

Martha's Vineyard Visual Preference Survey



Martha's Vineyard Commission
December 2005

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Note that the Martha's Vineyard Commission is not responsible for the opinions or the information expressed by members of the public in this survey.

1. Introduction

During the summer of 2005, the Martha's Vineyard Commission conducted a Visual Preference Survey in order to identify which components of the Vineyard's environment contribute positively or negatively to the Island. This survey is part of a community-based Comprehensive Island Planning process that the Martha's Vineyard Commission is undertaking. A series of photographs of different Island features were taken by citizens and subsequently compiled into a display with questionnaire for the general public to record their reactions.

We indicated to participants that we were mainly interested in the appearance of places, buildings (new or old; residential, commercial, public, and industrial), projects, landscaping (roadway design, parking lots, scenery, fields, woods etc.), vistas, and other features on the Vineyard that can be affected by planning, zoning, and development. For example, a photo of the ocean looking out from a beach, or a photo of prominent attractions such as the Old Whaling Church or the Gay Head Cliffs were not of particular interest to this survey, either because there is little that we can do to affect their future, or because we can be reasonably assured that these features will still be there for generations to come. Obviously, this technique only deals with certain types of issues; for example; it is hard to show in a photograph how expensive a property is, or what the nitrogen-loading is in a coastal pond. Although the results were undoubtedly affected, to some extent, by the quality of the photographs of specific places, the size of the sample and the methodology suggest that the general conclusions are valid.

The survey was carried out in two phases.

- First, twenty Vineyarders were given 27-exposure disposable cameras and were requested to take photographs that responded to a series of questions and to fill out a log on which they explained their choices. Respondents included business people, selectmen, architects, artists, planning board members, authors, and students. No MVC Commissioners or staff participated. A list of people who received cameras is in appendix 1; note that their responses were anonymous and a few of these people were not able to complete their assignment.
- In the second phase, all Vineyarders – permanent and seasonal residents as well as visitors – were invited to make their opinions known by participating in the survey. MVC staff selected a representative sample of the nine responses to each question in the first phase and members of the public were asked to select the photos that they felt were the best examples of responses to the questions. In addition, MVC staff added a second block of photos to focus on several specific issues.

The photos were used in a traveling exhibit displayed at the Agricultural Fair, the Steamship Authority terminal in Vineyard, Martha's Vineyard High School, and at the Martha's Vineyard Commission. In addition, a version of the exhibit was placed in all six Island libraries and was available on the Internet. This questionnaire is included in appendix 2. We received 343 usable responses in the second phase, 36% permanent residents, 40% seasonal residents, and 24% visitors. Their age distribution was: 11% under 18, 17% were 19-40, 50% were 41-60, and 22%

were over 60. (Note that, since the photos did not have captions, it was not always clear to people in phase 2 why some of the photos in phase 1 were selected.)

This Visual Preference Survey was conceived by Mark London, Executive Director of the Martha's Vineyard Commission. Cheryl Doble, Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture of the State University of New York provided advice on the methodology. Sam Slater, working as a part-time volunteer intern for the MVC throughout the summer, coordinated the entire effort and did most of the legwork to make it happen. Zak Steele, who was working at the MVC as a summer intern on an analysis of roadside views, did the graphics for the phase 2 exhibit.

2. Results

In general, people liked and were most concerned about the rural character of the Vineyard, notably fields, farms, and rural roads, as well as Menemsha and other traditional buildings and areas. They cited examples of open space preservation, Island Co-Housing, and the West Tisbury Library as good models for future development. Features that people disliked but thought could be improved include the Stop-and-Shop in Vineyard Haven and the adjacent parking lot, Boch Park, also in Tisbury, and several commercial buildings with large parking lots in front. Features to be avoided include buildings out of character with their surroundings (such as the “garage” on the North Bluffs in Oak Bluffs), roadside parking and storage in front of buildings, and roadside stockade fencing. People liked clustered development, vegetation along rural roads, parking located behind or beside commercial buildings, open low fences, as well as narrow shoulders and wood guardrails along Vineyard roads

Following are the specific responses to each of the questions, including many of the comments offered by participants. The name of the specific location and town is identified in the heading when it was obvious in the photo; otherwise, a generic description is given. Please refer to appendix 3 to see the images that are being referred to. The responses are given in order of the popularity of the choice. Note that, for the first six questions, people chose three images, so the total percentage of respondents selecting images for those questions adds up to 300%.

Question A: Places/features that typify “Vineyard character”.



