

**TOWN OF NANTUCKET
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

FY 2009

PLANNING:

Community Planning Efforts: Nantucket has been active in developing the long-term planning of its future. In an effort to update the Town Meeting adopted 1990 *Goals and Objectives for Balanced Growth* document, a committee of the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NP&EDC) spent five years developing a community plan. The 1990 document was voted by Town Meeting “as the Town’s overall, long-range comprehensive planning policy and guide for the management of future growth”. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, along with town officials, technical experts, local residents, and key staff members finalized their efforts in 2001. This planning process included public hearings, workshops, and surveys. This process resulted in the ratification of the *Nantucket Comprehensive Community Plan* in 2001 by the NP&EDC, however it was not adopted by Town Meeting. Although some of its goals were achieved, many of its recommendations are unrealized and are now obsolete.

The Planning Board embarked on an update of this and other earlier planning efforts beginning in June, 2005 under the authority of MGL Chapter 41, section 81D. The Board conducted forums, developed a web-site, prepared a questionnaire that was distributed with the local census, submitted a series of warrant articles that change zoning districts and sponsored a series of ballot questions, all to broaden public involvement in the planning process. The resulting document is the Nantucket Master Plan, set for certification by the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Council, and the approval of voters at the April 2009 Annual Town Meeting. The vision of the 2009 Master Plan is for development concerned with maintaining the safety, security, stability and beauty of the town’s natural and built environments, with the understanding that the quality and appearance of Nantucket’s physical landscape is essential to the well-being of its residents.

EO 418 Community Development Plan: This community development plan focuses exclusively on housing as being one of the most critical issues facing Nantucket. As property and housing prices continue to escalate the Nantucket community faces increasing economic, social and environmental problems. This plan thus reflects the community’s desire to maintain its traditional quality of life and presents both current and future strategies for the creation of affordable housing units within the purchasing power of year round islanders.

Nantucket Year-Round Housing Needs Assessment: This in-depth assessment aims to provide a clear understanding of the nature of Nantucket’s housing need through the analysis of demographic and economic trends, the current homeownership and rental opportunities, and the comparison of Nantucket with other high-cost communities across the country. While presenting a number of viable housing options for the community, the Housing Needs Assessment demonstrates an overall sense of urgency among Nantucketers to act decisively to preserve the community and keep essential members from leaving.

Nantucket Community Housing Action Plan: This plan, created in June of 2002 following the completion of the Housing Needs Assessment, clearly delineates a set of community housing goals to be met by the Nantucket community by 2010 in order to address the housing issues for year-round island residents. Included in this plan is the idea that Nantucket needs to develop an inventory of housing units that does not trade on the open market, but is preserved to meet essential community needs. Various goals set forth by this plan include the creation of 400 new homeownership opportunities and 200 new affordable rental opportunities in the next 8 years.

ACTION PLAN:

The following general Community Development Strategy is based upon the eight primary development issues as set forth by earlier planning documents and MGL Chapter 41-81D requirements.

Element 1: Goals and Policies

As rapid population growth and rising housing prices impact the island, guiding future growth on Nantucket in a way that respects its special character has been the goal of years of planning study. Currently, Nantucket’s growth management strategy will be implemented primarily through proactive changes to zoning. These changes must be considered to balance the needs of the community. After the collection of community input through an extensive period of public comment, an island-wide assessment of zoning districts has begun. Discussion about focusing commercial development in distinct areas to protect and support existing neighborhoods is a primary theme. The implementation of “Neighborhood Area Plans” will enable residents to participate in the planning process and provide input on growth management issues important to them. The creation of the “TOD- Town Overlay District” zoning classification facilitates the infill of housing around existing commercial water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure, concentrating development and making more efficient use of our resources.

