



ISLAND PLAN

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE VINEYARD



an overview



the Island Plan an overview

There is nothing modest about these approaches. But with wise choices, cooperative planning, consistent implementation, and constant evaluation and adjustment, we can create the future we want rather than just settling for the future we get.

The Challenges

Martha's Vineyard is a cherished place. It faces strong development pressures and intense forces of change, however, that may diminish those features we treasure the most... unless we act now.

The Island Plan is the product of four years of study and discussion by our community. The findings demonstrate conclusively that both year-round and seasonal residents are concerned that the Vineyard and our way of life are succumbing to the cumulative impacts of growth and change. Consider the following:

- Current zoning could allow as many as 12,000 more homes and guest houses, an increase of 70%.
- Every year, roughly 600 acres of the woods and fields we take for granted are developed.

- Residential septic systems and fertilizers have polluted our coastal ponds. Clean-up estimates range from \$150 to \$250 million today and could double if growth and pollution continue at current rates.
- The \$132,000 income needed to purchase a median-priced \$650,000 home is more than twice what most Vineyarders make.
- The high cost of living on the Vineyard, our seasonal economy, and our physical isolation place great strains on individuals and families.
- Traffic congestion could increase six-fold if growth continues unchecked.

That's the bad news.

To obtain the complete Island Plan, visit www.islandplan.org or contact the Martha's Vineyard Commission at 508-693-3453. It can also be found in libraries and town halls.



All photos by Mark London unless noted.

goals

The Opportunities

There's plenty of good news, too.

The Vineyard community has successfully faced major challenges in the past, and we can do it again.

We did well to protect hundreds of acres of open space, to keep our tree-lined roads, and to set up an Island-wide transit system. We provided hundreds of units of permanently affordable housing. We fought assaults on our historic town centers and avoided large-scale commercial development, vast parking lots and bright signs. We created unique organizations such as the Land Bank and Martha's Vineyard Commission to help us meet our challenges.

In the face of widespread concern about the future, the Martha's Vineyard Commission initiated a process to prepare an Island Plan. Its purpose? To chart a course to the kind of future the Vineyard community wants, and to outline a series of actions to help us navigate that course.

This document contains highlights from the Island Plan.

During the work on this Plan, thousands of residents and visitors responded to surveys; hundreds of neighbors and friends participated in work groups and forums. The result is a Plan that examines the challenges facing the Vineyard and sets out long-range goals and objectives in response. It contains over two hundred strategies for dealing with those challenges.

The Island Plan is a guide to keeping the Island safe, beautiful, healthy, and culturally rich—the best place it can be for our children and grandchildren. We can not only ensure that future development responds to community needs, but we can remedy the less fortunate results of past actions by bringing polluted coastal ponds back to health, by reestablishing fragmented habitat, and by restoring scenic beauty that has been compromised.

Now is the time to act.

- Conserve enough of the Vineyard's distinct ecological regions to retain their biodiversity, to protect the Island's scenic character, and to support recreational uses.
- Restore the ecological vibrancy of salt ponds and bays with healthy expanses of eelgrass, sustainable shellfish populations, and varied recreational opportunities.
- Maintain a community that is economically, culturally, and ethnically diverse, remaining intimately connected to the traditional ways of the Vineyard.
- Protect the distinct and diverse character of the Island's six towns, while forging a stronger regional perspective for dealing with Island-wide issues.
- Stimulate a vital and balanced local economy that is more self-reliant and more diverse.
- Produce as much of our essentials, such as food and energy, as we can, and convert our waste into useful products.
- Address climate change by reducing use of fossil fuels, harnessing renewable energy sources, and adapting to anticipated impacts on the Vineyard.
- Sustain our year-round community by addressing housing affordability and the high cost of living.
- Direct development to town and village areas, and limit building in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Reinforce compact, mixed-use, walkable town and village centers.

managing development and growth



THE VINEYARD HAS GROWN FASTER than any mainland Massachusetts community over the past quarter century. Our geographical isolation and strong community actions have preserved the Island's remarkably appealing qualities. However, if development continues as it has, it will threaten our environment and our beautiful, historic, and cohesive communities. Excessive or poorly managed growth will make the Vineyard more like everywhere else. It will undermine the very qualities that make people want to live or visit here, slowly eroding the things we love.

Continuing the trends of the past three decades and developing all available land permitted under current zoning is neither sustainable nor desirable. It would result in unacceptable traffic congestion, enormous additional costs for treating wastewater, fragmentation and destruction of habitat, and a host of other negative impacts.

We need to moderate and better manage growth to protect our sensitive environments and to preserve the character of the Vineyard. This will require a variety of strategies: new zoning rules, revised thresholds and criteria for MVC project review, carefully targeted open space acquisition, and other tools to ensure that the development that does take place fits well with its surroundings.

“The challenge is not to push back the forces of time—for that will inevitably fail—but to direct and shape those forces into something more civilized, more pleasing, and more gentle and graceful than it might otherwise be.”

PAUL GOLDBERGER
ARCHITECTURE CRITIC

For more information, see section 2 Development and Growth of the Island Plan

facts

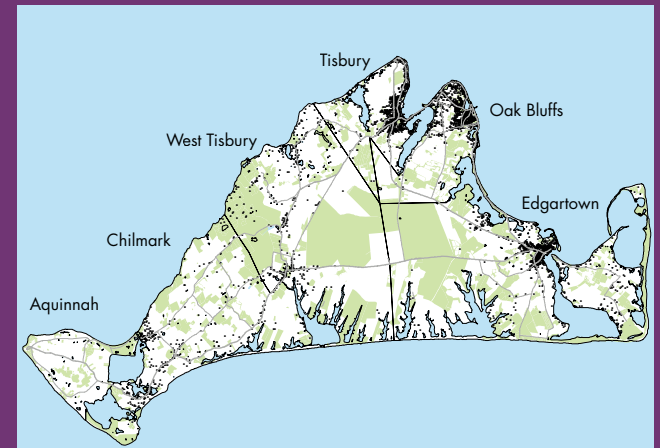
- Currently, 29% of the Vineyard's 89 square miles of land is fully developed, 36% is protected open space, 4% is wetlands, and 31% are "available" for future development or protection.
- The future of the Island depends on what happens to the almost 18,000 acres of woods and fields that are available for either development or open space protection.
- For the past decade, until the current recession, almost 200 new houses were built annually. About 600 acres of undeveloped land were built on and about 150 acres were placed into conservation each year.
- In surveys of almost 3,000 Vineyarders, 95% said protecting the Island's environment and character was a high priority. Only 7% said promoting development was a high priority. About 65% said controls over the quantity and quality of development should be strengthened; 7% said they should be relaxed.

strategies

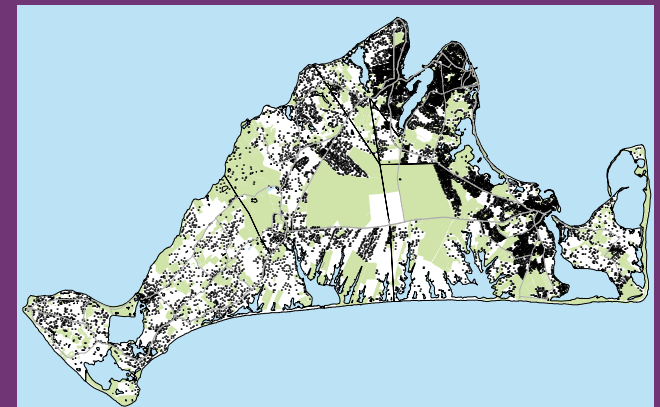
Here are 3 of the 15 recommended strategies addressing Development and Growth.

