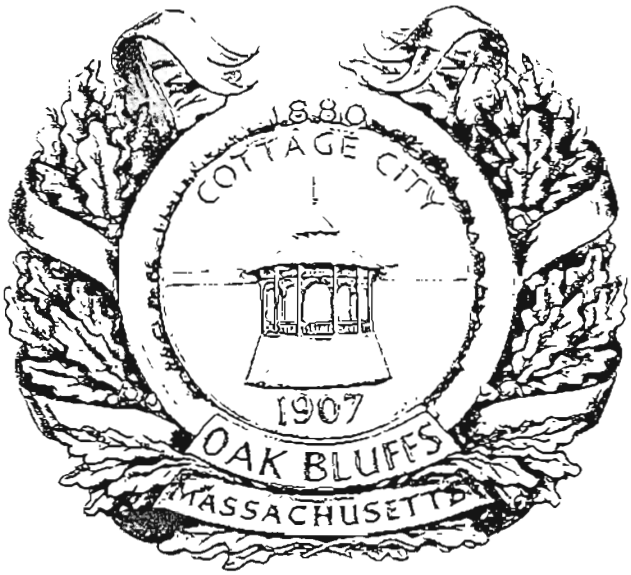
OAK BLUFFS MASTER PLAN



1998

TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS

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This Master Plan was approved and adopted by the Planning Board for the Town of Oak Bluffs on June 3, 1998.

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PROGRAM, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

In 1998, Oak Bluffs is a town with a rich history and an interesting future. First popular for its Methodist Camp Meeting, the Town grew up around tents which gave way to more permanent wooden structures, just as some of the spiritual attraction has given way to more worldly enticements. Still known for its treasured Victorian architecture, Oak Bluffs is a modern town facing issues of density, parking congestion and wastewater management. Oak Bluffs faces these challenges with some concern for losing its small-town lifestyle. However, there is great pride and a strong sense of identity about Oak Bluffs. There is a strong sense of commitment to keeping Oak Bluffs special, and that spirit has driven the effort to create a Master Plan.

MASTER PLANNING PROGRAM

The overall purpose of the Master Plan is to set forth objectives and recommendations as to the most desirable direction the Town's future growth and development should take. Section 81D of Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws gives authority to the Planning Board to prepare a Master Plan for the Town. Oak Bluffs completed its first Master Plan in 1985. That plan has become considerably outdated and, in 1996, the Planning Board set out to complete a new Master Plan. A survey was mailed to all Oak Bluffs property owners, according to the Town assessor's records, and all Oak Bluffs post Office box holders and rural route customers. 590 responses were received, a very high rate of return of almost 20%. Demographically, the survey identified respondents as year-round or seasonal residents, whether or not retired, and the number of children per household. The survey responses among these groups were proportional to their actual numbers, lending credibility to the results. When the results were tabulated, some trends became clear, and are reflected in the goals and objectives of this plan. Simply stated, those trends are as follows:

- The vast majority of residents surveyed placed priority attention on the harbors and beaches, air and water quality, open space and the charm of their community. A great deal of emphasis was also placed on cleaning up all areas of town and on better managing tourists and crowds to accomplish this.

- Participants embraced the notion of living in a family-oriented resort town and enjoying a small-town lifestyle. Respondents were most opposed to the idea of their town becoming a "Tourist Town". Some respondents went so far as to say the town has lost its original vision.

- Of special concern is septic and wastewater management, followed closely by traffic and parking problems. Many people commented on their frustrations with "warring government

factions" and a perceived inefficiency on the part of the town boards.

- Most residents are interested in the efforts of the town boards to preserve the quality of life in Oak Bluffs, rather than focusing on any more business expansion or promoting tourism.

The Planning Board held master planning sessions, focusing on growth and lifestyle issues. These sessions produced public input that further refined the issues and suggested implementation measures. The Planning Board analyzed other data such as population and land use statistics. The Board met several times to discuss ways to implement programs to achieve the goals. Alternatives were weighed and accepted or rejected. Finally, the Planning Board considered ways to present the information and recommendations, and produced the final Master Plan. The Planning Board voted on June 3, 1998 to adopt the Master Plan for the Town.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The Goals and Policies represent the desired directions for land use planning and development, and the course of action chosen to achieve those goals; policies have been selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions, to guide and determine present and future decisions.

ISSUE: BUSINESS GROWTH

GOAL:

- To guide downtown business growth to manage wastewater and crowds.

POLICIES:

- To utilize a sewer growth management plan to manage commercial flows and hookups.
- To restrict business growth to locations within existing business districts; do not expand business districts.
- To allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.

ISSUE: RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

GOAL:

- To preserve Victorian architecture.

POLICIES:

- To encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction, particularly for affordable housing.

GOALS:

- To manage growth in the R-1, R-2 and R-3 Residential Districts in order to stabilize spending for services and to maintain the rural character of the neighborhoods in those districts.

POLICIES:

- Continue to gather public input regarding residential growth issues.
- Remove provision for "remainder lots". Instead allow combining contiguous lots so as to achieve the minimum lot size for the district.

- Discourage additional community uses, that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue. Encourage provision for preferential treatment of Oak Bluffs taxpayers, in the form of reduced user fees or assessments and/or preference on waiting lists.

- Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District, including active recreational uses.

ISSUE: PRESERVATION OF TOWN VALUES

GOAL:

- To keep the small-town lifestyle.

POLICIES:

- To keep traditional downtown services in place.

- To work to preserve existing cultural and historic resources.

- To use Town resources to preserve and maintain existing Town-owned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.

GOAL:

- To make OB a family-oriented resort community.

POLICIES:

- To manage downtown trash better.

- To supply appropriate lighting, particularly at alleyways.

- To upgrade police presence to control crowds better.

- More night-time teen activities.

- More water-related family activities.

GOAL:

- To upgrade "honky-tonk" image downtown.

POLICIES:

- Selectmen's review of licensing practices.

ISSUE: PARKING AND TRAFFIC

GOALS:

- To reduce congestion in town.
- To manage downtown crowds better.

POLICIES:

- To consider pay parking such as parking meters or pay lots.
- To develop and promote a park'n'ride system, particularly directed toward employees who presently park in town.
- To consider with SSA options to build the staging area out over the water.

GOAL:

- To alleviate parking problems in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

POLICY:

- To consider implementation of a resident parking system.

GOAL:

- To reduce parking and traffic congestion at Sylvia State Beach.

POLICY:

- To promote implementation of a beach shuttle.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan represents specific practical measures proposed to bring about fulfillment of the desired results identified in the Goals and Policies. Implementation methods may involve proposed amendments to the zoning by-laws and other town regulations, and recommendations to town boards and others. The Planning Board proposes to present a comprehensive array of zoning and general by-law initiatives at the 1999 Annual Town Meeting. The Planning Board proposes to present recommendations to other town boards immediately.

ZONING INITIATIVES

- EXPAND COPELAND PLAN DISTRICT TO INCLUDE A COPELAND BUSINESS AREA; including Circuit Avenue, Kennebec Avenue, the North Bluff and Dukes County Avenue from Lake Avenue to Vineyard Avenue; to allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.

- EXPAND COPELAND PLAN DISTRICT TO INCLUDE AREA AROUND SUNSET LAKE AND LAKESIDE PARK; to protect Victorian architecture; all of Greenleaf Avenue, Rowland Avenue between Greenleaf Avenue and Simpson Avenue, properties on Spruce Avenue which abut Lakeside Park, and the one property between Lakeside Park and New York Avenue.

- AMEND THE ZONING BY-LAWS FOR THE R-1, R-2 AND R-3 DISTRICTS TO REMOVE PROVISION FOR REMAINDER LOTS; Instead, contiguous small lots may be combined to achieve the minimum lot sizes of 10,000 square feet in the R-1 District, 20,000 square feet in the R-2 District and 60,000 square feet in the R-3 District.

REGULATIONS

- COORDINATE COMMERCIAL GROWTH BY MEANS OF A SEWER GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN; control flow increases and new hookups; encourage growth and expansion of those businesses which promote Oak Bluffs as a family-oriented resort community, providing goods and services, food, lodging or entertainment that is appropriate for residents and visitors of all ages.

- SET UP EXPECTATIONS FOR BARS TO UPGRADE FROM HONKY-TONK - go upscale; recommend to Board of Selectmen to review their regulations regarding issuance of licenses for liquor and for entertainment such as jukeboxes and dancing, and for hours of operation, to encourage more family-oriented entertainment; ask Selectmen to enforce liquor restrictions on restaurants.

- SELECTMEN'S REGULATION TO RESTRICT SIZE OF TRUCKS FOR LOADING AFTER 9:00 A.M., to encourage businesses on Circuit Ave. to take deliveries early.

- POLICE REGULATION TO PROHIBIT PEDESTRIANS QUEUING UP ON CIRCUIT AVE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- UPGRADE POLICE PRESENCE - some feel that the police are not able to maintain control on Circuit Ave. - recommend police to enforce open container regulations.

- TAKE CARE OF TRASH - Town should supply more trash barrels on Circuit Ave., nice ones, ideally no more than 20' apart - Town needs to pick up the trash from the barrels regularly - Consider pledging business owners to clean sidewalks in front of their businesses - and/or recommend Selectmen enforce existing by-law requiring businesses to keep sidewalks and alleyways free of trash.

- MORE NIGHT-TIME TEEN ACTIVITIES - to keep teens off the streets - night-time activities in Town, like alcohol-free nightclubs; activities are preferable to setting up a "teen center".

- MORE WATER-RELATED FAMILY ACTIVITIES - Rebuild the old pay beach - Restore the pay beach to the way it was - Lease pay beach enterprise to private sector; Town shouldn't compete with the tax base. - Restore beach between Pay Beach and SSA, clear old pilings e.g. - A fishing pier, more family-oriented businesses like rental of canoes and windsurfers - paddle-boats in Sunset Lake.

- ENCOURAGE A VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL USES IN THE R-3 DISTRICT - including active forms of recreation.

- SUPPLY APPROPRIATE LIGHTING - particularly at alleyways - appropriate lighting would discourage some undesirable behavior and give an increased sense of safety at night.

- PARK'N'RIDE SYSTEM - Encourage development of a park'n'ride system, particularly directed towards employee parking.

- ENCOURAGE REHABILITATION OF AGING DWELLINGS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO NEW CONSTRUCTION, PARTICULARLY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING - recommendation to Resident Homesite Committee to promote rehabilitation of older dwellings; pursue grant funding such as the recent round of septic rehabilitation funds.

- DISCOURAGE COMMUNITY USES that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue. Encourage provision for preferential treatment of Oak Bluffs taxpayers, in the form of reduced user fees or assessments and/or preference on waiting lists.

- USE TOWN RESOURCES to preserve and maintain existing Town-owned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.

FURTHER STUDY

- RESIDENTIAL GROWTH use public participation to review and plan for overall growth in R-1, R-2 and R-3 Residential Districts.
- CONSIDER BUILDING SSA STAGING AREA OUT OVER THE WATER - invite SSA to talk about plans.
- CONSIDER STICKER SYSTEM FOR PARKING - residents park long-term; visitors have short term limits like 2 hours.
- CONSIDER PAY PARKING - consider parking meters - consider pay lots like Gay Head.

HISTORY

Oak Bluffs takes great pride in its rich history. Much of the treasured architecture dates to the Victorian era. The "gingerbread" and other Victorian delights are closely associated with the present identity of the Town. Survey respondents indicated a strong desire to keep intact the Victorian influence which pervades the more densely built part of Town.

The original inhabitants were the Wampanoags who still are very much in evidence in the life of the community. The Head of the Lagoon and Sengekontacket were the sites of Indian settlements and they may have retreated inland to the woodlands in the harsh winter months. In his History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts, Banks included a description of their dwellings..."Their dwellings were known as wigwams, a corruption of the Algonquian word 'wekowomut', meaning in our language, a house. The younger Mayhew described these structures as 'made with small poles like an arbor covered with mats, and their fire is in the midst, over which they leave a place for the smoak to go out at'. This was in 1650, and probably is a correct description of them as they were used before the coming of the whites. The island Indians did not use skins for a covering like those on the mainland, as there were not any animals numerous enough to supply them for that purpose. The mats were woven from the common marsh flag, or flower-de-luce, and probably long, native grasses were added for binding."[1].

The first whites settled in the Eastville area. Eastville also came to be the first entertainment district of sorts. According to Banks' history, the colonial laws of Massachusetts required each town to keep a house of entertainment for the convenience of strangers..."The Vineyard, being a practically independent political colony until it came under the jurisdiction of New York, was not subject to this law of the Massachusetts colony, yet our Island more nearly reflected the customs and spirit of Puritan Massachusetts than the roistering liberalism of the duke's New York province. Being out of the line of travel, there was not so much demand for public houses on the Vineyard as in towns situated on the king's highways, but when a stranger happened to arrive on the Vineyard the necessity of a tavern for his comfort and entertainment existed in greater relative proportion than on the mainland, for his only other resource was to proceed on to Nantucket or retrace his steps to America, unless charitable people opened their private houses and gave him bed and board...The license to keep an ordinary did not carry with it the permission to sell 'strong drink', and a separate one was required for that purpose. It is needless to add that the inn-keeper provided himself with this valuable authority to furnish entertainment for his guests. This often resulted in disorderly occurrences in the tap rooms of the taverns...."[2].

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[1]Banks, Charles Edward M.D., 1966 by Dukes County Historical Society, The History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts
[2]Banks, Charles Edward M.D., 1966 by Dukes County Historical Society. The History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts

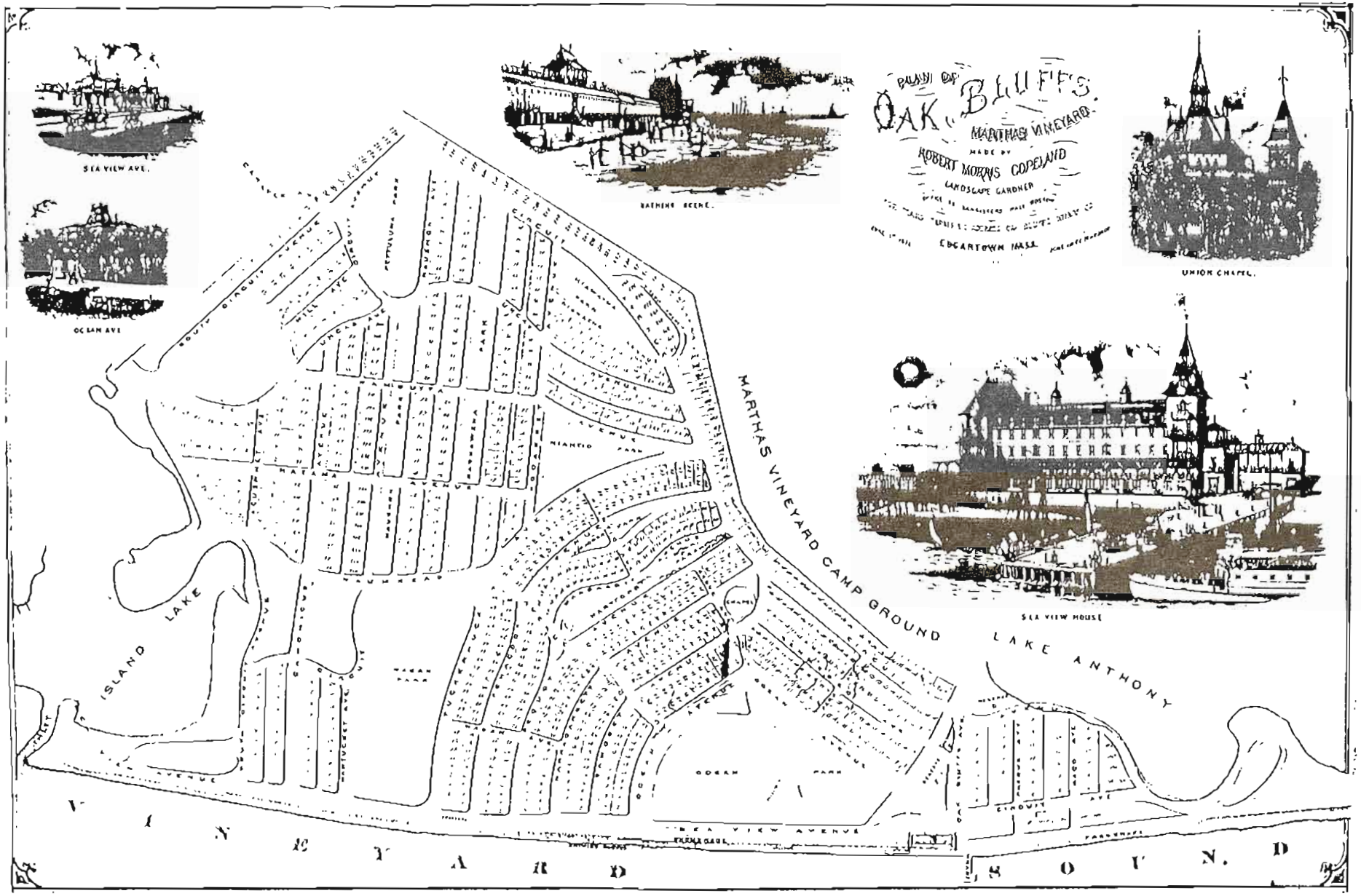
The fertile land in the eastern part of the present town soon drew the attention of the whites, and much of that land came into cultivation by the settlers.

In the early 1800's, revival meetings drew many of the faithful to the Wesleyan Grove, later to become known as the Campground. The original attendants pitched tents in circles around preaching podiums. Camp members began coming earlier to the meetings and staying on later into the summer/early fall seasons and the need for a more stable structure was becoming apparent. Small, closely spaced Victorian cottages were erected on the former tent sites. The Carpenter Gothic style emerged as a combination of the campground tent and a small gothic cathedral. The interior and exterior walls were fabricated from the same material, floor to eave tongue and groove boards, the windows and doors were cut out from these walls, and the pieces were then used during the winter to board up the houses.

