OAK BLUFFS

Comprehensive Master Plan

Oak Bluffs Planning Board
Master Plan Update Committee

Adopted April 25, 2019

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All maps in this Master Plan were prepared by the Martha's Vineyard Commission and can be viewed at the following weblink:

http://www.mvcommission.org/oak-bluffs-master-plan-maps-2019

Special thanks to Chris Seidel, GIS Coordinator for the Martha's Vineyard Commission, who prepared all the maps in this Master Plan.

1 INTRODUCTION

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so you can do something about it."

Alan Lakein
Time Management Writer

Welcome to the 2019 Master Plan for Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts!

This Master Plan reflects an overall vision for the future of Oak Bluffs based on a comprehensive planning process which involved:

- Taking a long-term view of issues and opportunities facing Oak Bluffs,
- Evaluating alternative directions and approaches, and
- Recommending strategies to help make Oak Bluffs an even better place in the future.

Protecting Important Resources

Managing Growth And Change

Addressing Emerging Issues

Meeting Community Needs

1.1 What Is A Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a document whose purpose is to discern and document a community's vision for its future and then identify policies and action steps that will help attain that vision. While its key purpose and function is to address the physical development of a community, it will often address issues related to the economic development and social development.

Preparation of a Master Plan is required for Massachusetts communities and the requirements are contained in Chapter 81D of the Massachusetts General Laws.

EXCERPTS FROM MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS CHAPTER 41 – Section 81 D – Master Plans

A Planning Board shall …

- Make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan.
- Conduct an interactive public process, to determine community values, goals and to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with these goals
- upon completion of … any change or amendment to a plan or report produced under this section, furnish a copy of such plan or report or amendment thereto, to the department of housing and community development.

The Plan shall …

- Be a statement … that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality.
- Be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards.
- Include the following elements
  - (1) Goals and policies statement
  - (2) Land use plan element
  - (3) Housing element
  - (4) Economic development element (including an economic development supplement; [containing] the goals of the city or town with respect to industrial or commercial development, affordable housing, and preservation of parks and open space
  - (5) Natural and cultural resources element
  - (6) Open space and recreation element
  - (7) Services and facilities element
  - (8) Circulation element
  - (9) Implementation program element
- Be public record.

What Is Planning?

At its most basic level, planning is a process for making informed decisions about the future.

Every so often, it makes sense for a community to evaluate the conditions and trends affecting the community and make informed decisions about how it should approach the future.

The planning process is fairly straightforward:

- Inventory - understanding where we are,
- Assessment – identifying where we are heading and issues / opportunities which exist,
- Strategies – evaluating alternative strategies for the future and selecting desired directions and/or outcomes, and
- Implementation – putting strategies into actions.

Overall Planning Process

Preparation of this Master Plan for Oak Bluffs was intended to place emphasis on local input and involvement so that the Master Plan represented a consensus among Oak Bluffs residents about the future of the community.

To do this, the Planning Board obtained funding at a Town Meeting and then formulated a Master Plan Update Committee (MPUC) made up of Oak Bluffs residents to oversee the process.

After organizing themselves, the Master Plan Update Committee conducted an online survey to get input from residents and then conducted a series of listening sessions and workshop meetings open to the community where issues and strategies were discussed. From this process, a consensus emerged about important issues and possible strategies, policies and action steps to address them.

This Master Plan summarizes those possible strategies, policies and action steps.

The Master Plan becomes an official document after adoption by the Oak Bluffs Planning Board.

This Master Plan was prepared with four key considerations in mind:

1. ***The Master Plan is an advisory document***. The Master Plan is primarily intended to provide a framework for consistent decision-making but it is not a regulation and its recommendations are not legally binding on any municipal entity. The real value of this Master Plan comes from identifying and promoting a common vision for the future of Oak Bluffs based on input from the community.

2. ***The Master Plan reflects the aspirations of Oak Bluffs residents.*** The Master Plan outlines an overall vision for the future of Oak Bluffs. Since it is unlikely that all of the elements of this overall vision can be accomplished quickly, the various parts of this overall vision can be thought of as aspirations for Oak Bluffs based on input from a cross-section of residents and property owners. The Master Plan is intended to inform community discussions in the future.

3. ***The Master Plan is intended to be an "actionable" plan.*** Since implementation should be carried out as circumstances and resources (financial or otherwise) permit, the Master Plan is an "actionable" plan rather than an "action" plan. It will become an "action plan" when a policy decision is made and/or when the necessary resources (time and/or money) are committed to accomplishing an action step.

4. ***The Master Plan is intended to be implemented.*** Implementation is the whole reason behind preparation and adoption of this Master Plan. Implementation will not occur overnight but it is expected to occur gradually over time. In fact, even though implementation of some recommendations may take ten to twenty years (or longer), staying the course will eventually produce the best results for Oak Bluffs.

5. ***The Master Plan can be reviewed and refined.*** The Master Plan is not intended to be a document fixed in time. The policies and action steps in the Master Plan can, and should, be regularly reviewed and refined as circumstances change, financial considerations change, or new information becomes available.

The Master Plan provides guidance for municipal activities as well as those of state agencies, civic organizations, property owners, and developers. The Master Plan will only be effective to the extent it is embraced and supported by the people of Oak Bluffs, and implemented by local boards and agencies.

1.2 Past Master Plans

Oak Bluffs has prepared several Master Plans for the community over the years. The first Master Plan was prepared in 1985 and the most recent Master Plan was adopted in 1998.

A summary of the key recommendations from the 1998 Master Plan is presented on the following pages.

Much has changed in Oak Bluffs since 1998 and the Planning Board felt it was time to update the Master Plan in order to reflect the issues of today and to better understand opportunities and constraints affecting the physical and economic development of Oak Bluffs and the overall quality of life in the community.

1998 Master Plan

OAK BLUFFS MASTER PLAN

1998

TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS

THEN & NOW

The above icon is used in the Master Plan to compare and contrast issues and strategies in the 1998 Master Plan with those of this Master Plan.

Summary of 1998 Master Plan

The 1998 Master Plan contained the following introductory sections:

- Goals And Policies
- Implementation Program
- History
- Population Characteristics

The Plan contained the following policy sections:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Land Use Plan
- Circulation
- Services And facilities
- Natural And Cultural Resources
- Open Space And Recreation

The key recommendations from each policy section are summarized on the following page.

1998 Plan Summary – Goals And Policies

Topic	Goal(s)	Selected Policies
Business Growth	Guide downtown business growth to manage wastewater and crowds	• Use a sewer growth management plan to manage commercial flows and hookups. • Restrict business growth to locations within business districts • Do not expand business districts. • Allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.
Residential Growth	Preserve Victorian architecture	• Encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction, particularly for affordable housing
	Manage growth in the R-l, R-2 and R-3 Residential Districts to stabilize spending for services and to maintain the rural character of the neighborhoods in those districts.	• 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 more community uses that drain town services while providing no tax revenue. • Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District, including active recreational uses.
Preservation Of Town Values	Keep the small-town lifestyle.	• Keep traditional downtown services in place. • Preserve existing cultural / historic resources. • Preserve / maintain Townowned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.
	Make OB a family-oriented resort community.	• Manage downtown trash better. • Supply appropriate lighting, particularly at alleyways. • Upgrade police presence to control crowds better. • More night-time teen activities. • More water-related family activities.
	Upgrade “honky-tonk” image downtown.	• Selectmen's review of licensing practices.
Parking And Traffic	Reduce congestion in town and manage downtown crowds better.	• Consider pay parking such as parking meters or pay lots. • Consider with SSA options to build the staging area out over the water.
Parking And Traffic	Alleviate parking problems in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.	• Consider implementation of a resident parking system. • Develop and promote a park'n'ride system, particularly directed toward employees who presently park in town.
Parking And Traffic	Reduce parking and traffic congestion at Sylvia State Beach.	• Promote implementation of a beach shuttle.

1998 Plan Summary – Implementation Plan

ZONING INITIATIVES

- Expand Copeland Plan District to:
  - Include a business area to allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.
  - Include area around Sunset Lake and Lakeside Park; to protect Victorian architecture.
- Amend the zoning by-laws for the R-1, R-2, and R-3 districts to remove provision for remainder lots.

REGULATIONS

- Coordinate commercial growth by means of a sewer growth management plan to promote Oak Bluffs as a family-oriented resort community.
- Set up expectations for bars to upgrade from honky-tonk.
- Adopt regulation to restrict size of trucks for loading after 9:00 AM.
- Adopt regulations to prohibit pedestrians queuing up on Circuit Avenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Upgrade police presence on Circuit Avenue / Enforce open container regulations.
- Take care of trash / Enforce existing by-law requiring businesses to keep sidewalks and alleyways free of trash.
- Provide for more night-time teen activities.
- Provide for more water-related family activities / Restore the old Pay Beach / Lease Pay Beach enterprises to the private sector.
- Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 district including active forms of recreation.
- Supply appropriate lighting particularly at alleyways.
- Encourage development of a park-and-ride system, particularly directed towards employee parking.
- Encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction, particularly for affordable housing.
- Discourage community uses that drain the town services while providing no tax revenue.
- Use town resources to preserve and maintain existing town-owned parks, beaches, open space and recreational areas.

FURTHER STUDY

- Use public participation to review and plan for overall growth in R-1, R-2, and R-3 residential districts.
- Consider building Steamship Authority staging area out over the water.
- Consider sticker system for parking / Residents park long-term / Visitors have short term limits (like 2 hours).
- Consider pay parking - consider parking meters.

1.3 Master Plan Organization

Based on input from the community survey and MPUC discussions, the strategies in the Master Plan are organized around the following main themes:

- Protecting Important Resources,
- Managing Growth And Change,
- Addressing Emerging Issues, and
- Meeting Community Needs.

Since Massachusetts General Laws identify certain elements to be addressed in a Master Plan, the following chart illustrates how the statutory elements are addressed in Oak Bluffs' Master Plan.

A solid circle (●) identifies the key chapter addressing this element while a gray circle (○) indicates another chapter that is relevant to this element.

	Elements Identified In Massachusetts General Laws								
	Goals And Policies	Land Use	Housing	Economic Develop-ment	Natural / Cultural Resources	Open Space / Recreation	Services And Facilities	Circulation	Implemen-tation
Introduction Introduction, Conditions And Trends ,Community Concerns	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Protecting Resources Water Quality, Ecosystem, Beaches, Open Space, Community Character, Coastal Resources	●	○			●	●			○
Managing Growth And Change Housing Needs, Downtown And Streetscape, Economy, Visitor Experience, Southern Tier	●	●	●	●	○			○	○
Addressing Emerging Issues Climate Change / Sea Level Rise, "Greener" Community, Resilient, Regional Issues	●	○		○	●	○	●		○
Meeting Community Needs Community Facilities / Services, Vehicular Circulation / Parking, Pedestrian Travel, Bicycle Travel, Transit Service, Water Supply, Wastewater Disposal, Storm Drainage, Electricity Supply, Communications Infrastructure	●	○	○	○		●	●	●	○
Implementation Implementation	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●

1.4 Plan Format

Each of the policy chapters of the Master Plan (the chapters within the four main themes of the Master Plan) recommends ***strategies*** for the community. The strategies are a "big picture" direction for Oak Bluffs to move towards to help make Oak Bluffs an even better place in the future.

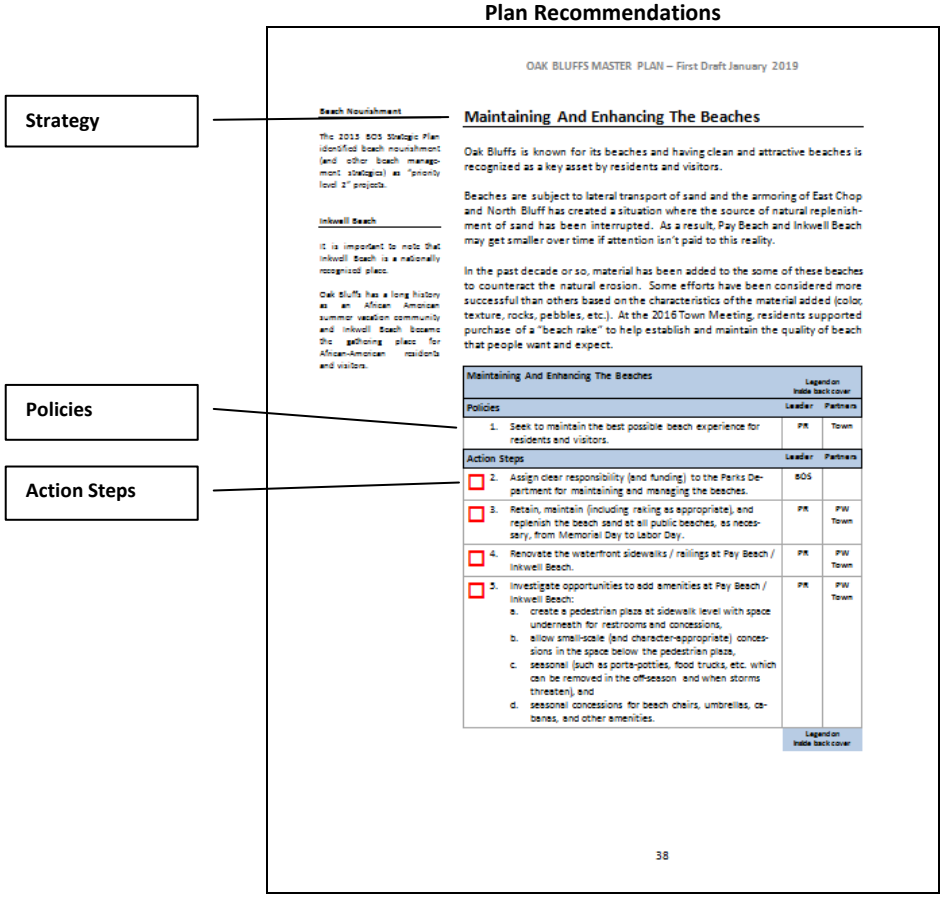
Each strategy will also have two types of recommendations:

- **Policies** – Policies are intended to be ***on-going positions*** of the Town of Oak Bluffs about how to evaluate and act upon local issues and actions. Policies do not lend themselves to measurement or recognition as being complete.
- **Action Steps** – Action steps are ***discrete tasks or activities*** which can and should be undertaken to accomplish Master Plan recommendations and policies. Action steps can be measured and recognized as being complete. Over time, it is envisioned that additional action steps will be identified by the Town of Oak Bluffs to help implement recommended policies.

