

TOWN OF WEST TISBURY

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN

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Introduction

The Community Preservation Act (CPA), which was passed by the State Legislature in 2000, is designed to help Massachusetts cities and towns preserve and plan for their community's future and to raise funds to accomplish town goals. West Tisbury adopted this Act at the April 2005 Town Meeting and approved the Town bylaw establishing a Community Preservation Committee (CPC) at the October 2005 Special Town Meeting.

The Act authorizes the Town to levy a surcharge on property tax bills to raise funds to expand our open space, historic, recreational and affordable housing assets. In doing so we are eligible to receive matching state funds. The Town elected to levy a surcharge of 3%; the first \$100,000 of assessed value of each property's assessment is exempt from this surcharge.

Although the state matches the funds raised by the Town, it is important to note that the spending of both state and local funds is controlled by Town Meeting. The CPC will recommend projects to be funded via the CPA surcharge. The voters at Town Meeting will accept or reject these recommendations. The sole requirement is that at least 10% of these funds be allocated to projects in each of the following areas: open space, historic preservation and community housing; once the open space funding requirement has been met, funds may be expended for recreation.

In this plan we define the Town's current profile with regard to each of the areas and specify goals which we feel the Town should work at attaining. These goals will be used in the evaluation of projects that come before the Committee; the process for submitting projects is defined in the attached Community Preservation Application.

The phrase that always comes up when describing West Tisbury is "rural character." The 2000 Open Space Plan defines rural character as: *The existence of large and small areas of woodland, field, ponds, streams, and wetland, especially along State- and Town-owned roads, which give the passerby the feeling of openness.* The preservation of West Tisbury's rural character is the preeminent value that is an undercurrent in all community decisions. And it is the preservation of this character in our rapidly changing world that guides the Community Preservation Committee.

Acknowledgments

In formulating this plan the Community Preservation Committee has consulted with the Town's Affordable Housing Committee, Parks and Recreation Committee, Historic District Commission, Paths by the Roads Committee and Conservation Committee, as well as with the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority and the Martha's Vineyard Commission.

Over the past several years, much work has been done by the Planning Board and others analyzing our Town. We have drawn upon this work in creating this plan. In particular, we have relied extensively on the following: West Tisbury's Master Plan (both the 1987

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Plan & current 2006 draft Plan), West Tisbury's 2004 Community Development Plan, and the Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Update 2005. The Community Preservation Plan will be reviewed annually.

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Open Space

CPA funds may be expended for "...the acquisition, creation, and preservation of open space... and for the rehabilitation or restoration of such open space... that is acquired under the CPA."

Profile of West Tisbury's Open Space and Natural Resources
(excerpted from 2004 West Tisbury Community Development Plan)

Despite the distinct physical characteristics and different patterns of land use, the people of the six towns of Martha's Vineyard share a deep appreciation for the natural beauty of their surroundings and the connection between the Island's open, undeveloped spaces and water quality, habitat protection, scenic vistas, recreational opportunities and access, and overall enjoyment of a unique quality of life. In addition to notable efforts by the six towns, the Vineyard is graced with private conservation organizations, both local (Sheriff's Meadow Foundation, Vineyard Conservation Society, Vineyard Open Land Foundation) and Mainland-based (Trustees of Reservations and The Nature Conservancy). Over the decades, the vision and dedication of these organizations have resulted in the successful protection of especially choice parts of the Island.

The creation and implementation of the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission illustrates the breadth of this appreciation among Islanders and citizens of each town. Established in 1986, our Land Bank uses a surcharge, paid by the buyer, on each transfer of real estate for the purpose of acquiring, holding and managing land and interests in land such as (a) land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas; (b) agricultural land; (c) forest land; (d) fresh and salt water marshes and other wetlands; (e) ocean and pond frontage; beaches, dunes and adjoining backlands, to protect their natural and scenic resources; (f) land to protect scenic vistas; (g) land for nature or wildlife preserves; (h) easements for trails and for publicly owned lands; and (i) land for passive recreational use. Through 2003, the Land Bank had preserved 2,275 acres, complementing the efforts of the other conservation groups. The Land Bank is an effective tool for towns to target and realize their open space objectives.