With the establishment of the Campground, Oak Bluffs was becoming known as the "Great American Watering Place', a fashionable resort similar to Saratoga and Newport. The increased popularity of the Town drew development companies, which planned neighborhoods near the thriving Wesleyan Grove, imitating the Victorian/Carpenter Gothic style of the Campground. The Oak Bluffs Land and Water Company sought to develop all of the land north of Farm Pond and east of the Campground. The Company intended to create a major resort, and spent freely to develop a wharf, grand hotel, casino, and nonsectarian chapel, as well as investing in railroads in Woods Hole. The Company hired Robert Morris Copeland to design the layout of the lots and roads. The planned developments included the fortunate designation of neighborhood parks, similar to New England village commons, scattered among and between the developments. These parks remain an integral element of Oak Bluffs' character today.

The Vineyard Grove Company purchased land extending toward East Chop, and in 1870 this area became known as the Vineyard Highlands. In 1872, development near the lighthouse on East Chop became known as Bellevue Heights and land near the Lagoon was known as Lagoon Heights. In other areas of town, Prospect Heights was slated for development in 1872 and Elysian Heights in 1890.

The nationwide Panic of '73 occurred at the height of the local building boom, initiating a sequence of events which have had some influence in the history of land use litigation. The Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company, developer of a large area facing Nantucket Sound and adjacent to the Campground, failed. The unsold lots were auctioned off and the streets and parks offered to the Town. The Town took on responsibility for the roads but refused to accept the parks and they were sold to George Abbott. Mr. Abbott offered the park property for inflated price to the Town or to abutters, threatening to ruin the open space by developing it so as to block the views. In the ensuing



Robert Morris Copeland's Plan for Oak Bluffs

struggle, Mr. Abbott filed suit against the Town for taking his property for a public street. Abbott won the first round of Abbott v. Cottage City, the Dukes County Superior Court having found that although the land in question had been dedicated to the public as a public square (including the land used for the road), that the dedication had not been accepted by the town under any statute or by vote of the town. The Supreme Court overruled the decision. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes argued that there is no burden on the Town to accept a park as public; that the mere dedication of the land as public and use as such are sufficient[3]. Holmes argued that the earlier court had relied too heavily on the need to establish responsibility for upkeep of a road by town acceptance, had confused acceptance of responsibility for maintenance with the right of use by the public. Abbott v. Cottage City appears prominently cited regarding parks legislation.

As more year-round residency began, it soon became clear that better roads had to be built, fire and police protection became more important, and the need for hospital and educational institutions became a priority. During the 1870's, as the population of the area grew, Oak Bluffs and Edgartown (one town at the time) began to have territorial problems concerning water, lighting, maintenance, police and fire protection, and drainage. A petition written by Oak Bluffs, concerning the secession of Oak Bluffs from Edgartown, was brought to the Massachusetts Legislature and was turned down. Again in February of 1880, the petition was presented and accepted by the Legislature. The new town was named Cottage City. By that time, the entire northern quarter of the Town had been subdivided into small lots. In 1907, "Cottage City" was renamed Oak Bluffs.

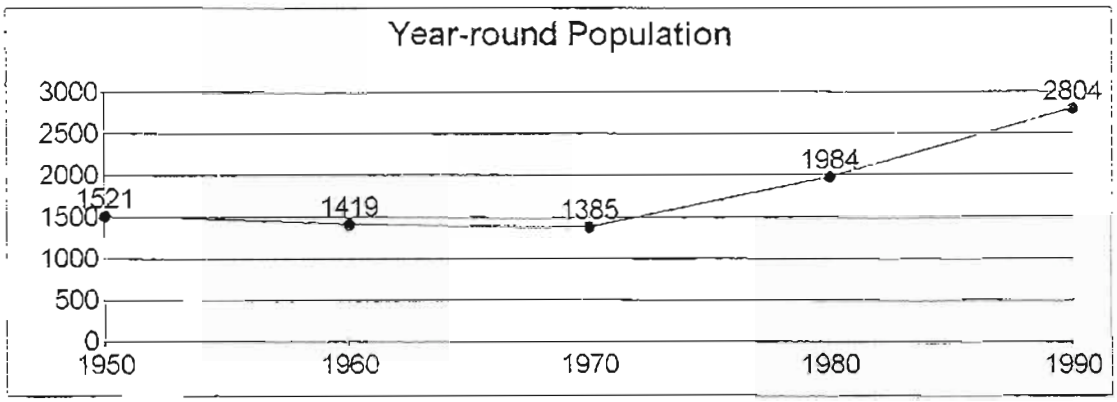
The early 1900's Pre-Depression era did not see many changes in the area. The most noted change was the increasing numbers of the African-American population and Azorean population coming and settling. The Depression of the 1930's did not have the drastic impact as it had on the rest of the country. However, it was the African-American population that bought and maintained summer places, keeping the Town vibrant through those times.

In the 1980's, the entire Island saw an unprecedented development boom. During the 1990's, visits by President Clinton and other high-profile celebrities served to heighten the popularity of the Island, further increasing the pressure to accommodate ever more visitors while raising the stakes in attempting to maintain the town's natural and historic integrity.

3Abbott v. Cottage City (1887) 143 Mass. 521

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

While occupying only 7.3% of the Island's land mass, Oak Bluffs' 1997 winter population of 3,614 represented over 25% of the Island's population.



The year-round population is growing, and it is growing faster than the Island population, the Commonwealth population, and the national population. The table below shows the population trends during the last two decades, when Oak Bluffs' year-round population increased by 43.2% and 41.3%. During the years 1990-1997, Oak Bluffs' population grew by 29%. If the trend continues, Oak Bluffs will also end this decade with approximately a 40% increase in year-round population. The Martha's Vineyard Commission prepared population trend estimates[4] of 3,509, 4,406 and 4,834 for Oak Bluffs for the years 2000, 2005 and 2010. Oak Bluffs' 1997 population of 3,614 has already surpassed the estimate for the year 2000.

POPULATION TRENDS[5]

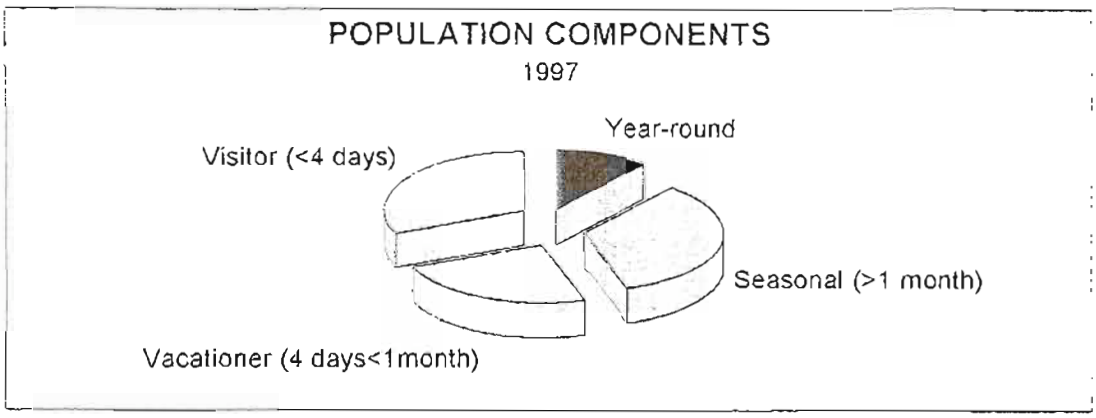
% INCREASE

Year	United States	Massachusetts	Dukes County	Oak Bluffs
1970-80	11.2%	0.9%	46.2%	43.2%
1980-90	9.8%	4.8%	30.2%	41.3%

[4]The Martha's Vineyard Commission, 1995, Summary of Population Trends for Dukes County 1980-2010

[5] US Census Data from Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER)

The 1997 estimated summer population of 33,642 represented 32% of the Island's estimated seasonal residents and visitors. According to Martha's Vineyard Commission estimates[6], the 3,614 year-round residents were joined by 11,565 seasonal residents (more than 1 month), 7,878 vacationers (stayed between 4 days and one month) and 10,585 visitors (stayed less than 4 days), on a typical summer day in 1997.



The Master Plan surveys provided information regarding the seasonal population. About 70% of the returned Master Plan surveys were completed by seasonal residents. The majority reside in Oak Bluffs for more than 8 weeks per year. Nearly one third indicated plans to eventually live in Oak Bluffs year-round.

An important consideration in planning for future growth is the age distribution of the Town's residents. The location and capacity of the school, recreational needs, housing needs and other factors are dependent on the expected age characteristics. One quarter of the Oak Bluffs year-round population is children; almost one in five is a senior citizen, one of the highest rates in the Commonwealth. 1994 surveys conducted by the Martha's Vineyard Commission among summer visitors showed a remarkable similarity of this age group division among summer visitors as well; the variation among the age groups listed above was less than 1%.

[6]Martha's Vineyard Commission, Data Report 1998

1990 AGE & SEX DISTRIBUTION

Age	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Pediatric (0-4)	114	83	197	7 %
School (5-19)	229	228	457	16 %
Adult (20-44)	582	561	1,143	41 %
Adult (45-64)	244	238	482	17 %
Senior (65-79)	148	239	387	14 %
Elder (80+)	41	97	138	5 %
Totals	1,358	1,446	2,804	100 %

This community is one of the Island's most ethnically diverse as well, being home to 58% of the African-Americans and 31% of Native Americans living on Martha's Vineyard. Minorities constitute over 10% of the year-round population of the Town, and an even larger portion of the summer community. Oak Bluffs has been a popular summer home for African-Americans since the revival meetings of the 1800's. This rich ethnic texture creates a lively cultural environment for all.

1990 RACIAL DISTRIBUTION[7]

(YEAR ROUND POPULATION)

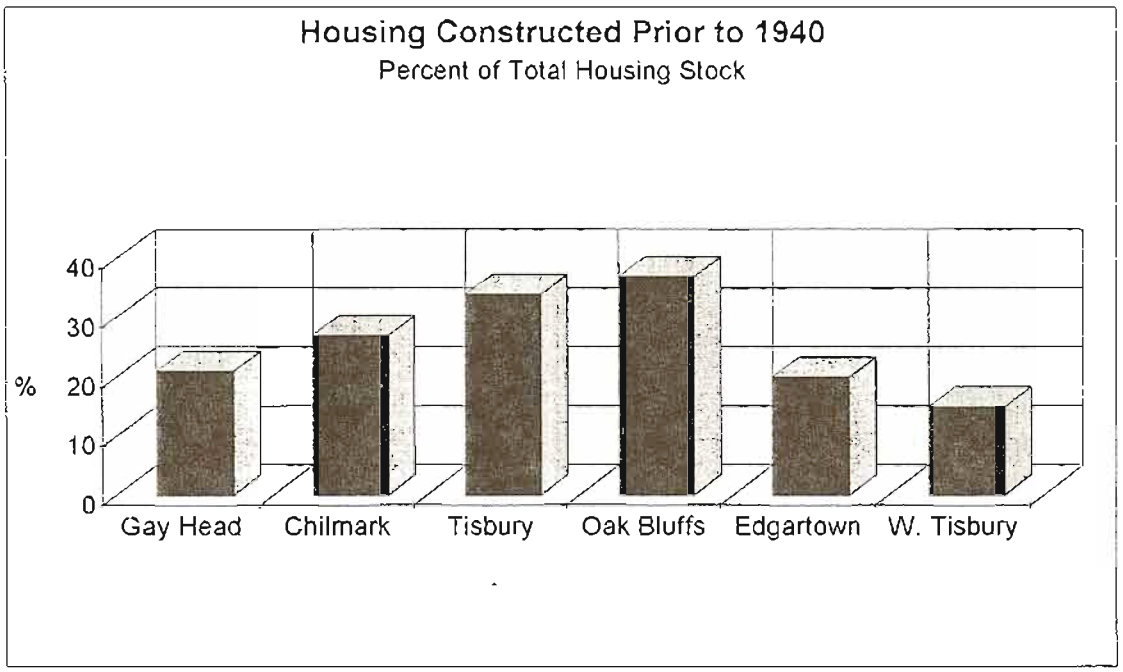
Area	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Other
Oak Bluffs	2,517	193	78	9	15
(%)	90%	7%	3%	<1%	1%
Martha's Vineyard (%)	94%	3%	2%	<1%	<1%
Massachusetts (%)	91%	6%	<1%	3%	
United States (%)	83%	13%	<1%	4%	

[7] U.S. Census

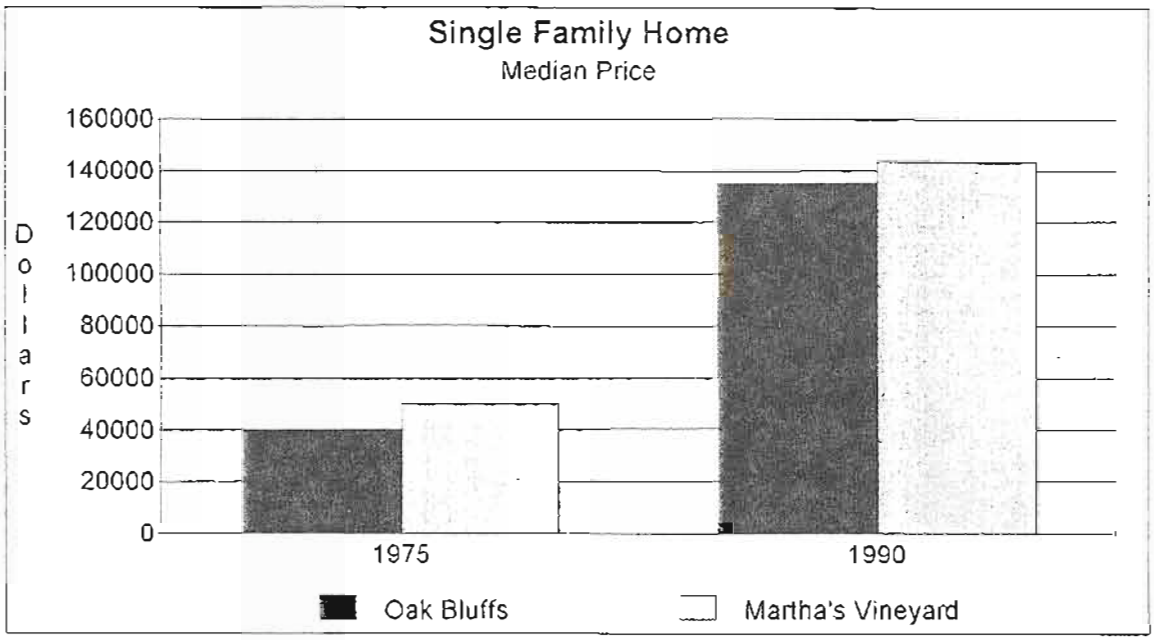
HOUSING

The Master Plan survey responses reveal important information about the townspeople's concerns regarding housing. The responses indicate that people are not concerned so much with the cost of housing, but rather with the preservation of historic structures. Seventy-nine percent of respondents named "preserving historic areas and structures" when asked about actions to be taken by town boards, more than for any other response.

Available data help to explain the concerns revealed in the survey. The age of the housing stock is a particularly dramatic part of the data, especially when compared with that of other Island towns. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, thirty-seven percent of Oak Bluffs' total housing stock was constructed prior to 1940, a greater proportion than found in any other town on Martha's Vineyard. It is understandable that there is great concern for preservation of these historic structures.



Another significant feature of the survey information is the apparent disregard for the cost of housing, when compared to the impacts of other issues. Respondents indicated that they are affected "not much" by the high cost of housing, in the top 3 "not much" responses. The data reveal that homes in Oak Bluffs are more reasonably priced than the average Vineyard home:



It should be noted, however, that although the price for a single family home in Oak Bluffs has consistently remained lower than the Martha's Vineyard average, the average price rose faster than that of the Island as a whole:

SINGLE FAMILY HOME PRICES

	Oak Bluffs	Martha's Vineyard
1975 Median Sale Price[8]	$39,760	$50,015
1990 Median Sale price[9]	$134,800	$143,467
1975-90 % Increase	239%	187%

Home sale price is only one part of the housing issue. Rental is another important consideration. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the median rent for a 2 bedroom home was $652. A study from 1988 puts that rent into perspective compared to other areas. The following table compares the average incomes and rents for Massachusetts and for the Cape and Islands area. The highest and lowest rent burdens are also listed:

[8]Banker and Tradesman, "Real Estate Trendlines Report"
[9]Martha's Vineyard Commission, 1986, Housing Report

1988 RENT BURDEN[10]

Area	Median Income	Median Rent (2 BR)	Rent Burden
Fall River	$18,000-24,000	$400	24%-27%
Cape & Islands	20,000-22,000	650	35%-39%
Boston	18,000-20,000	825	50%-55%
Massachusetts	22,000-24,000	650	33%-35%

Compared to the extremes, the rent burden for our area is remarkably close to the Commonwealth average. At least it was in 1988. The data help to explain the lack of concern expressed by survey respondents regarding the cost of housing. It should be remembered that the survey respondents are primarily homeowners. The survey was, in fact, mailed to homeowners.

According to a Martha's Vineyard Commission study[11], rental prices in Oak Bluffs averaged $750 per bedroom per week during July and August 1997. The dramatic increase in rents could create quite a hardship for persons and families who are not homeowners or cannot find year-round housing, affordable though it may be.

The availability of housing is a separate issue. The table below compares occupancy and vacancy statistics for Oak Bluffs and Martha's Vineyard from 1980 and 1990, according to the U.S. Census:

OAK BLUFFS OCCUPANCY

	1980		1990	
	Units	% of total	Units	% of total
Total Units	2,306		3,172	
Owner Occupied	642	27.8%	928	29.3%
Renter Occupied	197	8.5%	293	9.2%
Seasonal Units	1,250	54.2%	1,561	49.2%
Vacant Year-round	217	9.4%	390	12.3%

[10]Abt Associates, Inc., 1988, "Massachusetts Housing Inventory and Policy Indicators"
[11]Martha's Vineyard Commission, 1998 Data Report

MARTHA'S VINEYARD OCCUPANCY

	1980		1990	
	Units	% of total	Units	% of total
Total Units	8,700		11,604	
Owner Occupied	2,708	31.1%	3,569	30.8%
Renter Occupied	1,135	13.0%	1,434	12.4%
Seasonal Units	4,084	46.9%	5,390	46.4%
Vacant Year-round	773	8.9%	1,211	10.4%

In 1990 at least, there appears to have been adequate vacancy in year-round housing, at moderate prices, so that most needs should have been met.

