



MINUTES

**Cape Cod Commission
Regional Policy Plan Subcommittee Meeting
November 1, 2018
Cape Cod Commission Large Conference Room
3225 Main Street, Barnstable, MA**

The November 1, 2018 meeting of the Cape Cod Commission's ("Commission") Regional Policy Plan Subcommittee ("RPP Subcommittee") convened at 1:00 p.m. with a quorum of RPP Subcommittee members present.

RPP Subcommittee Members Present: Chair Elizabeth Taylor, Vice-Chair Jack McCormack, Jacqueline Etsten, Kevin Grunwald, and David Weeden (*Alternate*)

Commission Members Present: Commission Chair Harold Mitchell

Cape Cod Commission Staff Present: Sharon Rooney, Chloe Schaefer, Sarah Korjeff, Heather McElroy, Jessica Wielgus, Heather Harper, Erin Perry, Patty Daley, Michele White, and Kristen Clothier

After calling the meeting to order, Chair Elizabeth Taylor said that at this meeting, Commission staff would be reviewing the draft Technical Bulletin in the issue area of Community Design with the RPP Subcommittee. Draft Technical Bulletins are in development to inform the Commission's Development of Regional Impact ("DRI") review and future determinations of consistency with the draft RPP released for public comment on 9/20/18.

Chloe Schaefer, Community Design Planner, provided an overview of the Community Design Technical Bulletin with the use of PowerPoint slides. She said that Placetypes play a pivotal role in this Technical Bulletin.

She reviewed the three systems (Natural, Built, and Community); Community Design is within Built Systems.

The Community Design Goal is "to protect and enhance the unique character of the region's built and natural environment based on the local context." The three supporting Objectives for the Community Design Goal are:

- Objective CD1 – Promote context sensitive building and site design
- Objective CD2 – Minimize the amount of newly disturbed land and impervious surfaces
- Objective CD3 – Avoid adverse visual impacts from infrastructure to scenic resources

She noted that the third Objective is different than what was initially included in the draft RPP. The previous Objective CD3 focused on guiding development to Activity Centers; this would be difficult to achieve on a Development of Regional Impact basis. The new Objective CD3 had not been included initially but it needed to be addressed.

She then reviewed Methods for achieving Community Design Objectives.

The Methods for Objective CD1 are:

- Relate siting of development to building and streetscape patterns (to reinforce traditional development patterns)
- Follow regional and local scale of development (relative to building sizes and scales in design)
- Use regionally appropriate forms and materials (to enhance the design to complement community character)
- Locate parking where it does not adversely impact visual character of the area (reinforce more traditional village development patterns and provide for more walkable/pedestrian-friendly development)
- Provide appropriate landscaping and pedestrian amenities (may vary significantly by Placetype)
- Ensure lighting protects dark skies and signage fits with community character

She reviewed Placetype variations in Methods for meeting Objective CD1. In Natural Areas and Rural Development Areas, limit development to small-scale and screen it from view. In Suburban Development Areas, reestablish traditional village development patterns, bring buildings closer to the street edge, and move parking to the side or rear. In Historic and Maritime Areas, reinforce the historic character that already exists. In Community Activity Centers, reinforce traditional patterns, focus on a walkable environment, and create pedestrian amenities that help define the streetscape. In Industrial Activity Centers and Military and Transportation Areas, there is greater flexibility as long as the visual impacts are limited.

The Methods for Objective CD2 are:

- Reuse and redevelop existing buildings, structures, and sites (minimize the amount of newly disturbed land)
- Cluster development (cluster development in one area while preserving more open space in another area)
- Minimize total parking spaces to no more than what is required by zoning (limit impervious surfaces)
- Develop multi-story buildings where appropriate (achieve same square footage with smaller building footprint)
- Provide parking under or within buildings or in structures (minimize impervious surfaces)
- Maintain existing vegetation and revegetate disturbed sites (where feasible)

She reviewed Placetype variations in Methods for meeting Objective CD2. In Natural Areas, reuse and redevelop existing sites to limit any new development and disturbance. In Rural Development Areas, cluster new development and protect scenic resources. In Suburban Development Areas, concentrate development (especially commercial development) into nodes and minimize/reduce parking impacts. In Historic and Maritime Areas, reuse historic structures to maintain character and minimize new disturbances. In Community Activity Centers, there is more opportunity for multi-story development; also, minimize parking. In Industrial Activity Centers and Military and Transportation Areas, redevelop previously disturbed sites.