Element 2: Land Use

Various earlier planning documents and analysis confirm that Nantucket has programmed significant future growth and expansion within the regulations of its zoning bylaw. The Planning Board is currently undergoing a rigorous review of these bylaws, examining the appropriateness of its districts and allowed uses. The Board is committed to exploring how these districts might be changed to lower overall future growth, better manage and direct future development and address concerns related to housing, transportation, the economy, and the environment.

Element 3: Housing

For Nantucket residents and seasonal employees, rising home prices and the lack of affordable rentals has become a significant problem. The lack of affordable housing has become the most critical issue facing Nantucket and must be addressed. The town is committed to establishing productive partnerships with the Nantucket Housing Authority, state government entities, local employers, for-profit developers, and other Housing non-profits to achieve mutual goals and objectives. To achieve these goals, we must concentrate our work on three fronts: 1) supporting the work of non-profit agencies to provide homeownership and

financial literacy education, training and counseling to low to moderate income residents, 2) creating new affordable housing starts through 40B development, affordable covenant programs, special housing for senior citizens and disabled residents, and the scattered Housing recycling program, and 3) promoting the rehabilitation of existing housing stock through initiatives like the CDBG housing rehabilitation program

Element 4: Economic Development

Maintaining the vitality of Nantucket’s local economy through diversification and the development of a stronger year-round and seasonal economy is an idea that is receiving critical public support. Among the activities targeted for support and development are construction, shellfish and aquaculture, agriculture and retail. Home or internet-based businesses that diversify Nantucket’s economic base without adding further stress on its housing stock are a priority. Support for existing business owners, and development of new business opportunities, in the downtown core is crucial to the future survival of the community.

Element 5: Natural and Cultural Resources

Protection of Nantucket’s natural, cultural, historic and archaeological resources is a long established community goal. Protection of open landscapes, water supplies, historic buildings and streetscapes, maritime history, Native-American resources and Nantucket and Madaket Harbors are critical to the island’s well being and among the many factors that must be integrated into decision making about the island’s future.

Element 6: Open Space and Recreation

Nantucket has both public and private organizations diligently working to acquire and manage vast areas of protected open land. They have achieved tremendous success, protecting between 50% and 60% of the area of the island through fee acquisition or conservation restrictions. Open space preservation continues to be a primary goal of the island’s strategy, with shorefront land as a priority.

Element 7: Services

Future infrastructure needs will be met through the development of a long-range capital plan. Among those needs currently being addressed are: overcrowded municipal offices, outdated public safety facilities, inadequate sewer and water service facilities, and a functionally obsolete airport facility.

Element 8: Transportation

As island accessibility and popularity increases, concern grows over the corresponding crowding and traffic congestion. Developing traffic congestion and management plans, limiting the size and number of vehicles, and expanding public transportation are among the different strategies under review.

FUNDING:

The Nantucket Board of Selectmen has worked closely with the Finance Committee and various community groups to find funding solutions for the most prevalent community needs. With the passage of the Community Preservation Act, a new revenue stream has provided funding for critical community projects. CPA funds have helped fund the creation of a position for a Housing Specialist-Planner, who will focus on affordable housing issues, and have paid for the creation of new affordable housing units. Although a large number of organizations compete for these funds, this revenue source will continue to augment critically needed services and programs. The success of previous grant applications for CDBG funds for housing rehabilitation brought in over \$1million for new affordable housing initiatives. The waiting list for housing rehabilitation assistance has convinced the town to submit another application to continue this program. Town Meeting continues to grapple with large funding initiatives to preserve open space and address critical community needs. The Town consistently seeks other sources of funding, including the Executive Office of Public Safety, MEMA, EOE, MDPH and donations.

CONFORMANCE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES:

Concentrate Development and Mix Uses:

Nantucket has adopted a “Town” and “Country” overlay district concept that has received strong community support. “Town” districts allow a range of dense development including multi-family housing options and “Country” areas contain vast areas of protected open space, small village centers and estate lots. The TOD-Town Overlay District zoning designation encourages infill housing of housing around existing commercial water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure, concentrating development and making more efficient use of our resources. Nantucket utilizes land use tools such as town center density bonuses for second floor residential development, two cluster options and mixed-use development to concentrate development in certain areas. In 2008, a local non-profit commissioned a study by the Urban Land Institute to guide year-round revitalization efforts in the downtown core.