Statistical averages do not tell the whole housing story in human terms. Housing for persons with various special needs must also be considered. Island Elderly Housing, Inc., conducted a survey of elderly households in 1990. According to the report[12], 99% of the respondents favored the construction of additional housing on Martha's Vineyard that is designed especially for elderly or handicapped residents. When asked why they would consider moving into housing designed specifically for the elderly, they listed the following highest ranking responses: to stay out of a nursing home, present residence too difficult to maintain, desire to stay on Martha's Vineyard and for special services that might be provided. At the time, the Hillside Village complex housed 36 elderly and 4 handicapped persons, and the new 45 unit complex at Woodside Village was being planned. That complex has since been constructed and occupied. Elderly housing is also available in other Island towns. The Martha's Vineyard Special Parents Association conducted a survey of 21 Islanders with special needs. According to their report[13], the survey found that most of those persons were seeking or had expressed goals for housing in affordable group homes. The majority had been on housing waiting lists for 2-8 years. They sought affordable housing in Vineyard Haven or Oak Bluffs, a small home or group home with other disabled persons near transportation. They needed a variety of personal care.

The Master Plan survey produced an important piece of information in the responses by seasonal residents. **One third of the seasonal residents indicated plans to eventually reside in Oak Bluffs year-round.** One-third rent their homes to other vacationers from 2 to 16 weeks. An average of 4.77 residents

[12]Island Elderly Housing, Inc., 1990, "Housing Survey Results"
[13]MVSPA Housing Needs 1991

occupy each seasonal home, according to the survey responses. Most of those people already own homes in Oak Bluffs, according to the survey. It seems that a significant number of new homes must also be seasonal. According to town reports, 1203 residential building permits were issued from 1980 to 1986, and year-round population rose by 1603. If those were all year-round homes, there would be an average 1.3 residents per home. According to the U.S. Census information, average household size was 2.32 persons in 1980 and 2.45 persons in 1990. According to Commonwealth Electric Company[14], there were 516 new residential electric meter sets in Oak Bluffs between 1988 and July 1997, or about 57 per year.

HOUSING POLICIES

- To encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction, particularly for affordable housing.
- Continue to gather public input regarding residential growth issues.

[14] Michael Bettencourt, Commonwealth Electric Company, October 30, 1997 letter to Theophilus R. Nix, Jr.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development issues were addressed quite thoroughly in the Master Plan Survey. The responses indicated an overall desire for stabilization of business growth, rather than expansion, and a desire to make Oak Bluffs a family-oriented resort community. Those are extremely important considerations when planning for economic development.

SURVEY RESULTS

When asked the question "Ten years from now, what kind of town do you want Oak Bluffs to be?", the respondents **overwhelmingly expressed the desire to be a family-oriented resort community, not a tourist town.** The responses were as follows:

"YES"	78%	A family-oriented resort town
	62%	A town little changed since present
	51%	Resort Town (Vacation Destination)
	35%	Retirement Community
	20%	A tourist town (short-term, day trips)

"NO" The majority of the "No" responses were for "A tourist town" at 52%, followed by 29% against "A retirement community" and 21% opposed to "A resort town".

When asked if changes in the business district would enhance the Town, there was some ambivalence expressed. Thirty-eight percent agreed. Sixteen percent disagreed, and thirty-eight percent were unsure. The sixteen percent reflects a very low level of overall satisfaction with the status quo. When asked to suggest possible needs or improvements in the downtown area, the major responses were as follows:

35%	Parking and Traffic
19%	Fewer Bars and Better Crowd Control
18%	Beautify, Clean up, More Trash Receptacles
16%	Commercial Up-Grade
10%	Septic System
10%	Laws - Policing, Safety, Signage, Lighting

When asked what actions should be taken by town boards to "make Oak Bluffs the kind of town you think it should be", the lowest priority was given to "expanding the business district" followed by "promoting tourism". The survey respondents were overwhelmingly opposed to commercial growth at the harbor (65% opposed, 15% in favor), New York Avenue (61% opposed, 14% in favor) and Upper Circuit Avenue (61% opposed, 16% in favor). Smaller numbers, also in the majority, also opposed commercial growth in the downtown business area (57% opposed, 24% in favor), at the blinker light (50% opposed, 27% in favor) and on Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road (41% opposed, 24% in favor).

The survey also asked the question "If commercial growth were to occur in any of the following areas, what types of businesses are appropriate? Included here are those items which received 10% or greater support:

Downtown Business District:

20%	Drugstore
14%	Laundry and/or Grocery
12%	Light Commercial Growth
10%	Retail and/or Restaurant

Oak Bluffs Harbor:

36%	Marine Type
14%	Retail and/or Restaurant
13%	Tourist Type

New York Avenue:

35%	Offices, Home-based or B&B's
15%	Light Commercial Growth
12%	Retail and/or Restaurant
10%	Laundry and/or Grocery and/or Drugstore

Blinker Light:

28%	Grocery and/or Laundry and/or Drugstore
27%	Light Commercial Growth
13%	Light Industry
12%	Golf/Public Sports Facilities

Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road:

23%	Golf/Public Sports Facilities
20%	Light Commercial Growth
17%	Grocery/Laundry/Drugstore
11%	Light Industry, i.e., lumber, gardening...

One third of year-round survey respondents identified themselves as retired. The majority of seasonal respondents do not depend on the Island's economy for income.

Respondents were divided on issues of promoting aquaculture and shellfishing. When asked about expanding opportunities and facilities for aquaculture and shellfishing; thirty-eight percent agreed, thirty-four percent disagreed and thirty-four percent were "unsure". They suggested means such as control of use, access, better seeding and educational opportunities.

PLANNING SESSIONS

In addition to the survey results, the Planning Board considered the comments and discussion which occurred at the Master Planning Sessions. At those sessions, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the impacts of alcohol on the business community. Alcohol was not noted heavily by survey respondents as a problem. When asked what are the top 3 problems facing OB,

"bars" appeared in minor concentrations (somewhere between 7%-17%), and "alcohol" was among problems listed by less than 7% of respondents. When asked to suggest 3 possible needs or improvements in the downtown area, 19% suggested "fewer bars and better crowd control". Although alcohol service is not traditionally considered a Master Planning topic, the Planning Board heard quite a bit of commentary on the subject at the Master Planning sessions. Concerns regarding the "honky-tonk" image and overall crowd control were heard. Of greatest concern were the bars, which are perceived as drawing large and unruly crowds, particularly at closing time. It was also suggested that the bars are responsible for the "honky-tonk" image, in contrast to the desired image as a family resort.

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

In addition to the survey results and Master Planning Session comments, it is important to look at economic development in the context of indicators such as income and labor force statistics. Most of the data are from the U.S. Census, which was last done in 1990. The economic indicators show that income in Oak Bluffs lags slightly behind that of Martha's Vineyard, consistent with the Town's demographics; only forty-nine percent of the residents were employed in 1990.

1990 INCOME

	Oak Bluffs	Martha's Vineyard
Median Household Income	31,117	31,994
Median Family Income	38,402	40,369
Mean Household Income	30,236	30,312
Per Capita Income ('89)	16,695	18,306

WELFARE ASSISTANCE
(Department of Public Welfare 1994)

Cash Assistance	Cases
Refugee Assistance	0
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)-Aged	21
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)	19
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)-Disabled	33
Emergency Aid (formerly General Relief)	3
Medicaid Only	
Aged	9
Families	9
Disabled	7
Children	3
Food Stamps Only	21
Total	125

LABOR FORCE (1990 US Census)

Employed	1,373
Unemployed	115
Unemployment Rate	7.7%
statewide	6.7%

INDUSTRY GROUPS OF RESIDENTS (1990 US Census)

Agriculture	67
Mining	0
Construction	243
Manufacturing	40
Transportation & Communication	104
Wholesale & Retail Trade	321
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	82
Government	75
Services	441
Total	1,373

According to the Division of Employment and Training, in 1993 the total annual payroll was $27,689,000, the average annual wage was $21,414, and there were 163 business establishments. The largest employers were as follows:

M.V. Hospital (+28 part-time)	172
Oak Bluffs School and M.V.R.H.S.	129
Town of Oak Bluffs (off-season, full-time)	89
M.V. Community Services (+66 part-time)	39
Atlantic Connection (+ 50 part-time, seasonal)	25

It should be remembered that small businesses make up most of the employers. According to the M.V.C.'s 1988 Data Report, over half the businesses on Martha's Vineyard employ less than 5 people.

The seasonal nature of employment and unemployment must also be considered. The following table illustrates that dichotomy.

UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS[15]

Year	Oak Bluffs February	Martha's Vineyard February	Oak Bluffs July	Martha's Vineyard July
1980	14.0%	8.6%	8.8%	5.1%
1982	17.0%	10.4%	6.6%	3.8%
1984	16.0%	9.9%	3.4%	1.9%
1986	11.0%	6.3%	2.9%	1.7%
1988	7.1%	4.8%	1.9%	1.3%
1990	10.0%	8.4%	2.9%	2.2%
1991	17.0%	15.3%	4.0%	4.2%
1992	16.9%	15.2%	4.0%	3.8%
1993	12.7%	15.2%	4.0%	3.5%
1994		13.8%		2.7%
1995	9.6%	11.4%	1.9%	2.5%
1996	9.1%	11.0%	1.5%	2.0%
1997	8.6%	12.0%	2.4%	2.1%

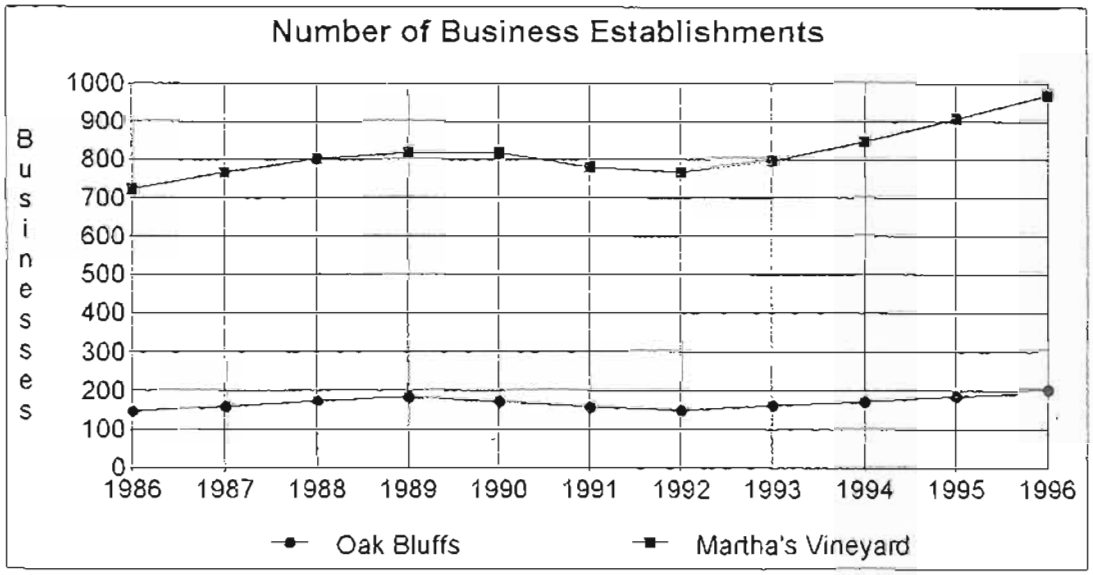
BOOM AND BUST

The following information on number of business establishments is from the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training. The numbers include separate businesses that may operate at the same location, and reflects the number of separate business establishments town-wide that filed a form-1. Religious organizations are exempt. The "boom" of the late '80s appears graphically in the data, followed by a slump in the early '90s. The desire for stabilization of business growth, as expressed in the survey, may be based in part on unpleasant experience with that boom-bust cycle.

[15]Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training

TRENDS IN # OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS[16]

	OB	MV
Year	# business establishme	
1986	148	723
1987	160	767
1988	174	802
1989	185	819
1990	173	818
1991	159	781
1992	150	767
1993	163	797
1994	173	848
1995	186	908
1996	197	969



[16] Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training; the numbers include separate businesses that may operate at the same location, and reflects the number of separate business establishments town-wide that filed a form-1; religious organizations are exempt.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMITS
NEW STRUCTURES

According to the Town Reports, commercial building permits were issued as follows:

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
2	4	0	4	3	1	3	2	1	3

According to Commonwealth Electric Company[17], there were 123 new commercial electric meter sets between 1988 and July 1997.

COMMERCIAL FISHING

In the Martha's Vineyard Commission's Regional Island Plan, there are policies to promote commercial fishing as an industry, identifying it as one which operates year-round, which fosters sustainable use of natural resources and which is consistent with the traditions and culture of Martha's Vineyard. According to the Martha's Vineyard Commercial Fishing Survey[18], 26% of the respondents use Oak Bluffs Harbor. During the survey year 1993, Oak Bluffs Harbor was home port to approximately 9 conch boats year round at the fishermen's bulkhead near the harbor entrance, with several seasonal quahog fishermen using the town landing area across the harbor in winter. When asked to suggest how the harbor might be improved to meet their needs or to "Keep what's there", 38% chose "Keep what's there" for Oak Bluffs Harbor, compared to the lowest value of 12% for Edgartown Harbor and the highest, 71% for Menemsha Harbor. The suggestions for improvement also reflected the moderate level of satisfaction, reflecting relatively minor concerns for better management of their work areas. Most of the concerns, such as removal of derelicts, have since been taken care of.

The Harbor Planning Advisory Committee developed a policy to maintain existing commercial fishing dockage in its present location and extent:

POLICY FOR COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS

In order to maintain the prominence of commercial fishing vessels in the harbor, the Harbor Plan recommends continued berthing of the commercial fishing vessels at the existing location and extent.

The policy is a part of the Oak Bluffs Harbor Plan[19].

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[17] Michael Bettencourt, Commonwealth Electric Company. October 30, 1997 letter to Theophilus R. Nix, Jr.

15 Martha's Vineyard Commission, 1994, Martha's Vineyard Commercial Fishing Survey

[19] Town of Oak Bluffs, 1998. Oak Bluffs Harbor Plan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

- To utilize a sewer growth management plan to manage commercial flows and hookups.
- To restrict business growth to locations within existing business districts; do not expand business districts.
- To allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.
- Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District, including active recreational uses as well as passive.
- To manage downtown trash better.
- To supply appropriate lighting, particularly at alleyways.
- To upgrade police presence to control crowds better.
- More water-related family activities.
- Selectmen's review of licensing practices, to upgrade the "honky-tonk" image.
- To consider pay parking such as parking meters or pay lots.
- To develop and promote a park'n'ride system, particularly directed toward employees who presently park in town.

LAND USE

Land use relates to the human activity associated with a specific piece of land. How people use land reflects the natural conditions present, the transportation networks, the type and extent of Town services and facilities and the demands made on the land. One of the prime prerequisites for better use of land is information about existing land use patterns and changes in land use through time. There is a need to know what Oak Bluffs now has available, what it was like in the past and what it is likely to become in the future.

In Banks' History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts[20], there is much information about land use in the area by the Indians and by the early white settlers. The Indians may have made seasonal homes in the Lagoon and Sengekontacket area, retreating with their wigwams to the interior of the Island for the winters. The original inhabitants used land in the Oak Bluffs area for farming. Many of their place names refer to the farming heritage. "Pecoye" is one such place name, meaning open land or land naturally fit and clear for cultivation. They probably grew squash in the vicinity of the pond and swamp which the white settlers named "Squash Meadow", now named Sunset Lake and Oak Bluffs Harbor. The early white settlers used the area for farming. Much of the eastern portion of the present town was included in the area of John Daggett's farm.

One of the first recorded land use conflicts arose regarding John Daggett's farm. John Daggett was granted by Thomas Mayhew Senior, Thomas Mayhew Junior and John Smith, on Dec. 1, 1642, "twenty acres of land upon the point beginning at the great stone next to my lot, and twenty acres of meadow; and also five hundred acres of land for a farm...". Although he probably continued his residence at his "home lot" in the Edgartown village, Daggett proceeded, in 1660, to buy the sachem's rights to the soil, from Wampamag, the chief of the Sanchacantacket tribe. For unknown reasons, Governor Mayhew refused to fulfill his early grant and, acting under the influence of Mayhew, the town voted, Oct. 3, 1660, 'that John Daggett, the elder, hath broken the order of ten pounds upon every acer in purchasing a farm at Sanchacantacket at the hands of the indians without the towns consent', for a fine of five thousand pounds. Banks wrote: "It was not only confiscation, but it meant banishment, the favorite method of Mayhew in dealing with his enemies." The case was tried in Plymouth and the jury found in favor of Daggett.

Banks wrote about the pastoral setting of the interior woodlands at that time: "Over all this section great groves of tall pine

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17Banks, Charles Edward M.D., 1966 by Dukes County Historical Society. History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts

and spreading oaks furnished welcome shade to the herds of cattle that browsed in the 'Great Pasture' on the borders of Squash meadow, and the only sounds that echoed through these woods were the calls of lowing kine, the bleating of a stray sheep, and the occasional crack of a woodsman's axe. This condition lasted for a generation in the first third of the nineteenth century, before its primeval stillness was invaded by a throng of people who were destined to turn it into a 'city' of paved streets and electric lights.".

In 1664, Felix Neck was divided into thirty-seven lots. After the necks were divided, the Daggett farm was divided. There has since been a dramatic reduction in the amount of land used for farming.

The following table illustrates the more recent decline in agricultural land, corresponding with urban growth during the years 1951-1981:

LAND USE[21]
ACRES

	1951	1971	1981
Forest Land	3,052	3,046	2,808
Agriculture/Open Land	992	463	332
Wetland	750	805	805
Waste Disposal		56	58
Urban Land	550	778	1,045
Outdoor Recreation		196	296
Total	5,344	5,344	5,344

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION
(Office of Environmental Affairs 1985)

	Acres	
Residential	1,450	30.3%
Commercial	26	0.5%
Industrial	0	0.0%
Transportation	56	1.2%
Agriculture	53	1.1%
Urban Open Land	61	1.3%
Recreation	306	6.4%
Water	71	1.5%
Other	2,763	57.7%

[21] William P. MacConnell, University of Massachusetts

Developed Land
Residential & Commercial

(MacConnell, 1985)

Forest Land

(MacConnell, 1985)

Agricultural Land

(MacConnell, 1985)

Open Space

(Open Space Plan, 1996)

TRENDS IN LAND USE

In 1951, there was a total of 992 acres of agricultural and open land in Oak Bluffs; in 1971, 463 acres; and by 1981, 332 acres. Since that time, significant farmland acreage has been subdivided (Iron Hill Farm, Hay Path Hill) and remaining farmland faces development pressure.