This question sought to find out what aspects of Martha's Vineyard people felt were most important in defining the Vineyard's character. The responses in both phases were divided about equally between natural and man-made features. Also, many of the images included views of the ocean. The following were the most commonly chosen places and features.

- Menemsha Fishing Village: This was the most chosen image (chosen by 67% of the phase 2 respondents). Comments included:
 - *The character of the harbor recalls the rugged days at sea.*
 - *Fishing is a Vineyard tradition and way of life. Menemsha*

offers one of the last ports offering free commercial access.

- *If Walt Disney had decided to build a fishing harbor, he'd have built Menemsha.*

- Rural Fields and Farms: There were many images of rural fields and farms in phase 1, and the two representative photos in phase 2 – one with a stone wall (67%) and one with a view of the ocean in the background (43%) – were chosen by large numbers of people. Comments on these and similar locations included:
 - Katama Farm – *Good example of cooperative preservation project by VOLF, VCS, Town, State. Preserves Island agricultural heritage.*
 - Beetlebung Farm, Chilmark – *Preserve our farms.*
 - Nip & Tuck Farm, Tisbury – *Nice view of farm and animals.*
 - Tashmoo Farm, Tisbury – *a beautiful old farm with many scenic views from the road.*
 - “The Ford”, North Tisbury, West Tisbury – *ancient watering spot for horse-drawn carts. Unique wooden railing; delicate, accommodating.*
 - Captain Flanders Farm, Chilmark - *Good vista and active farming.*
 - Thimble Farm, Tisbury – *Community Supported Agriculture, a good kind of thing to perpetuate . . . community.*

Other Natural Areas include:

- Long Point Long Pond, West Tisbury – *Classic sandplain heathlands and freshwater/brackish water oceanfront habitat. One of the best examples in the world.*
 - Moshup's Trail, Aquinnah – *One-of-a-kind habitat composed of maritime shrublands, wetlands, ocean front beach and woodlands; only Block Island resembles it.*
 - Chappy Point, Edgartown - *preserved by Land Bank.*
 - Mill Brook, West Tisbury - *Classic Moraine; stream, hills, older growth forest of diverse tree species and varied habitats for deep forest birds (unlike open sandplains)*
 - Owen Park, Tisbury – *Beautiful, unobstructed view of water, harbor. Public concert area, recreation.*
- Methodist Campground: The next most commonly chosen place was the Oak Bluffs Gingerbread Cottages (42%).
 - *The essence of the Vineyard.*
 - *The "Pink Doll House" typifies Vineyard character.*
 - Harbors: The Vineyard’s various harbors (chosen by 24%) typify the Island’s relation with the sea.
 - Vineyard Haven – *Home of the Island’s most beautiful sailboats, particularly its many schooners.*
 - Edgartown Harbor - *Essential uses and vistas*
 - Harbor, Oak Bluffs - *View of harbor from sunset hill, harbor views are vintage*
 - Rural Road: Tree-canopied rural roads (chosen by 22%) are the way most people experience the rural parts of the Island. Comments included
 - *Island roads district. Tree canopy protection.*
 - *White cement “hazard” posts give rural character and lend as sense of continuity. Look great with green foliage.*

- Dirt road east of Main St., Vineyard Haven - *Hidden passageway. Rural character in town. Local knowledge of shortcut to post office, etc.*
- Traditional Roadside House: The rural roads are punctuated by historic farmhouses (chosen by 18%).
 - Similar house at Beetlebung Corner, Chilmark – *Beautiful classical New England architecture.*
- Specific Traditional Buildings
 - Flying Horses, Oak Bluffs (chosen by 13%),
 - Strand Theater, Oak Bluffs (chosen by 4%) – *A landmark*
 - North Bluffs Restrooms, Oak Bluffs – *Institutions and municipalities must protect historic structures.*
 - Oak Bluffs Shop – *Old historic structure. Traces of past disappearing. Encourage preservation.*
 - Artcliff Diner, Tisbury – *Good thriving local business.*
 - 536 Main, Tisbury
 - Main Street across from the West Chop lighthouse
 - Morning Glory Farmstand – *One of my personal favorites.*
 - Katama General Store – *Represents the rural character of Katama, so close to Edgartown.*
 - Alleys, West Tisbury – *Thriving, small local business.*

Question B: Places/features that you like, and that might be changed for the worse or gone in a decade or generation if something is not done to protect them.



Martha's Vineyard 2005 Visual Preference Survey

This question sought to identify cherished places and features that were in need of protective measures. Again, the responses were about evenly divided between natural and man-made areas. The most commonly chosen places and features were the following.