- Direct development to appropriate areas:** The Island Plan's Land Use Guidance Map shows areas which should have little or no development and other areas where additional development is desirable, or at least more acceptable. Zoning revisions based on the map could reduce density in some areas and allow more residential units in commercial zones, fostering greater mixed use and vital town centers.
- Implement rate of growth regulations:** Island towns should adopt long-term "rate of growth" regulations to limit the rate of construction. These should be flexible, perhaps exempting affordable housing or development in "smart growth" locations.
- Require project review for sensitive projects:** The project review process—special permit review by town boards and Development of Regional Impact review by the MVC—can help ensure the appropriate amount and design of development on sensitive properties such as those located in scenic viewsheds or critical habitats. This could mean revising thresholds that determine which projects are reviewed, streamlining projects in appropriate locations in town and other growth areas, and ensuring greater review in resource protection areas.

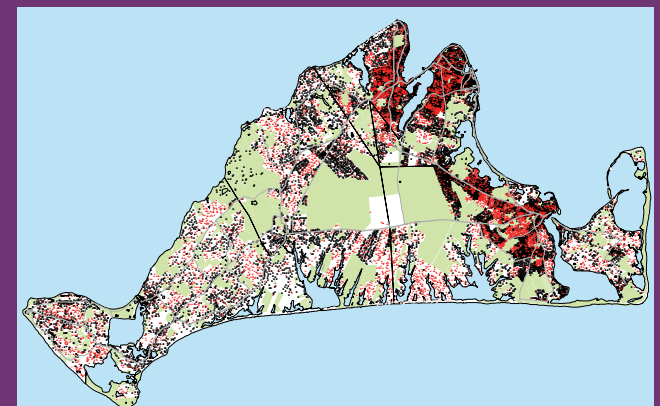
Land Development Status (in acres)							
	AQ	CH	ED	OB	TI	WT	Total
Developed land	703	3,361	4,284	2,157	1,752	4,226	16,483
Protected open space	832	3,336	7,257	1,273	944	7,078	20,720
Wetland	389	520	710	119	163	269	2,170
Available land	1,494	4,406	4,965	1,131	1,340	4,479	17,815
Total Area	3,418	11,623	17,216	4,680	4,199	16,052	57,188



Buildings 50 Years Ago: Houses and other buildings, of those standing today.



Buildings Today: Houses and other buildings.



Buildings 50 Years From Now: Possible new houses and other buildings (red) based on available land and current zoning.

protecting our **natural environment**



MARTHA'S VINEYARD'S NATURAL BEAUTY is often cited by residents and visitors as its main attraction. We walk the woods and beaches, we fish, sail, swim, bike, hunt, and bird watch, and we enjoy the scenery and sunsets.

People are frequently upset when land is cleared for development. But nearly half of today's undeveloped woods and fields could be built on in the future. Favorite vistas could be blocked. Extended stretches of tree-canopied rural roads could become lined with houses and large lawns. Agricultural fields could become subdivisions. Areas of open land still large enough to support rich populations of plants and animals could be so fragmented over time—with a road here, a house and lawn there—that their biodiversity (and especially the survival of some extremely rare species) could be threatened.

We need to better protect our Island's remaining open spaces, vistas, farms, and habitat.

The Island Plan recommends stepping up the pace of open space protection, doubling the acreage of native habitat in sensitive environmental regions, and restoring areas that have been compromised in the past. It proposes to create greenway corridors spanning the length and breadth of the Vineyard, to expand the Island-wide trail network and shoreline access, to protect more scenic vistas and roadways, and to grow more food locally to meet a greater portion of our year-round needs.

Through the ecological restoration and management of conservation lands, and practices such as native plant landscaping, we can do more than prevent further environmental degradation. We can create a Vineyard that is ecologically healthier and biologically richer than the one we have today.

facts

- The Vineyard has one of the highest concentrations of endangered species in the Commonwealth.
- Currently, 36% of the Island is protected open space, either through outright ownership or conservation easements.
- Of the 65 miles of ocean shoreline, 23 miles are public and 8 are limited (town residents and homeowner associations). The rest are private.
- We produce a small fraction of our own food today. This proportion could drop significantly if the population increases and houses replace farms. Alternatively, it could increase significantly if we prioritize agricultural use.



The Vineyard is ecologically unique and is also unique in how closely its human and natural environments are connected.

The Island Plan proposes land planning and management that will allow biological processes to play out at the scale needed to be viable. These same measures will also help with water quality protection and preserve scenic and recreational opportunities for Islanders of the future.

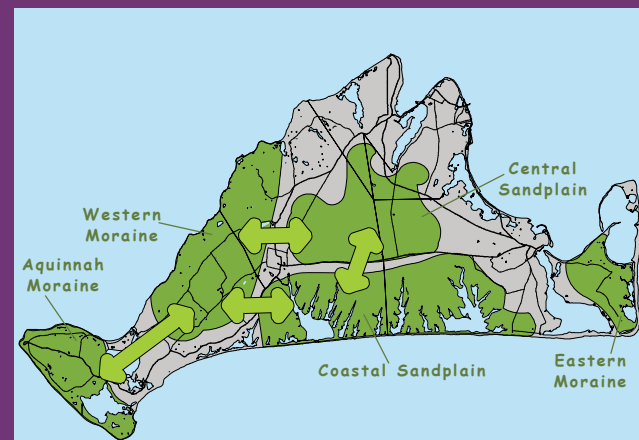
Matt Pelikan, naturalist, Oak Bluffs

For more information, see section 3
Natural Environment of the Island Plan.

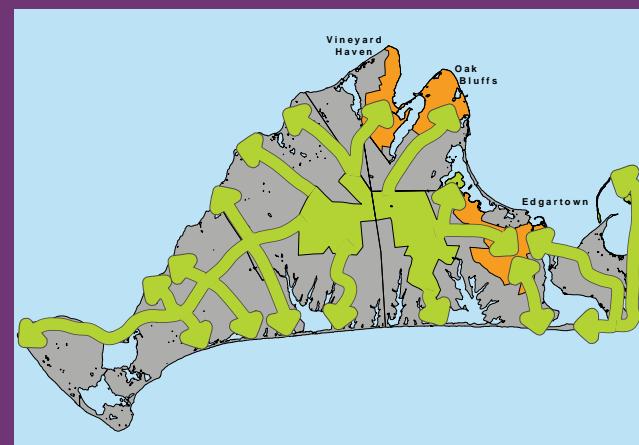
strategies

Here are 5 of the 38 recommended strategies addressing the Natural Environment.

- **Accelerate the rate of open space acquisition:** Increasing the purchase of open spaces and conservation easements from the current 150 acres per year—prioritizing areas of significant natural resources—will require additional sources of revenue.
- **Require partial open space protection as properties are developed:** In environmentally sensitive areas, the MVC and towns should establish clear standards requiring that a portion of each property be preserved as open space when the property is developed. This should focus on protecting the most important habitat or other features.
- **Work with property owners and public entities to help them restore and manage their lands in a way that furthers open space goals:** We can provide owners of developed properties with information and assistance regarding the impacts of non-native plantings, clearing of understory brush, fencing, and lighting.
- **Revise regulations to protect scenic roads:** We should revise regulations and ensure project review for roadside properties. In some areas, this means protecting open vistas. In other areas, it could focus on preserving a no-cut zone to buffer new development, on keeping roadside fences low and open, and on limiting signage and lighting.
- **Establish a program allowing long-term voluntary undevelopment of critical natural properties:** “Undevelopment” involves conservation groups or public entities buying “life estates” from willing sellers in prioritized areas. At the end of the owner’s lifetime, the house would be moved or recycled, and the land restored to open space, usually as native vegetation with public access whenever possible.