Partners

Each policy and action step identifies the "partners" expected to be ***most*** involved in implementation. The partners are listed in alphabetical order. Other organizations may also be included and involved in implementation of strategies.
The legend explaining the acronyms used to identify leaders and partners is located on the inside back cover for ease of reference.

Plan Recommendations



2 CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

"If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it."

Abraham Lincoln
American President

This section of the Master Plan summarizes the conditions and trends affecting Oak Bluffs at the time the Plan was being prepared.

1.1 Evolution of Oak Bluffs

The island we now know as Martha's Vineyard evolved over millions of years as a result of massive geologic forces. Soil formations left behind in this area as the last ice sheet retreated became an island as sea levels increased due to the ice melt. Native American of the Wampanoag tribes, Capawack (Capawake), Cheesehahchamuk, Chaubaqueduck, Gay Head, Mankutquet, Nashamoiess, Nashanekammuck, Nohtooksaet, Nunnepoag, Onkonkemme, Pahkepunnasso, Sanchecantacket, Seconchqut, Tewanticut, Toohtoowee, and Warnpamag (Sanchakankachet) came to inhabit this island.

European Discovery and Settlement

The first documented European discovery of this island came in 1602 when Bartholomew Gosnold, an English explorer, arrived in the vicinity and attempted to initiate trade with Native Americans on nearby Cuttyhunk Island. While that venture was short-lived, Gosnold is credited with establishing the name "Marth's Vineyard" although it is not exactly clear who "Martha" was or whether the moniker referred to this specific island. These activities preceded the first English settlement in North America (Jamestown in 1607) and the arrival of the *Mayflower* in Plymouth in 1620.

Over the next several decades, conflicting claims over the islands deterred attempts at settlement. By 1642, however, an Englishman named Thomas Mayhew was able to acquire both of the competing claims and remove this impediment. He then made arrangements to "buy land" from the Wampanoag tribe and European settlement of Martha's Vineyard began.

The first English settlement occurred in the area we now know as Edgartown (named in honor of the heir apparent to the English throne) since there was a natural harbor protected on all sides.

Over time, the English population increased and expanded out to more areas of Martha's Vineyard, displacing the Native Americans to some of the more remote areas (such as Chappaquiddick and Aquinnah). Over time, the Native American population decreased due to lack of immunity from European diseases and other factors. What had been about 3,500 natives around 1642 had decreased to around 300 by about 1770.

Early English settlers engaged in subsistence agriculture, fishing, and similar pursuits. In addition to Edgartown, settlements were established over time in Holmes Hole (now Vineyard Haven) and the Eastville area (where a hospital for sick sailors was established in 1798) since these areas offered a closer port for trade with the mainland. Fishing was important and, by the late 1700s, Island residents were participants in whaling as an economic pursuit.

The Portuguese Connection

During the whaling era, ships from Martha's Vineyard would often visit the Azores, Cape Verde, and Madeira islands (territories of Portugal) for hunting the sperm whales which could be found in those areas and for provisioning the ship. As part of these visits, some locals joined the crew. Some were pulled by the prospect of an exciting job on the high seas while others were pushed by the challenges facing their homelands due to a lack of jobs and poor soil fertility. Either way, these new crewmembers threw themselves into their work. Eventually, some moved up from deckhands to become officers and captains.

Over the years, upon return to Martha's Vineyard (and other New England ports), some of the Portuguese left ships to work in fishing villages, on farms, or in textile mills. Word of the economic opportunities travelled back to their families and more of their compatriots emigrated to the United States to find jobs and support families. This pattern was evident all over New England and contributed to the economic growth of New Bedford, Fall River, Boston, Providence, Provincetown, and other areas.

Even after the decline of the whaling industry, many people of Portuguese ancestry continued to settle in New England and became fishermen, farmers, laborers, builders, mill workers, seamstresses, merchants, bakers, restauranteurs, artists, athletes, executives, and filled a host of other occupations.

On Martha's Vineyard, the descendants of Portuguese families make up a significant portion of Oak Bluff's year-round population. From the Portuguese-American Social Club to the Holy Ghost Feast, there is much evidence of the Portuguese contributions to making Oak Bluffs what it is today.

Traditions

Many Portuguese settled in Oak Bluffs and their culture and traditions are an integral part of the community:

- The Holy Ghost Association,
- The Portuguese-American Club, and
- The Portuguese Holy Ghost Feast and Festival in July.

Fundraisers provide significant contributions to those in need. Portuguese residents contributed to the fishing and farming economies and the Catholic Church community.

Tabernacle

While early religious sermons may have occurred in the open air, they soon transitioned to raised and covered pulpits. While this provided cover for the preacher, it provided little cover for the congregants.

Eventually, a tent covering was added to supplement the natural cover provided by the oak grove.

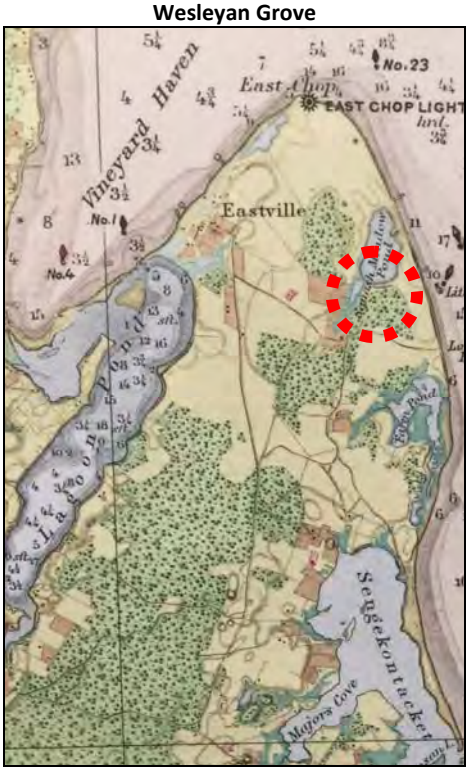
In 1879, a cast iron tabernacle was built to provide cover for all participants. The tabernacle was reported to be the largest cast iron structure in the world when it was completed.

Religious Revivals

The early 1800s was a time of religious revivals around the nation and, even though an island, Martha's Vineyard was no different. Itinerant preachers would arrive and give sermons which might be quite different from the Congregational Church sermons they were used to. Religious "meetings", where people got together for prayer and religion, eventually led to "camp meetings" where people would travel to a location and set up tents for a few days to hear new preachers and participate in religious study.

In 1827, a camp meeting event was hosted on Martha's Vineyard in the West Chop area. The location was so popular and memorable that popular demand supported the idea of another event on Martha's Vineyard. So, for 1835, a new site was selected in a cool shady grove of oak trees in the Farm Neck area of what was then the northern part of Edgartown. Reviews of that event were glowing and plans were made to repeat the event in the following year. This continued for nine consecutive years and then skipped a year. The camp meeting was back the following year (1846) and the organizers arranged for a 10-year lease for the land and for the ability to leave improvements in place over the winter. Around 1856, the land was purchased.

Wesleyan Grove

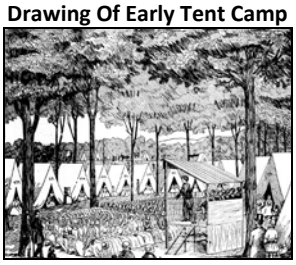


The camp meetings at Wesleyan Grove (so named for John Wesley, a founder of the Methodist philosophy of religion) on Martha's Vineyard were considered to be the best in New England and so people made arrangements to return year after year and wanted to reserve the same campsites. It did not take long for interest to turn from living in a tent to living in a cottage and so, starting in 1859, cottages were built. The "Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association" (MVCMA) received a charter from the Massachusetts legislature in 1860.

Some estimates are that there might have been more than 500 tents and about 12,000 participants over multiple days around 1860. People arrived days or weeks in advance in order to enjoy the sun, beach, surf, recreation, and other entertainment before embarking on the hard work of religious camp meetings. People arrived at the wharf in Eastville and travelled overland to the campground.

Opportunity Knocks

Drawing Of Early Tent Camp



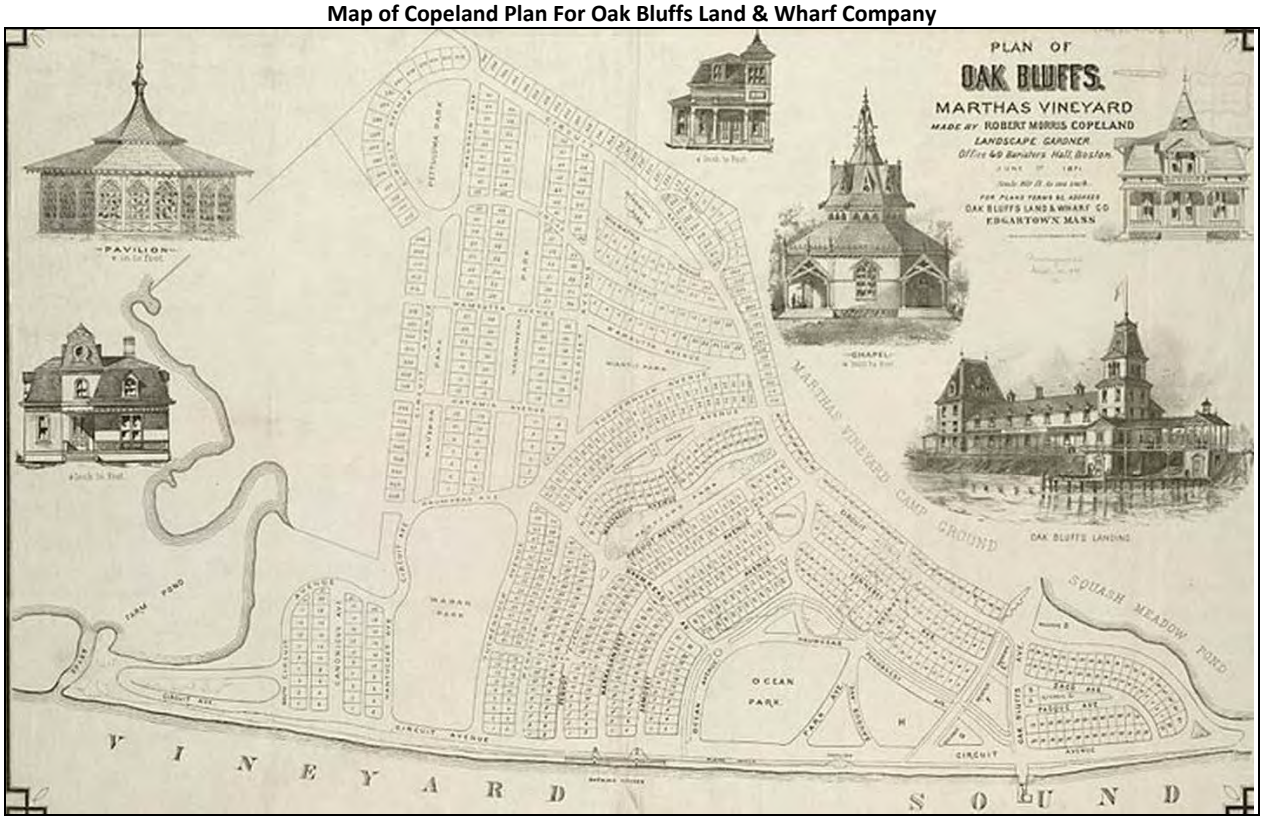
While the MVCMA could control what happened on their land, they could not control what happened outside their boundary. Opportunists saw the business opportunities afforded by thousands of visitors. "Hawkers and peddlers" set up shop at the edge of the campground and they were soon joined by people establishing boarding houses, restaurants, and a variety of other businesses. Over time, this arrangement became what we now recognize as the business area along Circuit Avenue.