- Rural Fields and Natural Areas: The feature that people identified as positive but needing protection were rural fields. An image of a field with a stone wall in front and the ocean in the background was, by far, the most popular feature (79%) and a somewhat similar shot

was also very popular (52%). Comments about these and similar photos included:

- Quitsa Overlook - *Needs vegetation trimmed to protect view.*
 - Viewshed, backside MV Shipyard - *Harbor & barrier beach with functional metal and wood industrial structures - unique combination - defining landscape.*
 - West Tisbury Edg. Road - *The stretch of road from entrance to Boldwater to Barnes Rd. is virtually building free and beautiful.*
 - Middle Road - *Save the farms.*
 - North Road near Capt. Flanders, Chilmark - *preserve these kind of vineyard views*
 - Squibnocket Road, Chilmark - *Open space and vistas*
 - State Road, Chilmark - *Quitsa Pond is a bygone relic to be treasured*
 - Edgartown - *This vegetation must be maintained and protected.*
 - Edg. West Tisbury Rd. - *Farm fields along Edg. West Tisbury Road - beautiful any time of year.*
 - John Mackenty's Property in Edgartown - *100+ acres of sandplain habitat on shores of Edgartown Great Pond*
 - Lighthouse Beach, Edgartown - *Beaches should be open to everyone, but more and more of them are being closed to the public.*
 - Pohogonot, Edgartown - *Several hundred acres of sandplain habitat, southshore*
 - Wintucket Ave., Edgartown - *Pond shorelines need protections - all ponds should be DCPC's. I have watched the development of Edg. Great Pond for 35 years. Some protections are in place but not enough.*
 - Nip n Tuck, West Tisbury - *preservation of farms needed to keep MV alive*
 - State Road W.T., Field across from Ag Hall and Janes Fairway - *Hay Field, Example of Both Vista and Working Farm, Concern that development pressures will result in house lots*
 - Tsissha Point Jones Property - *200+ Acres of prime sandplain habitat on Tisbury Great Pond*
 - State Road fork at Old County, West Tisbury - *I love these woods along State Road in West Tisbury and am greatly concerned about their protection as sprawl creeps towards here. Please protect this open space. We need to be vigilant.*
 - Whipporwill Farm - *Need to preserve farms and farmland from development*
 - Lots on Edgartown Great Pond - *A small but open blight on shoreline. [Nearby is] a lot up for sale with house coming; what will become of this beautiful natural place?*
- Menemsha Fishing Village: The next most commonly chosen image was Menemsha (54%). Comments included:
- *These shacks are getting decrepit but their preservation is essential to Vineyard Character. I know they are privately owned. God forbid they turn into T-Shirt Shops. This is truly a high priority.*
 - *Simple commercial fishing port. Buildings and businesses are for or in support of fishing. No motel/hotel. No restaurant.*
 - *Head of the harbor – This used to be a beach where we played with boats. Then was filled and is the last open lot on Menemsha harbor. This should be a public park. In the past many artists used to paint and have art classes there. Owner is slowly closing off.*

- Tashmoo Overlook View: The view of the ocean that terminates the vista at the Tashmoo Overlook (35%) was also identified as needing protection. A comment was:
 - *The incursion of vegetation is closing off the view.*

- Stone Wall, Chilmark: Many people (25%) felt that the stone walls need protection. [Note: in fact, stone walls within the Island Roads District of Critical Planning Concern, including most major roads, are protected.]

- Wooded Road: The tree-canopied rural road (chosen by 18%) might have been chosen out of general concern for this kind of road, or some might have realized that parts of this particular location at the intersection of Old County Road and State Road in West Tisbury are privately owned although the entire western side has been protected by the Land Bank since 2003.
 - *West Tisbury Edgartown Road - The stretch of road from entrance to Boldwater to Barnes Rd. is virtually building free and beautiful.*
 - *Middle Road Tea Lane - Intersection is old town center; should be preserved as is.*
 - *Meetinghouse Way - Last major dirt highway - needs preservation.*
 - *Lambert's Cove Road - county road vistas, stone walls, open fields, road districts.*

- Boch Park, Tisbury: This view of the ocean from Beach Road (chosen by 18%) could be threatened by development on this site
 - *Should serve as a major public space.*
 - *Beautiful open area providing view of harbor in an area that now has sewer and is a potential growth area.*