Urban land and land associated with urban uses has increased steadily. Most of this urban increase is due to residential construction. The downtown commercial area has kept its diminutive size, while serving as the focus of development and economic opportunity. Residential development has spread outward from the downtown. The popularity of the area as a summer resort followed the success of the nearby Martha's Vineyard Methodist Camp Meeting Association. Developers formed corporations; the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Co. in 1868 and the Vineyard Grove Company in 1870. Roads, parks, circles and drives were laid out, similar to the Camp Meeting Association property, and landings designed and constructed. In keeping with the Methodist traditions, restrictions were placed on the sale and use of the lots "to protect the residents from disreputable surroundings"[22]. The building boom continued and more subdivisions were created; Forest Hill, Vineyard Highlands, Oak Bluffs Beach (1908) (Windermere plan 1895), Lagoon Heights (1872) and Grovedale (1878). The nationwide Panic of '73 occurred at the height of the local building boom, and many of the subdivisions were not built, but remained as small lots on paper.

In the 1970's and 1980's, subdivisions were created outside of the original built area. These new subdivisions, such as Sengekontacket, Meadow View Farms, Waterview Farms, Hidden Cove, Tower Ridge, Farm Neck, Hart Haven, and Bayes Hill are characterized by cul-de-sacs and circular roads, in distinct contrast to the tightly clustered grid format of the nineteenth century subdivisions. The newer subdivisions do not have the same sense of neighborhood, and almost seem to be randomly dispersed and planned.

The southern area of Town, including the "Blinker Light" area, is the least developed area. In contrast to the planned nature of development in the nineteenth century, the southern part of town faces considerable development pressure with no discernible pattern. The Town's 1997 Open Space Plan particularly lamented the "disquietingly uncertain development future". This area is wholly within the R-3 zoning district, requiring minimum lot sizes of one and one-half acres, the largest required in Oak Bluffs. Representative uses in the area

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20Banks. Charles M.D., 1966 published by Dukes County Historical Society, The History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts in Three Volumes

include a high degree of regional support services (Martha's Vineyard Community Services, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, Woodside Village Senior Citizen Housing, Martha's Vineyard Ice Skating Rink, a ComElectric substation, and Duarte's Pond Boy Scout Camp). The Planning Board would like to discourage continued development of this area for community uses that place an unfair burden on the services provided by the Town of Oak Bluffs without producing any tax revenue for the Town. The Planning Board would also like to encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 area, including active recreation as well as passive pursuits.

SURVEY RESULTS

The Master Plan survey included a general comment area with maps of the downtown and more remote areas. Open Space, Growth Management, and Water Quality issues are important to residents who live near coastal areas and in the southern portion of town. Traffic Flow, Parking, Waste Management, Beautification and Neighborhood Preservation are important to those who live "in-town".

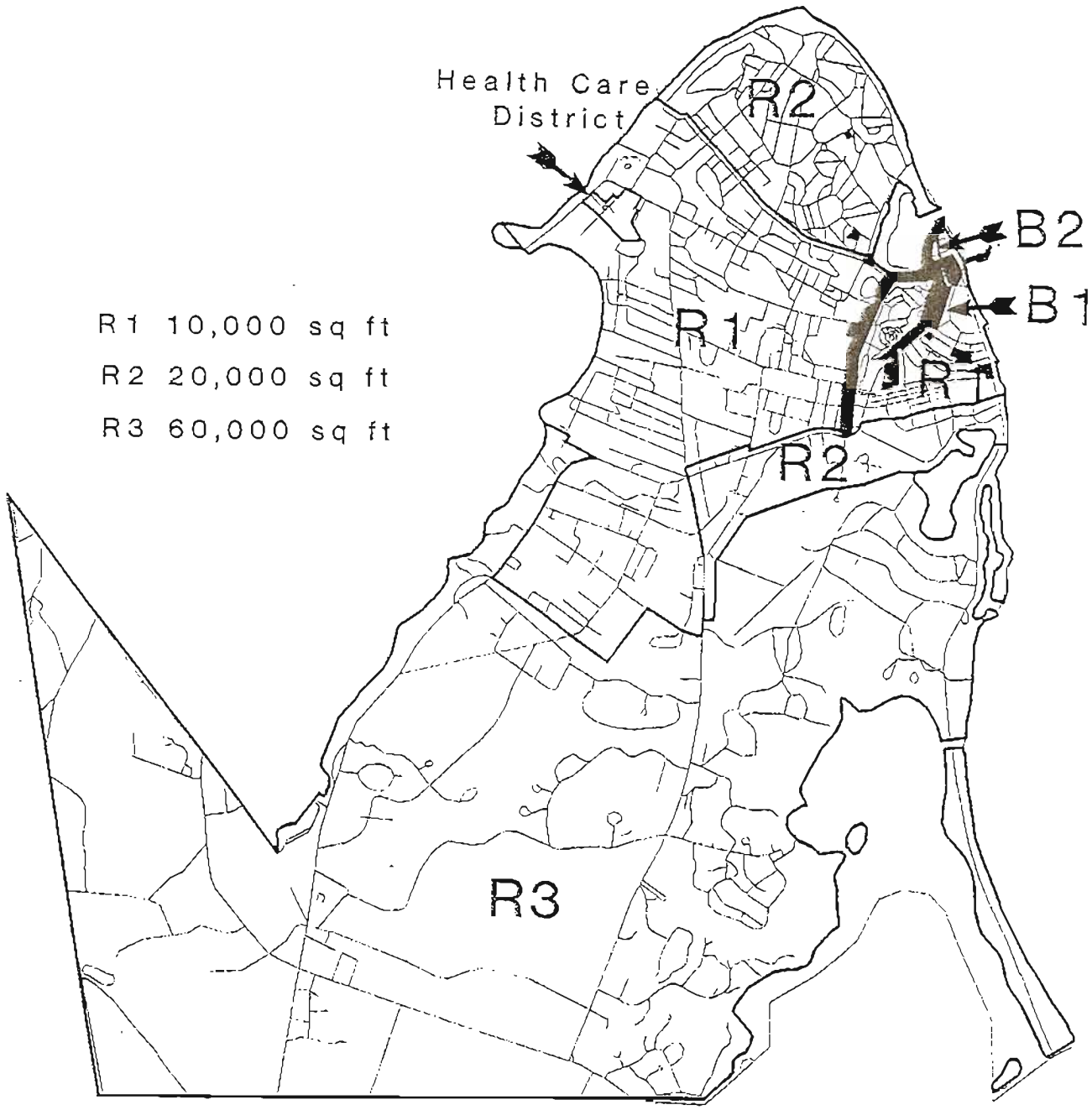
Commercial growth was generally not favored in the survey, particularly at the Harbor, the New York Avenue area, Upper Circuit Avenue and the downtown business area. When asked about favoring growth in specific areas, the responses were as follows:

	YES	NO	Unsure
Downtown Business	24%	57%	13%
New York Avenue	14%	61%	17%
Blinker Light	27%	50%	15%
Edgartown-V.H. Road	24%	41%	18%
Upper Circuit Avenue	16%	61%	16%
Oak Bluffs Harbor	15%	65%	10%

LAND USE CONTROLS

The Town is divided into two business districts and three residential zoning districts: R-1, with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet, in the area immediately surrounding the business districts; R-2, with a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet, immediately north of R1 (East Chop) and south of R1; and R-3, which covers the entire southern half of the Town. More recent development pressures have brought about a resurgence of interest in the small unbuilt lots of the old subdivisions. The Town has allowed development on these small "remainder lots". The Planning Board would like to see this practice halted. Instead, small contiguous lots could be combined to achieve the minimum lot size of the respective zoning district.

In the R-3 zoning district, a minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet is required. In early 1996, voters approved a new



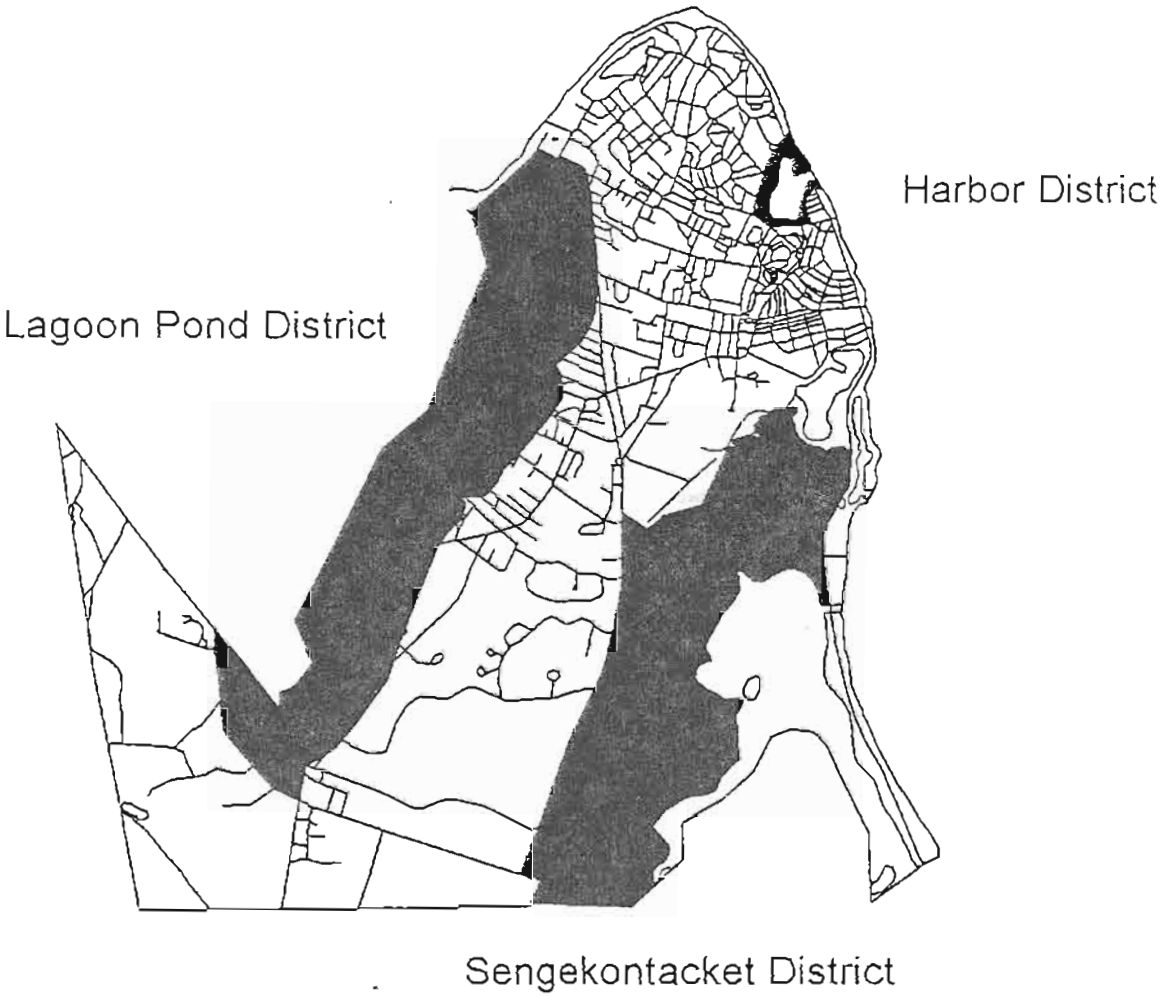
ZONING DISTRICTS

bylaw allowing recreational uses in the R-3 District by Special Permit. The Planning Board recommends that a variety of recreational uses be considered, including active forms of recreation.

In the B-1 business district, there are few building setback requirements and there is no minimum lot size. There are setback requirements and lot size limitations in the B-2 District. All uses permitted and specially permitted in the residential districts are permitted in the business districts, as are retail stores, wholesale jobbers and office space; restaurants and other places for serving food; theaters, halls, clubs or other places of entertainment; and gasoline and oil stations, garages for storage, repair and stables; conversion to apartment units; inns, hotels or guest houses. Uses by special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals include: conversion and expansion of an existing building to apartment units; any use not listed. Conversion to apartment units includes specification for off-street parking. In addition, any conversion from residential to commercial, or any new commercial construction or enlargement, requires specific off-street parking accommodations depending on uses. In the B-2 District, a variety of uses are permitted and by Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals, "any use not listed above that has had its plans approved by the Planning Board under 5-2-B and in the opinion of the Board of Appeals in keeping with the Goals and Purposes of the B-2 District". In the B-2 District, there are no provisions for parking. Selected text of regulations for the business districts are appended to this plan.

One of the most significant zoning tools currently in use on Martha's Vineyard is a set of overlay districts (Districts of Critical Planning Concern, or DCPCs), enacted with the partnership of the Martha's Vineyard Commission. The Commission, upon the request of a Town Board or taxpayers' petition, considers whether to designate a particular geographic location as a DCPC. If so designated, the Commission draws up guidelines for the District; the Town then develops specific by-laws in accordance with those guidelines. The ensuing regulations may be quite different from those that the Town would be able to develop using the Zoning Act. In Oak Bluffs, these districts include the Coastal District, the Island Road & Special Ways District, the Lagoon Pond District, the Sengekontacket Pond District, the Copeland Plan District, the Oak Bluffs Harbor District, the Special Places District (Duarte's Pond) and Oak Bluffs Southern Woodlands District.

The following maps illustrate various Districts of Critical Planning Concern. Larger scale maps are available in the Town's recently completed 1996 Open Space Plan.


Harbor District
Lagoon Pond District
Sengekontacket District

Coastal District

Island Road District

Southern Woodlands District

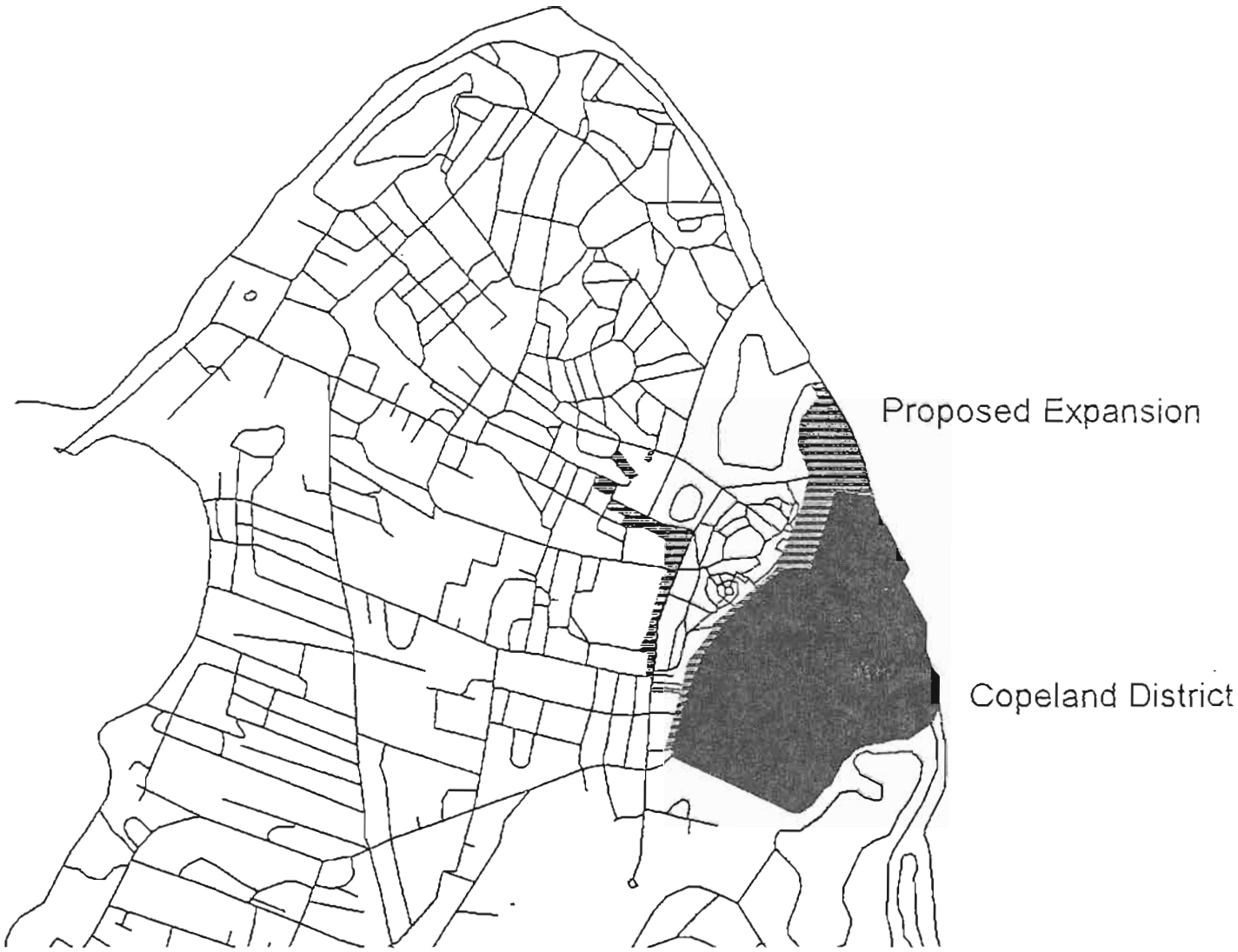
The Planning Board made a survey of existing building heights on and around Circuit Avenue:

CIRCUIT AVENUE[23]		
Arcade	3 stories	41'
Lamp Post	3-4 stories	40'
David's Island House	2 stories	22'
Island Theater		33'
CIRCUIT AVENUE EXTENSION		
Gingerbread Building	3 stories	33'
Dockside Inn	3 stories	42'
OAK BLUFFS AVENUE		
Standby Diner	3 stories	38'
Dreamland Garage	2 stories	29'
Strand Theater		25'
LAKE AVENUE[24]		
Wesley Hotel	5 stories (with tower)	70'
Wesley Arms (new)		33.5'
	tower	12'.

Also, the Planning Board researched the heights of former hotels:

Pawnee	3 stories	
Metro	4 stories (with clock tower)	
Island House	(used to be) 4 stories	
Beatrice House	4 stories	
Providence	3 stories.	