Transition From Tents To Cottages

But bigger changes were afoot as well. People who may have attended a camp meeting and enjoyed the coastal ambience recognized the opportunity to have a cottage outside of the campground. By 1866, the "Oak Bluffs Land & Wharf Company" (OBLW) had acquired land between the Campground (the "oaks") and the water (the "bluffs") and began to prepare plans to develop the area. They intended to make this area available to all, not just Methodists.

OBLW commissioned Robert Morris Copeland to prepare a plan which became the framework for development of this area. In addition, OBLW built a wharf in 1866 (to try to profit from the travelers to the MVCMA) and a primitive hotel (with sales office) in 1867.

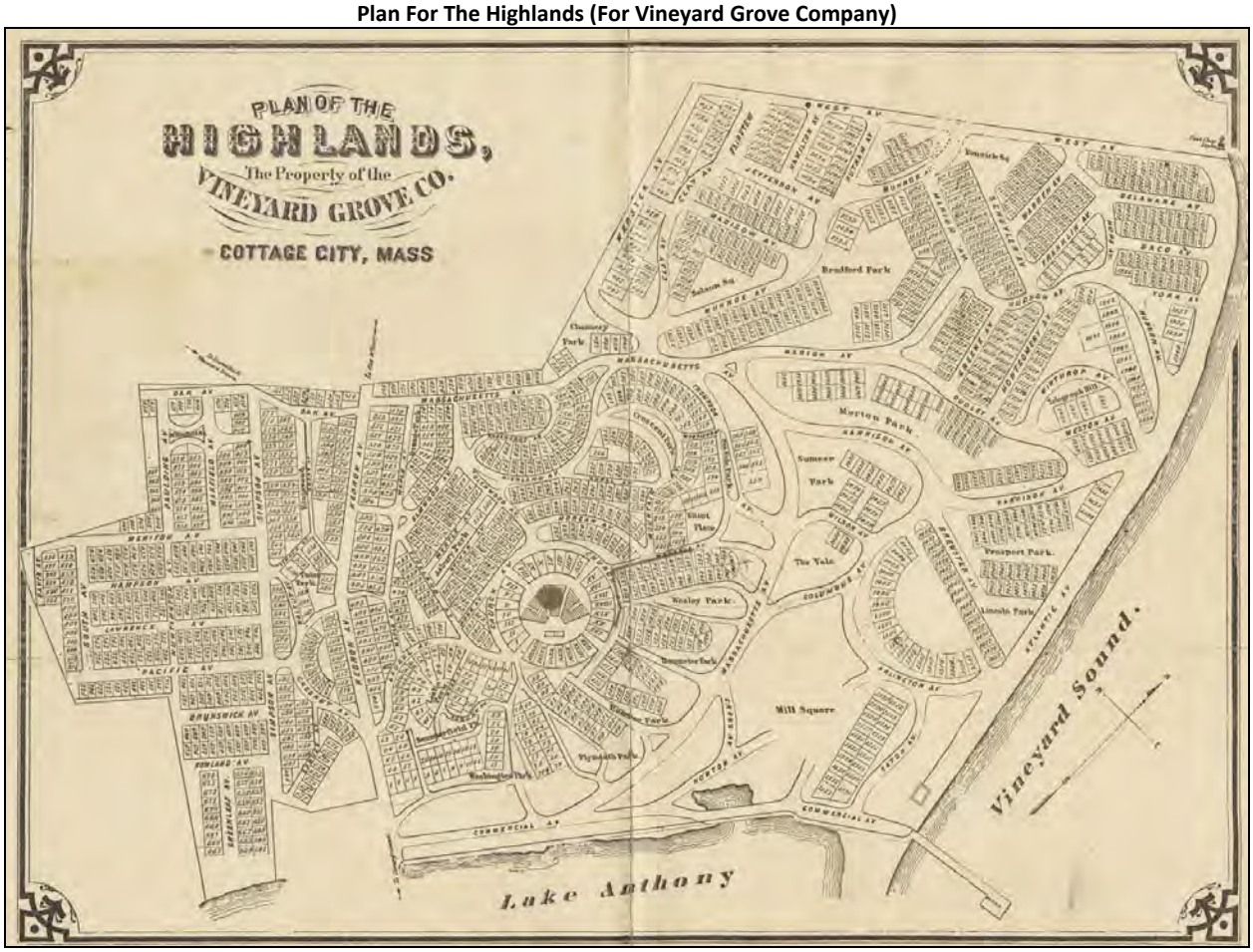
Map of Copeland Plan For Oak Bluffs Land & Wharf Company



This was all too much for the Campground. In 1867, MVCMA installed a fence around their land with no openings to the east to separate themselves from the activities in that area. Further, in 1868, they are thought to have been involved in the assemblage of land to the north and west of the campground which might further protect their religious enclave.

However, since members of the Camp Meeting Association did not want to be involved in land speculation, any interest they had in the land was transferred in 1870 to the Vineyard Grove Company (VGC). More land was added by VGC to extend their holdings as far as the lighthouse. VGC established a wharf and laid out its own plan for lots and improvements to capitalize on the opportunities. The MVCMA adopted the new Highland Wharf constructed by VGC as its "official" wharf.

Plan For The Highlands (For Vineyard Grove Company)



Competing Real Estate Ventures

Hundreds of lots had been laid out in a short period of time and a competition of sorts began between OBLW and VGC for real estate supremacy. However, even with the growing popularity of Martha's Vineyard and the improved access provided by steamship ferry service (much more reliable than sailboats), selling them on a timely basis become a challenging endeavor.

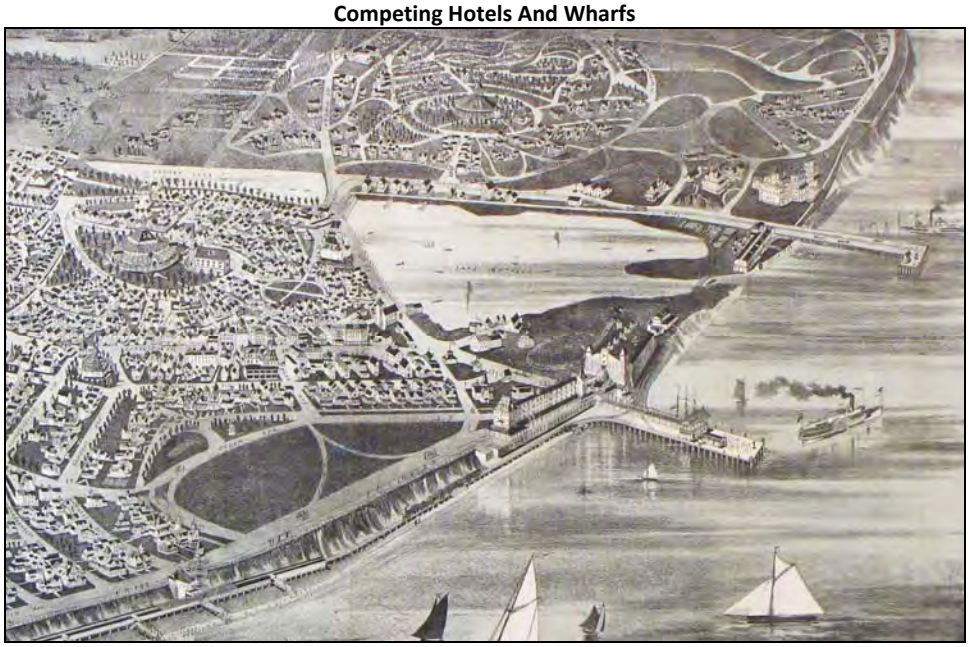
In 1871, VGC built a four-story hotel (Highland House) with 150 rooms and other amenities. Not to be outdone, OBLW replaced their hotel with the Sea View hotel in 1872. OBLW highlighted their proximity to a large beach and amenities available. VGC built a 3,500 foot long boardwalk (later supplemented by a small horse-drawn railway in 1873) from their wharf to MVCMA to facilitate travel since their wharf was further away.

The tug of war continued in other ways as well. The post office was first established as "Vineyard Grove" (1870) but was changed in 1878 to "Oak Bluffs." This change must have caught most people unawares because it was changed back to "Vineyard Grove" within three months.

Economic fluctuations and meager returns created difficulties. Whether due to financial or religious reasons, the VGC sold their oak grove to a group called the Baptist Vineyard Association in 1875 (who erected an octagonal temple in 1878). OBLW failed in 1882 and assets were turned over to others.

When both hotels burned to the ground (Sea View in 1892 and Highland House in 1893), it was the end of an era in terms of large Island hotels.

Competing Hotels And Wharfs



Parks and Open Space

The initial Copeland plan laid out lands as parks and open space but, since it was a private development, the responsibility for maintaining these lands fell to the Oak Bluffs Land & Wharf Company.

Eventually, the Company wished to reduce their expenses and so, in 1881, they offered this land to the newly-formed Town. No action was taken.

In 1885, the then owners sold the parks and open space land to a private party and this upset some residents and owners who filed a lawsuit.

Although the court was unable to reach a verdict in the first court hearing, a second lawsuit was filed. In 1891, the court ruled that the lands could be privately owned but could not be sold as building lots or kept out of public use since other purchasers had relied on the representation as parks and open space.

This ruling is considered to be one of the first in the nation requiring the reservation of open space if pledged as such as part of a development proposal.

Edgartown

Edgartown may have been a little miffed that they were being left out of the real estate opportunities playing out nearby.

Some property owners hired Robert Morris Copeland (the designed for OBLW) to prepare a plan for the Katama area of Edgartown and it involved a hotel even larger than the Sea View hotel. Initially, access was from a wharf but it was not the draw they had hoped.

To improve access to the Katama area, local investors convinced the Town to participate in the construction of a narrow gauge railroad from the OBLW wharf to Edgartown and Katama.

However the Katama resort area faltered, the railroad was never successful, and Oak Bluffs continued to be recognized as the major resort area of Martha's Vineyard.

Establishment As A Municipality

Despite the ongoing real estate competition, most people were in agreement that this area was not well served by still being part of Edgartown. Dating back to the early 1800s, the remoteness of Eastville from Edgartown led to the sentiment that property owners paid taxes but received little in terms of services or improvements for their money. This sentiment grew exponentially once MVCMA was established and as OBLW and VGC increased the tax base. Some reports indicate that this area was providing about 60 percent of all tax revenue raised by Edgartown.

Finally, in 1880, the General Court authorized the separation of this area from Edgartown as a separate municipality. The name assigned was "Cottage City", a former railroad marketing reference ("Cottage City in America") that avoided any favoritism between the competing developments of "Oak Bluffs" and "Vineyard Grove."

Residents were apparently not fond of the designation of "Cottage City" (perhaps because it drew attention to the cottages in the Camp Meeting Association or because of the use of "city) and so, in 1907, the name was changed to Oak Bluffs.

No history of Oak Bluffs is complete without recognizing its place in the history of African-Americans in the United States (see facing page). From a modest population of 39 "blacks" as counted in the 1790 Census, the African-American population has grown and prospered over the years in Oak Bluffs in a variety of ways.

Oak Bluffs Today

Although Oak Bluffs has changed in many ways over the years, it retains many of the best features and attributes of the various eras in its history. Oak Bluffs continues to be recognized as a vacation destination and a great place to live.

Victorian Era Architecture

African American History

African Americans may have come to Marth's Vineyard to work as craftsmen, domestic workers, laborers, and caretakers or to work in the whaling industry. William Martin from Martha's Vineyard was an African American whaling captain of some renown. Some African American itinerant preachers came to Martha's Vineyard during the period of religious awakening. Some African Americans may have arrived as enslaved workers before Massachusetts abolished slavery in 1783.

A number of African Americans settled as permanent residents in the Eastville area of Oak Bluffs. By 1880 (following the end of the Civil War), about six percent of the Island's population was African American and they settled here for the economic opportunity and sense of community. For example, Charles Shearer (a resident of Everett) started a summer laundry business in Oak Bluffs around 1900 to serve residents in the Highlands area. Later, Shearer opened a guesthouse for people of color who came to the Vineyard because other lodging establishments would not rent to African Americans. The "Shearer Cottage" is a major part of the African American history of Oak Bluffs.

As more African Americans became familiar with the Vineyard, additional businesses were set up and more workers and families came, both seasonally as vacationers and workers and as year-round residents. In Oak Bluffs, they found a community which did not practice segregation (which was prevalent in other places) and found a place they felt comfortable.

Oak Bluffs continues to be a haven for all, whether for year-round residents or seasonal visitors. In the words of Vernon Jordan, a lawyer and civil rights leader, Oak Bluffs "is one of the most integrated communities, racially and economically, that there is."

Guests At Shearer Cottage In The 1930s

Summer Fun

National Recognition

By the 1920s or so, according to a book by Robert Hayden, Oak Bluffs came to be recognized as a place "where African Americans can go be themselves, free of the strains of class and race consciousness that hovers over their hometowns and cities." Between 1920 and the end of World War II, more African Americans came to Oak Bluffs to buy property despite the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression in the 1930s.

