

**Island Plan
Summary of
Steering Committee Workshop
December 9, 2006
V1: 12/12/06**

The Work of the Steering Committee for the Next 6 months

- Engaging in conversation about big ideas and weaving across themes and topics.
- Developing a common vocabulary – each steering committee member puts forth a list of terms they want to be defined and send to Ned.
- Discovering a new way to educate the public or better said “engage” people rather than “educate.” Aim at engaging particular people, especially planning board people. Are we assuming the risk of alienating people we want to engage?
- Guide the process of synthesizing the data and what we learn: a public fact book- a source book of decisions and synthesized material.
- Keep an eye on the functioning and process of the work groups, including composition – are the right people in the core and other tiers.

Mutual Dependencies among Issues

- When we get inside the economy, the community/character, the ecology and land Use – housing is the one word that comes up everywhere.
- In a nice way, every work group talks the same conversation. How do we stop having the same conversation? The conversation will be better once the groups solidify themselves, and identify the questions that connect them to other groups?
- We agree on what needs to be done, but there’s no general agreement on the means to the end. Start by putting some strategies up among the steering committee to see what works/doesn’t work.
- This is not just an Island conversation; it’s how we live as a nation in 2006. The lists of issues are common wherever you go. What does it mean that we’re all having the same conversations, throughout the country? It’s an opportunity to come up with better solutions, it’s about how you view its glass half empty, half full. How to identify the huge societal forces and how they impact who we are.
- Identify and celebrate our successes and figure out why! Is it because a moat surrounds us? We have something human here, that others places do not. Is it a matter of size and do you lose it when numbers get larger?

Doing Planning and Implementation at the Same Time

This includes producing products as we go and engaging elected officials early before we get too far along. The aim is to set the stage for implementation.

The steering committee needs to develop an approach to implementation that answers these questions:

- What are the issues to dig into?
- What is the end in mind: the goal?
- What is the strategy?
- What are the most likely first products from the Island Plan?
- What are the first steps?

One view: We could go every quarter to the planning boards and use 5 minutes at their meeting. Another view: Absolutely not – planning is messy and we need one-on-one engagement with them.

Reasons for doing planning and implementation together

- Shouldn't postpone things to the end; start with good judgment about what to release, when.
- At some point, you can't pull any more ideas out and need to propose something to do.
- When something is ready to go: implement it.
- Get the decision makers in early so that they're part of the "we".
- Once you have something useful, it's time to engage them in order to make it iterative.
- Maybe we have to implement something to get people "upset" enough to engage.

Reasons for not doing planning and implementation together

- Want a process to try things out without getting locked into it.
- We've accomplished a lot, maybe the expectation to get stuff done was unrealistic, but I'm not ready to implement. I don't want creativity to be dampened.
- Want to start with a vision of what you want to do and not complicate it by doing.
- Good to see something turn out not the way you thought.
- Don't start with a compromise.
- We've already alienated planners, people with big homes, etc. We need a conversation about alienating people. We're not clear internally yet and can't engage others on the outside. Engagement requires back and forth and selectmen are too busy. The alienation is coming from the outside toward us. One group opposes any regulation. The second group: this is a MVC thing and some will reject it for that fact.

Development, Housing, Neighborhoods and Related Issues

These issues are viewed as inter-connected and need to be sorted for a handoff to existing workgroups, new workgroups, or the steering committee:

- Affordable housing, including affordable living, community preservation, employee housing, big houses
- Development: where to grow? How much? How? What rate?
- Growth and change/the build environment: protecting our sense of scale
- Neighborhoods: protecting the ones we've got – where to preserve
- Neighborhoods and villages: new ones and larger, more-dense existing ones – where to change
- Is mixed use and mixed income a useful approach for MV?
- Re-development, un-development, and its relation to village-making
- Making places whole on Martha's Vineyard

Data to collect by MVC staff

- Produce a report from this group that graphically shows how MV will look like in 20 years from two views: if we don't do anything and if we do something to alter the trajectory. Questions/issues: Do we have the capacity to produce this kind of report? Concern is the existing study only considers new buildings. Involve citizens in what we could do so they feel it. Make the "what it'll be" based on past plans. The more simple you make it (pictures and illustrations), the more effective it'll be.
- Assemble best practices from other places. Are there any communities that intentionally decided not to "grow" and are still living?

Questions to Keep Us in a Big Idea Conversation

The group brainstormed possible questions. Who are we? Who are we dependent on? What are we? Who do we want to serve? And be ready to modify as we go.