- Traditional Buildings, Oak Bluffs: There was concern that several traditional Victorian buildings (chosen by 9% each) are not legally protected.
 - *Corner East Chop Drive and Brewster Ave - wonderful Victorian summer cottage- no protection whatsoever, Demo Deeds can put off, but cannot stop demolition*
 - *Corner NY Ave and Tehmehegam - The Smith House is similar to one that was torn down in order to build the MV Hospital.*
 - *Corner NY Ave and Towanticut - Was originally part of the Oak Bluffs Club founded in 1886 on Ocean Ave. Was cut in half and moved to New York Ave around 1900*
 - *East Chop Drive about 100 yards north of beach club - wonderful Victorian summer cottage. No protection whatsoever. Demo Deeds can put off, but cannot stop demolition.*
 - *Humphrey's Big Dipper - Has become a kind of funky Victorian building over the years, but fits with the current feeling of downtown*
 - *Island Theatre - A landmark.*
 - *Nashua House; Corner of Kennebek and Park - Is in B1 Zone. Not Historic District. No restrictions on charges. Demolition delay by-law only delays.*

Question C: Places/features that you like, and are a good model for future development on the Vineyard.



This question aimed to identify what kind of development should be promoted in future planning and zoning. We were hoping to get a large variety of examples of developments that people felt were especially appropriate for the Vineyard. However, people mostly picked natural areas with no development. Those areas with buildings generally had heavy natural vegetation.

- Open Field: The popularity of this view of an open field with the ocean in the background (chosen by 54%) conforms to the responses to the first two questions.
 - Keith Farm, from Middle Road –
Vineyard Open Land Foundation project - 48 acres open space - limited development plus protects magnificent roadside view.
 - Nat's Farm - VOLF project - roadside view - limited development plus 56 preserved acres
 - Howland Property, State Road - 75 acres open space & limited development - also protects 3,000 feet along Squibnocket Pond, Aquinnah & Chilmark
 - Flanders Farm, North Rd./crossroad - Farming, clear vistas visible from 2 roads - great job.
 - Sweetened Water - VOLF Project - limited development - 35 protected acres - roadside view of rolling fields
 - Old County Road. Sheriff's Meadow Property, West Tisbury - A good model- preserving open space, roadside vistas, and good habitat
- West Tisbury Library: This photo (chosen by 46%) shows a pedestrian walkway lined with vegetation and leading to the wood-shingled building. It is the only photo in the top five that has a building in it.
 - *A nice looking, modest building design. Nice parking lot- unpaved, nice landscaping, nice lighting. I know some qualms [have been expressed] with these aspects, but it is a good effort for planning and design.*
- West Tisbury Walkway and Cronigs Landscaping: This photo (chosen by 42%) shows the pedestrian walkways recently constructed along State Road in West Tisbury and also includes the indigenous landscaping in front of the Cronigs Up-Island market.

- *Native plants, attractive plan, barrier from road, well maintained.*
- Wooded Road, West Tisbury: This photo (chosen by 36%) shows a typical heavily wooded road, in this case, State Road. It also includes the wooden bridge in the background, though there is no way of knowing how important the bridge was in people's selection.
- Wooded Dirt Road: This photo (chosen by 35%) is similar to the previous one, except that this is a dirt road.
 - *Dirt road allows permeation - large lots buffered by native vegetation - small varied house styles using natural wood exterior - dirt road - Vineyard character especially up Island in rural areas.*
- Campground, Oak Bluffs: The Methodist Campground (chosen by 27%) is the most popular choice that includes more than one building.
 - *Campgrounds - Quiet, attractive, dense housing; lots of native trees and canopy cover, near town and beach*
 - *Highlands - Quiet, older homes, dense, small parks, native vegetation, near town and beach and ethnically diverse*
 - *Nashawena - In-town feel of small lots feel larger because of park in middle of boulevard feel. Last block by Circuit Avenue needs second lane installed and paved.*
- Island Co-Housing, West Tisbury: This is the most highly rated image (chosen by 26%) of recent development that includes more than one building.
 - *Co-Housing - a good example of good development pattern.*
- Traditional Roadside House: This photo (chosen by 21%) shows a traditional house by the road.
 - *The Allen's house an excellent example of a beautiful home with a lot of character.*
- Infill Commercial Building, Main Street, Vineyard Haven: The reconstruction of the Pacific Cotton building (chosen by 13%) is an example of an infill building that harmonizes with the neighboring buildings.
 - *Excellent mixed-use infill commercial building.*

Question D: Places/features that you dislike, but that you think could be remedied if addressed.



The results of this question can suggest specific measures that could be carried out to deal with some of the problem areas.