In increasing numbers, African Americans also came to Oak Bluffs to vacation. In 1947, an article in Ebony magazine titled "Where To Go Vacationing" recognized Oak Bluffs as the "most exclusive Negro summer colony in the country."

Growth Pattern

The year-round population of Oak Bluffs has been growing since 1970 and projections by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts indicate that population is expected to continue to grow in the future. The year-round population could reach about 6,000 people by the year 2035.

Year	Population
1930	1,333
1940	1,584
1950	1,521
1960	1,419
1970	1,385
1980	1,984
1990	2,804
2000	3,713
2010	4,527
2020	*5,140*
2030	*5,625*

1.2 Oak Bluffs Today

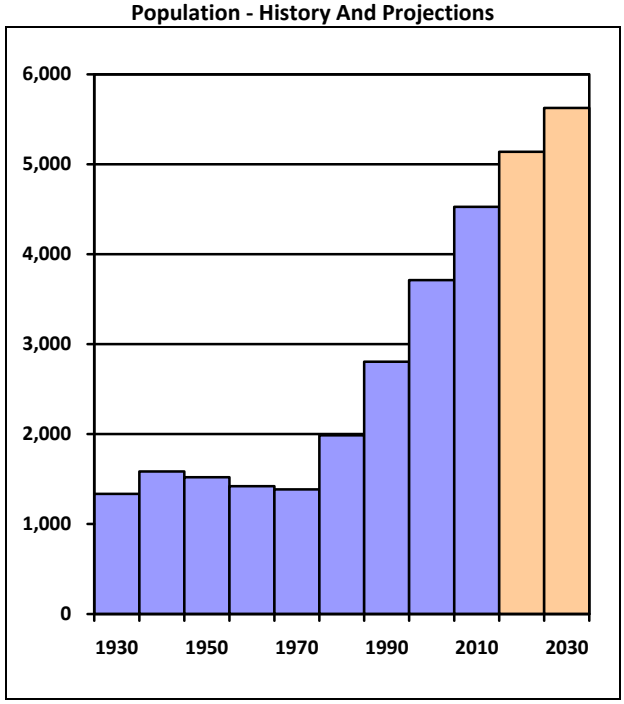
People Of Oak Bluffs

In terms of population, Oak Bluffs is a tale of two communities – year-round and summertime.

The American Community Survey estimated that Oak Bluffs had a year-round population of 4,675 people in 2017. Compared to other Island towns, Oak Bluffs has:

- the largest year-round population (more than a quarter of the total Island population lives in Oak Bluffs), and
- a higher percentage of population age 65+ (24% vs 18% for the Island as a whole).

Population - History And Projections



During the summertime, the population of Oak Bluffs increases significantly both in terms of day-time visitors and overnight stays. If all housing units and hotel rooms are occupied, Oak Bluffs' population can easily increase to 15,000 to 20,000 people. When day-trippers on the ferries are combined with visitors to Oak Bluffs from other Island communities, the population can increase to 20,000 to 30,000 people.

More Active In Summer

Quieter In Winter

Housing In Oak Bluffs

According to the American Community Survey, Oak Bluffs had about 4,346 housing units in 2017. About 46 percent of these units are occupied year-round and there are almost 2,400 units kept for seasonal, occasional, or recreational use. Compared to other Island towns, Oak Bluffs has a higher percentage of homes occupied year-round.

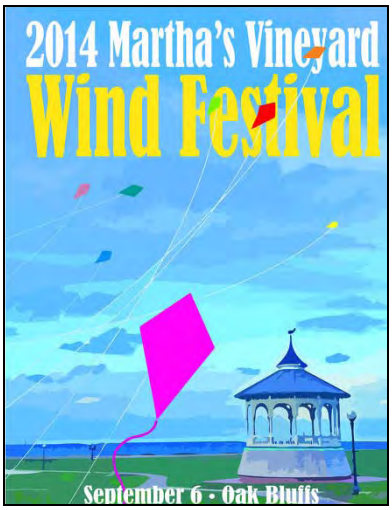
Due to the strong interest in vacation homes on Martha's Vineyard, sale prices are high and this creates affordability problems for year-round residents and seasonal workers.

Economy Of Oak Bluffs

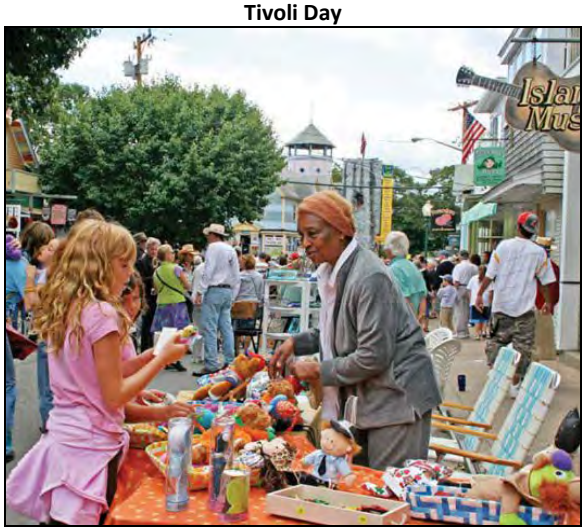
Not surprisingly, the Oak Bluffs economy is dominated by the summer season. According to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the unemployment rate in Oak Bluffs fluctuates from a high of almost 10 percent in January to a low of about 2 percent in August. While there are reported to be about 250 establishments employing almost 2,000 people, about one-third of those jobs are highly seasonal (accommodations, food services, retail, etc.) and may pay lower wages typical for service jobs.

Overall, while about one-third of the households earn more than $100,000 annually, about one-third of the households in Oak Bluffs have incomes less than $35,000 per year.

Wind Festival



Tivoli Day



1.3 How Land Is Used / Zoned

Use Of Land In Oak Bluffs

As can be seen from the map on the facing page, most of the land in Oak Bluffs is used for residential purposes.

Zoning Of Land In Oak Bluffs

Likewise, as can be seen from the map on page 24, most of the land in Oak Bluffs is zoned for residential use. Most of the land in the "northern tier" (north of Trade Winds Preserve and the Highway Garage) is zoned for lot sizes of 20,000 square feet or less. Most of the land in the "southern tier" is zoned for lot sizes of 60,000 square feet or more. Commercial zones are located along Circuit Avenue and Dukes County Avenue.

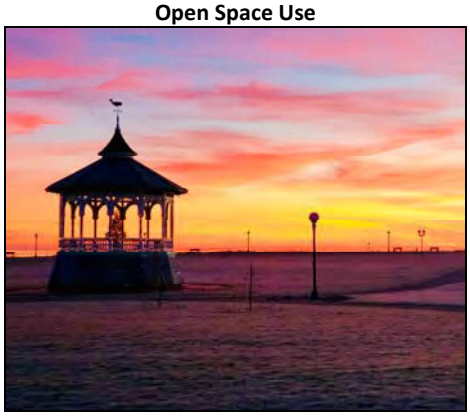
The map on page 25 shows the configuration of some "overlay districts" which modify the requirements in the underlying zones.

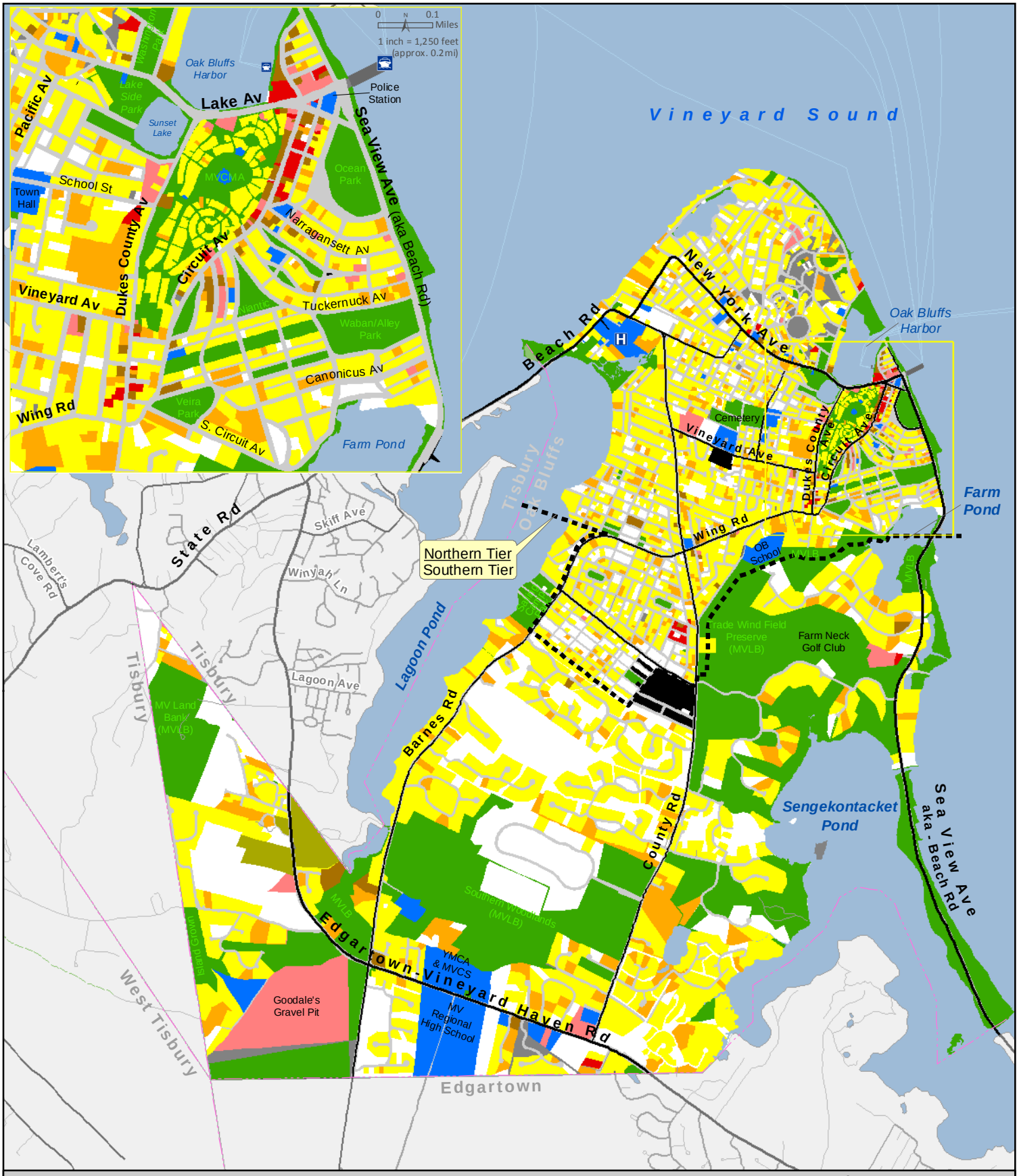
Residential Use

Commercial Use

Institutional Use

Open Space Use





Land Use

- Vacant/Not Conserved*
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Unit and Other Residential
- Retail/Service Commercial
- Other Commercial
- Multiple-Use
- Community Facility/Institution
- Recreation/Entertainment
- Agriculture
- Utility
- Other
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

*Might be developable.