The West Tisbury 2000 Open Space and Recreation Plan identified 6,536 acres, 42% of the town, as having some degree of conservation protection. Thirty-nine percent of the town is protected permanently; of this, the State Forest accounts for 41%. If the State Forest acreage were excluded from consideration, 29% of the town's (non-State Forest) total area or nearly 3,900 acres would have some form of protection.

Often overshadowed, but evident from the ownership of conserved land, private landowners play a significant role in efforts to conserve portions of the town. In 2000, privately owned protected land exceeded the amount held by the Town's Conservation Commission, the Land Bank and the private non-profits combined.

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West Tisbury sets as the Town's highest priorities (in no particular order):

- Active or fallow farmland, particularly if visible from a public road or water body
- Vacant or virtually vacant pond front or coastal parcels, including beaches, dunes, bluffs and adjoining backlands
- Forest land
- Hilltops and other scenic vistas
- Any vacant or virtually vacant property bordering existing protected open space
- Other environmentally sensitive areas such as fresh and salt water wetlands, sandplain grasslands and other wildlife habitat
- Any trail easement connecting or potentially connecting other protected open space or conservation land

West Tisbury Conservation Commission

(excerpted from draft 2006 West Tisbury Master Plan)

The primary function of the Conservation Commission is the protection of the Town's wetlands. The Commission is the local permitting authority under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). The WPA regulates dredging, filling, removing or regulating activities within these areas to protect the wetlands value for flood control, storm damage prevention, prevention of pollution, drinking and groundwater supply, fish and shellfisheries, and wildlife habitat. Anyone proposing to work in a resource area must apply to the Commission for a determination of the law's applicability and, if it is applicable, obtain an Order of Conditions regulating the activity.

In the 1987 Master Plan, one of the primary goals of the Commission was the adoption of a Town non-zoning wetlands bylaw and associated regulations; this was accomplished in 2004. The bylaw establishes the buffer zone created under the WPA as a resource area in its own right and gives the Commission the ability to create performance standards for work proposed in the first 100 feet from a pond, bordering or isolated wetland and for work near vernal pool habitat. The Commission is currently developing new Wetlands Protection Bylaw Regulations.

Another responsibility given the Commission by Massachusetts General Law is the management of land for conservation and passive recreation. The town purchased the 365-acre Greenlands preserve in 1982 for the primary purpose of protecting a portion of the Regional Aquifer and to provide passive recreation. In accordance with the management plan, the Commission has worked with the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank to reestablish and create new walking trails. In 2004, the site was dedicated to a long time Conservation Commissioner and was renamed the Margaret K. Littlefield Greenlands.

The Commission is also charged with stewardship of land purchased for open space and land entrusted to the Town's care. Additionally, the Commission reviews conservation restrictions between various land conservation organizations and West Tisbury property owners. To date, conservation restrictions have been placed on over 2,000 acres of land.

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Open Space Goals & Objectives

- Protect water quality (surface water, watersheds, public well zones); identify areas of land with the greatest sensitivity and seek to preserve the land for water quality protection; educate public about water quality issues (nitrogen reduction, run-off, Title V, vegetation management, etc.).

- Increase open space to protect woodlands, habitat protection, wetlands, well zones, agricultural lands, water access, parcels in existing neighborhoods; identify areas where public access to the water is limited (for swimming, beaching, boating, walking) and seek additional public coastal access; identify and prioritize those areas most significant to watershed and habitat protection and seek protection; review need for additional open space in underserved areas; educate public on value of open space to the community's quality of life and economy.

- Ensure that open land stays open; obtain Conservation Restrictions on parks, neighborhood common lands.