- Stop-and-Shop and Town Parking Lot, Tisbury: By far, the place most chosen (78%) that people disliked but felt could be improved was the parking lot and grocery store opposite the Steamship Authority terminal, at the main year-round entrance to the Island.
 - *Unspeakable. In a class by itself.*
 - *Remove or improve vista obstructions.*
- Commercial Building, Upper State Road, Tisbury: This building (chosen by 46%) typifies some of the development on Upper State Road, with parking in front and no landscaping.
 - *This commercial area is poorly planned. Barnes Trucking is a kind of landmark. Everything else is a mish mash.*
- Boch Park, Tisbury: This building and waterfront lot (chosen by 46%), located near Five Corners, has been vacant for many years.
 - *Speaks for itself*
 - *Boch Park- is an eyesore that could be a productive community asset.*
- Middletown, West Tisbury: The large parking lot in front of the Cronigs Up-Island market was chosen by almost a third of respondents (31%). [Note that the high quality of the landscaping along the road had also been chosen as a positive feature.]
 - *Pull-up parking and porch good, but setback from State Road too great, too suburban. Bring parking to street edge for biz district feel & for social interaction; this will slow traffic, too.*
 - *Parking issue and issue of parking in view of roadside; good screening at W.T. post office.*
- Clear-Cut Area: This photo shows an area which has just had its vegetation cleared (chosen by 30%).

- Barnes Rd - cutting trees in spite and left as vacant field.
- Tashmoor Overlook, Tisbury: This overlook (chosen by 26%) was rebuilt several years ago resulting in four lanes of asphalt, elimination of vegetation, and use of a standard steel guardrail.
- Island Mini-Putt: (chosen by 18%)
 - Theme-park overdone. We could have the same activity with less of a carnival atmosphere
- Bank, Tisbury: Edgartown - Vineyard Haven Road, (chosen by 16%)
 - Excessive tree clearing when the Bank took over the property. Exposed power plant and industrial buildings to main road.
- House with parking in front: – (chosen by 6%)
 - Entire front yard is demolished.

Question E: Other places/features you dislike, which even if they can't be remedied, at least shouldn't be repeated with future development on the Vineyard.



This question aimed to identify what kind of development should be avoided in future planning and zoning. The results indicate that people would like to avoid buildings out of scale with their surroundings, roadside stockade fences, highly visible parking and storage areas, and further limits on public access.

- North Bluffs "Garage", Oak Bluffs: The survey was conducted in the midst of a controversy about the construction of a three-story structure in the historic North Bluff neighborhood of Oak Bluffs, which had only received a building permit for

replacement of an existing garage. It would appear that a large number of people (73%) felt that this structure was out of scale with its neighborhood.

- *Garage on Pizza Hill - a gargantuan offense to the area.*

- Stockade Fence: The next highest feature to avoid is stockade fences along the roadside (chosen by 55%).
 - *Proliferation of stockade fences along state road in Edgartown.*
 - *Long stockade fence; is this going to stay? Very nasty trend.*
- Home With Open Parking and Storage: This example of a home with a large parking and storage area next to the road was also chosen by more than half the respondents (55%).
 - *Demolished front yard, used for storage of vehicles.*
 - *Junk in front yard; landscape destroyed.*
 - *... an example of what should not be allowed. Derelict boats and equipment left to rot and fall apart in a high visible, high traffic area. Mars natural beauty and leaves sharp steel frames that can hurt someone.*
- Triangle, Edgartown: The photo of the Triangle emphasizing the vast parking lot with little vegetation was chosen by more than a third of respondents (34%).
 - *Sea of pavement, no trees, no landscaping. I remember when this went in; a real travesty. Even as a teenager I was horrified.*
- Oak Bluffs Fire Department: The photo of the Oak Bluffs Fire Department building, chosen by a quarter of respondents (25%) also emphasized the large parking lot, highly visible from two main roads.
- "Private" Road: The key feature of this photo of a road (chosen by 21%) was the sign that said "Private Way: Owners and Guests Only".
 - *There are 251 "Posted" signs on North Road going west from North Tisbury. I don't like any of them.*
- Large Houses: These three large houses in Edgartown, 20%.
 - *Building out of scale - poor placement on lot - angled- commercial over-regulated - residential not regulated - plan pretends to be old town center -B2 regs. If want to create new town center need to reduce setbacks and put parking on street and bring buildings to street edge.*
- Commercial Development, West Tisbury: This building is at an odd angle to the road and has a large parking area at the front (13%).
- House With Open Area: 3%.