The Methods for Objective CD3 are:

- Site infrastructure away from scenic resources
- Collocate infrastructure with other existing infrastructure and/or within buildings (no new visual impacts)
- Utilize previously developed and/or impervious areas
- Locate infrastructure underground where feasible (to minimize visual impacts)
- Design and scale infrastructure appropriate to context (color to help camouflage, height minimization, etc.)
- Screen infrastructure with vegetative buffers, buildings, or other structures

She reviewed Placetype variations in Methods for meeting Objective CD3. In Natural Areas, Rural Development Areas, and Historic and Maritime Areas, avoid siting in these areas to the greatest extent possible. In Suburban Development Areas, focus more on buffering development. In Community Activity Centers, make sure development is appropriate in scale. In Industrial Activity Centers and Military and Transportation Areas, buffer development from residential areas.

She then reviewed application requirements, which include a written design narrative, systems map, context renderings, and required project plans. For certain infrastructure projects, additional visual impact information might be required, such as a visual impact map, visualizations and simulations, and additional design narrative content.

The RPP Subcommittee provided comments and asked questions relative to the Community Design Technical Bulletin.

Elizabeth Taylor suggested that revegetating with native species be specified in the last Method of Objective CD2. She asked about the reuse of existing vacant buildings; might the Commission be able to help or is this a local issue (for example, town incentives such as tax breaks). It might be that the owners want to sell, lease for certain uses, etc.

Sharon Rooney, Chief Planner, said there are multiple reasons for vacant buildings. In this Technical Bulletin, redevelopment is encouraged where it's appropriate. In other cases, it might be more appropriate to shrink the development footprint, especially in Suburban Development Areas, in order to create nodes of development. They are not saying universally to reuse every building; sometimes buildings are not in a condition to do that or there are other constraints. This will also be addressed in other technical guidance areas, including the Economy Technical Bulletin.

Elizabeth Taylor asked whether undevelopment is discussed.

Sharon Rooney responded that yes, this will be covered in the Economy Technical Bulletin. This could also be included in the Community Design Technical Bulletin. It's not a common term so this might need to be described.

Sarah Korjeff, Historic Preservation Specialist, said that reuse of buildings is encouraged, whether they are currently occupied or not. She agreed that there are a lot of reasons for vacant buildings; some of it is the decline of retail. Reuse

is considered a positive but you can't get at the big picture just by looking at design; incentives are also needed, which are laid out in other parts of the RPP.

Elizabeth Taylor asked whether the state has incentives.

Heather McElroy, Natural Resources/Land Protection Specialist, noted links to other parts of the RPP. The Open Space Technical Bulletin provides incentives to reuse existing sites. This may or may not involve reusing the building itself.

Jack McCormack said that in Yarmouth part of the problem is the way commercial property is taxed.

Sharon Rooney agreed that part of it is economics; it's a number of different factors, not just one.

Jacqueline Etsten asked why under Objective CD2, one of the Methods is to "develop multi-story buildings where appropriate" with multi-story development encouraged in Community Activity Centers. She thinks they should remain silent on the issue; if someone comes forward with something good that's three stories it would not be prohibited. In her opinion, the current approach would be similar to rezoning within Community Activity Centers for three stories, as towns' Local Comprehensive Plans and zoning are required to come into conformance with the RPP. You can get additional stories out of a two-story building with gabled roofs and by doing something with the basement.

Sharon Rooney said that the premise behind Community Activity Centers is that they are compact and walkable. The identification of them included factors of form, such as smaller footprints, closer to the street, etc. Since there is less space in Community Activity Centers, the idea of going up rather than out is supported. This doesn't necessarily mean more than two stories. Commission staff will be working with communities to incorporate Community Activity Centers and planning for them into Local Comprehensive Plans; each community will decide the appropriate scale, height, and setbacks going forward, not the Commission. It's meant to be a general statement of the desired form in these areas.

Sarah Korjeff said that as you get down into the details, the Community Design Technical Bulletin says to add a second or third story to reduce building footprints, consistent with traditional building form. It's all based on context; when proposing a new development, part of the application is a narrative explaining how the design relates to the surrounding existing development. There is room to protect any existing character. She would be surprised if any areas identified as Community Activity Centers have a majority of one-story buildings.

Sharon Rooney said that we want to encourage some density somewhere; the Activity Centers are the most likely places where that could occur in a way that is still compatible.

Jacqueline Etsten indicated that she is still concerned about this.