[23]MVC staff estimates made with Toko duo-site range height finder
[24]Peter Martell, 1997. personal communication


Proposed Expansion
Copeland District

After review of existing regulations, the Planning Board found that existing height restrictions for the B1 District would not allow for construction of a large 4 or 5 story Victorian hotel. The Planning Board recommends expansion of the Copeland Plan District to include a Copeland Business District, in order to facilitate a resurgence of the grand Victorian hotels of the turn of the century. The Copeland Plan District was intended to preserve Victorian architecture, and includes architectural review.

According to the existing height regulation for the B-1 District, maximum height is 35'. The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant a Special Permit for building height up to a maximum of 50 feet: "an applicant must also show that the increase in height is in keeping with the Victorian architecture prevalent in Oak Bluffs at the turn of the century allowing sufficient air and light and will enhance rather than detract from the unique architectural character of Oak Bluffs". The regulation does not allow for construction of an additional floor level (would not allow passage of air and light), but is rather intended for isolated Victorian features such as turrets and towers. The height limitation in the B-2 District is 24 feet with no more than two floors; by Special Permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals, the 24 foot height may be exceeded to a limit of 32 feet, but still not to exceed 2 floors, if the added height in the opinion of the Board helps promote the architectural goals of the District. The height limitation in the Copeland Plan District is as follows: "The maximum height of building and structure elements shall be 50 feet. The roofline shall be asymmetrical in keeping with the Victorian architecture prevalent in Oak Bluffs at the turn of the century and shall allow sufficient passage of air and light". The Planning Board has found that the height limitation, combined with the site plan review to promote Victorian architecture, would be an appropriate means to achieve a resurgence of the grand Victorian hotels in the downtown. The Planning Board recommends expansion of the Copeland Plan District to include a Copeland Business District: to include all of Circuit Avenue and Kennebec Avenue, Dukes County Avenue from Lake Avenue to Vineyard Avenue and the present B-2 District.

LAND USE POLICIES

- To utilize a sewer growth management plan to manage commercial flows and hookups.
- To restrict business growth to locations within existing business districts; do not expand business districts.
- To allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.

- To encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction, particularly for affordable housing.

- Continue to gather public input regarding residential growth issues.

- Remove provision for "remainder lots". Instead allow combining contiguous lots so as to achieve the minimum lot size for the district.

- Discourage additional community uses, that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue. Encourage provision for preferential treatment of Oak Bluffs taxpayers, in the form of reduced user fees or assessments and/or preference on waiting lists.

- Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District, including active forms of recreation.

- To keep traditional downtown services in place.

- More water-related family activities.

- To consider with SSA options to build the staging area out over the water.

- To consider implementation of a resident parking system.

CIRCULATION

Because of the planned nature of the northern part of Town, an extensive grid road system provides easy access into and out of neighborhoods. Two road systems, Circuit Ave-Wing Road-Barnes Road and Eastville Ave-County Road run north-south through the Town, connecting the downtown areas to outlying areas and to both the State Highway and the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road. Most subdivisions in the southern part of Town are accessed directly from Barnes, County, or Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road. A State Highway (Beach Road) links Oak Bluffs with both Edgartown and Tisbury (or Vineyard Haven), as does the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road. Fortunately, the Town's design allows through traffic to maneuver through town more easily than in other Island towns.

According to the Registry of Motor Vehicles, vehicle registrations rose by 46% in the 5 years between 1992 and 1997, while registrations on Martha's Vineyard rose by 44%. Of the 4,572 registrations in Oak Bluffs, 2,611 were for automobiles and the remainder for trailers, light trucks, heavy trucks, motor cycles and others.

The 1990 U.S. Census provided the following information regarding commuting to work in Oak Bluffs:

Commuting to Work (1990 US Census)

Drove alone	76.1%
Carpools	9.0
Public transportation	1.1
Other means	3.2
Walked or worked at home	10.5
Average time to work	11.2 minutes

An extensive bike path system is popular with visitors as well as residents. In 1998, the Town added bicycle paths on County Road and the southern part of Barnes Road, in addition to those parallel to the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road and along Beach Road (State Highway. In 1991, over 227 bicycles an hour were recorded as using the Beach Road bicycle path.

Public transportation is provided by a private carrier, Island Transport, inexpensive bus service continuously throughout the summer from early morning to midnight from Oak Bluffs to Edgartown and Vineyard Haven. This carrier allows passengers on and off of the bus anywhere on the route. Oak Bluffs is a member of the Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority. The MVTA provides paratransit services to the elderly and disabled.

SURVEY RESULTS

According to part of the Master Plan Survey, traffic flow, parking, waste management, beautification and neighborhood preservation are important to those who live "in-town", while issues of open space, growth management, and water quality issues are important to residents who live near coastal areas and in the southern portion of town. Overall, twenty-three percent of respondents listed "traffic, roads and transportation" among the top three problems facing Oak Bluffs, behind wastewater and septic management (53%), crowds and daytrippers (26%), and taxes and tax equity (25%).

MASTER PLANNING SESSIONS

The Master Planning Sessions produced quite a bit of discussion on parking in town. Most participants favored establishment of a park'n'ride system, specifically to target employee parking. The Planning Board supports the establishment of a park'n'ride system. According to the MVTA, in 1997 26,771 riders used the downtown Edgartown shuttle and 14,945 used the Tisbury Park-n-ride. It is also interesting to note the growth in ridership for the new Tisbury shuttle. Ridership rose from 7,261 in 1994 to 13,661 in 1995, to 13,068 in 1996 and to 14,945 in 1997. Oak Bluffs should be prepared for a similar slow start, should it decide to start its own shuttle. Another interesting concept which was brought up at the Master Planning Sessions was the idea of developing a shuttle to State Beach. For reference, the long-established South Beach shuttle experienced ridership of 23,924 in 1994, 24,269 in 1995, 21,000 in 1996 and 22,882 in 1997.

Concern was also expressed for the lack of available parking for residents of the neighborhoods near the downtown area. The Planning Board recommends that, after the park'n'ride has been established, the Town give further consideration to easing the parking congestion in the downtown neighborhoods. Such measures might include establishment of parking limits to permit only residents to park long term, others to be allowed only short term parking.

The Planning Board recommends establishment of police regulations to prohibit queuing up of pedestrian patrons on Circuit Avenue, and a Selectmen's regulation to limit the size and hour of standing of trucks unloading on Circuit Avenue. The Planning Board recommends further consideration of additional measures such as pay parking (parking meters, e.g.).

CIRCULATION POLICIES

POLICIES:

- To keep traditional downtown services in place.
- To consider pay parking such as parking meters or pay lots.
- To develop and promote a park'n'ride system, particularly directed toward employees who presently park in town.
- To consider with SSA options to build the staging area out over the water.
- To consider implementation of a resident parking system.
- To promote implementation of a beach shuttle.

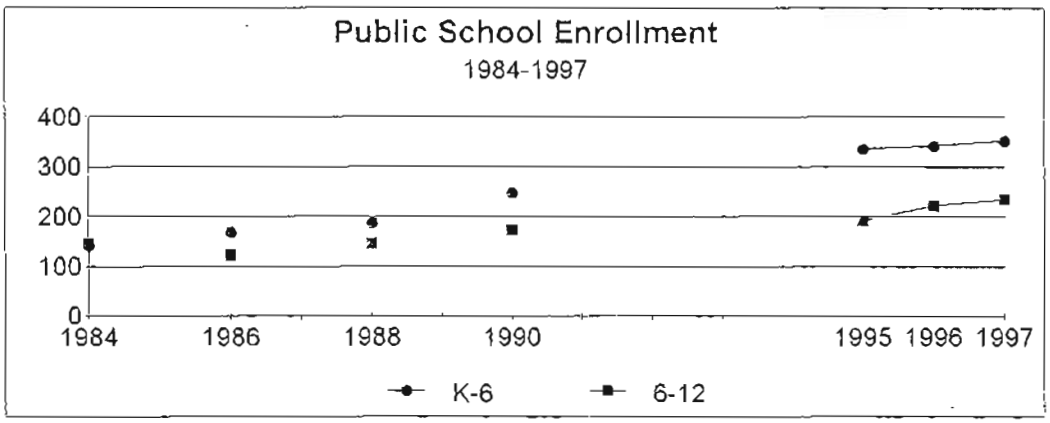
SERVICES AND FACILITIES

There is a significant infrastructure network in Oak Bluffs. Because of the dense development within the Town, water has been supplied from a municipal water system since the late 1800's. The Town maintains its own Highway Department that maintains all Town-owned roadways.

Statistics are available regarding some services offered by the Town, such as school and library services:

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
(Dept. of Education)

	Enrollment 94/95	Change 1981-95
Oak Bluffs	393	88.9%
Martha's Vineyard	519	11.4%
Statewide		-10.2%



Between the years 1984 and 1997, public school enrollment climbed by 102%. (compared to a 63% increase in the general year-round population). The chart above shows that much of the increase was in the Kindergarten through Grade 6 category; an increase of 146%. The 60% increase in enrollment for grades 6 through 12 more closely mirrors the 63% increase in the general year-round population for that time period.

PUPIL COST
(Dept. of Education)

Integrated Per pupil Cost 91/92	$7,395
State Average	5,034

LIBRARY
(Board of Library Commissioners 1993/4)

		Statewide
Total Holdings	15,098	
per capita	5.35	4.91
Total Circulation	20,269	
per capita	6.92	7.02

HARBOR

Oak Bluffs Harbor generates considerable income directly to the Town through its marina. In 1995, harbor berthing fees[25] grossed $479,649. Operational expenses totaled $97,868.40. The only other large source of user-generated income was garbage/trash disposal, which generated $308,603, and was offset by the Board of Health operating expenses of $301,037.04. Marina income is clearly the major source of user-generated income. Of the total $9,714,551 revenues to the General Fund, the largest source was tax collection - $8,186,480, from a tax rate of $11.85.

In development of the Oak Bluffs Harbor Plan, the Harbor Planning Advisory Committee reviewed a maintenance and capital improvement plan proposed by the Harbor Management Committee and made a number of recommendations: additional jetty protection is needed and should be funded other than by property taxes; for safety, fuel should be relocated; the Town should build rest rooms on Town-owned land between Nancy's Snack Bar and the Bluffs Walk Building; there should be a mooring field outside the harbor. In addition, the Committee opened discussion of the feasibility of construction of a community pier on Town-owned land on the East Chop side, slips to be leased for the season (not for transient use). There will be further consideration of this option. Issues of traffic and parking congestion must be carefully considered, and there should be more public exposure and discussion of that topic.

Other services currently offered to boaters include: a pumpout boat, trash pickup and disposal, showers. Launch service is provided by a private service licensed by the Board of Selectmen.

In 1997, the Harbor Management Committee prepared information regarding berthing availability in the harbor. They found a total capacity of 446 boats; Town owned/managed dockage

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22 Town of Oak Bluffs, 1995, Annual Town Report

for 112 boats, private dock space for 92 boats, 48 Town managed moorings (192 boat capacity @ 4 boats/mooring) and 41 private moorings. In the Oak Bluffs Harbor Plan, there is a recommendation for harbor improvements[26]:

RECOMMENDATION FOR
PHASED HARBOR IMPROVEMENTS

Phase I - Landscaping and Beautification at Lake Avenue.

- Project 1 - Bury all utilities
- Project 2 - On south side of Lake Ave., replace the sloped bank with a bulkhead; relocate parking to south side of street
- Project 3 - Waterside landscaping - install planters, irrigation system and no more than 10 trees; construct gazebo (restore at former location) and wooden boardwalk; install cookspaces (consisting of gravel areas with grills on posts, adjacent benches)

Phase II - Jetty extension for increased storm protection

Phase III - Possible marina expansion, following the construction of additional storm protection. Potential expansion of Town marina facilities to a maximum of 40 additional slips and conversion by attrition of 20 moorings from private use to Town-managed transient use.

SEWER SERVICE

Much of the planned development in the downtown area was modeled after the densely packed Campground. Over one hundred years later, the building density of the early days has led to a pressing need to take care of the sewage disposal needs. From its spiritual roots, the Town has evolved into one which faces that most earthy of problems, sewage. The Planning Board set out to develop a Master Plan for the Town, in a climate of great concern for resolution of the sewage disposal needs and for preservation of existing town values. The Town rejected a large-scale two-town sewering plan, and in 1998 is zeroing in on a plan to provide central sewer service to the downtown areas with the most crucial need.

SEWER GROWTH MANAGEMENT

According to the Town's draft Phase III Facilities Report[27], the design capacity proposed for treatment includes a growth factor of 3% per year. (After 20 years, the 3% per year growth

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[26]Town of Oak Bluffs, 1998 Oak Bluffs Harbor Plan

[27]Horsley & Whitten, Inc. and Wright-Pierce, 1998, Town of Oak Bluffs Massachusetts Draft Phase III Wastewater Facilities Plan and Environmental Impact Report

would result in 76% growth overall.) There is no residential growth proposed, the assumption being that there is no room for new residential construction. The design growth for the commercial sector reflects a potential growth in volume of sewage flow, rather than growth by new construction. There is very little or no vacant land in the downtown area. It should be remembered that the 3% per year, 74% cumulative growth is merely a design capacity for the system. It will be up to the Town to decide how and when businesses are allowed to increase sewage flow.

The Planning Board attempted to investigate examples of sewer growth management from other towns. Unfortunately, there don't seem to be good examples to go by. After several inquiries at different towns, all said they didn't use a growth plan but sure wish that they had! Edgartown, for example, did not use a plan. Sewer commissioners allowed anyone to tie in who wanted to, until they realized that the plant was over capacity. Then they said no to everyone. Nantucket has had a similar experience to Edgartown's. They built a system and allowed new construction to tie in at will, and are now finding that they don't have the capacity to take care of the problem areas already built. Falmouth built a Phase I sewer for Woods Hole and part of Main Street. The Phase II expansion has been problematic because of problems with the operation of the system and disagreement with the contractor over the capacity. They are not sure about the capacity of the expanded facility, and are therefor having trouble deciding who can tie in. There is no policy plan for deciding who can tie in, although the sewer manager continues to request one. Current procedure is a letter of request to the Selectmen, who must approve the request, along with the Town Administrator and the sewer manager.

The Planning Board would like to see Oak Bluffs avoid some of the unfortunate mistakes that have been made by towns in similar situations. The Planning Board recommends development of a sewer growth management plan to control flow increases and new commercial hookups; to encourage growth and expansion only of those businesses which promote Oak Bluffs as a family-oriented resort community, providing goods and services, food, lodging or entertainment that is appropriate for residents and visitors of all ages.

TAX RATE AND TAX BURDEN

Banks' history[28] includes some statistics from the 1908 assessors' books "Personal estate assessed, $143,375; real estate assessed, $1,806,075, of which two-thirds is held by non-

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[28] Banks, Charles Edward M D., 1966 by Dukes County Historical Society, The History of Martha's Vineyard Dukes County Massachusetts

residents; total tax assessed, $38,520, including tax on 293 polls. Acres of land, 3,423; dwelling houses, 1,126; horses, 108; cows, 100; tax payers, 1454, including 110 who pay poll tax only. It will be seen upon comparison with the statistics of the other towns that although the youngest community, it has the largest valuation and raises the greatest tax on the Vineyard."

Things have changed! According to the Annual Town Reports and the Board of Assessors, the total valuation and tax rate rose between 1993 and 1997 as follows:

	FY93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97
total valuation	$644,534,245	649,048,327	659,201,604	660,871,248	679,178,627
tax rate	$9 81	9.93	11.65	12.23	12.30

The Planning Board has found that non-profits and community service uses contribute significantly to the tax burden. Oak Bluffs carries an unfair burden of non-taxable land and uses for the entire Island. Non-taxable land and uses draw on Town services and have an adverse effect on provision of necessary services to others in the Town. Oak Bluffs hosts the hospital, the Regional High School, Community Services, the Ice Arena, and others. The Planning Board recommends discouraging further development of community uses that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue. The Planning Board also encourages provision for preferential treatment of Oak Bluffs taxpayers, in the form of reduced user fees or assessments and/or preference on waiting lists for admission.

SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents to the Master Plan Survey showed great concern for service issues. When asked to name the top three problems facing Oak Bluffs, 53% named wastewater and septic management (leading response). Twenty-five percent named taxes and tax equity. Categories ranked between 7% and 17% included: The Town and Money Management (includes police), Government Factions and Inefficiency, Litter and Noise Pollution. When asked to rate how they are affected by problems, the highest responses in the "very much" category (as opposed to "somewhat" or "not much"), included wastewater and septic management (64%) and property taxes (59%). Respondents listed "beautification of Oak Bluffs" (67%) among the top three priorities for actions that should be taken by town boards.

PLANNING SESSIONS

At the Master Planning Sessions, much attention was devoted to issues of town services. Particular concerns included tax burden for services, particularly in the event of business expansion perceived to be likely to arise after the downtown has sewer service.

POLICIES FOR SERVICES & FACILITIES

- To utilize a sewer growth management plan to manage commercial flows and hookups.
- Continue to gather public input regarding residential growth issues.
- Discourage additional community uses, that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue. Encourage provision for preferential treatment of Oak Bluffs taxpayers, in the form of reduced user fees or assessments and/or preference on waiting lists.
- To keep traditional downtown services in place.
- To work to preserve existing cultural and historic resources.
- To use Town resources to preserve and maintain existing Town-owned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.
- To manage downtown trash better.
- To supply appropriate lighting, particularly at alleyways.
- To upgrade police presence to control crowds better.
- More night-time teen activities.
- More water-related family activities.
- To develop and promote a park'n'ride system, particularly directed toward employees who presently park in town.
- To promote implementation of a beach shuttle.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Oak Bluffs is made of glacial material left by the retreat of the last of the continental glaciers in our area, approximately 16,000 years ago. The resultant land mass is comprised of sandy material with stones and occasional boulders. Some of the sands and fine materials have been eroded from East Chop and distributed along the shore in the form of beach sand, an important circumstance for the continued popularity of Oak Bluffs as a resort community. A report on the nature of the Town's soils is found in the Dukes County Soil Survey, published in 1986, by the U. S. Soil Conservation Service. The limitations of each soil are described for use in sewage disposal, commercial sites, homesites, landfills, and others.