Eco-Regions: These are the minimum viable landscape areas needed to preserve the biodiversity of the Island’s five significant Eco-Regions.



Greenways: A network of open space corridors would eventually extend from the State Forest and a central spine toward each shoreline and the centers of the down-Island town centers.

The Society for Ecological Restoration International

RESOURCE

SER is made up of individuals and organizations actively engaged in ecologically sensitive repair and management of ecosystems. The aim is to support communities promoting ecological restoration as a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and reestablishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.

We can learn from this and other off-Island case studies and resources pursuing similar objectives.

maintaining the Island's distinct **built environment**



THE VINEYARD'S HISTORIC AND COHESIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENT is among the most remarkable in the country. It is an important part of the scenic beauty at the heart of the Island's character, identity, and visitor-based economy.

The character of our neighborhoods and towns is threatened by demolition of significant older buildings and construction of new buildings that are oversized, that don't fit their surroundings, and that violate environmental building practices.

The Island Plan recommends measures to ensure that each neighborhood and streetscape is reinforced, not undermined, by new development. These measures are intended to strengthen our historic downtowns, to modify our newer commercial areas with preservation and careful infill echoing the successful townscapes of the past, and to make environmental building practices ubiquitous.

CASE STUDY

Providence Revolving Fund

Since 1980, the Providence Revolving Fund has invested \$15 million to leverage over \$125 million in projects to preserve the city's architectural heritage and stimulate community revitalization in historic commercial areas and neighborhoods. One program purchases endangered properties that are then developed for owner-occupied affordable housing, and makes rehabilitation loans to owners who cannot get conventional financing. Funds are committed on a short-term basis and are "revolved" back into the capital fund when a building is resold or as loans are repaid.

For more information, see section 4 Built Environment of the Island Plan.

facts

- There are 2,000 buildings more than 100 years old on the Vineyard and another 1,500 built prior to the end of World War II. Only a quarter of these are protected in historic districts.
- The percentage of homes over 4,000 square feet has increased from 3 to 5% in Tisbury and from 8 to 19% in Chilmark since 1990.



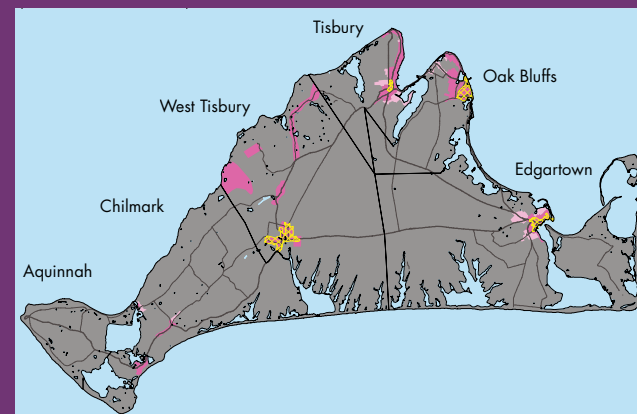
Much of what we most appreciate about the Island is the subtle and complex interplay between the natural and man-made elements. To ensure that the delicate dance of these varied elements is properly balanced, we need greater effort to ensure that buildings and neighborhoods are preserved and built to reinforce the Vineyard's special character.

Bruce MacNelly, architect, West Tisbury

strategies

Here are 4 of the 27 recommended strategies addressing the Built Environment.

- **Enlarge historic districts to protect all historic areas and traditional neighborhoods:** We should enlarge existing districts and create new ones to protect the parts of historic areas and traditional neighborhoods with no protection. It is the most effective way to protect the quality of people's streetscapes and neighborhoods, and their property values. This would provide for review of proposals to demolish or modify buildings.
- **Produce a publication on Building the Vineyard Way.** A guidebook for property owners and building designers would explain what defines the Vineyard's distinct historic areas, older neighborhoods, buildings, roadscapes, public spaces, and landscaping. It should include guidelines on how to protect existing buildings and features, and how new development can fit in, as well as information about green building and ways to reduce environmental impacts such as using dark-sky-compliant lighting.
- **Set up a review process for high-impact buildings based on size or other criteria.** A design review process at the town and/or MVC level for critical buildings, such as those much larger than a neighborhood average, would help ensure that new or enlarged buildings harmonize well. This would complement zoning revisions to reflect each neighborhood's existing character.
- **Set up a program to encourage energy/green-building standards for existing buildings.** A program of education and technical assistance can provide advice to owners about possible energy savings and other advantages of environmental building design, and can help with access to grants, materials, products, and expertise. This would be a complement to new Commonwealth and local regulations for energy-efficient construction.



Historic Areas and Traditional Neighborhoods: Only a small fraction of historic areas (concentrations of hundred-year-old buildings, shown in dark pink) or traditional neighborhoods (concentrations of sixty-year-old buildings, shown in light pink) are protected with historic district designation (yellow hatching).

	Pre-1905	1906-1945	Since 1946	Total Buildings	Total Area (acres)
Historic Districts	806	128	139	1,073	502
Historic Areas	888	556	828	2,272	2,135
Traditional Neighborhoods	52	394	493	939	545
Remainder of Island	225	464	10,278	10,967	53,859
Total	1,971	1,542	11,738	15,260	57,040



Tisbury Urban Design: The MVC is working with the Tisbury Planning Board on a design study to identify existing defining characteristics as guidance for future development.

fostering a rich **social environment**



Photo of volunteers building the new Agricultural Hall by Alison Shaw

VINEYARDERS GENERALLY THINK OF THEMSELVES IN VERY POSITIVE WAYS—traditional but creative, small-town but sophisticated, involved but independent, self-reliant but caring. We have a history of accepting and taking care of one another.

Yet our growing population and changing demographics bring new challenges that warrant new perspectives.

Our population is rapidly aging, and we will need an array of new approaches to serve this older population. Growing economic disparities threaten our middle class, and we wonder if we will become an island of wealthy seasonal residents served by a largely commuting underclass. Our physical separation from the mainland is a hurdle to health services and educational opportunities. An influx of non-English speakers is straining our long-standing view of tolerance.

If we are to maintain a healthy, engaged, and diverse community, we must keep our strong sense of ourselves as an Island that cares for its own. At the same time, we will need to take on the same issues that plague rural communities all over the country: health care, healthy lifestyle choices, and efforts in education and the arts to reflect and amplify our heritage and prepare us for the future.

For more information, see section 5 Social Environment of the Island Plan.

facts

- The Island's population has multiplied more than 2½ times since the 1970s.
- We are among the fastest aging communities in Massachusetts. The proportion of the Island's population between 60 and 70 years old will triple in the next ten years.
- Half of Vineyarders would prefer to age at home.

“A small place, as I know from my own experience, can provide opportunities of work and learning, and a fund of beauty, solace and pleasure—in addition to its difficulties—that cannot be exhausted in a lifetime.”

WENDELL BERRY, AUTHOR & POET



Our Island institutions and town departments provide excellent health care, social, and educational services consistent with their specific mandates. Our greatest challenge is to look beyond these mandates and form broader and deeper alliances to address needs not currently being met, particularly those of the most economically challenged members of our community.