Elizabeth Taylor asked if there were any other questions or comments; there were no further questions or comments. She thanked Commission staff.

Sarah Korjeff noted that Commission staff tried hard to translate the existing design manuals. They didn't change the content very much, they just reformatted it and brought it into this Placetype categorization. The resulting Community Design Technical Bulletin is shorter than the two existing design manuals together.

Sharon Rooney concurred that they tried to blend the two existing design manuals. She also said that the visual impact Objective is based in part on the Wireless Technical Bulletin. A lot of existing guidance helped them put this together.

Elizabeth Taylor asked whether any towns have come up with a height overlay, allowing heights greater than 30 feet.

Sarah Korjeff said that Falmouth, Barnstable, and Buzzards Bay allow more than 30 feet.

Jack McCormack said that in Yarmouth they addressed quite a few of these issues at the local level. He mentioned the example of the Yarmouth Economic Revitalization Committee; approximately 10 years ago, when he was on the Planning Board, they worked to try to create an overlay district to accommodate some of the architectural designs they were looking for. The result was the Revitalization Overlay Architectural District. Only one building was built under the original bylaw. Since then, they created the Yarmouth Architectural and Site Design Standards; they are mandatory in most of the new overlay districts. A lot of these issues can be addressed at the local level if they have the will to do it.

Sharon Rooney said that this was the only Technical Bulletin which would be covered today. Elizabeth Taylor asked which one was next. Jessica Wielgus, Commission Counsel, said that there are several slated for November 15. After

discussion, it was agreed that the RPP Subcommittee would next meet beginning at 12:30 p.m. on November 15, before the full Commission meeting.

Jacqueline Etsten said that she had a comment on page 21 of the draft Community Design Technical Bulletin. The draft reads: “Design parking lots to accommodate average, not peak, volume.” She said the difference between peak period and winter period is extreme; if you don’t have enough parking to accommodate the summer business, you could be out of business. If there isn’t enough parking, then the tendency is either for people to park along roadways which could be dangerous or to park in other businesses’ lots, which could put them out of business.

Sharon Rooney said that this is also covered in the Transportation Technical Bulletin, not just the Community Design Technical Bulletin. Across Cape Cod, particularly in many commercial zones, the parking ratios are so high that most of the year there are empty parking lots. The Technical Bulletins are trying to reduce the amount of impervious pavement to what is necessary and to encourage other ways to meet seasonal needs.

Sarah Korjeff noted that this has been a policy since the original design manual.

Jacqueline Etsten provided an example of a small bookstore and large seasonal variations in parking needs.

Sarah Korjeff said that this guidance is for projects coming before the Commission for DRI review; it’s for large malls and large parking fields, and the difference between having 200 spaces versus having 160 spaces.

Jacqueline Etsten suggested noting “where adequate public parking/alternative parking is available” and said that perhaps they should look into having reserve-area parking for summer use.

Sharon Rooney said that this is included in the Technical Bulletin — to consider reserving area for additional overflow parking that would be left in a pervious state/not paved. She said that they want to encourage towns to reduce parking requirements overall as in general they are really high.

Jacqueline Etsten said that businesses may know how much parking they need, based on their other developments, times of year, etc.

Sharon Rooney said that they have worked with a number of applicants in terms of meeting their parking needs, to try to encourage them to shrink their parking footprint and to come up with creative ways to meet the overflow demand.

Elizabeth Taylor asked, with the number of places with massive parking areas and the changing ways people shop (not as much in brick and mortar stores), whether there is any thought as to other uses of parking lots, not for shared parking but instead removing them and doing something with the large areas that are just creating stormwater issues.

Sharon Rooney said that in the Water Resources Technical Bulletin, there is a stormwater section that addresses reduction in impervious surfaces and Low Impact Development (“LID”). In the Community Design Technical Bulletin, infill and frontage building concepts are promoted. In some cases, parking lots can be reused as building area if parking requirements can be reduced. This is addressed not only through DRI review but also through planning and zoning changes. Following RPP adoption, a future action will be to determine if there are grayfield sites that might be good opportunities for on-site renewable energy generation.

Elizabeth Taylor asked whether there was any new business; there was no new business. The next RPP Subcommittee meeting will take place on November 15 at 12:30 p.m.

Elizabeth Taylor made a motion to adjourn. Jack McCormack moved the motion and Kevin Grunwald seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting of the RPP Subcommittee adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Taylor, RPP Subcommittee Chair