In addition to its sandy beaches, Oak Bluffs is blessed with a number of ponds that are used for recreational and commercial shellfishing year 'round, and for boating and swimming in the summer. Sengekontacket Pond, 691 acres, is shared with the Town of Edgartown. Lagoon Pond, 583 acres in size, shared with the Town of Tisbury, is also the site of a herring run. There are a number of smaller tidal and fresh ponds. Because of the high permeability of the sandy soils, there are no streams other than the Stepping Stone Brook at the Head of the Lagoon. The few small fresh ponds exist because the ponds are lower than the water table. Oak Bluffs Harbor was once such a small fresh pond, known as Lake Anthony. Opened to Nantucket Sound at the turn of the century, the harbor has since been fortified with jetties and bulkheads and offers seasonal protection for approximately 400 recreational boats on a busy summer weekend. Ferry service and other commercial ventures also operate in the harbor in the summer months. In the winter months, there is very little protection from damaging northeast winds, and few vessels take advantage of the limited protection. The harbor is, however, home port to a number of year 'round commercial fishing vessels. In the winter months, there is an active commercial quahog fishery. An administrative closure is in effect prohibiting shellfish harvest in the summer, due to the number of boats resident at that time. Oak Bluffs Harbor, Sengekontacket Pond and Lagoon Pond contain important quantities of shellfish: clams, quahogs, and scallops. The commercial value alone of the shellfish catch for these three species in Oak Bluffs waters during 1993 was over $100,000.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

One of the Town's richest historic sites is the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association, with its 300 densely-packed Victorian cottages and park-like grounds surrounding the outdoor tabernacle constructed in 1873. Though privately owned by the MVCMA, the Campground has historically been open to the public, and numerous art shows and events take place within the Tabernacle throughout the summer, including the annual

Illumination Night in August, drawing thousands to pack the Campgrounds as the cottagers festoon their homes with oriental lanterns. Strict regulations promulgated by the MVCMA concerning architectural integrity, noise control and use help to maintain the area in much the same manner as it has appeared for more than 100 years.

In 1871, Robert Morris Copeland drew plans for a large residential development to the east and south of the Campground. The Copeland Plan included clustered residences surrounding open parks, taking its form from the popular Campground. This area still looks much the same as it did 100 years ago, and the architecture and open parks are a treasured part of the charm of Oak Bluffs. The Planning Board recommends expansion of the Copeland Plan District of Critical Planning Concern to extend the coverage of the architectural protection afforded by the overlay district regulations.

Other historic sites, including most Native American sites, remain obscure and almost hidden from public inspection. Pulpit Rock, the first Native American "pulpit" in the new world, sits quietly in a grove of trees in a subdivision within an old cemetery. According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, ancient Indian settlement sites - some discovered, others long hidden - exist in the southern part of town, especially near the Head of the Lagoon and Major's Cove, though, like other sites, they are elusive to the public - some by design, some by neglect. Several ancient settlers' cemeteries are indicated on maps, but seem to have disappeared under the forest undergrowth. The Norton House, believed to be the oldest house in Oak Bluffs, sits between Barnes Road and the Lagoon Pond. Of traditional Cape design, it contains fireplace bricks dated from the 1600's.

SURVEY RESULTS

The Master Plan survey responses illustrate the great attachment that the townspeople have for the natural and cultural resources of the Town and the desire to preserve and maintain them. When asked what actions should be taken by town boards to make Oak Bluffs the kind of town you think it should be, 79% chose "preserving historic areas and structures". Another 68% chose "improving the quality of the environment", and 67% chose "beautifying Oak Bluffs". When asked which of Oak Bluffs' features are most important, respondents chose: Harbors and Beaches 76%, Air and Water Quality 74%, Small Town Lifestyle 66% and Open Space 62%.

POLICIES FOR NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

- To preserve Victorian architecture.
- To work to preserve existing cultural and historic resources.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Open space and recreation are adjuncts to the protection of the natural and cultural resources of the Town. Accessibility and availability of the resources is just as important. The Town's beaches, harbor, ponds, vistas and architecture are all treasured resources that should be available to residents and visitors as appropriate.

SURVEY RESULTS & PLANNING SESSIONS

A number of suggestions came from the Master Planning Sessions. Participants showed interest in: a shuttle to Sylvia State Beach, more water-related family activities, a fishing pier, and rebuilding the old pay beach.

Master Plan Survey respondents attributed high priority to the harbors and beaches, air and water quality, open space and architectural charm. Specifically, when asked important reasons for choosing to live in Oak Bluffs, 71% chose "open space" and 39% chose "parks and recreation".

In 1996, the Town completed an updated Open Space Plan, including a survey of townspeople's needs and desires regarding open space and recreation. Those survey responses are consistent with the Master Plan responses:

"1. For most residents, the heart and soul of Oak Bluffs is the downtown - the MVCMA, Circuit Avenue, the Harbor, and Ocean Park. They want the buildings, uses and views of this area preserved intact. The Harbor should be useful and active, but not built upon or obscured from view.

2. There is a strong call to maintain, clean, and upgrade the Town's existing facilities. The beaches, parks, harbor and Circuit Avenue need better maintenance, restrooms, trash collection, and improved landscaping. Town parks need updated and repaired or improved recreational equipment to serve residents. Upkeep is a priority over expansion, though expansion is also requested for active recreational opportunities: ballfields, tennis courts and playgrounds.

3. Strong support exists for extending bicycle paths along main roads and designating walking trails.

4. Residents request <u>both</u> preservation of water quality <u>and</u> the ability to access and use ocean & ponds for a variety of recreational pursuits. Boaters specifically point to a lack of launching sites and moorings.

5. Significant support exists for a municipal golf course. This one specific issue garnered notable support in most of the survey's free response questions.

6. Significant support exists for preserving an open space use for as much of the southern woodlands, Featherstone and Webbs as possible. Town residents reject <u>both</u> unlimited development <u>and</u> no development whatsoever for this area.

7. A well-developed plan for the southern woodlands/ Webbs/Featherstone area, providing for golf course facilities, preservation of large wooded tracts with continuous walking trails, a picnic area, and modest, nonintrusive recreational elements would most likely appeal to the greatest number of residents. Purchase of the area by both the Land Bank and the Town have the largest support."[29]

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

The Open Space Plan[30] includes an extensive recreation and open space inventory:

The following parks in the town of Oak Bluffs are under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department; those listed below are parcels which are at least one acre in size. They are distributed into two categories:

1) Grassy open lots used for recreational activities from frisbee and picnicking to festivals and softball "Amenities" include man made items from playground structures to benches

2) Wooded lots that serve as buffers between properties and/or have accessible trails.

Most parks have general public access with few improvements; access by the handicapped is often over grassy areas, which is possible, though smooth, level paved paths are preferable.

Some parks are completely inaccessible to the public. Accessibility for the disabled is specifically designated only for those parks which have access for the general public. Obviously, parks which the general public can not enter are equally inaccessible to the disabled. Each park name is followed by the Oak Bluffs Assessors map and lot number. For inventory purposes only, East Chop Association parks have been included below. They are designated as such. "Open" or "closed" access in these cases refers only to the ability to physically access the parcel from a public roadway - not handicapped accessibility.

Category 1:

Ocean Park (10/1)- 7.0 acres- Large, grassy open lot. Amenities: several benches, wading pool, bandstand, flower beds, black-top paths, bike rack. Some trees in a small grove and several shrubs along the western edge. Good for most activities from festivals to picnics to games and kite flying. Well used and maintained. Lighting is good. General access is good. Wide, paved pathways accommodate the disabled.

Waban Park (10/135)- 8.1 acres- Large, grassy open lot. Amenities: two benches and lighting on northern edge. Several trees in small groves. Black-top path across park. Good for most activities from festivals to picnics to games and kite flying. Well used and maintained. General Access is good; path could use better maintenance.

Naushon Park (11/100, 101 and 17/34)- 1.5 acres- Small grassy lot in front of houses. Well used and maintained. Some of it is fenced off by private houses. General access is discouraged by the appearance of being assumed by abutters.

Viera Park (17/33)- 3.0 acres- Large grassy lot. Amenities: baseball diamond, benches for players, bleachers for spectators, lighting, fence. Well used and maintained. Use of diamond for Little League only. Bleachers need attention. Rest of park open to public, small grassy area with a few trees. General access is good, though the disabled must pass over grass: no paved path to the backstop area exists.

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[29] Town of Oak Bluffs, 1996, Open Space Plan

[30] Town of Oak Bluffs, 1996, Open Space Plan

Hartford Park (10/102)- 2.0 acres- Long, narrow lot. Amenities: none. Lots of trees, shrubs, and a few flowers. Black-top paths cut into park. Well used and maintained. General Access good for all.

Lakeside Park (8/141.1)- 6.1 acres- Large hilly lot. Amenities: none. Trees by lake, park partially fenced and quite sandy. Used and maintained. Good for picnics, frisbee and kite flying. Access is good for general public; no paths for wheelchairs.

Washington Park (8/154, 123)- 4.8 acres- Mixed use lots. 8/154-Large grassy lot. Amenities: none. Scattered trees and bushes, fenced on three sides. Black-top path winds through park. Used and maintained. Good for picnics and frisbee. 8/123- Unimproved wooded lot. Dense. Access: good.

Prospect Park (3/57)- 1.0 acre- Small grassy lot. A few patches of shrubs and a couple trees. Old black-top path, otherwise well maintained. Access, good, path needs maintenance

Plymouth Park (8/119)- 1.7 acres- Small grassy lot covered with various species of shrubs. Well maintained. Access is good; hilly terrain prohibits wheelchair use.

Nashawena Park (11/134, 125, 109, 98)- 4.7 acres- Long, narrow grassy lot. Amenities: benches, good lighting, view of ocean. Trees, bushes. Well used and maintained. Good for picnics. Access is good for all.

Niantic Park (11/91)- 4.6 acres- Large grassy lot. Amenities: swing set, two slides, playground structures, several benches, picnic tables, play area fenced in from road, snack machines, covered area, four tennis courts, backboard, basketball court, bleachers. Large, climbable trees. Heavily used and well maintained. General access is good. Park is designed for active use; playground equipment and bleachers are not particularly suited to the handicapped.

Hiawatha Park (11/144)- 1.3 acres- Hilly lot scattered with trees. Parking. Maintained. Access is good; terrain prohibitive to wheelchairs.

Penacook Park (11/57, 58)- 1.1 acres- Small grassy area. Amenities: benches, partially fenced. Trees, shrubs. Access is good for all.

Category 2:

Forest Park (21/20)- 1.6 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Mostly low ground cover and shrubs, some trees. Access: closed.

Saratoga Park (15/87)- 1.5 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Mostly low ground cover and shrubs, some trees. Access: closed.

Linton Park (7/210)- 1.1 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, pines, junipers, bayberry. Medium density. Well used walking trail. General access: open.

Massachusetts Ave. Park (3/114.1)- 1.6 acres- Mixed lot. Unimproved wooded lot with dense ivy ground cover. Oaks, conifers, junipers. Partially worn trail. Well maintained grassy areas. General access: open

East Chop Association Parks:

Arlington Park (3/13, 42)- 6.8 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Trees, grasses. Not used or maintained. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

Morton Park (3/74)- 1.5 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Trees, mainly oaks. Dense. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

Sumner Park (3/79, 85)- 4.0 acres- Wooded lot unimproved with the exception of old black-top paths. Well used. Dense. 3/79- Property of East Chop Association, 3/85 private property. Access: open.

Crystal Lake (1/56)- 14.5 acres- Lake is surrounded by scrubby brush, reeds, small junipers, beach roses, poison ivy. Maintained. Property of East Chop Association. Access: restricted.

Mill Square Park (3/12)- 3.9 acres- Unimproved wooded lot Conifers, scrubby shrubs, grasses. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

The Vale (3/86)- 2.1 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Mostly oaks. Dirt road. Dense. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

Church Ave. Park (8/97)- 6.5 acres- Wooded lot unimproved with the exception of old black-top trails. Oaks, conifers, ground cover, grasses. Does not appear to be maintained. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

The following are parklands in the town of Oak Bluffs that are less than one acre in size. They are also divided into the two aforementioned categories, and include both Town parks and East Chop Association parks. As a rule, these are lands are held by the Town or East Chop, but there are no efforts to improve them in any way due to their sizes.

Category 1:

Lincoln Park (3/51)- .8 acres- Grassy open lot with a few shrubs, a couple conifers. Well maintained. No trail. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

Seaside Park (3/150)- .3 acres- Grassy lot with a couple trees. Maintained. Appears to be part of private property. Property of East Chop Association. Access: closed.

Leslie Park (8/88)- .1 acres- Grassy open lot. Oaks, hemerocalus. Appears to be part of private property. Maintained. Access: closed.

Hudson Park (2/81)- .2 acres- Grassy open lot. Junipers, cedars in small grove. Maintained. Property of East Chop Association. Access. open.

Rose Ave. Park - (lot 8/35 S)- .06 acres- Grassy open lot. Appears to be partially developed. Well maintained. Fenced. Access: closed.

Category 2:

Crescent Park (3/155)- .1 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, shrubs, tall grasses. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

Ellinwood Heights Park (8/255)- .6 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Predominately oaks. Access: open.

Summerfield Park (8/87, 76)- Mixed lot, part grassy, part wooded. Grass maintained, wooded lot wild. Mostly oaks and ivy, shrubs. 8/76-Property of East Chop Association, 8/87-private property. Access: open.

Vineland Lot (8/45)- .1 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, bayberry, plus a variety of other trees. Dense. Access: open.

Oriental park (16/49. 58)- .7 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Mostly low ground cover, some oaks, conifers, ferns. 16/49-Private property. Access: open.

Webster Park (4/17)- .5 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Mostly oaks, shrubs. Access: open.

Connecticut Park (4/144)- .7 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Dense. A few well used paths. Access: closed.

35' Way (2/54)- .2 acres- Surrounded by unimproved wooded areas. Trees, shrubs. Property of East Chop Association. Access: closed.

Morgan Ave. Park (3/128)- .4 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, conifers, ground cover. Property of East Chop Association Access: open.

Coral Ave. Park (corner of Coral and Highland Avenues)- .6 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, shrubs, grasses. Access: open.

Thompson Ave. Park (3/172)- .7 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, shrubs, grasses. Property of East Chop Association. Access: open.

Mountain Ave. Park (3/121)- .4 acres- Unimproved wooded lot. Oaks, shrubs, grasses. Access: open.

California Lot (15/73)- .1 acres- Surrounded by unimproved wooded lots. Trees, shrubs. Access: closed.

Conservation Commission Facility

Sailing Camp Park - 15.4 acres - Large mixed use area. Amenities: picnic tables, beach access, Mainstay Building (available for rent for non-profit functions), boat docking, bike rack, parking. Small open areas to densely wooded areas. Lots of trees, shrubs, some flowers. Heavily used and well maintained. General access off of Barnes Road. Building was purchased with Commonwealth Self-Help funds.

INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION & RECREATIONAL INTEREST

ACCESS KEY

yes - public access secured or unchallenged
res - restricted to certain users, abutters, or association membership
no - no general public access permissible, except where rights in ancient ways may be exercised.

Status	Place name	Acres	Access
Private			
Agricultural/61A	Bayes-Norton Farm	14.2	no
	Elijah Smith Farm	1.4	no
	Chicama Vineyards	2.4	no
61/Woodland	Webbs Campground	84.1	res
	Featherstone Farm	25 3	res
	DeBettencourt	24 5	no
	Goodale Tree Farm	55.5	res
61B/golf & country	Farm Neck(open)	75 8	res
	Farm Neck (links)	204.8	res
Conservation restric.	Iron Hill Farm	20.3	no
Unknown	Shepard Trust	129.0	no
Unprotected Farms	Thimble Farm	10.0	res

Status	Place name	Acres	Access
Unprotected/private	Tower property	35.0	no
	Proskauer property	5.0	no
	MVY Realty Trust	26.4	no
	Builders Collab.	12.9	no
Public & Non-Profit			
United States of America	East Chop Lthouse	.1	yes
	Sanderson Ave	1.3	yes
Commonwealth of Mass.	Lobster Hatchery	14.8	res
	HartHaven Beach	.4	yes
	Sylvia State Beach	54.8	yes
	Brush Pond	16.0	yes
Dukes County	Eastville Beach	5.2	yes
	Solar Greenhouse	1.4	yes
Land Bank	Farm Pond	8.0	yes
	Tradewinds Field	71.9	yes
	Wapatequa Woods	19.6	yes
	Quay's Corner	.6	yes
	Pecoy Point	14.3	yes

The Town of Oak Bluffs owns a large number of small "pocket parks" and larger neighborhood parklands which were laid out by the first resort developers a century ago. They are simply listed below; however, a full description of each of these parks, their amenities, and conditions, is included in Section 11 of this Plan as part of the 504 Accessibility Report.