- Protect scenic vistas, roadside greenbelts, wildlife habitat & historic areas.

- Provide walking trails; reactivate Trails & Byways Committee; seek to protect trails & ancient ways, possible Special Ways Bylaw, identify areas where new trails would be suitable.

- Preserve and protect natural resources from invasive species.

- Strengthen viability of agriculture, including but not limited to preservation of farmland, through monetary grants, land purchases, etc.

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Recreation

CPA funds may be expended on “...*the acquisition, creation, and preservation of land for recreational use... and for rehabilitation or restoration of... land for recreational use... that is acquired or created*” under the CPA. Recreational use is defined as active or passive. The Act prohibits use of funds to acquire, create or preserve land for a stadium, gymnasium, or similar structure.

Profile of West Tisbury’s Recreational Facilities
(*excerpted from draft 2006 West Tisbury Master Plan*)

Beaches

Beaches are the heart of recreation on Martha’s Vineyard. Each of West Tisbury’s two beaches has a distinct character.

Lambert’s Cove Beach is an 1,800-foot-long beach on Vineyard Sound. It is accessible by a short walk through the woods from the parking lot off Lambert’s Cove Road. The beach is guarded from late June through Labor Day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

Seth’s Pond is a 12-acre freshwater kettle pond. The sandy portion of the beach has receded dramatically over the past three years.

The growing year-round and seasonal population strains the capacity of the beaches, the parking places and access. Parking space at Lambert’s Cove Beach is not able to accommodate even five percent of the cars for which beach stickers have been issued. The Parks and Recreation Committee’s attempt to renovate and slightly enlarge the parking lot was restrained by conservation concerns. It did, however, install a new fence and grade the parking area in 2002. By necessity, parking occurs along Lambert’s Cove Road; only those cars without stickers are towed. Increasing boating in Lambert’s Cove is hazardous to swimmers. Seth’s Pond is vulnerable to pollution, and at peak season, high coliform counts have at times necessitated closing the beach.

Tennis Courts, Ball Fields, Playground and Sponsored Activities

The Parks and Recreation Committee is responsible for maintaining the school ball field and Manter field for use year round, as well as the grounds and playground equipment at the Town Hall and the park at Mill Pond. At Town Meeting in April 2004, the Town approved \$65,000 to renovate the tennis courts, which was completed in 2005.

Town-sponsored recreation may be less of a necessity than other services, but the availability of recreation is an important aspect of the quality of life in a community. The feasibility of Town-supported, year round and summer programs becomes greater as the community grows, simply because there is a greater population to participate in and support such programs. The Council on Aging offers some recreation for senior residents. The Parks and Recreation Department offers tennis instruction, a summer swim program, and a winter recreation program including sports, art, theatre, chess and

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yoga, which supplement other activities available on the Island. It also hosts individual events through the year such as the Halloween party, family skates, and a Spring performance of family entertainment.

Other Recreation

An array of recreational pursuits in West Tisbury occurs apart from the facilities described above. Bicycling, jogging, walking, horseback riding, bird watching, nature study, shell fishing, and fishing are some of them. In many cases, Town policies and decisions have had and will have a significant impact on the availability and quality of such pursuits.

The only recreation area not run by the Town is Long Point, which is run by the Trustees of Reservations.

Parks and Recreation Committee

The Parks and Recreation Committee has the responsibility of overseeing the recreational facilities of the Town; they hire personnel to sell beach stickers, supervise use of the beaches and courts, give swimming lessons, and contract for the care of the Town grounds in their charge.

The Committee's \$93,383 budget for FY 2004 was more than double that of five years earlier; \$59,926 is allocated for beach expenses, personnel and swim instruction. Revenues from the sale of beach stickers was \$41,500. There were no fees charged for tennis court use over the past two years due to the poor quality of the courts. In June of 2001 the Committee was granted use of the fire station on Old Courthouse Road as its summer office, which has greatly improved the consistency, efficiency and accessibility to the community.