Question F: Buildings that are out of place with their context.



This question is a variation of the previous two questions, but focused particularly on the issue of buildings integrating with their context. Most of the selections were newer commercial buildings on the outskirts of towns or in town, and almost all were in the Tisbury and Oak Bluffs. Many of them had parking areas in front of the buildings. There were also several examples of large houses that were felt to be out of scale with their natural surroundings.

- Black Dog, Upper State Road, Tisbury: This area was identified by many people in phase 1 of the study. The image used in the phase 2 study was chosen by almost two-thirds of the people (62%).

Comments about this and similar buildings include:

- *Ugly, out of context building*
 - *Bad commercial project, bad design, another State Road mistake*
 - *Railroad car nightmare*
 - *Shirley's is a great business, which I respect, but the metal industrial building does not fit in.*
- North Bluffs "Garage", Oak Bluffs: This choice for an out-of-context building tied with the next image (62%).
 - *The infamous 3-story garage. Building and health codes are routinely ignored or erratically applied.*
 - Shell Station, Tisbury: This highly prominent gas station (chosen by 54%) blocks a significant view of the water. It had recently been repainted in bright colors.
 - *Building deliberately rejects its context to display the oil company logo colors.*
 - Large House in Open Area: This image (chosen by 32%) typified the phenomenon of building so-called McMansions in highly visible areas.
 - *Plunking these big new houses in the middle of pastures. Looks like Long Island. Farmland needs protection.*

- *[The owner] had this entire lot of frost bottom ecosystem cleared and put up this big monster. The growth is now 2 yrs. old. Still scant. All frost bottom land should have some protection.*
 - *"If I had it to do again, I'd build it bigger." Ernie Boch*
 - *Building [is] grandiose, out of proportion with landscape, and in fragile habitat*
 - *High house on flat land, grandiose, Hampton-esque*
- Seaview, Oak Bluffs: This large condominium (chosen by 29%) in a prominent location replaced an historic hotel in a neighborhood of smaller homes.
 - Nancy's Restaurant, Oak Bluffs: This large and highly visible building (chosen by 21%) was recently enlarged in a style of architecture that bears little relation to its surroundings.
 - Oak Bluffs Old Town Hall: This building (chosen by 19%), surrounded by parking, is one of the first things that visitors see when they arrive by ferry in Oak Bluffs. Its public disfavor may have been influenced by the fact that it has a reputation for being a "sick" building.
 - Tashmoo Insurance Building: This building (chosen by 11%) has a blank façade facing State Road and blocks the view of a traditional house to the rear.
 - *Ugly, out of context building.*
 -
 - Bank, Tisbury: This relatively new building (chosen by 10%) is set behind a parking area and has a prominent drive-through on the side.
 - Other Buildings
 - *Atlantic Connection, Oak Bluffs - The Atlantic Connection Club is a building out of context.*
 - *Post Office, Oak Bluffs - The Post Office is out of context.*
 - *Oceanview Restaurant, Oak Bluffs - Totally out of character architecturally style - great visibility.*
 - *Library, Oak Bluffs - New Library is a grotesque size in a compressed area*
 - *N-Star - Promote energy plan for sustainability, renewables, independence.*

Question G: In rural areas, what is the best pattern of development?

With this question, people were presented with two possible theoretical approaches to the development of a rural area. The vast majority (78%) chose the illustration of clustered development in which houses were concentrated in limited areas, keeping most of the fields open and undeveloped. Fewer than a quarter (22%) chose traditional, large-lot development in which the houses were spread across all the available land.

Question H: With commercial development, where should parking be located?

This question focused on the trade-off between two objectives, the aesthetics of not having parking areas between the road and stores, and the convenience of having the off-street parking easily accessible in front of stores. Virtually everyone (94%) thought that the parking should not be at the front. Most people thought that it should be in the back (78%) and some thought that it should be at the side (15%).

Question I: In rural areas, what kind of landscaping is generally most appropriate along the road in front of a house?

The vast majority of people (97%) felt that it was inappropriate to have an open lawn with little vegetation in front of a house facing a road. Opinions were about evenly split between the options that had some openness in front (50%) and the one that had vegetation so heavy as to completely screen the house (47%). The choice may have been influenced by the choice of illustrations, which did not include any open area to the sides or rear of the building; the option with a lawn in front was the only one that offered any open area for the homeowner's.

Question J: In rural areas, what kind of fencing is generally most appropriate along the road?