Town of Oak Bluffs	East Chop Lighthouse	1.4	yes
	Prospect Park	1.0	yes
	Crescent Park	.1	yes
	Town Beach/Eastville	.2	yes
	Town Beach	2.5	yes
	Leslie Park	.1	yes
	Washington Park	4.8	yes
	Harborfront walk	1.1	yes
	Boat launch	.2	yes
	Sunset Lake Park	3.0	yes
	Lakeside Park	6.1	yes
	Ocean Park	7.0	yes
	Hartford Park	2.0	yes
	Waban Park	8.1	yes
	Niantic Park	4.6	yes
	Nashawena Park	4.7	yes
	Naushon Park	1.5	yes
	Hiawatha Park	1.3	yes
	Sailing Camp	15.4	yes
	Oriental Park	.7	yes
	Viera Park	3.0	yes
	Forest Park	1.6	yes
	Brines Woods	91.2	yes

Status	Place name	Acres	Access
	Brines Wds/south lot	4.6	yes
	Brush Lane lot	1.1	yes
Oak Bluffs Water Dist.	Well #1	4.6	res
	Well #2	6.6	res
	Well #3	47.8	res
Tisbury Bd. of Health	Well Protection lots	1.9	yes
	Septage lots	9 3	no
MV Camp Meeting Assoc.	Trinity Park	5.0	yes
Audubon Society	Sarson's Island	3.6	no
Boy Scouts of America	Duarte's Pond Camp	5.8	res
East Chop Association	East Chop Drive	8.4	yes
	Crystal Lake	14.5	yes
	Mill square	3.9	yes
	Arlington Park	6.8	yes
	Morton Park	1.5	yes
	35' Way M2L54	.2	yes
	Harrison Park	4.0	yes
	Columbus Park	3.1	yes
	Morgan Park	.4	yes
	Coral Ave Park	6	yes
	Thompson Ave Park	.7	yes
	Marion Park	1.4	yes
	Mountain Ave Park	.4	yes
	Monroe Ave Park	1.1	yes
	Plymouth Park	1.7	yes
	Monhegan Park	1.0	yes
	Pauldinel	.5	yes
	Vineland lot	.1	yes
	Marie Ave lot	.02	yes
	Moss Ave	1.1	yes
	Church Ave Park	6.5	yes
Homeowners Assoc.	Bayes Hill	11.6	res
	Deer Run	32.1	res
	Farm Neck	15.7	res
	Hidden Cove	17.6	res
	Iron Hill Farm	3.0	res
	M V Forest Farms	9.3	res
	Meadow View Farms	29 9	res
	Sengekontacket	14.9	res
	Tower Ridge	12.7	res
	Vineyard Hills	19.6	res
	Waterview Farms	20.7	res

Other:

Public Rights-of-Way to Lagoon Pond

Name	width (feet)
Vineyard Avenue Extension	30
Bayview Avenue	30
Lagoon Road	40
Worcester Avenue	40
Hudson Avenue	40
Winne Ave	40
Springfield Avenue	40
Park Avenue	40
Linden Avenue	60
Old Barnes Road	25

Public Right-of-Way to Vineyard Haven Harbor

Eastville Avenue	35

Ancient Way Networks (various ownership)

1) Chaise Road/Old County Road/Road to Farm Neck
2) Checama Path/Little Pond Road/Ben Luce Road/Watcha Path
3) Sailor's Burial Ground Road/Road to Wapatequa/Hay Path

POLICIES FOR OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

- Discourage additional community uses that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue. Encourage provision for preferential treatment of Oak Bluffs taxpayers, in the form of reduced user fees or assessments and/or preference on waiting lists.

- Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District, including active forms of recreation.

- To use Town resources to preserve and maintain existing Town-owned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.

- More night-time teen activities.

- More water-related family activities.

- To promote implementation of a beach shuttle.

REFERENCES

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Town of Oak Bluffs, 1998, Oak Bluffs Harbor Plan

Chris Stoddard, 1980, A Centennial History of Cottage City

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Island Elderly Housing, Inc., 1990, "Housing Survey Results"

MVSPA Housing Needs 1991

APPENDIX I

MASTER PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

MASTER PLAN SURVEY RESULTS
for OAK BLUFFS
SUMMER 1996

Overview

A total of 590 Oak Bluffs Master Plan Surveys was completed and returned. This demonstrates a response rate of 20%. By survey standards, this shows a solid return. The responses generally represented all types of Oak Bluffs residents from seasonal to year-round, retired and working, to those with and without children. There were striking similarities of interest between this Master Plan Survey and the Open Space Plan completed in the spring of 1996, particularly concerning the maintenance of existing town facilities and preservation of natural resources. The two surveys should complement each other well.

On the whole, responses were articulate and thoughtful, often revealing the diversity of Oak Bluffs. Participants seemed to appreciate their town the way it is and have concerns about how the qualities they enjoy can be kept up. Here are the generally favored trends:

I. **A Desire to Maintain Existing Physical Characteristics.**
The vast majority of residents surveyed placed priority attention on the harbors and beaches, air and water quality, open space and the charm of their community. A great deal of emphasis was also placed on cleaning up all areas of town and on better managing tourists and crowds to accomplish this.

II. **Preservation of Existing Town Values.**
Participants embraced the notion of living in a family-oriented resort town and enjoying a small-town lifestyle. Respondents were most opposed to the idea of their town becoming a "Tourist Town". Some respondents went so far as to say the town has lost its original vision.

III. **Concern for all forms of Growth Management.**
Of special concern is septic and wastewater management, followed closely by traffic and parking problems. Many people commented on their frustrations with "warring government factions" and a perceived inefficiency on the part of the town boards.

IV. **No Further Expansion.**
Most residents are interested in the efforts of the town boards to preserve the quality of life in Oak Bluffs, rather than focusing on any more business expansion or promoting tourism.

Overview Continued

About 70% of the returned surveys were completed by seasonal residents. The seasonal residents who responded can be largely characterized as:

1) Home-owners;
2) Residing in Oak Bluffs for more than 8 weeks a year; and,
3) Not depending on the Island's economy for income.

Further, of the 418 seasonal residents responding to this survey, nearly one-third indicated eventual plans to live in Oak Bluffs year-round and one-third rent their homes to other vacationers from 2 to 16 weeks.

An average of 4.77 residents occupy each seasonal home, according to the survey responses.

Year-round residents made up the remaining 30% of the responses. These respondents were also predominantly home-owners, with one-third identifying themselves as retired.

General Questions Summary

This section gives an overall account of the way people responded to each question that applied to both year-round and seasonal residents. Percentages will be shown for the top responses.

Question 1. Which of Oak Bluffs' features are most important to you?

76% Harbors and Beaches
74% Air and Water Quality
66% Small Town Lifestyle
62% Open Space

For the majority of people responding to the survey, Oak Bluffs is strongly defined by its physical setting and natural features.

Question 2. "What four words would you use to describe the character of the town to a person who has never been to Oak Bluffs?"

40% Quaint, Charming, or Eclectic
32% Friendly, Fun, or Nice
30% Safe, Quiet, Relaxed, or Community-Oriented
26% Beautiful, Pretty, or Clean
25% Funky, Unique, or Victorian
25% Diverse.

There were varied responses to this question since it was open-ended. Smaller percentages included less positive perceptions like: "Poorly-Run, Busy, Dirty, Honky Tonk, Blue Collar, Tacky, Resort, Commercial, and Noisy."

Still others included: "Well-Run, Young, Historic, Windswept, and Expanding."

General Questions Summary Continued

The combined high percentages allotted to each of the highest rated categories are due to the fact that each respondent could give up to four answers per question. In Questions 1, 2, and 3, the percentages demonstrate the overall frequency of appearance.

Question 3. "What are the top three problems facing Oak Bluffs?"

53% Wastewater and Septic Management
26% Crowds and Day Trippers
25% Taxes and Tax Equity
23% Traffic, Roads, and Transportation

The following categories were ranked between 7% and 17% (highest to lowest):

Town and Money Management (includes police)
Government Factions and Inefficiency
Growth, Planning, and Zoning
Litter and Noise Pollution
Parking
Development
Bars, Too Much Commerce, and Greed
Water Quality and Natural Resources

Problems receiving less than 7% were(in descending order): Harbor; Drugs, Alcohol, and Loitering; Image; Hospital; Beach and Park Maintenance; Tourists; Community Use Facilities (i.e. Library, Bike Path, etc.); Laundry; Population; Lack of Youth Activities; Restrooms; School Budget; Affordable Housing; and a Year-Round Labor Force.

Question 4. "Ten years from now, what kind of town do you want Oak Bluffs to be?"

"YES" 78% A family-oriented resort town
62% A town little changed since present
51% Resort Town (Vacation Destination)
35% Retirement Community
20% A tourist town (short-term, day trips)

"NO" The majority of the "No" responses were for "A tourist town" at 52%, followed by 29% against "A retirement community" and 21% opposed to "A resort town". The survey asked that people answer "Yes", "No", or "Unsure" to each question which again accounts for the relative high percentages.

Question 5. Of the many problems affecting residents, how are you affected by:____? Respondents were asked to rate each category as being either "Very much", "Somewhat", or "Not much" affecting them.

The *most* bothersome (percentage marking "Very much") were:

64% Wastewater and Septic Management
62% Traffic Congestion
59% Property Taxes

In town parking, Population growth, High cost of goods and services, and Trash and litter also rated rather high at between 40% and 50%.

Residents seemed the *least* affected (percentage marking "Not much") by:

65% Year-round jobs
53% Too many regulations
40% High cost of housing

Question 6. To make Oak Bluffs the kind of town you think it should be, what actions should be taken by the town boards?

Actions rated as deserving of the highest priority, overall, are:

79% Preserving historic areas and structures

68% Improving the quality of the environment
67% Beautifying Oak Bluffs

The lowest priority was given to "expanding the business district" (62%) followed by "promoting tourism" (50%).

Question 7. 125 maps were randomly selected for analysis.

7A. Generally, the responses to the first part of Question 7 tended to match comments and concerns expressed in other questions. Specifically, Open Space, Growth Management, and Water Quality issues are important to residents who live near coastal areas and in the southern portion of town. Traffic Flow, Parking, Waste Management, Beautification and Neighborhood Preservation are important to those who live "in-town".

7B. This section did not yield enough responses to add significant results. However, more frequent suggestions include: Purchasing Land for a Municipal Golf Course, Limiting Development (in order to Improve Water Quality and Stem Erosion of coastal areas), Providing Additional Parking in the Harbor area, Encouraging a "Better Mix" of businesses downtown, Controlling Noise and Crowds Downtown, and Improving Public Beaches and Parks.

Question 8. A. Would changes in the Business District enhance the town?

YES	NO	Unsure
38%	16%	38%

General Questions Summary Continued

8B. Please suggest three possible needs or improvements in the downtown area:

35% Parking and Traffic
19% Fewer Bars and Better Crowd Control
18% Beautify, Clean up, More Trash Receptacles
16% Commercial Up-Grade
10% Septic System
10% Laws - Policing, Safety, Signage, Lighting
8% Public Use - Spaces and Toilets
7% Limit Cars on Circuit Ave. (From Fewer to None at all)
6% Drugstore

Of 5% or less were the remaining suggestions (in descending order): Promote Year-Round Living, Post Office Access, Transportation, Preserve Architecture, Laundry, Less Development, More Tourist Development, No Mopeds or Bikes, More Family-Oriented, Limit Harbor Development, Promote Youth and Sports Activities, More Marine Services, Better Planning and Underground Utilities

Question 9. A. "Do you favor any commercial growth in the following areas?":

	YES	NO	Unsure
Downtown Business	24%	57%	13%
New York Avenue	14%	61%	17%
Blinker Light	27%	50%	15%
Edgartown-V.H. Road	24%	41%	18%
Upper Circuit Avenue	16%	61%	16%
Oak Bluffs Harbor	15%	65%	10%

Based on the percentages of the responses, Commercial Growth is largely unfavored, especially for:

65% Oak Bluffs Harbor
61% New York Avenue
61% Upper Circuit Avenue
57% Downtown Business

9B. "If commercial growth were to occur in any of the following areas, what types of businesses are appropriate?"

(Note: In this instance the percentages given are of the total who responded to that one question. That total number is in parentheses.)

General Questions Summary Continued

Downtown Business District: (260 total)

20% Drugstore
14% Laundry and/or Grocery
12% Light Commercial Growth
10% Retail and/or Restaurant
8% Year-Round/All-Purpose
7% Beautify and Up-Grade
7% Bookstore, Drugstore and Restaurant
6% Restaurants and Service-Oriented
6% Specialized Retail

Receiving 5% or less of those who responded to the question are (in descending order): Tourist-Type, Family Appeal, Local Type, Computer or Technical, Art, Sports Type, Offices, Hardware/Appliance.

New York Avenue: (122 total)

35% Offices, Home-based or B&B's
15% Light Commercial Growth
12% Retail and/or Restaurant
10% Laundry and/or Grocery and/or Drugstore
9% Year-Round/Sports/Family-Type
8% Up-Grade Retail and Beautify

Of less than 3% (descending) are: Drugstore, Light Industry, Parking, Art, Theater, Hardware and Appliance, Local Type, and Island Produce.

Blinker Light: (178 total)

28% Grocery and/or Laundry and/or Drugstore
27% Light Commercial Growth

13% Light Industry
12% Golf/Public Sports Facilities
5% Retail and/or Restaurant

Of less than 3% (descending) are: Bank, Year-Round, Non-Polluting, Hardware and Appliance, Home-Based, Specialized/Up-Graded Retail, Art, and Night Life.

Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road: (151 total)
23% Golf/Public Sports Facilities
20% Light Commercial Growth
17% Grocery/Laundry/Drugstore
11% Light Industry, i.e., lumber, gardening...
5% Home-based, Offices, B&B's

General Questions Summary Continued

Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road:
Below 5% in descending order are: Retail and/or Restaurant, Hardware and Appliance, Year-Round, Parking, Non-polluting, Island Produce, Family Appeal, Computer/Technical, Bank, Up-Graded, Tourist Type.

Oak Bluffs Harbor: (116 total)
36% Marine Type
14% Retail and/or Restaurant
13% Tourist Type
7% Beautify and Up-Grade
6% Light Commercial Growth
5% Art

Under 4% descending: Public Recreational, Family Appeal, Night Life, Pumping Station, Year-Round, Laundry, B&B's, Theater and a Farmer's Market.

Other Suggestions: (18 total)
22% Beach Toilets (4)
17% Golf (3)
11% Beautify (2)
11% Specialized (2)

One Person Each: A Firehouse Bakery, A Kite Shop at Ocean Park, and Barnes Road in general.

Question 10. A. "Do you favor expanding opportunities and facilities for fishing/aquaculture/shellfishing?"

YES	NO	Unsure
38%	34%	34%

10B. "If so, please suggest three possible changes:"
Here again, the percentage is of the total who made suggestions. (109 Total)

18% Control Use
14% Access
14% Better Seeding/Education Opportunities

11% Create a Fishing Pier (new or old)
8% Protect Beaches/Water
6% More or Bigger Hatcheries
5% Tax Relief for Aquaculture

At less than 4%, in descending order, are the following: Boost the Year-Round Economy, Use of Harbor for Commercial Fishing, Crabbing and Oysters, Use of Lagoon Pond, Cheap/Free Fishing Spaces, Involve Young People, Artificial Reefs, Off-shore Farming, No Jet-Clamming.

Responses by Sub-Groups

Based on the responses, five distinct sub-groups are apparent. These are:

Group 1 - Seasonal residents not planning to become year-round
Group 2 - Seasonal residents unsure of moving status
Group 3 - Seasonal residents planning to become year-round
Group 4 - Retired year-round residents
Group 5 - Employed year-round residents

The following tables portray the responses within these sub-groups. The numbers in the tables indicate the percentages.

Question 1. Important reasons for choosing to live in Oak Bluffs:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Small-Town Lifestyle		58	67	69	71	68
Harbors and Beaches		77	81	82	70	60
Open Space		58	58	73	55	53
Air and Water Quality		67	76	79	80	65
Health Care		34	31	37	59	65
Good place to Retire		23	35	62	72	35
Parks and Recreation		40	44	45	29	36
Property Taxes		53	54	56	52	41

Question 2. Four words to describe the character of Oak Bluffs:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Quaint, Charming		47	41	43	25	33
Friendly, Fun, Nice		29	34	30	36	33
Community		30	25	29	32	36
Pretty, Clean		24	25	30	23	24
Unique, Victorian		30	23	25	22	26
Diverse		28	24	29	13	27

Question 3. Top Three problems facing Oak Bluffs:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Wastewater Management		59	50	51	53	52
Crowds and Day Trippers		29	18	30	20	16
Tax Equity		14	24	26	28	38
Traffic, Roads and Transport		24	24	25	26	13
Town/Money Management		19	10	13	20	26

Responses by Subgroups Continued

Question 4. Oak Bluffs in ten years:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Family-Oriented Resort		59	80	73	52	55
Little Changed		57	50	53	36	52
Vacation Destination		88	80	73	74	77
Retirement Community		26	28	44	46	38
A Tourist Town		19	18	19	13	32

Question 5. Problems affecting residents, visitors, and business owners:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Cost of Goods and Services		45	47	47	74	64
Traffic Congestion		63	64	63	73	51
Parking		49	53	47	70	45
Population Growth		45	49	49	49	46
Property Taxes		57	60	57	64	60
Wastewater Management		65	62	64	70	59

Question 6. Actions that should be taken by town boards:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Improve Public Transit		36	48	43	41	51
Year-Round Business		19	19	31	39	48
Historic Preservation		83	85	82	59	77
Lower Tax Rates		45	56	54	64	56
Improve Business Climate		26	25	37	31	41
Acquire Open Space		55	64	60	45	47
Limit Development		45	50	44	40	49
Improve the Environment		69	73	77	46	62
Enforce By-Laws		42	38	34	61	44
Beautify Oak Bluffs		65	62	75	55	66
Stronger Land-Use Rules		56	54	50	55	52
Develop Income Sources		36	38	33	43	63
Expand Commercial Fishing		28	37	35	41	50

Question 8A. Changes in the Business Districts will enhance the town:

Group 1	32
Group 2	29
Group 3	44
Group 4	43
Group 5	49

Responses by Sub-Groups Continued

Question 9A. Areas favored for commercial growth:

	Group:	1	2	3	4	5
Downtown Business		23	19	27	14	33
NewYork Avenue		13	10	16	10	22
Blinker Light Area		24	20	30	35	32
Edgartown-V.H. Road		31	19	30	22	29
Oak Bluffs Harbor		11	9	19	13	24

Question 10A. Favors expanding fishing/aquaculture/shellfishing opportunities and facilities:

Group 1	53
Group 2	37
Group 3	58
Group 4	41
Group 5	76

Question 11E. Average number of cars and trucks used on-island:

Group 1	1.41
Group 2	1.38
Group 3	1.39
Group 4	1.3
Group 5	1.88

APPENDIX II

PLANNING SESSIONS

MASTER PLANNING SESSION
AUGUST 20, 1997
7:00 P.M. O.B. School

Planning Board members present: Acting Chairman Kenneth Rose, members John Leite III and Ramon Suarez

Participants: Renee Balter, Ron Mechur, Richard Williams, Wally and Jean Ross, Charles Simberg (Speakers' initials are annotated.)

Others: Jo-Ann Taylor, Martha's Vineyard Commission, advisor

Acting Chairman Rose opened the meeting at 7:00 P.M. He explained that this is the first of planned sessions to gather public input for the Master Plan. This part of the planning program follows the distribution and collection of survey materials. Based on responses from the survey questionnaire, the master planning session is intended to gather further public input regarding prominent issues: Growth & Traffic, How to Maintain and Promote the Small Town Character of Oak Bluffs, and Making Oak Bluffs a Family Resort Community. The Planning Board invited participants to present any ideas without regard to conflict. Practicalities, including conflicts with existing By-laws, can be considered by the Planning Board at a later date. The ideas presented here have not as yet been voted by the Planning Board for incorporation into the Master Plan.