Tad Crawford,
retired energy company senior executive, West Tisbury

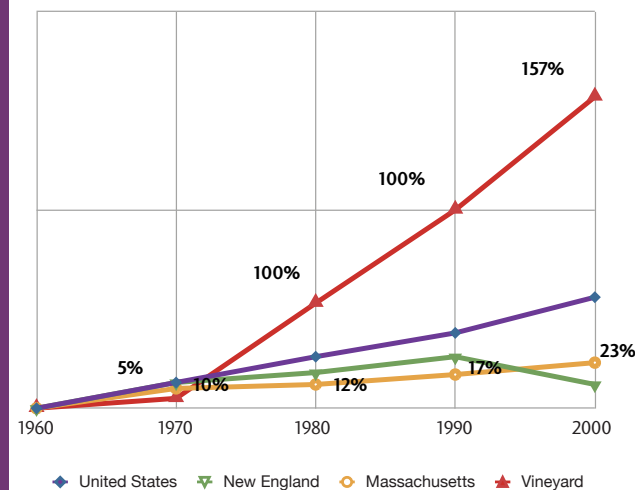
strategies

Here are 4 of the 16 recommended strategies addressing Social Environment.

- **Improve coordination among institutions and town boards on social environment issues:** Though there are some mechanisms to foster Island-wide collaboration within specific fields, we need to define ways to promote Island-wide cross-discipline collaboration to deal with all aspects of the social environment.
- **Create a structure to address public health issues Island-wide:** Town Boards of Health focus mainly on local, environmental concerns such as septic and restaurant inspections. An Island-wide structure could help town boards by concentrating on specialized and more broadly based activities, such as Island-wide health data.
- **Provide professional development programs:** We can make it easier for residents to take professional courses and work towards certification in various fields. A model might be the hospital's successful nurse certification training, combining on-Island courses with visiting professors, together with concentrated off-Island specialized training.
- **Create an arts/cultural collaborative:** A new collaborative entity could take the leadership in supporting, coordinating, and promoting arts and culture on the Vineyard. It could offer artists or groups assistance and training in the business aspects of their creative pursuits, maintain a database directory, help coordinate event calendars, take on promotion, and help solicit funding.

	AQ	CH	ED	OB	TI	WT	Total
Population Year-Round (2008)	357	971	3,932	3,735	3,811	2,638	15,444
Total Area (square miles)	6.0	20.6	26.8	7.1	7.2	25.5	93.2
Population Density per sq mi (2008)	62	47	147	523	530	104	166

Population: Three-quarters of the Island's people live in the three down-Island towns. The density of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury is more than ten times that of Chilmark.



Population Growth: In the thirty years prior to the 2000 Census, population growth on the Vineyard far outpaced that of Massachusetts, New England, or the United States as a whole.

Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Communities

RESOURCE

The Partnership works with communities, organizations, and funders to support, develop and sustain healthier and safer communities. The aims are to stimulate collaboration opportunities among public health and community leaders, to improve a community's ability to implement change, to find new ways to help communities include their diverse populations, and to build on research, community wisdom and experience to implement effective health promotion and disease prevention strategies.

making local **livelihood and commerce** thrive

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE ENSURE JOBS and housing for this generation and for our children, to allow our young people to remain on the Island and make a viable living.

The bulk of the Vineyard's economy is based on providing services to seasonal homeowners and visitors. As a result, we have a high proportion of low-wage jobs and a high rate of seasonal unemployment. The combination of lower than average incomes and a high cost of living makes it challenging to earn a living and raise a family here.

While we should strengthen our vacation-related industries—hospitality, retail, construction, real estate—we should also move to a more balanced and diverse, year-round economy that offers higher paying jobs and more opportunities for people who grow up here to stay or return.

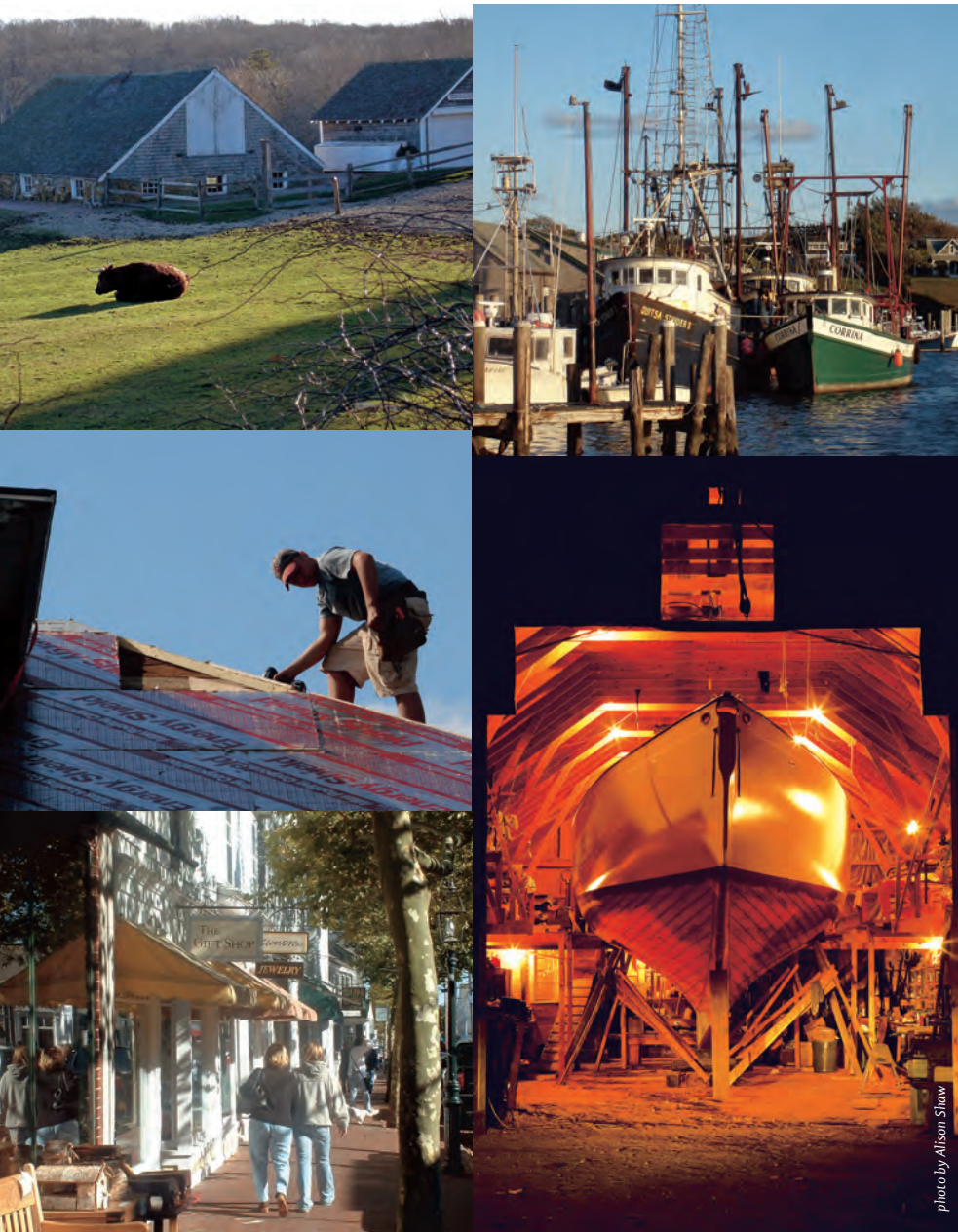
This means reducing the dollars that “leak” off-Island (instead of re-circulating within the Island community) by supporting local businesses that provide good year-round jobs. There are many areas where we can replace imports with Island-based products, from small craft industry and energy production, to financial and professional services.