Recreation Goals & Objectives:

- Maintain the quality of beach areas for Town residents by securing sufficient space and access to prevent overcrowding and by conscientious supervision of existing beaches.

- Create opportunities for environmental education.

- Preservation of quality playgrounds, ball fields and tennis courts.

- Develop a long-range financial plan for upgrading all physical properties under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Committee.

- Develop a "Friends of the West Tisbury Parks and Recreation."

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Community Housing

CPA funds may be expended for “...*the creation, preservation, and support of community housing and for the rehabilitation or restoration of such... community housing that is acquired or created*” under the Act. Community housing is defined to include housing for persons or families earning up to 100% of the median income for Dukes County (which figure is calculated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development).

West Tisbury’s Community Housing Profile

(excerpted from 2004 West Tisbury Community Development Plan, 4/12/2005 Zoning Bylaws & 2005 Housing Needs Update)

The seasonal and tourist-based economy of the Vineyard has greatly affected the home rental and ownership market in West Tisbury. Rapidly escalating property values have made affordable housing a critical issue for all of Martha’s Vineyard and housing costs in West Tisbury have traditionally been higher than in other parts of the Island.

According to the 2000 US Census, the town of West Tisbury has a total of 1,849 housing units, of which 1,774 (96%) are single-family homes. The remaining four percent of West Tisbury’s housing stock is either 2 or 4-unit structures or with a detached dwelling unit on the property. Statistically there is not a lot of housing diversity, such as multi-family housing units or apartment complexes, in West Tisbury.

From 1997 to 2003, the real estate market in West Tisbury has seen the median price for a home increase from \$282,250 to \$670,000. Between 1997 and 2003, a total of 337 homes sold in West Tisbury. In 2002 there were 56 homes sold, only two of which sold for less than \$250,000. According to a 2001 housing needs assessment study for Martha’s Vineyard, the number of homes selling for less than \$200,000 from 35 sales in 2000 to just 9 sales in 2001. The number of homes selling for under \$250,000 dropped from 82 to 39 over the same period. In 2005, finding a home at even the \$500,000 level is now as difficult as finding one at \$250,000 four years ago. According to LINK (the local Multiple Listing Service where brokers share their listings with other brokers) there are no homes listed for sale in West Tisbury under \$499,000, and only 15 of the current home listings island-wide have asking prices under \$499,000.

The current market indicates that there is a serious gap between what a market rate home costs and what families can afford. The Vineyard community has an income that’s 30% below the state average, while housing costs are 80% higher. The median household income for West Tisbury was \$54,077 as reported by the 2000 US Census. According to Housing and Urban Development’s income limits, the median family income for a family of four in Dukes County was \$68,300 in FY 2006. Individuals or families earning \$68,300 could not afford a home that costs more than \$340,000 or should not pay more than \$1,560 per month on rent. According to HUD guidelines, individuals or families who either own a home or rent should not pay more than 30% of their gross income for

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housing cost, which includes principal, interest, insurance, taxes and/or utilities if renting. The 2003 median sales price of a home in West Tisbury is \$670,000 – that amounts to an affordability gap of \$330,000 for someone earning \$68,300.

One aspect of the housing dynamic on the Vineyard is that year-round residents, especially first time homebuyers, are competing with second-home buyers who, due to higher incomes, are often in the position to outbid them. The same also holds true for those renting a housing unit. As a seasonal community, year-round residents oftentimes do not have stable year-round rental housing. The seasonal rental market on the Vineyard provides a lucrative opportunity for landlords to rent their homes on a weekly or monthly basis during the summer months. As a result, year-round residents renting that housing unit are given a short-term lease and are forced to compete with vacationers and seasonal workers for summer housing at sharply higher rents. This results in the all too common “island shuffle” of having to move two or more times each year, which has physical and sociological impacts in addition to economic effects.