GROWTH AND TRAFFIC

- SHUTTLE, PARK'N'RIDE SYSTEM - Oak Bluffs Association has asked MVRTA to look at shuttle, park'n'ride system; could be particularly effective for the ~200 employee cars; could be funded by fare box, stickers, etc.; employees could park at High School or at old OB School (only about 30 spaces at old school) (RB, RM)

- STICKER SYSTEM FOR PARKING - Use a residential sticker Island-wide; transients would be allowed to bring cars to M.V. but not into the downtown areas (RM). - Could use a sticker for short-term visitors that would permit them 2 hour parking (CS).

- PAY PARKING - Parking meters (previously opposed by business community) (KS). - Pay lots like Gay Head (RS).

- MAKE DOWNTOWN AREA MORE PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY - Need a central location for toilets/information, possibly near Ocean park, not on Kennebec; could be privatized like Edgartown's, it's run as a successful business; could eliminate 1 million gallons of wastewater if designed zero-discharge, composting toilets e.g. (RB).

- SHUTTLE FOR BEACH ACCESS (RM)

- BUILD SSA STAGING AREA OUT OVER THE WATER (RM)

- TRANSPORTATION PASS INSTEAD OF PAY-AS-YOU-GO (RB)

- SUMMER SATELLITE POST OFFICE - to operate in summer only, in order to avoid drawing business out of town in off-season (RM)

- KEEP PARKING AS IS - People manage to find spaces (WR) - but problems arise from illegally parked vehicles and obstruction to passage of emergency vehicles (JL, KR).

- GET BOATLINES TO STAGGER ARRIVALS; SSA, ISLAND QUEEN, ETC. - would ease congestion of people picking up passengers (JL) - Hy-lines and Island Queen already don't come into the harbor together (RS, RB).

- LIMIT GROWTH - We are already beyond capacity; people park on the grass in the parks on Illumination Night and Fireworks night; that ruins the grass (RW)

HOW TO MAINTAIN & PROMOTE THE SMALL TOWN CHARACTER OF OAK BLUFFS

- RENOVATE, RESTORE AND IMPROVE BUSINESSES WITHIN DOWNTOWN - Oak Bluffs Association would like to see in Master Plan ways to improve existing business area rather than expand out of town; more Victorian renovations e.g.; keep downtown vital; encourage more large Victorian structures like there used to be; they could be used for seasonal hotels, etc. that bring in room taxes; new hotels could use composting toilets so as to avoid adding to the wastewater burden; keep downtown vital (RB). - People in survey said expand within the downtown, up e.g. (RS)

- LOCATE MORE BUSINESSES OUT OF TOWN - like Edgartown, encourage competition (CS).

- ENCOURAGE AN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT OUT-OF-TOWN - so, don't encourage more people to come into town (JL).

- CAP GROWTH ALTOGETHER - Don't move congestion out of town to rural areas (RW). - More isn't necessarily better; some business owners would like to close up on 4th of July weekend, they could do better with smaller and more controlled crowds (RB). - Fort Lauderdale businesses are better off without the Spring Break kids e.g. (KR).

MAKING OAK BLUFFS A FAMILY RESORT COMMUNITY

- TAKE ANOTHER VOTE TO GO DRY - Make it binding (Town previously voted by non-binding referendum to cap licenses) (JL). - Young kids can't go out on Circuit Avenue after dark; it's unsafe (RW). - People think of OB as honky-tonk because of bars; it's a mistake to subsidize the bars by providing them with police protection; their payments to the Town do not justify making the Town honky-tonk (CS). - Restrict liquor licenses before sewer betterment charges encourage more property owners to seek liquor-related income (JL).

- ENCOURAGE EXISTING BARS TO RELOCATE TO AIRPORT - give bars inducements to relocate to Airport (CS).

- KEEP BARS AND LIQUOR - OB has always had bars; kids used to be able to walk on Circuit Avenue late at night, even with bars (KR); - Bars pay lots of taxes, large license fees; they take care of their own trash, septic, etc. (RB). - Restaurants need liquor licenses to compete; good restaurants bring good business because people eat and then shop, go to movies, etc. (CS).

- SET UP EXPECTATIONS IN MASTER PLAN FOR BARS TO UPGRADE FROM HONKY-TONK - or they're out (RM). - Only two bars make the town honky-tonk; Ritz and Lamp Post (RB).

- ENFORCE RESTRICTIONS ON RESTAURANTS - They aren't supposed to serve liquor without food (RS).

- SPREAD LIQUOR DENSITY AROUND ISLAND - Let liquor be served in all towns; let them share the burden (KR).

- ATTRACT AND ENCOURAGE SUMMER <u>RESIDENTS</u> - Don't turn them off with residential property tax exemption like Tisbury (CS).

OTHER

- MORE USER FEES - Let summer users share the burden more, don't leave it all up to the taxpayers; have head tax, parking meters, etc.; should be linked to seasonal crunch (RM).

- LITTLE REVENUE IDEAS ADD UP - collection boxes in toilets yield $6-7,000 e.g. (RB).

- HIRE CONSULTANT FOR MASTER PLAN - Use volunteer professionals like Ed Logue (CS). - Hire someone to make cost estimates for actions proposed in Master Plan (RB). - Planning Board has asked MVC for technical assistance (RS).

- LOOK AT DENSITY IN 3 DOWN-ISLAND TOWNS TOGETHER (KR).

- LOOK AT RESIDENTIAL DENSITY, TOO (CS)

MASTER PLANNING SESSION
NOVEMBER 13, 1997
7:30 P.M. O.B. School

Planning Board members present: Chairman John Bradford, members John Leite III and Ramon Suarez

25 Participants: Julie Cippola, Renee Balter, Terry McCarthy, Primo and Mary Lombardi, Caleb Caldwell, Ted DeBettencourt, Rhonda Campbell, Penny deBettencourt, Paul Strauss, Ron Mechur, Paul Colletti, Linda Marinelli, Judy Williamson, David Richardson, Mott Hinckley, Bill Stevens, Richard Williams, Ken Rusczyk, John Newsom, Laurie Welch, Thomas Welch, Geraldyn DeBettencourt, Manny deBettencourt, Buzzy Hall, Kerry Scott (Speakers' initials are annotated.)

Others: Jo-Ann Taylor, Martha's Vineyard Commission, advisor

Chairman John Bradford opened the meeting at 7:40 P.M., inviting participants to speak to three issues prevalent from the responses to the planning survey: growth and traffic, how to maintain and promote the small town character of Oak Bluffs, and making Oak Bluffs a family resort community.

GROWTH AND TRAFFIC

TRAFFIC:

- PARK'N'RIDE SYSTEM - Park'n'ride Committee is working on a park'n'ride system for two main problems: employee parking and inability of people who live near Circuit Ave. to park near their homes; they will know about funding by January, hope to have something in place for next summer (RB). - Shuttle system needed for 24 hour parking for employees and for people who take IQ for days off-Island (JW).

- MORE HOTEL ROOMS IN TOWN - With more in-town hotel rooms, people would not have to bring cars (TMcC). - But, those people will want to bring cars anyway (RW).

- REDUCE CONGESTION - from Open Space survey, people would like less congestion; require more off-site parking and employee parking (PS)

- SHUTTLE TO STATE BEACH - no more parking spaces available at Sylvia State Beach, so limit the number of cars at the beach, run a shuttle (PS)

- BUILD SSA STAGING AREA OUT OVER THE WATER - look at SSA as part of the traffic problem (RM)

- PROVIDE INCENTIVES - be creative with incentives (RM) - send economic message to encourage off-street parking, use

exemption on property tax (DR). - use zoning incentives rather than tax exemption (JB) - zoning incentives could add to property value; extra story e.g.(DR).

- ONE-WAY STREETS - more one-ways would reduce congestion and make people think twice about taking a car into town, Wing Road e.g.(JC). - But, that's been tried before, in Edgartown, and didn't work. It was a disaster and they went back to the old way (PdeB).

- SSA DOESN'T NEED HIGH SPEED FERRY - Let steamships bring them (GDeB). - Write to SSA immediately and tell them we don't need a high speed ferry (TMcC).

- DON'T WIDEN ROADS - Wider roads will only carry more cars faster. Spend that money on public transportation (KS). - But Wing Road is too narrow to hold cars, bikes, baby carriages, etc. (DR).

- THERE ARE WAYS TO GET AROUND IN OAK BLUFFS - We all have our pet ways to get around in Oak Bluffs, unlike VH and Edgartown (DR).

GROWTH:

- GROWTH AND WASTEWATER - What will happen to OB after wastewater? It's already pretty much built out laterally, will it grow up in height?(LM) - WFPC is planning for 3% growth (RS). Sewerage hasn't caused tremendous growth in Edgartown (PL, DR). Edgartown has changed; drugstore and grocery store left downtown (RW). Edgartown has changed. Residences have converted to guest houses (GDeB). Uses in Edgartown may have changed, but not structures (PL). - WFPC has proposed growth-neutral solutions. Growth should not happen just because there's sewerage (PS). - Sewerage doesn't necessarily mean rampant growth (TDeB).

- RESTRICT GROWTH TO % CAP - We must take steps to control growth; restrict to a certain % each year, e.g.(LM).

- RESTRICT HEIGHT TO HISTORIC VICTORIAN SKYLINE - Rather than an artificial cap, allow growth in height to restore historic skyline in areas where old Grande Dame hotels used to be; make sure anything built up has to be Victorian; go back to the future (TMcC). - sewerage impacts?(RW) - This won't produce more than 3% growth; anyone proposing a new hotel has to go to ZBA, MVC, etc. (TMcC).

- USE ZONING, MVC TO CONTROL GROWTH - Use traditional and non-traditional zoning incentives to control growth (RM). - Don't limit growth by reducing services, do it with zoning (JC). - Use building codes and Martha's Vineyard Commission to keep Circuit Avenue growth controlled (TDeB) .

- GROWTH VS. NO GROWTH - What about growth other than in height? Many businesses have restrictions on first floor uses now; restrictions don't always work; people in survey want to restrict growth; we can't afford increase in growth (RW). - OB can control growth with rules, shouldn't be afraid of the future (DR). - Business community is not pushing for rampant growth, most have been in business for more than 10 years; we must work cooperatively to address growth issues; don't pit business against residential(RB). - Some growth is inevitable because of increased communications ability (RM). - Growth can be good; Circuit Avenue was a mess 10 years ago. OB Architectural Assistance Committee helped to get it fixed up (JW, TDeB).

- RESTRICT BUSINESS GROWTH TO CIRCUIT AVENUE AREA - Business should stay in Circuit Avenue area; there's been lots more growth in home businesses out of town (TDeB).

- CREATE A NEW TOWN BOARD - Create a town board concerned with economic development, architecture, controlled growth (RB). - That's the Planning Board (TMcC).

HOW TO MAINTAIN & PROMOTE THE SMALL TOWN CHARACTER OF OAK BLUFFS

- FOCUS ON THINGS THAT MAKE OB A NICE PLACE TO LIVE; keep it that way. We can grow and change without losing our small town identity (KS).

- KEEP TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWN SERVICES IN PLACE - OB has Linda Jean's, Post Office, etc. in town; Edgartown has declined because services like mail left; keep business downtown, don't go out to blinker e.g.(LW). OB has essential services; you can buy food, shoelaces, etc. not like downtown VH and Edgartown (DR). Don't lose essential downtown services like Edgartown (TMcC). At Linda Jean's, Post Office, etc. people can meet other townspeople (PS).

MAKING OAK BLUFFS A FAMILY RESORT COMMUNITY

ALCOHOL:

- CHOOSE BETWEEN BARS AND FAMILIES - Now we have competing land uses, bar next to ice cream shop e.g.; survey said we want to be a family town; do we want bars or families? (RM) - In 70's, OB threatened to vote to go dry (GdeB).

- EXISTING BARS ARE OK; DON'T HAVE ANY MORE - We only have 3 bars now; because of nonbinding referendum, we won't have any more; she wouldn't like to see any more bars (RB). Existing regulations would allow more bars (RS).

- ENCOURAGE EXISTING BARS TO RELOCATE TO AIRPORT - suggestion from August session; ask offending businesses to relocate to Airport; make Circuit Avenue more a family place; OB is too honky-tonk (JL).

- CREATE AN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT OUT OF TOWN - if we can't do it at Airport, how about somewhere else in OB? (JB)

- ENFORCE OPEN CONTAINER REGULATIONS - Open container violations are the problem (RS).

- GO UPSCALE - Edgartown used to have Lou's Worry, Kafe, etc.; now they don't; they've gone upscale (JB).

- MORE LICENSES FOR RESTAURANTS - More liquor licenses for restaurants would be OK (RB). But they don't live up to restrictions (LM).

- BRING FAMILIES OUT ON CIRCUIT AVENUE - Family presence will crowd out bars; OB Harbor used to be rowdy, rowdies were crowded out by families; also Naples, Florida, for example (TMcC).

ENCOURAGE FAMILIES:

- REPLACE LARGE VICTORIAN HOTELS - Bring in families by replacing old hotels; influx of families will crowd bars out (TMcC).

- STREET MARKET - Have weekly street markets on Circuit Avenue (RM).

- CLOSE CIRCUIT AVENUE TO TRAFFIC IN EARLY EVENING - Close Circuit Avenue during family time, 7-9:30 e.g. (RM).

- TEEN CENTER - We need a teen center (RM). - Get a youth center going at the old school (RW).

- MORE WATER-RELATED FAMILY ACTIVITIES - Rebuild the old pay beach (RM) - Restore the pay beach to the way it was (JB) - Lease pay beach enterprise to private sector; Town shouldn't compete with the tax base (JL). - A fishing pier, more family-oriented businesses like rental of canoes and windsurfers (RB)

- UPGRADE POLICE PRESENCE - Get real policemen for Circuit Avenue, not keystone cop kids with big guns (LM). - OBPD is dangerously understaffed; she has seen them reluctant to act because they are outnumbered (LW). - We lose control of Circuit Avenue, especially on holidays (RS). OBPD handles bar closing pretty well; it's raucous and noisy for 1/2 hour, then cabs take them all away (BH).

- CONSIDER NIGHTTIME CHARACTER ON CIRCUIT AVENUE - We really have 2 Circuit Avenues; daytime is fine for kids and families; character changes at night (JB).

- CONSIDER SUMMER/WINTER DICHOTOMY - Circuit Avenue is dramatically different in summer and winter (PS).

- TAKE CARE OF TRASH - More growth would bring more trash and expense of pickup (RW). - Need more trash barrels on Circuit Ave., get nice ones (not the ones on poles) and people will use and respect them (JW). - Pledge business owners to clean sidewalks in front of their businesses (LW). - from Disney study; people will walk as far as 20' to throw something away (JB). - Enforce existing by-laws requiring businesses to clear sidewalks (JL). Can't just put them out, have to pay to have them picked up. Don't keep cutting Highway and Parks Departments' budgets. Support those budgets at town meeting (JW, MdeB, LW).

OTHER

- TAX BASE, TAX BURDEN: Business pays only 7% of taxes(RW). - Need to look at commercial and residential growth; services cost, particularly schools; business tax dollars support schools without using them. Businesses use private trash services, rather than Town pickup (RB). - There are jobs and support for infrastructure in the residential sector; they provide year-round jobs; downtown closes 8 months; residential and seasonal residential pay for schools, not business(RW). - Business owners and their employees hire tradesmen (JW). - Seasonal businesses pay the same taxes and don't use the services (DR, TMcC). In a resort, people who come to the town pay for services like trash and police, not the taxpayers; how about a head tax? (PS) - People who work on Circuit Avenue and make money off the visitors should pay for some of the trash pickup, etc. (JB) - For every year-round residential tax dollar, the Town spends $1.49; for every business dollar, the

Town spends $.51-79 in services (TMcC). - Would like to see those figures; 80% of taxes are paid by seasonal residents (RS). - Tax base is $670 million; business is only $48 million, 7%; we need our own study (RW). Encourage more hotel rooms, to increase room tax revenues (RB). - OB is seasonal community; seasonal residents and businesses get their share of services; that's when services are strained and extra services are needed for them (unknown source) - Seasonal business owners don't mind paying taxes, even for schools; is a community effort (BH).

- PUBLIC REST ROOMS: need more public restrooms, they should not be closed at odd times (JW) - OB has 4 rest room facilities now (PdeB).

Chairman Bradford closed the meeting at 9:45, with hearty thanks to all.

OAK BLUFFS MASTER PLAN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENT
1998

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development issues were addressed quite thoroughly in the Master Plan Survey. The responses indicated an overall desire for stabilization of business growth, rather than expansion, and a desire to make Oak Bluffs a family-oriented resort community. When asked the question "Ten years from now, what kind of town do you want Oak Bluffs to be?", the respondents overwhelmingly expressed the desire to be a family-oriented resort community, not a tourist town. When asked what actions should be taken by town boards to "make Oak Bluffs the kind of town you think it should be", the lowest priority was given to "expanding the business district" followed by "promoting tourism".

GOALS

- To make Oak Bluffs a family-oriented resort community.
- To guide downtown business growth to manage wastewater and crowds.
- To upgrade "honky-tonk" image downtown.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Master Plan survey responses indicate that people are not concerned so much with the cost of housing, but rather with the preservation of historic structures. Seventy-nine percent of respondents named "preserving historic areas and structures" when asked about actions to be taken by town boards, more than for any other response. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, thirty-seven percent of Oak Bluffs' total housing stock was constructed prior to 1940, a greater proportion than found in any other town on Martha's Vineyard. Respondents indicated that they are affected "not much" by the high cost of housing, in the top 3 "not much" responses. The data reveal that homes in Oak Bluffs are more reasonably priced than the average Vineyard home.

GOALS

- To preserve Victorian architecture, by rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction.
- Preference for Oak Bluffs residents on waiting lists for community housing projects located in Oak Bluffs.

OPEN SPACE

Open space and recreation are adjuncts to the protection of the natural and cultural resources of the Town. Accessibility and availability of the resources is just as important. The Town's beaches, harbor, ponds, vistas and architecture are all treasured resources that should be available to residents and visitors as appropriate.

GOALS

- To keep the small-town lifestyle.
- Preservation and maintenance of existing Town-owned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.
- A variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District.
- More night-time teen activities.
- More water-related family activities.
- A shuttle to Sylvia State Beach.

adopted by vote of the Oak Bluffs Planning Board July 8, 1998