Land Use

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

4/2/19

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_15_LandUse.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

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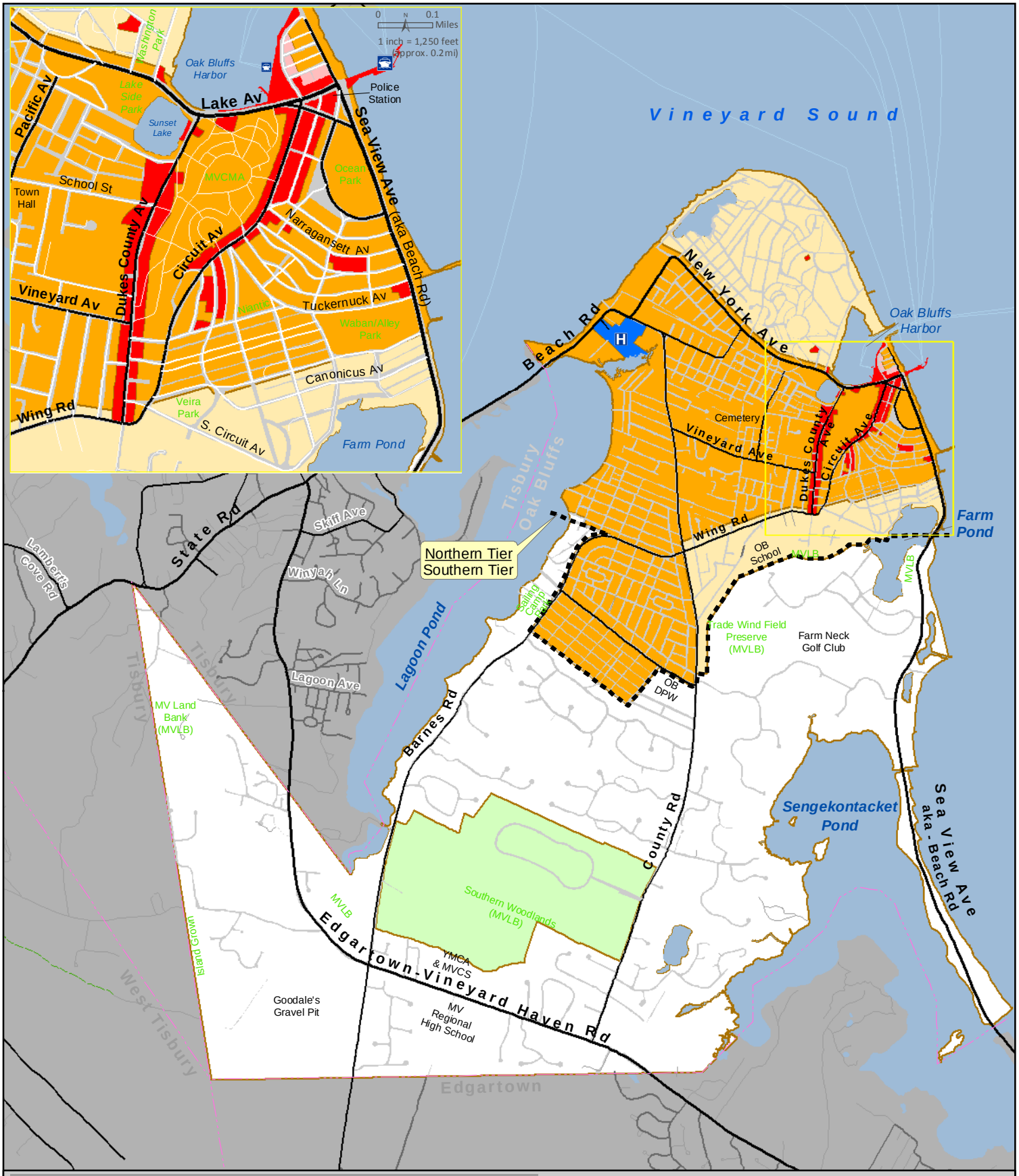

B1 Commercial Business
B2 Small Scale Business
R1 Residential (min 10,000 sq ft)
R2 Residential (min 20,000 sq ft)
R3 Residential (min 60,000 sq ft)
R4 Residential (min 130,000 sq ft)
HC Health Care
Right of Way
Water
Ferry Service

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_04_Zn_v3.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

Primary Zoning Districts

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4
Miles

N

2/8/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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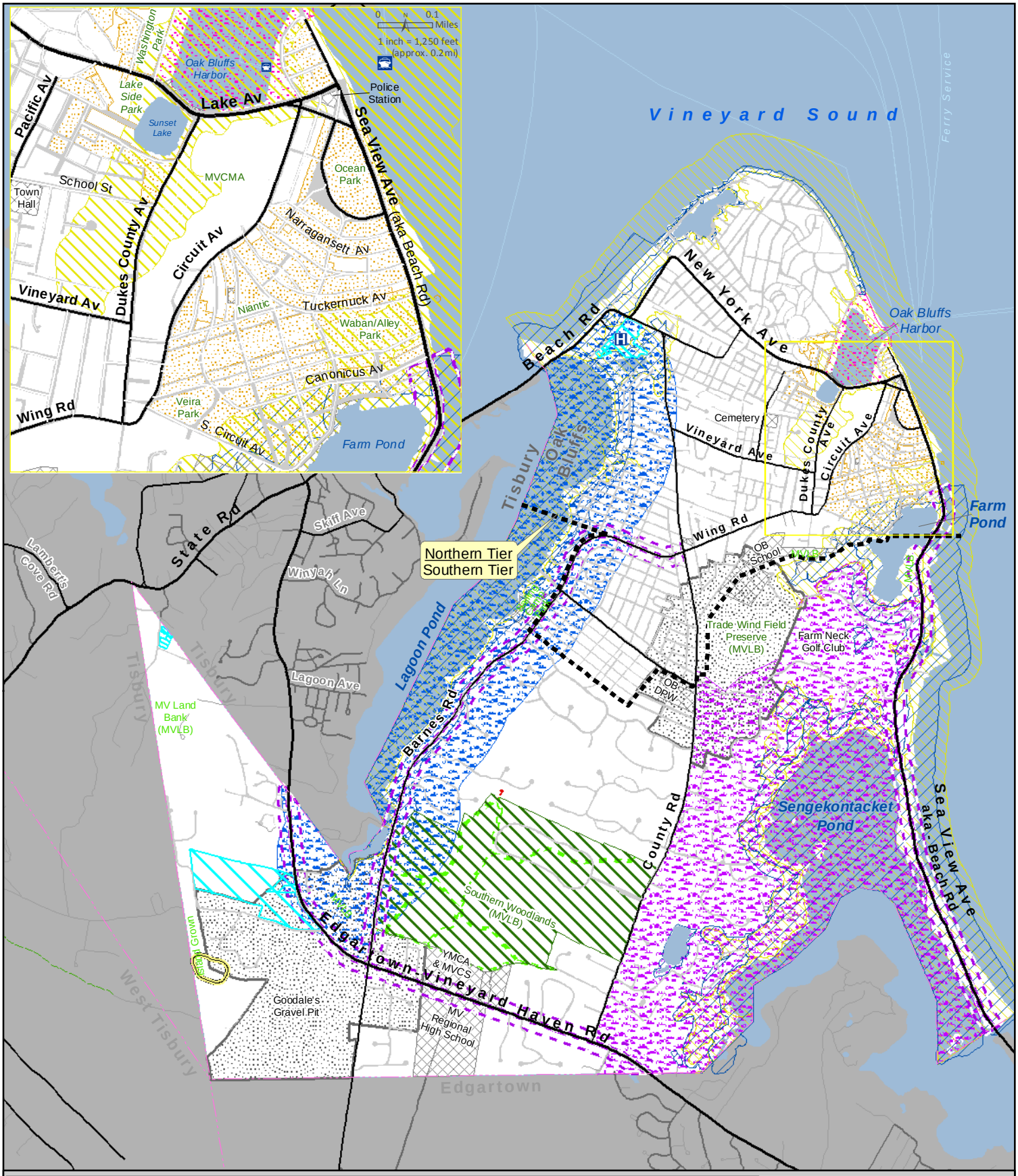


Overlay Zoning

- Coastal District
- Copeland Plan District
- Floodplain Overlay District
- Island Roads District - Major Roads Zone
- Special Ways - via Southern Woodlands District
- Island Roads District - Special Ways Zone
- Lagoon Pond District
- Oak Bluffs Harbor District
- Registered Marijuana Dispensary District
- Sengekontacket Pond District
- Southern Woodlands District
- Special Places District
- Water Resource Protection District
- Wireless Communication District

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_OvZn.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

2/13/19

Overlay Zoning Districts

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5 mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

Compiled By: MVC, CL Seidel
For planning purposes only.

3 COMMUNITY CONCERNS AND GOALS

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

Margaret Wheatley
Writer

A number of exercises were conducted as part of the planning process in order to involve the community in the Master Plan and get feedback as the Master Plan was being refined and adopted.

Information from these exercises was incorporated into preparation and review of the Master Plan.

3.1 Issues Survey

In the spring of 2018, an on-line survey was created to get input from Oak Bluffs residents about issues they felt it important to address as part of the Master Plan update. The availability of the survey was publicized via Facebook, local newspapers, radio stations, presence at Town Meeting, and word-of-mouth. Overall, ***more than 750 completed surveys*** were received.

A summary of the results is available on the Master Plan webpage.

Highlights of the results follow:

- About 40 percent of respondents were year-round residents
- About one-quarter of respondents were attracted to Oak Bluffs due to people, family, or friends and another one quarter were attracted by the overall character / appearance of the community
- Some of the topics considered important for the Master Plan included:
    - Natural Resources / Water Quality / Beaches / Ponds
    - Community Character / Appearance / Maintenance
    - Housing Needs
    - Open Space / Parks / Conservation Lands
    - Resiliency / Sea Level Rise / Storm Preparation
    - Downtown
    - Water Supply / Sewage Disposal / Utilities / Cell Phones

- A question about the most important issue facing Oak Bluffs today resulted in the following:
    - Housing Needs
    - Downtown / Parking
    - Water Quality
    - Traffic
    - Waste water
- A question about the greatest challenge or need over the next 10 to 20 years resulted in the following:
    - Housing
    - Water
    - Beaches
    - Sea level rise
    - Maintaining the community
- A question about things residents were "proud of" in Oak Bluffs resulted in the following:
    - Beaches
    - Sense of community
    - Martha's Vineyard Campground
    - Ocean Park
    - Events and activities
- A question about things residents were "sorry about" in Oak Bluffs resulted in the following:
    - Housing issues
    - Beach conditions
    - Parking issues
    - Traffic congestions
    - Downtown / Movie Theater /. Circuit Avenue

3.2 Briefing Booklets / Listening Sessions

The main issues expressed as part of the survey were reviewed by the Master Plan Update Committee and then grouped together for the purpose of scheduling listening sessions. Briefing booklets were prepared for each group of topic and residents and community groups were invited to attend to give input and feedback as part of the Master Plan process. A total of seven listening sessions were held on the following topics (briefing booklets are hyperlinked below):

- Access / Circulation / Mobility
- Community Experience
- Economic Strength
- Natural Resources / Open Space / Sea Level Rise / Climate Change
- Housing Needs / Options
- Utility Infrastructure
- Downtown / Harbor / Beaches / Southern Tier

THEN & NOW

The 1998 Master Plan involved a survey mailed out to property owners. Survey results indicated that:

- Oak Bluffs was a town with a rich history and an interesting future, known for its treasured Victorian architecture.
- Oak Bluffs was facing issues of density, parking congestion and wastewater management and some concern for losing its small-town lifestyle.
- Oak Bluffs had great pride, a strong sense of identity, and a strong sense of commitment to keeping Oak Bluffs special which drove the effort to create a Master Plan.

The 1998 Master Plan also included listening sessions on "growth and lifestyle issues."

Methodology

Notice of the survey was publicized via Facebook, local newspapers, radio stations, presence at a special Town Meeting, and word-of-mouth. Overall, more than 350 completed surveys were received.

In the survey, participants were asked to rank the strategies within a group of related strategies. The rankings were used to generate an overall score giving one point for the lowest rank, ten points for the highest rank, and distributing points proportionately in between. In this way, the results from categories with a different number of choices could be compared.

When all topics are listed together and ranked by their "score", the priorities identified by Oak Bluffs residents are as shown.

3.3 Priorities Survey

Based on the input and discussion at the listening sessions, preliminary strategies for the Master Plan were identified. To ascertain which of these preliminary strategies most resonated with Oak Bluffs residents, an on-line survey was conducted to get input about the relative priorities for the Master Plan.

Prioritization Of Strategies

Overall	Score
1. Maintaining And Improving Water Quality	1,495
2. Protecting Our Unique Ecosystem	1,410
3. Maintaining And Enhancing The Beaches	1,388
4. Maintaining And Enhancing Community Character	1,359
5. Maintaining And Improving Open Space Areas	1,356
6. Addressing Housing Needs	1,342
7. Enhancing The Downtown Streetscape	1,330
8. Maintaining An Adequate Water Supply	1,307
9. Becoming A Greener Community	1,219
10. Preparing For Sea level Rise / Climate Change	1,217
11. Strengthening The Economy	1,212
12. Maintaining / Enhancing The Harbor	1,165
13. Managing Wastewater Disposal	1,142
14. Addressing Vehicle Parking	1,107
15. Enhancing Community Facilities / Services	1,099
16. Managing Ferry Services	1,069
17. Maintaining Adequate Storm Drainage	1,026
18. Managing Regional Impacts	1,015
19. Guiding Land Use Activities In The Southern Tier	1,003
20. Addressing Vehicular Circulation	981
21. Promoting Pedestrian Travel	979
22. Becoming More Resilient	968
23. Promoting Transit Service	867
24. Enhancing Gateways / Wayfinding	851
25. Enhancing The Visitor Experience	847
26. Promoting Bicycle Travel	818
27. Encouraging Resolution Of Electricity Supply	809
28. Promoting Festivals / Events	784
29. Enhancing Communications Infrastructure	740
30. Reinforcing Oak Bluffs "Brand"	664

3.4 Master Plan Themes And Topics

Based on the survey results and the relatedness of topics, the Master Plan was organized as shown below.

PROTECTING IMPORTANT RESOURCES

- Maintaining And Improving Water Quality
- Protecting Our Unique Ecosystem
- Maintaining And Enhancing The Beaches
- Maintaining And Improving Open Space Areas
- Maintaining And Enhancing Community Character
- Managing Coastal Resources

MANAGING GROWTH AND CHANGE

- Addressing Housing Needs
- Enhancing The Downtown And Streetscape
- Balancing The Economy With Quality Of Life
- Enhancing The Visitor Experience
- Guiding Land Use Activities In The Southern Tier

ADDRESSING EMERGING ISSUES

- Preparing For Climate Change / Sea Level Rise
- Becoming A “Greener” Community
- Becoming More Resilient
- Addressing Regional Issues

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Enhancing Community Facilities / Services
- Addressing Vehicular Circulation / Parking
- Promoting Pedestrian Travel / Accessibility
- Promoting Bicycle Travel
- Promoting Transit Service

PROVIDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

- Maintaining An Adequate Water Supply
- Managing Wastewater Disposal
- Maintaining Adequate Storm Drainage
- Improving Electricity Supply
- Enhancing Communications Infrastructure

IMPLEMENTING THE MASTER PLAN

- Importance of Implementation
- Using Implementation Tools

4 PROTECTING IMPORTANT RESOURCES

"Conservation is a state of harmony between [people] and land."