Business Alliance for Local Living Economies

R E S O U R C E

BALLE brings together small business leaders, economic development professionals, government officials, social innovators, and community leaders to build local living economies. It provides resources to help businesses flourish in local economies that are community-based, green, and fair. It focuses on businesses that build community such as sustainable agriculture, green building, renewable energy, community capital, zero-waste manufacturing, and independent retail.

For more information, see section 6 Livelihood and Commerce of the Island Plan.



facts

- From winter to summer, the number of jobs grows from about 6,100 to 10,500, plus an estimated 3,300 self-employed individuals.
- The Island's wages are 27% below the state's average. The cost of living is about 70% higher than the national average and 26% higher than Boston.
- More than 70% of Island businesses are small, fewer than 5 employees.
- Many low-wage workers earn significantly more than those doing the same jobs in other places in Massachusetts. Conversely, traditionally high-wage jobs tend to pay less on the Island than elsewhere in the state.
- Though the number of new houses built annually has declined from 800 to fewer than 200, over the past few decades the percentage of construction-related jobs has remained steady at 13% as renovations and additions increase.
- About half of the Island's workers are employed in vacation-related industries. They account for 80% of the Island's low-wage jobs.

We need to ensure that the younger generation of Vineyarders can make good careers here, such as by providing services to local companies as I do. New communications technology makes it increasingly feasible for people who love the Vineyard to live here and work remotely. The key to our local economy holding strong is keeping our money on the Vineyard, by having more people and companies get their goods and services on-Island.

Brian Athearn, Business Owner, West Tisbury



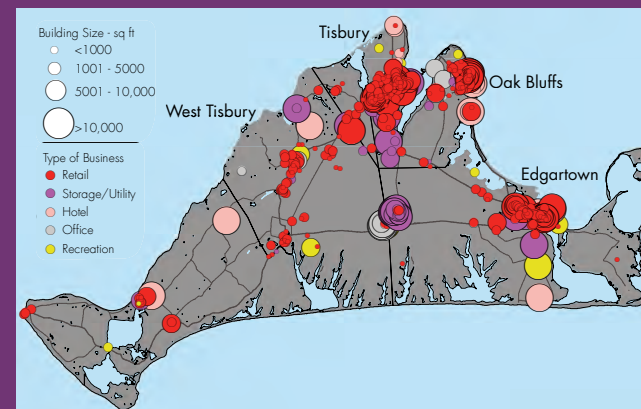
strategies

Here are 3 of the 15 recommended strategies addressing Livelihood and Commerce.

- **Create new financial mechanisms, such as a revolving loan fund, to promote investment in local enterprise:** A new funding mechanism would give community-based investors the opportunity to earn fair-market returns from local for-profit initiatives. There is significant investment capital available to the Vineyard that can be channeled to spur entrepreneurial efforts to expand export products and services, to harness local renewable energy sources, and to expand agriculture-related production.
- **Increase community awareness of the impact of purchasing on Island:** We need to inform and remind Islanders—in ways that influence individual and institutional actions—of the inter-related issues of buying local products and services, reducing economic leakage off-Island, and expanding the Island's capacity to provide more and better services. This can include an Island-wide Buy Local campaign that emphasizes the community value, authenticity, and economic advantages of local production and purchasing.

- **Create a world-class heritage tourism program:** We should encourage a well-marketed program of educational, ecological, recreational, spiritual, physical, social, and historical activities that could run off-season, to attract participants mainly from off-Island but open to all. It could be a partnership between the Island's hospitality industry and the Island's environmental and cultural not-for-profit sector.

For more information, see section 6 Livelihood and Commerce of the Island Plan.



Commercial buildings: The dots reflect the floor areas of retail (38%), hotels/inns (22%), office (8%), and recreation/entertainment/other (14%) of a total of 3,400,000 square feet.

	AQ	CH	ED	OB	TI	WT	Total
Businesses with employees (2008)	6	67	355	214	373	134	1,162
Jobs (2008)	73	271	2,407	1,657	2,555	806	7,814
Commercial Floor Space (thousand s.f.)	14	77	1,258	610	1,082	382	3,424
Property Assessed Values (\$ millions - 2008)	\$778	\$3,166	\$7,559	\$3,130	\$3,129	\$2,985	\$21,027

The Vineyard Economy: Over 81% of businesses and 86% of commercial floor space are located in the three down-Island towns.

“In a sense, all discussion about local economy is about giving up some measure of efficiency for other values.”

BILL MCKIBBEN,
AUTHOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST

increasing **energy and waste** autonomy



photo by Tyler Studds

WE IMPORT VIRTUALLY ALL OUR ENERGY AND EXPORT VIRTUALLY ALL OUR SOLID WASTE—at tremendous expense.

We can better manage these resources to the benefit of both our environment and our economy. The two go hand in hand.

The extra expense of bringing energy from the mainland means our costs are among the highest in the U.S. Our systems for obtaining and using energy are environmentally unsustainable, and we have little control over future energy supply or prices. Waste is just the reverse; we ship almost all of it off-Island and pay a premium to do so.

Our first line of defense is to cut our energy consumption in half by reducing the energy used in our buildings and the amount of gas used in our cars. Requiring energy-efficient new construction and encouraging improved energy efficiency in existing buildings are top priorities. Then, we can produce a large fraction of the energy we use from renewable sources by harnessing the wind, the sun, and the tides. Since we are located in an area with the best wind resources on the Atlantic coast, wind turbines can provide not only for the Vineyard's needs but also supply energy to other areas.

Similarly, wiser use of what we now discard as waste could reclaim reuseable materials, reduce waste transportation costs, create new economic opportunities, and even produce some of our energy.

Fox Island Energy Co-op

CASE STUDY

Vinalhaven, an island resort community in Maine about one-tenth the size of the Vineyard, is confronting its high electricity rates by generating its own electricity. The people of the island created an energy cooperative. After several years of feasibility studies, voters overwhelmingly approved the \$15 million Fox Island Wind Project in July 2008 to erect three 388' high wind turbines on the island. The turbines became operational November 2009 and noise levels have been greater than anticipated. Energy rates will be stabilized at about current levels for the next twenty years.

facts

- The Vineyard annually uses the energy equivalent of 757,000 barrels of oil, three quarters of a thousand-foot-long supertanker.
- Our energy costs are among the highest in the United States, draining more than \$64 million from the Island economy each year to purchase energy from off-Island.
- Transportation accounts for 37% of the energy consumed on the Vineyard.
- Every year, we ship off 33,500 tons of waste, 15% of the Steamship Authority's annual freight traffic.
- Our 1.3 trillion watt-hours of annual energy use could grow to 1.6 TWh with current trends, or be cut to about 0.6 TWh with the modest growth scenario favored in the Island Plan and with aggressive energy efficiency measures.
- Generating 0.6 TWh of electricity would theoretically need about 85,000 individual 10kw wind turbines (like the one at the high school) at a cost of about \$2.6 billion, or about 32 large-scale, offshore, 6MW wind turbines at a cost of about \$675 million.



The Vineyard will be especially affected by climate change, with increased storms and with sea-level rise impacting our low-lying downtowns. By limiting our energy consumption and using renewable sources, we have an opportunity not only to help life on the Island, but also to protect ourselves from when oil prices go through the roof. Making the investment now means much-needed environmental and cost stability down the road.