Another aspect of the strong seasonal demand for rental housing is that year-round owners can also benefit from renting out space for vacationers or summer workers. In fact, the prospect of this income stream from rentals is such that lending institutions will take it into account in determining a mortgage limit. Island towns, West Tisbury included, provide for guesthouses or even detached bedrooms to help Islanders to supplement their incomes. One downside to this practice, with respect to housing affordability, however, is that the income-generating potential of housing is one more factor pushing up the value of property.

The Town of West Tisbury has worked toward addressing its affordable housing needs primarily through its zoning bylaws, Section 4.4 of which currently, *“allow[s] the creation of apartments, multi-family dwellings, and accessory dwellings to help meet the Town’s housing needs, as well as the construction of individual residences on lots that do not satisfy minimum lot size requirements which will remain in the affordable housing pool in perpetuity; and to require affordable, year-round housing in all larger developments.”* Consult the West Tisbury Affordable Housing Guidelines for further details on the creation of affordable housing under this section of the zoning bylaw.

West Tisbury is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the hopes of allowing current residents the opportunity to continue to reside within the community. It further recognizes the need to have a diverse housing stock in order to have a healthy and economically diverse community, particularly as the escalating rise in property values will continue to challenge affordable housing initiatives.

Community Housing Goals & Objectives

- Support non-profit and for-profit developers in the creation of affordable rental and home ownership units such as single or multi-family housing units, duplex housing units, and/or condominium housing units, with long-term affordability restrictions achieved by way of a deed rider or ground lease.

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- Work to ensure that current affordable restrictions do not expire.
- Continue to work with the other island towns, the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority, and the Martha's Vineyard Commission, as well as other affordable housing groups to address the need for affordable housing.
- Streamline the process of applying for and permanently restricting affordable units.
- Work toward the state's goal of designating 10% of its year-round housing stock for affordable housing, as defined by the Department of Housing and Community Development, to be counted towards the state's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory.
- Designate a percentage of developable vacant Town-owned land for the purposes of addressing the need for both rental and homeownership units for families and individuals earning up to 100% of the area median income.
- Seek monetary funding from the State, local, or private resources for the development or rehabilitation of affordable housing, including both rental and homeownership.
- Continue to participate in Small Cities Program, which assists in financing and rehabilitation of existing homes.
- Seek to develop a community consensus on additional appropriate measures for creating affordable housing, such as refining or changing zoning bylaws to allow for increased density within certain areas of the town.
- Continue to support the Town's Affordable Housing Committee in such projects including:
 - purchase of land and/or buildings for affordable housing developments;
 - establish a fund to supply first, last and security deposit monies to income-qualified renters;
 - develop an incentive program whereby residents get tax breaks in exchange for permanently restricting the resale price of their real estate.
- Provide mortgage assistance to income-qualified homebuyers and homeowners in exchange for permanent resale restrictions.

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Historic Preservation

CPA funds may be expended “...for the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources...” A historic resource is defined to include a building, structure, vessel, or other real property that is either listed or eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places; or determined by the local Historic Commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture (including cultural landscapes) of the Town.

Profile of West Tisbury’s Historic Resources

(excerpted from 2006 draft Master Plan)

There is presently an historic district in the West Tisbury town center. This district was established in 1982 and originally included 14 properties. In April of 2000 at annual town meeting, by two-thirds majority, the district was expanded along Music Street, Old County Road, State Road toward the cemetery, and West Tisbury-Edgartown Road, to include 119 properties. The purposes of the historic district are: 1) to preserve distinctive characteristics of significant historic sites; 2) to maintain and improve the setting of such sites; and 3) to encourage compatibility of new building designs with existing ones.