Aldo Leopold
American Ecologist

Strategies related to protecting important resources were among the highest priorities identified by Oak Bluffs residents as part of the planning process.

Water Quality

Unique Ecosystem

Beaches

Open Space

Resource Materials (partial list)

1. Oak Bluffs Master Plan (1998)
2. Martha's Vineyard Island Plan (MVC, 2010)
3. Estuaries Reports - Sengekontacket Pond, Oak Bluffs Harbor, Farm Pond (2010 – 13)
4. Oak Bluffs Open Space and Recreation Plan (2014-16)
5. North Bluff Seawall Extension Project (2015)
6. East Chop Coastal Bank Repairs Materials (2017)
7. Martha's Vineyard Visual Preference Survey (MVC, 2005)
8. OB Harbor District Design Guidelines (MVC, 1997)
9. Cottage City Cultural District Asset Inventory Oak Bluffs (2016 Draft)

4.1 Maintaining And Improving Water Quality

Water quality is important to overall environmental health and human well-being and this is especially important on Martha's Vineyard where fresh water is an "island," replenished only by rainfall, amid an ocean of salt water.

In the survey of priorities for the Master Plan, maintaining and improving water quality was the highest rated priority of Oak Bluffs residents.

Threats To Water Quality

Groundwater on Martha's Vineyard shows evidence of heightened nitrogen levels and this comes from human activity (past studies have estimated that 79 percent of the nitrogen originates from septic systems). Coastal ponds and embayments are showing evidence of nitrification and this could have significant implications in the future for Oak Bluffs. About *three-quarters of the land area in Oak Bluffs* drains to a coastal pond or embayment and, if the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection formally designates these areas as "nitrogen sensitive" for purposes of 310 CMR 15.000 ("Title 5"), this could limit the number of bedrooms on lots served by septic systems (also see discussion of wastewater in the Master Plan).

Oak Bluffs intends to try and avoid this formal designation and undertake efforts to slow or stop degradation of water quality from nitrogen.

Stormwater has the potential to adversely affect water quality if runoff contaminated with pollutants picked up from overland flow (heavy metals, nutrients, etc.) enters the water cycle. Techniques such as "low-impact development" (also known as "green infrastructure") have the ability to prevent or discourage such pollution. Oak Bluffs should continue programs and efforts to address this.

Chemical fertilizers and pesticides have the potential to threaten water quality and the use of these types of chemicals should be discouraged or prohibited.

Sengekontacket Pond

Lagoon Pond

Water Quality And Fishing

Fishing and shellfishing are an important part of the history of Oak Bluffs and the local economy today.

The health of this industry and the products they harvest depends on water quality.

Targeted Watershed Plans

The Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA) may require the preparation of targeted watershed management plans (TWMP) as part of the process of protecting water resources in Oak Bluffs.

Green Infrastructure

There is a great deal of information on the internet about "green infrastructure" and "low impact development" techniques.

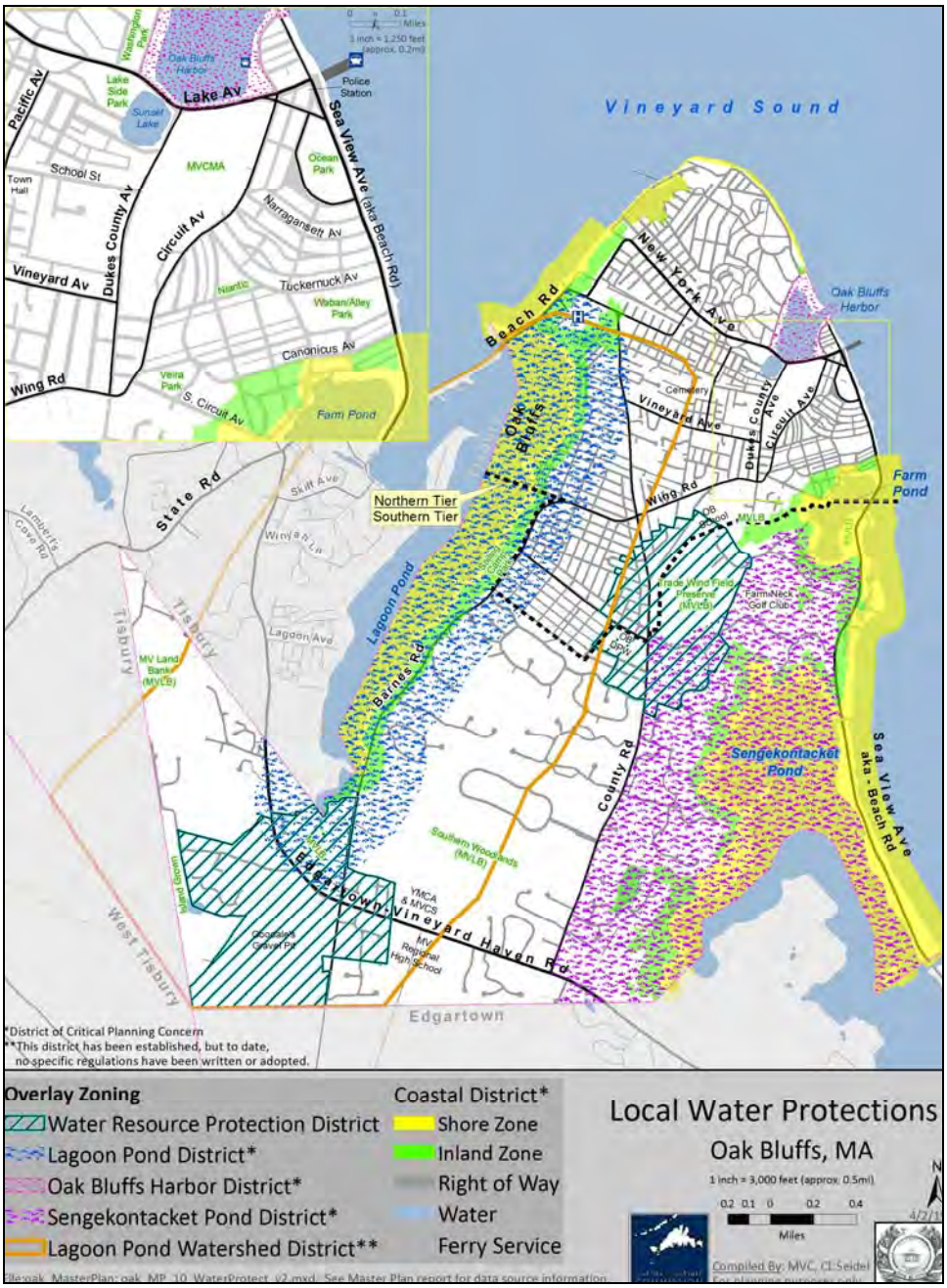
Some information prepared by Mass Audubon is available on their website.

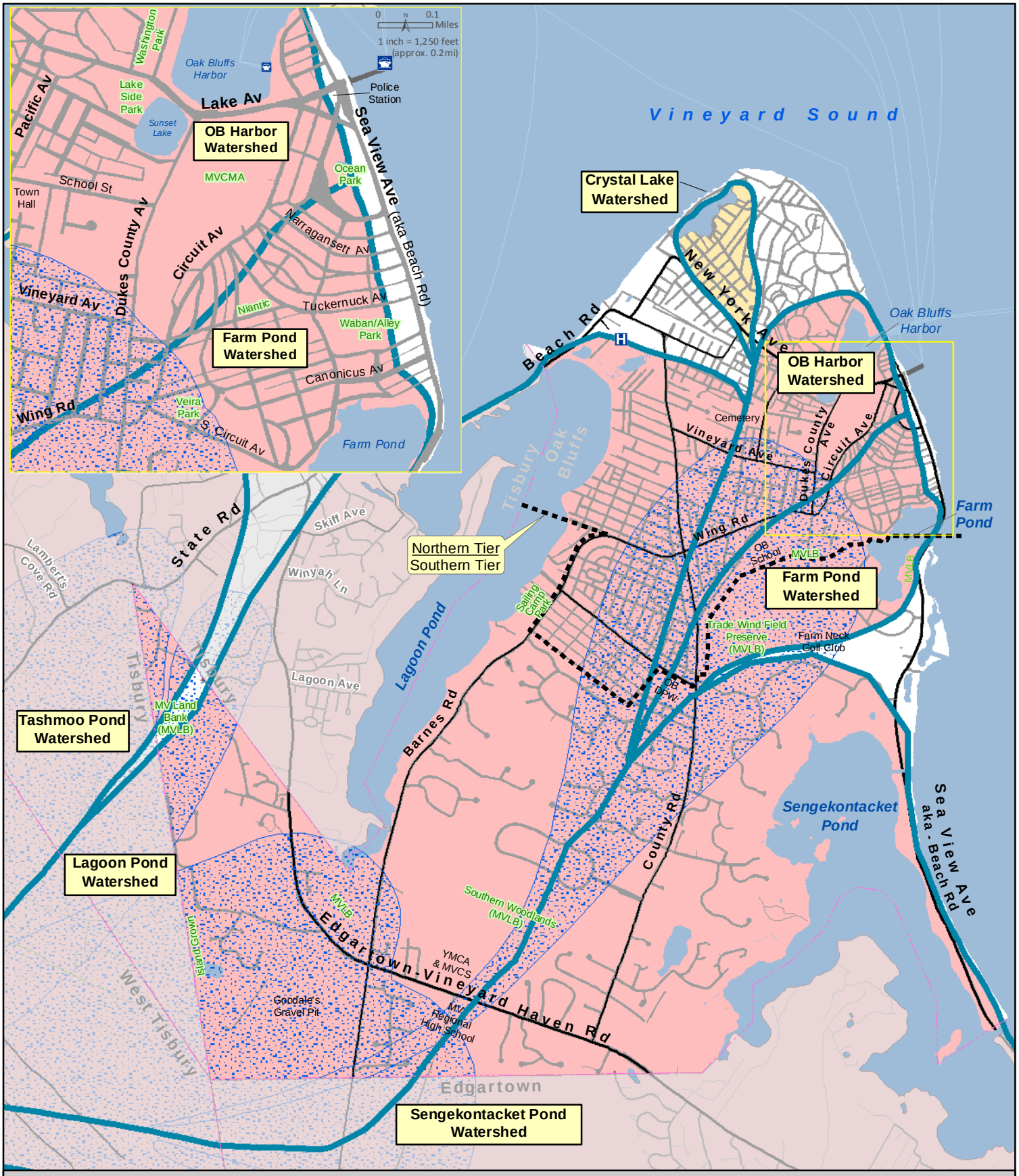
Information is also available on the water resources part of the Martha's Vineyard Commission website.

Water Protection Regulations

Oak Bluffs already has some water protection regulations in the Zoning Bylaw and these regulations should be continued and enhanced, as appropriate. This includes "districts of critical planning concern" as established in Section 9.0 of the Zoning Bylaw.

Water Protection Zones





Water Resources

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

2/8/19

Wellhead Protection Area
- Zone II

Major Watershed Boundary

Pond Water Quality Rating
- Impaired
- Unknown

- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

File:oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_08b_Water.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

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Estuaries Project

In 2001, the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) was created to help determine current nitrogen loads to southeastern Massachusetts estuaries and evaluate reductions that would be necessary to support healthy ecosystems.

This information is used by MassDEP to calculate the maximum amount nitrogen that a waterbody can assimilate and still support a healthy ecosystem (i.e., meet surface water quality standards and support public health).

The MEP also provides technical guidance to support appropriate wastewater, watershed, and embayment management techniques to reduce nitrogen loading. This technical guidance is being used by communities to support the development of Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plans (CWMPs).