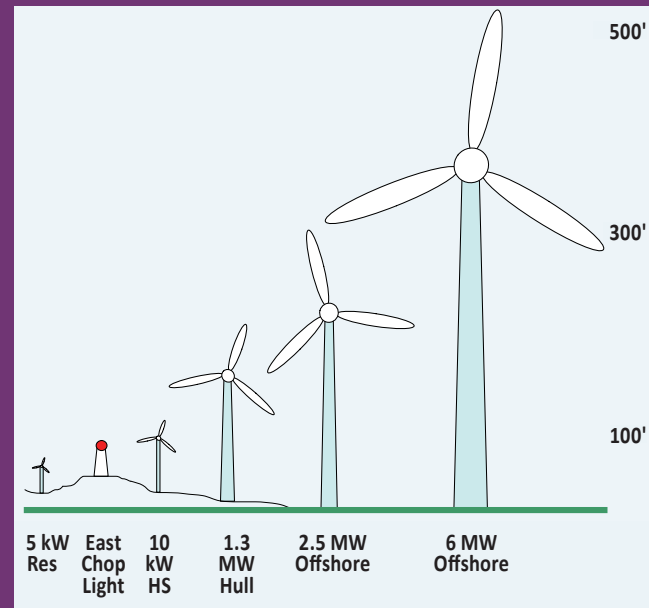
Sharon Strimling Florio, business owner, Oak Bluffs

strategies

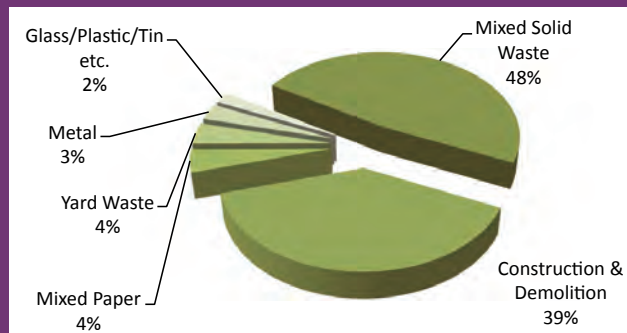
Here are 4 of the 35 recommended strategies addressing Energy and Waste.

- **Adopt a Vineyard Energy Code requiring new construction to be more energy efficient:** The Commonwealth's Green Communities Act allows Vineyard towns to adopt local building codes that require improved energy performance for new buildings and major renovations, and to gradually increase performance targets.
- **Establish an electrical cooperative:** Producing our own energy through community-owned facilities such as a carefully located offshore windfarm—with siting determined by the local community—could stabilize and eventually reduce our electric bills.
- **Promote use of hybrid and other energy-efficient vehicles:** Measures to encourage use of fuel-efficient vehicles include: having towns and other public agencies buy them; requiring that taxis and a proportion of car rentals be fuel-efficient; organizing an information campaign to encourage individual purchase; and offering incentives such as priority ferry reservations and better parking spaces. The Island's low speeds and short distances make it an ideal location to test prototypes of new car-fueling technologies.
- **Develop an Island-wide system for coordinated waste management:** An approach to waste management that combines all handling systems under an integrated system would be more efficient. It could also open new opportunities to draw us nearer to zero waste, such as centralized composting and building materials recycling.

For more information, see section 7 Energy and Waste of the Island Plan.



Scale of Wind Turbines: Height in feet in comparison to the East Chop Lighthouse.



The Vineyard's Waste Stream: About 87%—the mixed solid waste and the construction and demolition debris—is not recycled.

ensuring stable **housing** for our local population



photo by Brian VanderBrink

THE LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING HAS A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT on who arrives, who stays, and who leaves—school teachers, young families, year-round job applicants, those born and raised here. High housing costs are a struggle even for middle-class families.

While we created more than 400 affordable housing units over the last 25 years, the Island Plan recommends we redouble our efforts to create and finance protected housing until 20% of our year-round housing stock is permanently affordable to people earning less than 150% of the area's median income.

The Island Plan outlines strategies for adding hundreds of housing units at prices our residents can afford. We can allow accessory units and higher density construction in certain areas provided the extra units are affordable. We can create incentives to convert existing seasonal rental housing to year-round rentals. The Plan also includes proposals for addressing the special needs of our rapidly growing senior population as well as housing for the influx of seasonal workers.

For more information, see section 8 Housing of the Island Plan.

facts

- Only 44% of our homes are occupied year round.
- For the roughly 29% of us who rent, the “Vineyard shuffle”—finding affordable places to live during summer months when rents skyrocket—is routine.
- Visitors and nearly 5,000 seasonal workers compete with year-round residents for summer housing.
- Currently, only 9% of the Island’s housing stock is multi-family, and zoning allows it on only a small part of the Island.



To sustain our wonderful community, it is critical that we supply a broad spectrum of housing opportunities—a balance of rentals and home ownership—that are affordable to Vineyard residents. Young people need hope that they’ll someday own a home. If we don’t do this, we’ll lose family continuity and vibrancy.

Candy DaRosa, realtor, Chilmark

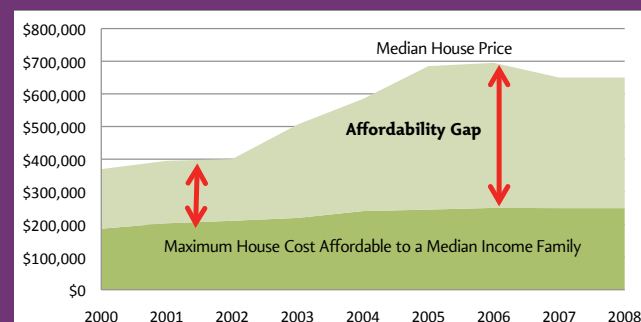
strategies

Here are 4 of the 21 recommended strategies addressing Housing.

- **Allow multi-unit affordable and community housing in certain areas:** The shortage of multi-family housing makes it difficult for singles, young couples, and empty nesters wanting to downsize. Zoning in growth areas (in and close to towns, services, and infrastructure) should be revised to allow multi-unit housing—such as duplexes, triplexes, or small apartment buildings—provided all additional units beyond the base zoning are used for affordable and community housing.
- **Create the Martha’s Vineyard Housing Bank:** In 2005, all Island towns endorsed a proposal to create a housing bank, financed by a 1% fee on the portion of property sales over \$750,000. However, the legislation stalled in the state legislature. Getting this legislation passed could generate a steady stream of funding for affordable housing.
- **Create additional elderly housing and assisted living communities for seniors:** The creation of additional assisted living communities located in pedestrian-friendly, in-town locations would allow individuals to remain active and connected to the community.
- **Allow an additional accessory affordable housing unit on appropriate properties:** Allowing units on residential properties that are deed-restricted for affordable housing or for use by the owner’s immediate family could effectively expand affordable housing in a low-impact manner. This unit could either be within an existing home, an addition to an existing home, or (where permitted by zoning) in a guest house or garage apartment. This could be implemented gradually, first only in growth areas with a special permit. If effective, it could later be extended to the whole Island and allowed as-of-right.

	AQ	CH	ED	OB	TI	WT	Total
All Housing Units (2000, latest census)	463	1,409	4,360	3,820	2,720	1,849	14,621
Seasonal Units (2000)	70%	73%	64%	58%	39%	44%	56%
Annual New Home Starts (2000-08)	6	17	75	35	27	30	192
Affordable - Number (2008)	41	3	84	141	108	23	400
Affordable (Percentage of Year-round Units - 2008)	26.5%	0.7%	4.9%	8.4%	6.2%	2.1%	5.9%

Housing Units By Town: Only Aquinnah has achieved the Commonwealth’s target of making 10% of its permanent housing stock affordable.