At the present time there is only one site in West Tisbury listed on the National Register: the Old Mill building on Edgartown-West Tisbury Road (MV Garden Club headquarters). Whether other sites or larger areas will eventually also be listed is not yet certain; the Historical Commission is considering possibilities. It is the combination of National Register listing, the establishment of local historic districts, and zoning that provides the most effective protection from inappropriate, aesthetically incompatible construction and development.

Historical Inventory

The committee appointed to study the need for an historic district began an inventory in 1979, focusing on the town center area. In 1984 the Historical Commission began the work necessary to make it complete. This inventory was finished in 1986 and is on file in Boston at the office of the Massachusetts Historical Commission as well as at the Town Hall. In addition to providing information for potential districts, the inventory can provide material for a comprehensive community history and be an important educational tool. The current inventory is by no means complete. It is an outline of the Town’s historic assets. In the future, additional research is needed to fully document building dates, expand the body of knowledge, and substantiate some of the existing information concerning the history and historic sites of West Tisbury.

A total of 198 historic properties have been identified. Ten are either pre-historic or historic-period archaeological sites; one is an area designation – the section of North Tisbury known as Middletown; 180 are specific buildings; five are cemeteries; and two are monuments. Further research will probably establish that there are about five buildings in town that were built in the late 1600s, 35 houses built in the 1700s, and 126

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in the 1800s. Each site, with a photograph and designated by the appropriate assessor's map and lot numbers, is recorded on a Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory form. (Unfortunately, because of the State Historical Commission's policy of maintaining sole oversight access to sites of archaeological value, the forms describing those sites are not duplicated in the Town's files.)

Historical Character

It is clear that what characterizes the Town and what popular consensus wishes the Town to maintain is an essentially rural ambiance. The original Town was incorporated in 1671; the part that is now West Tisbury became separately incorporated in 1892. In all those years some old structures were preserved, even if in modified ways, and some were moved to new sites or given new functions. What has primarily contributed to the Town's distinctive atmosphere is not the existence of numerous famous old houses or of an untouched old town, but the spatial patterns – the acreage of woodland, farmland, and wildlife sanctuaries, with clusters of relatively old public buildings and private dwellings bounded and enhanced by the spaces between. West Tisbury's historical character has thus been marked not simply by the look of its older buildings and open fields, but inescapably by the visible patterns of communal life to which all the buildings and sites contribute.

Historic Preservation Goals

- Protect the present historic district as the Town's center – a place where town business, library use, and religious activities all come together.

- Encourage the Historic District Commission to study the possibility of expanding the present district along State Road toward the concentration of residential and commercial properties that constitute Middletown.

- Begin and complete an inventory of roadside trees in the present historic district and Middletown

- Use every reasonable means to resist the crowding or invasion of those open spaces through which one approaches the Town center, Middletown, and other historic areas that deserve respect.

- Support the rehabilitation and restoration of historic sites located within the Town.

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Appendix – list of possible projects

The following projects may qualify for funding in one or more of the CPA categories of open space, recreation, community housing and historic preservation.

- Dredge Mill Pond and Parsonage Pond.
- Maintenance of conservation land located in West Tisbury.
- Plan for future land use in “triangle” area; develop priorities, strategies for the large areas of undeveloped, unprotected land in the “triangle” (the “triangle” is adjacent to the North Tisbury business district, at the intersection of State and North Indian Hill Roads).
- Renovate the fire station on Old Courthouse Road.
- Fill and edge the grass and infield at Manter field
- Reroute the parking area at the school field by installing a split rail fence and landscape the area between the fence and the road.
- Install composting bathroom at Lambert’s Cove Beach.
- Ensure handicapped and elderly access to Lambert’s Cove Beach (employ an ATV or motorized wheelchair).
- Install electricity in the shed at the school field.
- Provide additional monetary support to programs run by the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority.
- Provide monetary support to island non-profit organizations dedicated to the creation and preservation of affordable housing.
- Hire intern(s) to update inventory of historic sites and develop a website showcasing the historical inventory.