In Oak Bluffs, studies have been conducted for:

- Sengekontacket Pond
- Lagoon Pond
- Oak Bluffs Harbor
- Farm Pond

Maintaining And Improving Water Quality		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A.	**Policies**	**Partners**	
1.	Continue efforts to slow or stop degradation of water quality from nitrogen and avoid designation of coastal ponds as "nitrogen impaired."	**CA HD**	**MVC SC**
2.	Continue programs and efforts to improve stormwater quality through the use of "low impact development" (LID) and similar approaches.	**CA**	**PB**
3.	As provided in the adopted Island-wide ban, continue to discourage / prevent use of chemical fertilizer / pesticide.	**CA HD**	**MVC SC**
4.	Maintain the Water Resource Protection Overlay Districts (Section 8.2 of the Zoning Bylaw) to help protect water resources.	**CA HD**	**MVC PB**
5.	Maintain Districts of Critical Planning Concern related to: a. Lagoon Pond b. Sengekontacket Pond c. Duarte Pond	**CA HD**	**MVC PB**
6.	Work with Edgartown and Tisbury to address water quality in Sengekontacket Pond and Lagoon Pond.	**CA HD**	**MVC PB**
B.	**Action Steps**	**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Consider innovative / alternative septic systems in Oak Bluffs for new construction or septic system replacement (standard septic systems remove bacteria but not nitrogen).	**HD**	**PB**
☐ 2.	Implement improvements to the sewer system to treat nitrogenous waste, especially in sensitive watersheds.	**Town**	**WW**
☐ 3.	Improve water flow to Sengekontacket Pond and Farm Pond to promote water turnover in these ponds.	**CA MDOT**	**PW**
☐ 4.	Seek to designate and maintain eelgrass beds and shellfish restoration areas.	**CA**	

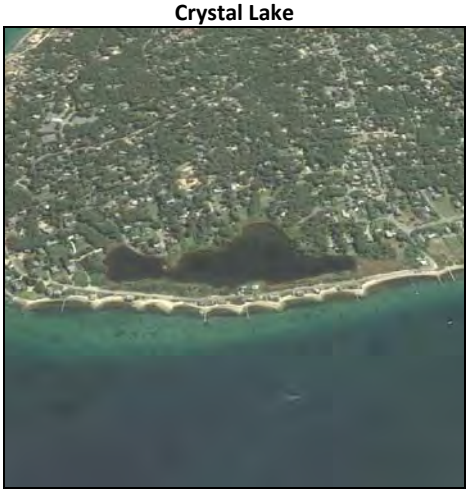
Sengekontacket Pond

Lagoon Pond

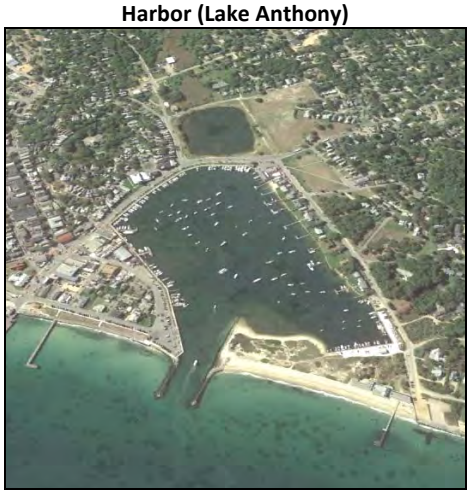
Key Coastal Ponds And Embayments In Oak Bluffs

Lagoon Pond

Crystal Lake



Harbor (Lake Anthony)



Farm Pond

Sengekontacket Pond

Ecosystem Value

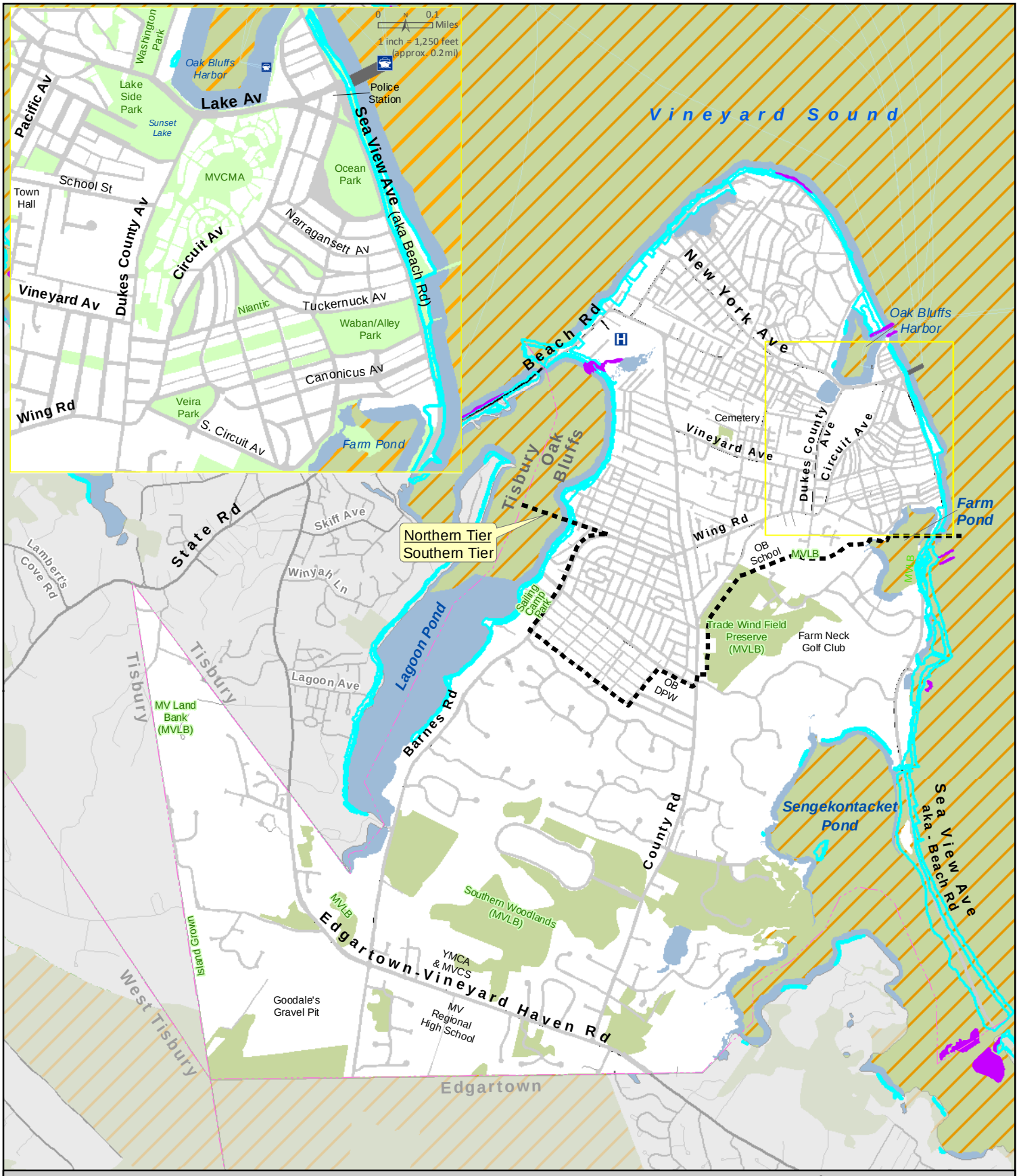
The 2017 report titled "Valuation of Coastal Ecosystem Services" estimated that the coastal ecosystem provides about $150 million annually to Oak Bluffs in terms of environmental and economic benefits.

4.2 Protecting Oak Bluffs' Unique Ecosystem

Protecting natural resource is important since doing so helps promote environmental health, preserve environmental functions, enhance community character, and enhance the overall quality of life. In addition, the 2010 Island Plan prepared by the Martha's Vineyard Commission recognized the importance of the Vineyard's unique character and ecology to the economy.

While Oak Bluffs has good tools and organizations in place to protect natural resources, it intends to remain vigilant about protecting the unique local ecosystem. Enhancement of the community and protection of the ecosystem are ***not*** mutually exclusive.

Protecting Oak Bluffs' Unique Ecosystem		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Continue to protect habitats, especially for rare and endangered species.	**CA**	**Town**
2.	Encourage / require the use of native plant species in Oak Bluffs and discourage / prohibit the use of invasive plant species in Oak Bluffs.	**CA PB**	**Town**
3.	Manage development in flood prone areas in accordance with the Floodplain Overlay District Bylaw and the National Flood Insurance Program.	**CA PB**	**ZBA**
4.	Continue to protect wetland areas (and wetland buffer areas) from development impacts and/or minimize any such impacts.	**CA**	**PB**
5.	Continue efforts to manage coastal resources as they exist today and as they evolve in the future (such as salt marsh advancement) in response to sea level rise and climate change.	**CA**	**Town**
6.	Support changes in the National Flood Insurance Program which will avoid repetitive losses and encourage adaptation to sea level rise.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Investigate requiring that substantial improvements in flood-prone areas be elevated above projected flood levels by at least two feet.	**CA**	**PB**
☐ 2.	Investigate ways to participate in FEMA's Community Rating System program in order to reduce flood insurance premiums for Oak Bluffs property owners..	**CA**	
☐ 3.	Seek grants to relieve flood risks at vulnerable properties.	**CA**	



Natural Resources

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

2/8/19

NHESP Effective August 1, 2017

- NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife
- NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species

Wetlands*

- Tidal Flats
- Beach/Dune
- Open Space/Conservation Land
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

*Marsh & Swamp areas excluded.

File:oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_07_NatRes.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

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Beach Nourishment

The 2013 BOS Strategic Plan identified beach nourishment (and other beach management strategies) as "priority level 2" projects.

Inkwell Beach

It is important to note that Inkwell Beach, as it is known and referred to locally and elsewhere, is a nationally recognized place.

Oak Bluffs has a long history as an African American summer vacation community and Inkwell Beach became the gathering place for African-American residents and visitors.

4.3 Maintaining And Enhancing The Beaches

Oak Bluffs is known for its beaches and having clean and attractive beaches is recognized as a key asset by residents and visitors.

Beaches are subject to lateral transport of sand and the armoring of East Chop and North Bluff has created a situation where the source of natural replenishment of sand has been interrupted. As a result, Pay Beach and Inkwell Beach may get smaller over time if attention isn't paid to this reality.

In the past decade or so, material has been added to the some of these beaches to counteract the natural erosion. Some efforts have been considered more successful than others based on the characteristics of the material added (color, texture, rocks, pebbles, etc.). At the 2016 Town Meeting, residents supported purchase of a "beach rake" to help establish and maintain the quality of beach that people want and expect.

Maintaining And Enhancing The Beaches		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
	1. Seek to maintain the best possible beach experience for residents and visitors.	**PR**	**Town**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐	1. Assign clear responsibility (and funding) to the Parks Department for maintaining and managing the beaches.	**BOS**	
☐	2. Maintain the beach sand at all public beaches (including raking from Memorial Day to Labor Day, if appropriate).	**PR** **PW**	**Town**
☐	3. Replenish the beach sand at all public beaches.	**PR** **PW**	**Town**
☐	4. Renovate the waterfront sidewalks / railings at Pay Beach / Inkwell Beach.	**PR** **PW**	**Town**
☐	5. Investigate opportunities to add amenities at Pay Beach / Inkwell Beach: a. Add a pedestrian plaza at sidewalk level with space underneath the plaza for seasonable and/or removable restrooms and concessions, b. Investigate allowing seasonal amenities (porta-potties, food trucks, etc.) and/or seasonal concessions (beach chairs, umbrellas, cabanas, etc.) which can be removed in the off-season and when storms threaten.	**PR** **PW**	**Town**
☐	6. Consider establishing a policy with regard to organized activities (such as parties, events, etc.) on public beaches.	**PR**	

Oak Bluffs Public Beaches (clockwise)

Sailing Camp Beach (Medeiros Cove)

Lagoon Pond Beach

Eastville Beach

Linda Marinelli Beach (Jetty Beach)

Town Beach (Pay Beach)

Inkwell Beach

Joseph Sylvia State Beach

Old Post Card Of Lover's Rock

Sea View Avenue Plan

A Sea View Revitalization Concept Master Plan was conducted in 2007 (from the Oak Bluffs Harbor to Farm Pond Multi-user Path).

North Bluff improvements from the harbor entrance to Steamship dock (and fishing pier) have been constructed

Public meetings on the concept plan elicited input that residents wanted ***more*** beach amenities.

The section of the beach from Ocean Avenue to Pennacook Avenue (Pay/Town Beach, Inkwell Beach, Lover's Rock) *used to have* significant beach amenities (comfort facilities including changing rooms, restrooms, showers, foot washers, drinking fountain, and a food concession with picnic tables and umbrellas).

MV Land Bank

Preservation of open space on Martha's Vineyard is the mission of the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank (MVLB).

Since being created in 1986, the MVLB has collected a two-percent (2%) commission on the fair market value of property transfers (with some exceptions) and has acquired over 3,100 acres of land on Martha's Vineyard (about five percent of the island's land area). In Oak Bluffs, MVLB has acquired about 453 acres in nine separate holdings.

Chapter 61 Lands

Chapter 61 of the Massachusetts General Laws allows a community to assess land by its use value rather than its market value. The use assessment reduces the property taxes and makes it easier for owners to retain undeveloped land longer.

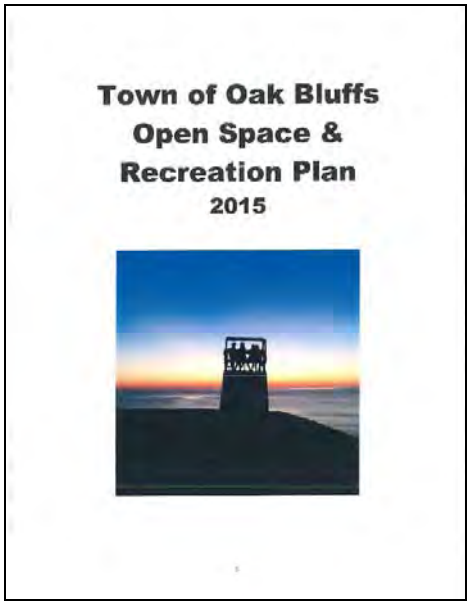
Property owners elect to participate in the program. In exchange for the lower taxes, the property owner gives the municipality the opportunity to purchase land enrolled in the program if it is to be sold.

