sketches illustrate the existing situation, the type of inappropriate development that could take place under existing zoning, and the type of development that would be possible with the adoption of zoning changes and/or design guidelines to ensure more appropriate development.
EXISTING

ALLOWED BY CURRENT ZONING

POTENTIAL OPTION

Incentives for pedestrian scale elements like porches

Protect existing vegetation

Require gabled roofs, while maintaining height allowed by existing regulations

Continuous well designed sidewalks