Advance Equity:

Nantucket public officials are constantly working to broaden public input and providing factual and timely information. Many town offices now utilize the Town's web site to post notices and minutes of meetings. Several public groups, including the Planning Board, Marine Department and Town Government Study Committee, have created interactive web sites. Selectmen's meetings other public forums are televised on the local cable access channel.

Make Efficient Decisions:

Nantucket's regulatory system is dedicated to fairness and openness; the town benefits from a robust participatory democracy composed of an active and motivated citizenry. The Planning Board coordinates with other town government entities to ensure that activities are executed collaboratively, and in keeping with the principles set forth in the Master Plan and its preceding planning documents. The Housing Specialist-Planner serves as a liaison between Nantucket's municipal, for-profit, and non-profit affordable housing entities to ensure that their efforts are harmonious.

Protect Land and Ecosystems:

The 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan provides an updated framework for conservation and recreation planning in the Town of Nantucket. The Plan is designed to meet the state's current *Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements*. This Plan builds upon goals outlined in the 1987 and 1992 Plans as well as Goals and Objectives adopted as part of the town's 1990 Comprehensive Plan and direction provided by the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan public survey. The town actively purchases open space, protects wildlife and natural areas and limits construction near natural resources. Nantucket has an exemplary record of open space preservation

Use Natural Resources Wisely:

The Town of Nantucket promotes water conservation, operates a recycling and reuse facility at the landfill and actively manages its many open space areas. CDBG housing programs target existing affordable housing stock. In recent years, Nantucket has become a leader in relocating proposed "tear-down" houses for scattered-site affordable housing development. The town is currently studying the feasibility of the adaptive reuse of former electric company facilities, possibly for a transportation center. A proactive approach to zoning regulation ensures the town's adherence to smart growth and low-impact development principles.

Expand Housing Opportunities:

The Town of Nantucket, the Nantucket Housing Authority, and numerous other non-profit housing entities have been pro-active in creating affordable housing opportunities. In addition, the Town allows for the creation of market-rate housing opportunities in accessory apartments, secondary dwellings, duplex dwellings and multi-family housing options. Affordable covenant programs, 40B development regulations, and scattered site recycling of "tear down" homes are other initiatives promoted by the town to encourage new affordable home starts. CPC funding has allowed for the establishment of a Housing Specialist position in the Nantucket Planning Office; the Housing Specialist-Planner focuses on affordable housing initiatives, and coordinates the efforts of municipal and non-profit affordable housing entities on island. Since the inception of the position the Housing Specialist-Planner has prepared and submitted to the DHCD a Housing Production Plan (HPP), and has drafted for adoption at 2009 Annual Town Meeting an Article to create an Affordable Housing Trust for Nantucket. Proactive zoning encourages development near existing transportation and municipal infrastructure.

Provide Transportation Choice:

Seasonal public transportation is available on Nantucket and has been expanded in recent years. A local non-profit has recently established “Greenhound,” an entity working in concert with existing public transit organizations and offering low-emission vehicles to shuttle passengers throughout the island. The Town has actively constructed new bike paths and expanded a network of off-road paths with a new trail spur recently completed in the Old South Road and Fairgrounds Road area of the Town Overlay District. Work is now underway to establish a badly needed trail connecting the Cliff Road bike path to the downtown core. Initiatives are underway to reduce vehicular traffic, particularly in the peak summer season. Redevelopment of the Candle Street area, and the reuse of the former electrical generation facility could provide much needed parking and transit alternatives.