We haven't yet seen concentrated smart growth, villages. Can we grow in a different way? Where do we keep and expand open space, where do we concentrate? Can you live on Main Street without a car? What questions remain open? What do we agree to? How do we show what's possible and prove it? How do we embrace people with big homes? Based on these questions, we narrowed the discussion to two interdependent set of questions: the character of the Island and the kind of development to encourage?

The Discussion about Character

- Who are we now?
- What do we want to become?
- Who do we want to serve?

Who are we now?

- We are a wealthy resort community and tourist. Rural, resort, retirement community, but becoming a suburb.
- Diverse community: economically, year round and seasons.
- We are diverse and we are many separate communities (more separate than before, less vertical integration, new immigrant community.)
- We hold things in common like an affection of small town character, value nature, but nevertheless, function as an auto oriented suburb. We like our affections, but live in an auto oriented suburb.

Who do we serve?

- We serve the Island community and anyone who invested in the community.
- Serve voting and non-voting.

What do we want to become?

- Want more balance socially and economically (less dependent on “the season”).
- To become: a place that attracts those who live here and those who visit for the same uniquely authentic reasons. We are different from any place else, but real ...and self-reliant too. To serve only those coming here for our character.

The Discussion about Development

- How can we grow in a different way?
- To what extent do we want to reorganize where we live and how?
- Where to keep and expand open space?
- Where to concentrate development?
- How to make it so you can live on Main Street without a car?

A sense of community

- Make more nodes of community (like Tony’s market with seasonal satellites).
- Village anchor businesses must be present like pharmacy, grocery, hardware, post office. You need these things to live downtown; tax breaks for anchor businesses.

Strengthen Existing and Add New Villages

- Develop new villages and new models in optimal locations.
- New mixes of use.
- Identify areas, especially already developed areas, where there can be compact, mixed-use areas.
- Site repair: pick the worst place and fix it.
- Do development near services and near existing development.
- Do more compact mixed use development.

Un-development of Land

- Engage in un-development to protect and use natural resources. Do it by using market forces, willing sellers. We could consider a finite number of built houses and after the limit, there’s a “cap and trade” or development trading.
- Delineate natural areas of island and find ways to limit development.
- Landowners put extra land into conservation, when it sells it remains untouchable.

New Tools to Guide Future Development

- Need to prepare alternative visions of Vineyard: consider best practices, tools to demonstrate potential changes, and look at community designed maps.
- Examine traditional neighborhoods and find ways to keep character. Buy back downtown area places that were formerly seasonal and make

them year round. What's happening in Oak Bluffs that's making us vital? For example, people are purchasing houses in-town, no highway goes thru it, first cluster development in US, and lots of public space.

- Integrate seasonal into year round community.
- Wean ourselves from growth industry with better use of our resources (including human capital) by growing internally
- Make existing development more pedestrian friendly. Save water views and access.

Open Space

- Want open space where resources are most critical (you know the list)
- Maintain/increase wooded visual breaks between development; no more visible development along island roads; create emotional breaks.
- Preserve more than 50% of un-built land.

The Focus of the Housing Work Group

The work team on housing has a huge task. Does it address big houses, neighborhoods, and the housing continuum? Most of the core group is mostly knowledgeable about affordable housing. The disposition of the issues: Should the housing workgroup split its tasks and add people with additional know-how to address its' scope of work? Should a new work team form? Should the SC take on some of the issues?

Conclusions Regarding Scope

- Focus on affordably housing and the population.
- Focus on year-round and seasonal workforce housing.
- Examine the question: Housing that needs to be built can it be profitable?
- Write a report that integrates existing reports and data into group's core questions.
- Pull back big home and neighborhood questions into the Steering Committee.
- Built environment takes on non-affordable housing.

Organizing Field trips on the Island

The goal is to get the steering committee members working together on some important shared doing – a shared experience. The aim is to identify 4-to 6-design situations on the Island to serve as learning laboratories, teams can visit and study. Four types of design situations to consider:

- Went bad, what happened/lessons learned? North Tisbury happened badly and quickly, Tisbury landfill, and Dodgers Hole.
- Change is anticipated: how to influence it?
- What works: lessons applicable elsewhere? What made Music Street successful? Oak Bluffs Campgrounds.
- Places off-Island to consider, e.g., Dennis, MA that used visualization software to show the public the positive impact of adding height in the town center?

Do the visits as a whole group so there is the common experience and the beginning of a common vocabulary. Organize the site visits as structured laboratories for learning. Determine in advance: what do you want to look for before you visit? So you have a common frame-work to look and converse. Give people roles: agree in advance who looks at what specific issues or serve as integrator. De-brief as a group afterwards.