People clearly do not think that stockade fencing is appropriate in rural areas; almost everyone (99%) chose one of the other two types. Most of those (85%) chose split rail fencing. In retrospect, there were two problems with the questionnaire design that likely affected the results, particularly with respect to the third option of no fencing (chosen by 14%). The wording of the question asked people to choose a kind of fencing, pushing people to choose between options 1 and 2. Also, last-minute time constraints led us to use a photo that didn't really illustrate a typical rural property without a fence; it showed an in-town property with a sidewalk and open lawn.

Question K: In town areas, what kind of fencing is generally most appropriate along the road?

Again, the wording of the question – asking people to choose a type of fence – likely affected the results with respect to the last option of no fence at all. Twice as many people (57%) chose a picket fence than no fence at all (27%). A small group (15%) thought that stockade fencing could be appropriate in town situations.

Question L: In rural areas, what is the most appropriate treatment for the side of the road?

The purpose of this question was to get the public's reaction to a dilemma that is often faced in road design, the desire to keep the road as narrow as possible for aesthetic reasons versus the desire to have shoulders able to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Most people (57%) chose the photo of the 2-foot-wide shoulder. The next largest group (27%) chose no shoulder at all. The smallest number (16%) chose the photo with a 4-foot-wide shoulder.

Question M: What is generally the most appropriate guardrail design?

The vast majority of people (87%) chose wood guardrails instead of the steel guardrails that are more prevalent on the Vineyard (chosen by 12%). The very low support for cable guardrails (1%) may have been affected by the fact that the only photo that was available when the exhibit was assembled also had a wide and unattractive dirt area along the road; this type of cable is increasingly used in rural areas as it maximizes the visibility beyond the roadside.

Written Comments About the Phase 2 Survey

Note that the phase 2 survey had a very short introduction that didn't explain that the photos in the exhibit had been taken by a cross-section of Vineyarders, not by the MVC. Also, the nature of the small exhibit and simple questionnaire did not allow for subtle nuances about options and choices that could be better explored with other techniques such as workshops or in-depth interviews.

The following are the written comments offered by people reacting to the phase 2 survey.

- *This was a very thought-provoking/discussion-provoking survey. But, it's important that people distinguish between architecture styles and context.*
- *Great idea to do this.*
- *Good for gathering feedback – Section 2 needs more choices & variety for different character of island places.*
- *This survey needs more thought – you have set it up to get the answers you want!*
- *Question 3 – who are we to criticize people's choices? Whose judgment will prevail?*
- *I am embarrassed for the MVC. This is a meaningless exercise. You need to put these in context – in town, in central business district, in rural places.... You unfortunately will get no useful results. Need to facilitate the process!*

- *This was very interesting and thought provoking. [The writer also noted that a photo of a farm identified as a place that might be changed for the worse if not protected is, in fact, protected by a conservation easement.]*
- *While planning roadways, think about bike trails. It's preferable to have some separation from the road, both for safety & aesthetics. Eminent domain may be a necessary tool. Preserve farmland from development!*
- *I agree. European practice with bike trails is a very good model.*
- *Preserve the green, rural quality about the Vineyard. Enough trophy homes – keep the MV character, the environmental focus, the simple life.*
- *It's too late. [arrow pointing to previous comment]*
- *I find the content of your exhibit frightening at best.*
#1) Martha's Vineyard is no longer a rural community.
#2) When you speak of what kind of landscaping is appropriate in front of a home, this implies that you are interested in imposing your idea of "good taste" upon individuals – an absolute "no no." This is still America; supposedly, you cannot "dictate" good taste. Same with your fencing ideas.
#3) Some of your concerns are legitimate, but this whole exhibit feels like it was put together by recent wash-a-shores from some place like Greenwich, CT.
- *Takes one to know one. [arrow pointing to previous comment] Please go back to Greenwich and leave the Vineyard alone!*
- *This is an important survey but the photos (& questions) are out of context so the information you are gathering is limited.*
- *Thanks for doing this survey. Some context would be helpful, especially for Section 1(B) (what are the threats to these places?)*
- *This survey is to pad your own beliefs; not the wishes of real Islanders.*
- *I am concerned that you would like to control every aspect of Vineyard life not allowing for choice, progress, or change. You're also not allowing for financial ability. I live here too and I seriously wonder about you & power & control issues. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak my mind. This visual preference survey should not be a contest about aesthetics.*
- *Survey does not do justice to a visitor that Martha's Vineyard is over rated 110%. Will never visit again. Too pricey. Non-friendly persons on Island. Buses need to run every 15, no later than 30 minutes. Taxi rides too expensive for visitors. Toilets in Gay Head Cliffs too far for elders to walk. Bus line drivers need to be able to know the area to point out highlights of the trip at each stop.*