Increase Job and Business Opportunities:

Nantucket actively fosters income-producing opportunities in aquaculture, agriculture and the fisheries. The 2009 Master Plan stresses the importance of preserving business activity in the traditional economic hub of the downtown core. Voters at the 2005 Annual Town Meeting approved articles limiting chain stores in the downtown area, increasing the competitiveness of locally owned businesses, and maintaining Nantucket’s distinctive appeal to summer visitors. Private redevelopment of the Mitchell’s Bookstore and the Dreamland Theatre, both fixtures of the downtown area, will encourage increased cultural activity and more frequent foot traffic to surrounding businesses. Smart growth principles and infrastructure improvements in the mid-island area have facilitated the sustainable development of commercial opportunities in this rapidly expanding district. Nantucket is also investigating strategies to remediate the current shortage of seasonal workers created by changes to H2B visa regulations. In accordance with the directives of numerous planning documents, Nantucket has prioritized the development of home and internet-based businesses, which will bring year-round stability to residents vulnerable to the volatility of the seasonal economy, without placing an additional burden on the already stressed housing stock.

Promote Clean Energy:

In partnership with the Town of Edgartown, Nantucket has submitted an application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC project number P-13015) for permits to install tidal in stream energy conversion devices (TISEC’s) in the Muskeget Channel. The town anticipates that these alternative energy generation strategies will prove less contentious than the current “Cape Wind” project. A Warrant Article has been submitted for the approval of voters at the 2009 Annual Town Meeting, requiring the Historic District Commission (HDC), in consultation with the town’s Energy Study Committee, to streamline the permitting process for residential solar generation systems to the maximum extent possible without adversely impacting the historic preservation aims of the town.

Plan Regionally:

Nantucket works with the island of Martha’s Vineyard and with Barnstable County and the Cape Cod Commission to share ideas and strategies. Regional planning also includes the Steamship Authority, private ferry services and the airport.

Community Development Priorities:

1. Promote expanded access to affordable housing. Encourage rehabilitation of existing affordable housing stock through the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation Program. Pursue new affordable housing development through an Affordable Housing Trust. Develop a Coordinated Housing Plan under the direction of a CPA funded Housing Specialist-Planner. Support Home Ownership and Financial Literacy education to low and moderate-income residents, which will allow them to buy or retain affordable housing for their families.
2. Study the redevelopment potential of Candle Street area. Include goals to expand parking, public transit and pedestrian facilities. Incorporate economic development, hazardous site mitigation, and affordable housing strategies into final plan.
3. Develop Overall Waste Management Plan (Wastewater & Solid Waste). Develop short-term and long-term Wastewater Financing Plan.
4. Continue updates and reconstruction of airport terminal to conform to current safety and security requirements.
5. Complete 41-81D Master Plan. The Planning Board will submit the plan for voter approval at the April 2009 Annual Town Meeting.
6. Pursue future development of a shared Community Safety facility. Conclude feasibility analysis and begin design, permitting and development of a new facility for the Nantucket Police Department at the corner of Fairgrounds Road and Ticcoma Way.
7. Promote economic revitalization of downtown area. Coordinate with non-profit, municipal, and for-profit entities to beautify downtown core. Partner with the Dreamland Foundation for beautification efforts in the area around the downtown cultural icon, the Dreamland Theatre. Complete sewer rehabilitation work in downtown core.
8. Address energy needs. Explore Bulk Fuel Storage facility outside of downtown area. Pursue alternative energy generation strategies including: permitting for tidal in stream energy conversion devices (TISEC's) in the Muskeget Channel; promotion of residential solar energy generation through coordination with the Historic District Commission (HDC) and Town Energy Study Committee; permitting and construction of commercial and residential wind turbines.
9. Develop Coastal Management Plan in accordance with Massachusetts Ocean Plan (Oceans Act of 2008). Establish advisory committee to guide plan's treatment of natural resource preservation, water quality, coastal hazards, public access, beach access, shellfishing, erosion and beach nourishment.
10. Complete construction of Cliff Road bike path extension from Crooked Lane. to Sherburne Turnpike, connecting the existing Cliff Road bike path with the downtown core.