The Affordability Gap: In the past decade, the gap between the median house price and the maximum house cost that is considered to be affordable to a family earning the median income has increased dramatically.

Aspen Employee Housing

CASE STUDY

For more than three decades, Aspen, Colorado has faced an affordable housing crisis as a world-famous resort community with high property values (the average home cost is now over \$1 million). The Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority has addressed this, focusing mainly on current and former workers as well as the disabled. The authority builds and buys housing units for sale or rent, funded largely from a 1% fee on all property sales that now generates about \$3 million a year. The authority has created 2,600 employee units—one-quarter of the area’s occupied housing dwellings.

making our **transportation** work better



THE FREQUENCY AND LOCATIONS OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION COULD DRAMATICALLY EXPAND. It could increase from a few hours a week in the summer, as occurs currently, to almost all daytime hours in the summer. Congestion would also extend well into the spring and fall.

While we can make a few modest improvements to our road network, we should carefully protect the two-lane rural roads so essential to the Island's character. Instead, our emphasis should be on promoting alternate modes of travel so we are less dependent on private automobiles. This is particularly challenging here due to the low-density, rural development of much of the Vineyard.

We need to expand and improve our bus system and taxis, and promote them as viable ways to get around the Island. We need to make it easier and safer to use bicycles and to walk. We need to encourage people to get out of their cars long before they jam village centers.

National Complete Streets Coalition

RESOURCE

The coalition supports communities that are working to "complete their streets." This involves transforming streets originally designed only to move cars into important components of a livable community. The aim is to redesign streets and roads so they are safer and more welcoming to everyone: young and old, motorists and bicyclists, walkers and wheelchair users, bus riders and shopkeepers.

For more information, see section 9 Transportation of the Island Plan.

facts

- Our 177 miles of two-lane, public roads were adequate for an Island of about 6,000 people. They now must serve about ten times that number in peak summer months.
- Some of our roads are near their capacity, carrying as many as 20,000 cars on a summer day.
- Even in the peak of summer, most vehicles on the road are Islanders. Of traffic travelling on Upper State Road on an August weekday, 68% were year-round residents, 23% were seasonal residents, and 9% were shorter-term visitors.
- VTA buses carry more than a million passengers yearly. Ridership increased by more than a third in five years, blunting the potential growth of other traffic.



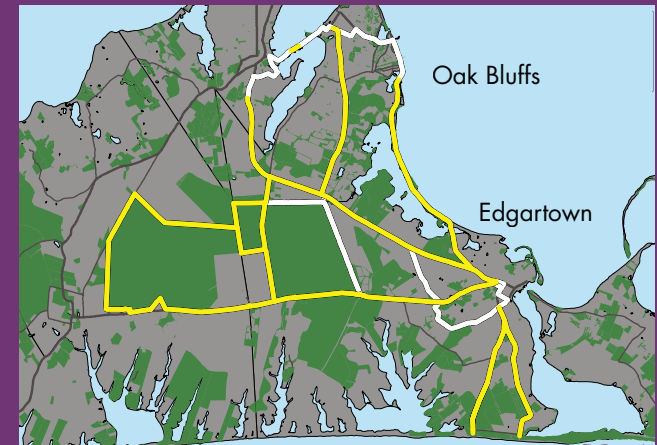
Most day trippers already leave their cars behind and use the bus. The challenge is making public transit appealing and convenient to the year-round community and seasonal residents. The private sector could play a strong role in getting people to change habits: employers can affect their employees' habits, and realtors and hoteliers can affect the patterns of vacationers.

Mark Snider, resort owner, Edgartown

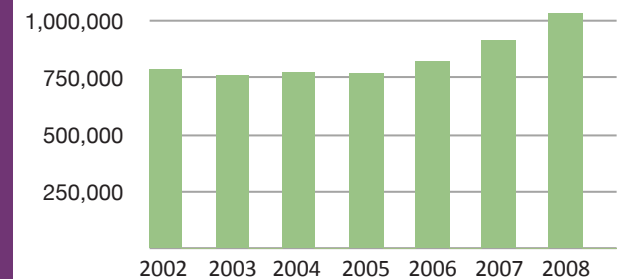
strategies

Here are 3 of the 20 recommended strategies addressing Transportation.

- **Create public-private alliances to improve and promote alternative transportation:** There are a number of ways in which town business associations, the VTA, and citizens can collaborate to deal with business-related transportation issues. They could promote employee use of park-and-rides, help hospitality employees to familiarize their patrons with the transit system, and promote rideshare and staggered/flexible work hours.
- **Extend the network of off-road bike paths and improve the safety of existing ones:** Major gaps remain in the 37-mile network of these paths, forcing cyclists back onto the road at the very places where the roadways are the most congested. The MVC and Island towns are working on implementation of a plan to complete the missing down-Island links in the network of off-road bike paths.
- **Create a working group in each town to focus on pedestrian and bicycle improvements:** Groups representing the town, seniors, schools, businesses, and the VTA should identify deficiencies in town pedestrian and bike facilities (sidewalks, crosswalks, shoulders, bike racks, etc.) and spearhead improvements.



Bike Paths: Adding a few missing links (white) would complete the down-Island portion of the Island's off-road network of Shared-Use Paths (yellow) linking the Island's three largest towns with each other and with the State Forest.



Bus Ridership: The annual number of bus passengers riding VTA buses surpassed one million in 2008.

protecting **water resources**



THE MOST SERIOUS WATER-RELATED CHALLENGE facing the Vineyard is the deterioration of the water quality in our fragile coastal ponds.

This has been caused mostly by homes in the ponds' watersheds—whether along the shore or miles away—releasing nitrogen from septic system wastewater. Nitrogen promotes excessive plant growth in the ponds that chokes off other life. Fertilizers and pesticides on our yards and farms add to the problem, as do dirt, bacteria, metals, fertilizer, and petroleum products caught up with stormwater runoff.

As a result, the water quality of 13 of our 21 coastal ponds is already impaired, threatening our commercial and recreational uses of the ponds and undermining one of the special features of the Vineyard. Future development will only add to the problem.

Protecting our coastal ponds and our drinking water sources will require a major public effort and significant investment. A key action will be to expand the use of public sewers or install small-scale neighborhood treatment facilities. We also need to limit growth in sensitive watersheds, strengthen regulations to protect private wells, and take action to keep contaminated stormwater from entering critical water resources.

Block Island Wastewater Management Program

CASE STUDY

Block Island is working with the University of Rhode Island to aggressively deal with wastewater challenges similar to the Vineyard: seasonal demand, sewers only downtown, nitrogen-sensitive coastal ponds. With help from an EPA grant, it focused on locating, inspecting, and upgrading septic systems and cesspools including use of computer-monitored innovative alternative systems.

facts

- Excessive nitrogen leads to destruction of eelgrass beds, an essential habitat for young fish and shellfish. In the past twenty years, eelgrass beds decreased by over 50% in Tashmoo and Lagoon Ponds.
- Household septic system are regulated to protect human health but not the well-being of the ponds, which are far more sensitive to nitrogen pollution. A septic system with its related natural processes removes 25% of nitrogen from wastewater, whereas a wastewater treatment facility removes over 90%.