Visual Preference Survey - Phase 2 Results									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	22%	13%	18%	67%	24%	67%	43%	42%	4%
B	79%	35%	18%	9%	54%	52%	18%	9%	25%
C	42%	36%	13%	46%	21%	26%	35%	54%	27%
D	78%	46%	31%	30%	16%	8%	18%	46%	26%
E	21%	55%	55%	25%	20%	34%	13%	3%	73%
F	10%	62%	29%	21%	19%	11%	54%	32%	62%
G	22%	78%							
H	17%	78%	6%						
I	47%	50%	3%						
J	2%	77%	21%						
K	1%	85%	14%						
L	16%	57%	27%						
M	12%	87%	1%						

Note that people could vote for three responses in questions A to F.

3. Conclusion

This survey was carried out as a lead-in activity for the Comprehensive Island Plan planning effort that is just getting underway. It provides an initial idea of what a cross-section of Vineyarders and visitors feel about the Island. The images and results of this study can also be used during the planning process to gain greater insight into people's opinions, and to help identify how these opinions might translate into some of the plan's goals, objectives and strategies. If the preferences are confirmed, the following are some examples of the directions that could be considered based on the results of the survey.

- The identification of places and features that typify Vineyard character gives a general idea of what existing characteristics need protection – notably rural areas as well as village areas such as Menemsha and Oak Bluffs – and what characteristics might be encouraged in future development.
- The identification of places needing protection suggests a possible focus for efforts to conserve the natural and man-made environment, notably: rural fields and natural areas, rural roadway character, Menemsha, views of the ocean from the Tashmoo overlook and Boch Park, and older buildings lacking legal protection.
- The identification of places that serve as a good model for the future suggests the kind of planning and zoning that might be encouraged: open space preservation, clustered development such as the Campground and Island Co-Housing, buildings that fit into the character of their surroundings (such as the West Tisbury Library or a new infill building in Vineyard Haven), and good roadside landscaping.
- The identification of places that people don't like but think could be improved suggests the possible focus of short-term actions to make improvements to areas such as the Stop-and-Shop building and parking lot in Vineyard Haven, commercial development on Upper State Road, as well as commercial and residential buildings with roadside parking or storage in front.
- The identification of features that people dislike and said shouldn't be repeated with future development helps identify possible planning and zoning changes to avoid new buildings that are out of keeping with their neighborhoods or natural surroundings, roadside stockade fences, parking and storage areas highly visible from the road.
- The identification of buildings out of place with their context could be used to outline guidelines that encourage greater harmony between new buildings and their surroundings.
- The comments on the best pattern of development suggest favoring clustered development.
- The comments on the location of off-street parking areas suggest that ways might be explored to encourage that they not be located in front of buildings.
- The comments on avoiding completely open lawns in front of houses in rural areas raises issues of how vegetation could be encouraged.

- The strong disfavor with respect to roadside stockade fencing in both town and rural locations suggests possible action to minimize them.
- The strong favoring of wood rather than steel guardrails supports efforts already begun by the Martha's Vineyard Joint Transportation Committee to encourage MassHighway to use wood for future guardrails.

This survey generally confirms that the public shares the kinds of concerns that the Martha's Vineyard Commission, the towns' planning boards, and various non-profit organizations have been grappling with for decades. We hope that it proves useful in the upcoming Comprehensive Island Plan program to help articulate specific actions that will help to guide development so that more of the characteristics that Vineyards feel have high value are protected and promoted, and that those characteristics that are considered to have lower value are improved, and are avoided in future development.

APPENDICES

- A1 List of Participants in Phase 1**
- A2 Phase 1 – Questionnaire**
- A3 Phase 2 – Display/Questionnaire**

A1 List of Participants in Phase 1

The following people received cameras in phase 1 of the Visual Preference Survey. Note that their responses were anonymous and a few of these people were not able to complete their assignment.

Marie Allen
Renee Balter
Tom Chase
Greg Coogan
Philip Craig
Tom Dresser
John Early
Frank Fenner

Ben Hall
Lennie Jason
Mark Hutker
Ray LaPorte
June Manning
Fred Mascola
Carol McGee
Edo Potter

Norman Rankow
Camille Rose
Art Smadbeck
Henry Stephenson
Lisa Strachen
Michael van Valkenburgh
Kate Warner
Rez Williams