In the long run we'll have to spend a lot of money to ensure clean water in our ponds to maintain our shellfishing and tourism. I'd rather spend it wisely now, based on good planning to control growth and prevent nitrogen pollution, than having to spend even more ten years from now trying to clean up the mess, and having failed to accomplish what is so important to all of us.

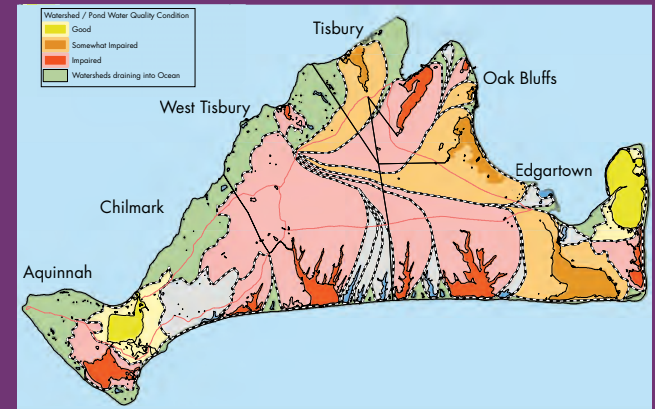
*Terry Appenzellar,
retired information technology consultant, Oak Bluffs*

strategies

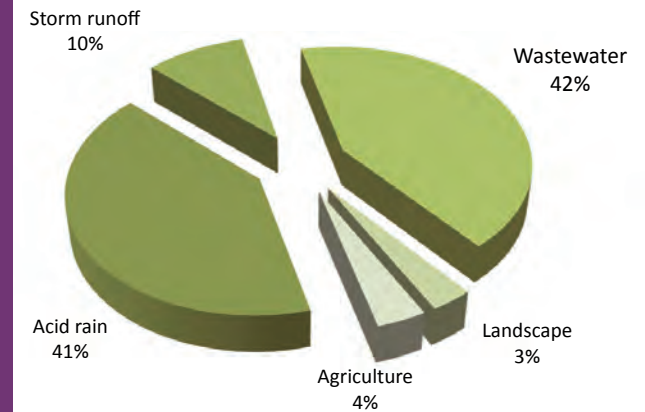
Here are 5 of the 20 recommended strategies addressing Water Resources.

- **Prepare a Wastewater Management Plan:** In conjunction with the Island Plan, the MVC is carrying out a general evaluation of current and potential wastewater management options. It should become the core of more detailed plans to identify the most effective ways to treat and manage wastewater.
- **Set up management committees for each coastal pond:** The selectmen in each town should appoint committees or designate existing committees for each coastal pond tasked with preparing and carrying out a Pond Management Plan aimed at meeting critical nitrogen thresholds in each watershed.
- **Expand sewers and centralized or package wastewater treatment in higher density areas:** The most cost-effective way to reduce nitrogen-loading is with wastewater treatment. The Island Plan maps priority areas, namely higher density residential areas within impaired watersheds located within two miles of existing treatment facilities. Sewering should be accompanied by limits on growth.
- **Improve monitoring of private wells:** We should set up a program to encourage private well owners to test water periodically to ensure that their water quality remains acceptable. This could involve education and possibly incentives such as discounts on the cost of testing. Building a database of anonymous private well test results would help monitor groundwater quality in private well areas.
- **Increase shellfishing in coastal ponds by increasing habitat area and quality:** The presence of shellfish in a pond, particularly oysters, quahogs, and mussels, improves water quality by filtering water and removing nitrogen. We need to improve habitat for wild populations and increase the opportunities for carefully sited private shellfish aquaculture ventures. Adequate financial support is needed for public shellfish management and propagation efforts.

For more information,
see section 10 Water Resources of the Island Plan.



Watershed and Pond Water Quality Condition: Most of the land on the Island is in watersheds that drain into coastal ponds with impaired or somewhat impaired water quality.



Sources of Nitrogen in Ponds: Over 60% of the nitrogen in coastal ponds comes from local sources, of which by far the greatest source is septic systems. These percentages are the average of all Vineyard coastal ponds. The actual breakdown varies greatly based on the population and the sizes of the pond and watershed.

“Water is the most critical resource issue of our lifetime and our children’s lifetime. The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land.”

LUNA LEOPOLD, HYDROLOGIST

making it happen



It is easy to assume that nothing can be done to overcome the challenges facing the Vineyard: economic forces are too powerful, Town Meeting might not support zoning or other changes, things are already gone too far to save.

That's just not the Vineyard way.

Instead of letting the Vineyard drift toward a future that isn't what we want, we can take charge of the Island's future and change its course. Our knowledgeable and highly engaged community has been tested many times in the past, often emerging with our own creative solutions. We can do it again.

In many ways, the Island Plan's proposals for the next generation will help keep the Vineyard much as it is today—characterized by carefully protected open spaces, vistas, and historic neighborhoods, and provided with great services and recreational opportunities.

However, in many ways the Island will be different and greatly improved. Although tourism and construction will still be important parts of the economy, many people will have transitioned to well-paying, year-round “green” and knowledge-based jobs, attracting many young people to stay on the Island. Farming and fishing will be expanded and feeding more of the population. Our energy will come from a community-owned offshore

“If you want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.”

ITALIAN FOLK SAYING



wind farm. There will be an Island-wide greenway and trail network. New buildings will fit into their neighborhoods. It will be an even more vital year-round community, as our families can live here affordably.

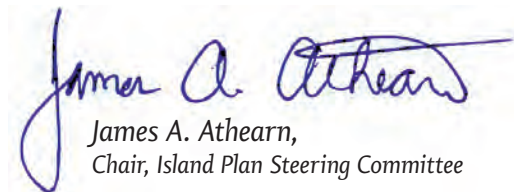
The full Island Plan provides guidance to the Vineyard community and shows how we can turn this vision into reality, with more than 200 practical strategies involving business initiatives, educational efforts, incentives, projects, and regulations. Many of these initiatives are already underway; some helped shape the Plan, others emerged from the planning process.

We are not alone in taking up this challenge. Federal and state programs enable and support many of the efforts outlined in the Island Plan. Other communities like ours are creatively taking on similar challenges; we can share information.

Implementing the recommendations of the Island Plan will lead to a better future for the Vineyard. Your input, support and involvement are essential to turn them into reality. This can come in many forms: your participation in community organizations, your vote at Town Meeting as measures come up for approval, your spirit of enterprise to create new

businesses and jobs, and your individual choices in your home and in your lives.

The Island Plan is our community's vision for a better future. Let's work together to make it happen!



James A. Ahearn,
Chair, Island Plan Steering Committee

On behalf of the Steering Committee, the 540 members of the Network of Planning Advisors and the thousands of people who came to forums, responded to surveys, or otherwise participated in preparing the Island Plan.

Overall Goal of the Island Plan

Make Martha's Vineyard a more sustainable, resilient, diverse, balanced, stable, and self-sufficient community, preserving the Island's unique natural, rural, and historical character and creating a better future for Vineyarders and the Island itself.

Use the Island and manage its development in ways that are compatible with the long-term sustainability and carrying capacities of our natural resources and community.



ISLAND PLAN

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE VINEYARD

For more information about the Island Plan go to:

WWW.ISLANDPLAN.ORG

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The cost was underwritten by the six towns of Martha's Vineyard, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (District Local Technical Assistance), the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Edey Foundation, the Permanent Endowment Fund for Martha's Vineyard, and private donors.

For explanations of and references for maps and data, please refer to the main Island Plan document at islandplan.org. The inclusion of quotes or images of people or institutions does not imply their endorsement of Island Plan recommendations.



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

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