In the future, Oak Bluffs may choose to act on Chapter 61 opportunities that may arise (including possible collaboration with the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank or others).

4.4 Maintaining And Improving Open Space Areas

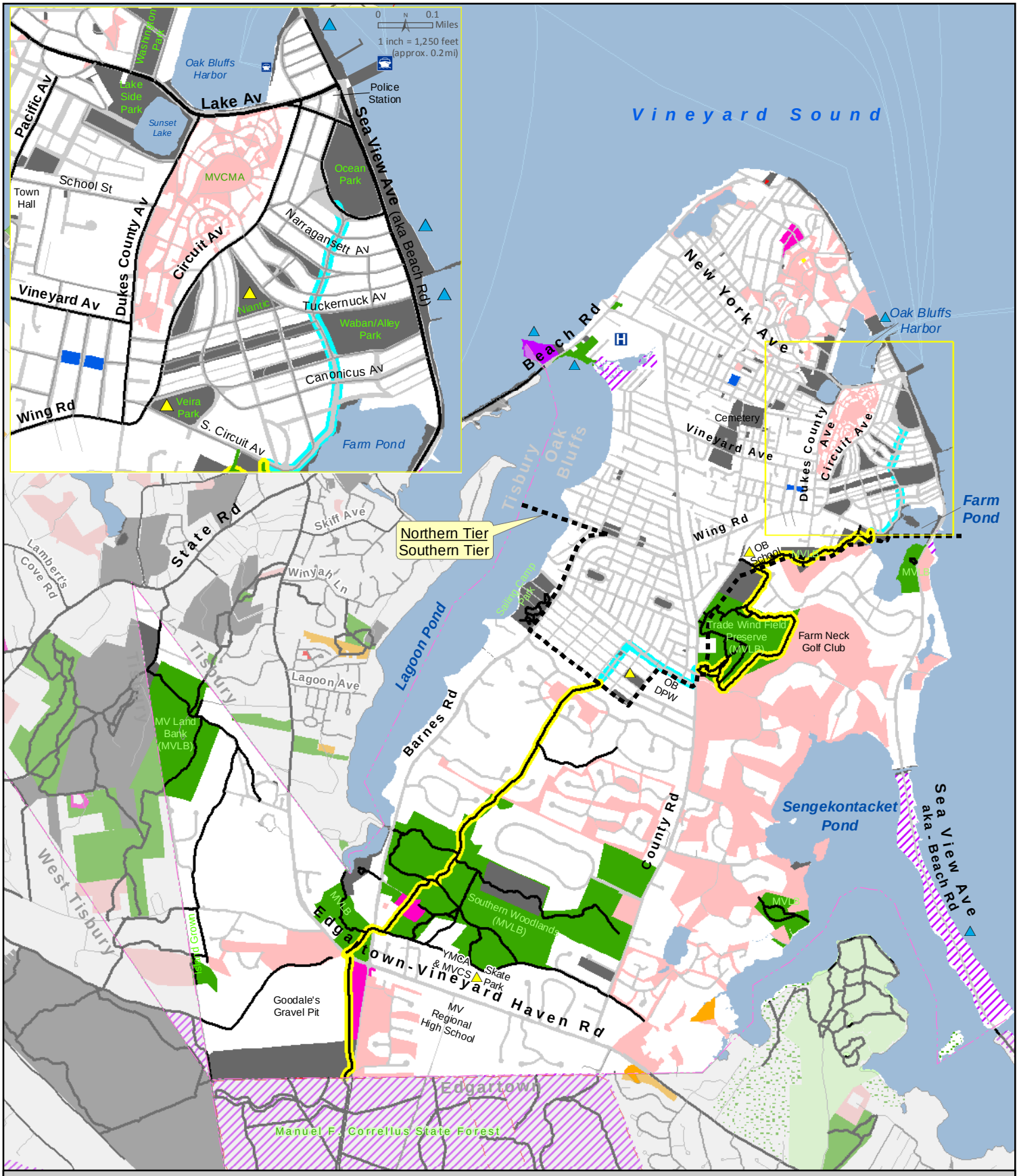
When Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company planned their development in the 1860s, a number of areas were identified as parks and open space. These areas have significantly enhanced the overall character and ambience of Oak Bluffs.

Nevertheless, as recommended in the 1998 Master Plan and the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the main open space strategy will be to focus first on the upkeep of existing parks. New open space areas can be added in the future as opportunities arise (including partnerships with the MVLB or a "right of first refusal" associated with any Chapter 61 lands).



The recommendations from the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Plan are hereby included by reference for consideration as part of the Oak Bluffs Master Plan.

Maintaining And Improving Open Space Areas		Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Continue to prioritize upkeep of existing parks over expansion of parks or addition of new open space areas.	**PR**	**Town**
2.	Dedicate adequate resources (people and funding) to maintain existing parks.	**BOS FC**	**PR**
3.	Strive to improve recreation facilities and parkland as identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan.	**PR**	**Town**
4.	Encourage the use of flexible development in the "southern tier" (as provided in Section 7.3 of the Zoning Bylaw) as a way to preserve open space as part of new development.	**CA PB**	**PR**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Explore the possibility of acquiring Chapter 61 lands, should they become available, including partnering with the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank and/or others.	**BOS CA**	**MVLB**
☐ 2.	Continue to seek opportunities to preserve open space in Oak Bluffs, including private philanthropy, working with other organizations, etc.	**CA PR**	**Town**



Conservation Land - by Owner

Conservation Groups
- Felix Neck Wildlife Trust
- MA Audubon Society
- MV Land Bank
- Sheriff's Meadow Foundation
- Vineyard Open Land Foundation

Government
- Town
- County
- Commonwealth
- Federal
- Trail
- Fire Trail
- Ferry Service

Miscellaneous
- Miscellaneous Non-Profits
- Private Owner or Home Owners Assoc.
- Unknown

Parcel Data
- Right of Way
- Water
- Public Swimming

Cross-town Trail/Route
- Wooded Trail
- On Road Route
- Playground &/or Sports Field

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_09_OS_v2.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source info.

Open Space
Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

4/2/19

Compiled By: MVC, CL Seidel
For planning purposes only.

THEN & NOW

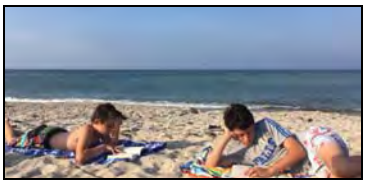
In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies with regard to community character included:

- Preserve Victorian architecture
- Encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings.
- Keep the small-town lifestyle.
- Work to preserve existing cultural and historic resources.
- Make Oak Bluffs a family-oriented resort community.
- More water-related family activities.

4.5 Maintaining / Enhancing Community Character

Since humans tend to be "visual" in their assessment of places, community character is important because it enhances feelings about the community, creates higher visitation / desirability, enhances the overall quality of life, and results in higher property values.

The following pictures, which were submitted as part of a photo contest conducted at the same time as the Master Plan update, help illustrate "community character" in Oak Bluffs and what it means to residents.



Other Notable Sites

Other notable sites in Oak Bluffs include:

- Baptist Temple Park (site of the former Baptist Tabernacle)
- Information booth at "Farland Park" at the junction of Circuit Avenue, Lake Avenue, and Oak Bluffs Avenue

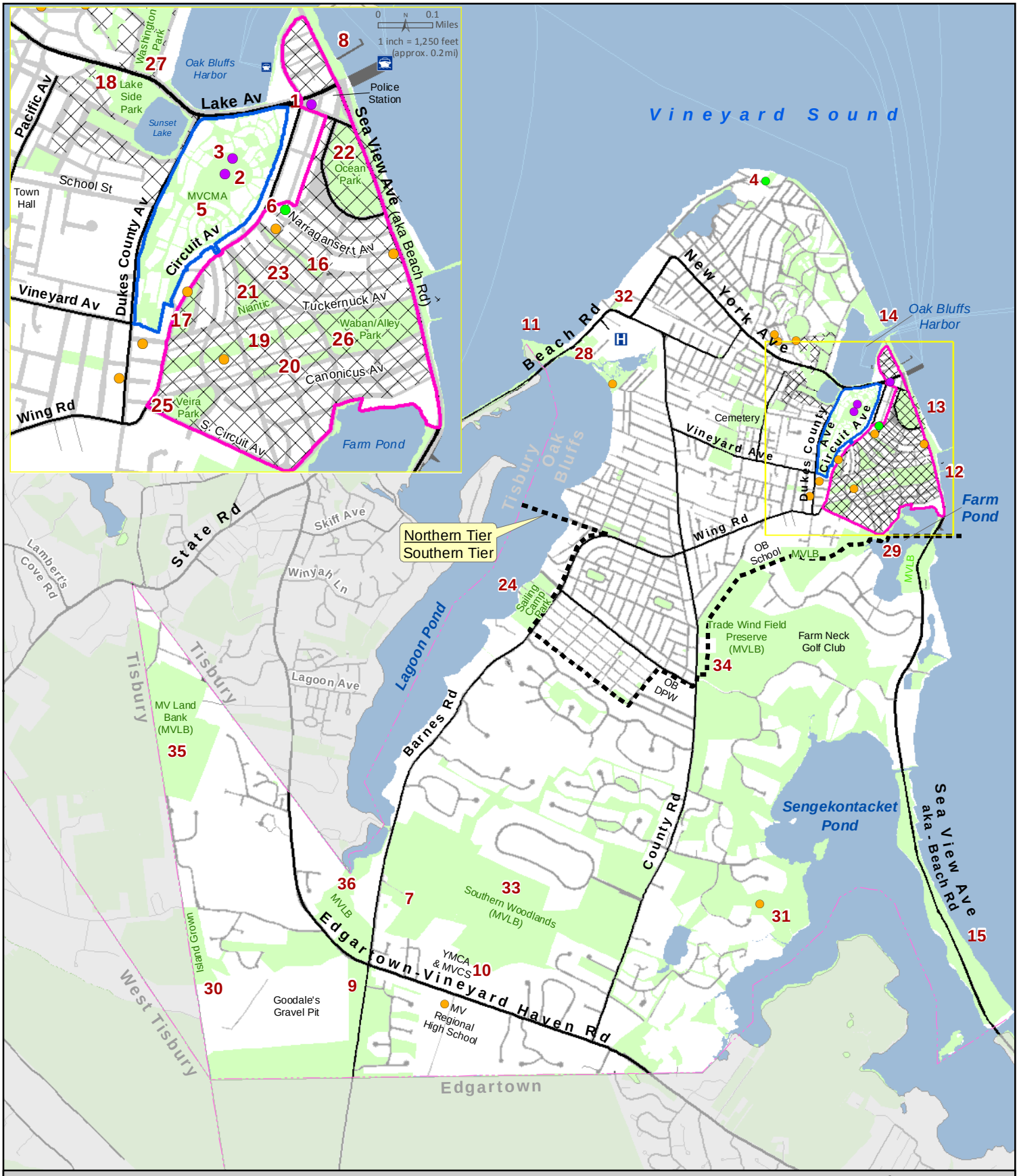
Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association

Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association

Some of Oak Bluffs' most notable character sites are listed below and keyed to the map on the facing page:

#	Oak Bluffs Notable Sites	Distinction
1	Flying Horses	National Historic Landmark
2	The Tabernacle	National Historic Landmark
3	Trinity Methodist Church	National Historic Landmark
4	East Chop Lighthouse	National Register of Historic Places
5	MV Camp Meeting Association	National Register of Historic Places
6	Union Chapel	National Register of Historic Places
7	Featherstone Center for the Arts	Community Arts Center
8	Fishing Pier and Boardwalk	Public Recreation
9	MV Youth Tennis	Public Recreation
10	YMCA/MV Ice Arena/Skate Park	Public Recreation
11	Eastville Beach	Public Beach
12	Inkwell Beach	Public Beach
13	Pay/Town Beach	Public Beach
14	Jetty Beach	Public Beach
15	Joseph Sylvia State Beach	Public Beach
16	Hartford Park	Town Park
17	Hiawatha Park	Town Park
18	Lakeside Park (Sunset Park)	Town Park
19	Nashawena Park	Town Park
20	Naushon Park	Town Park
21	Niantic Park	Town Park
22	Ocean Park	Town Park
23	Penacook Park	Town Park
24	Sailing Camp Park	Town Park
25	Veira Park	Town Park
26	Waban/Alley Park	Town Park
27	Washington Park	Town Park
28	Doug's Cove Preserve	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
29	Farm Pond Preserve	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
30	Little Duarte's Pond Preserve	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
31	Pecoy Point Preserve	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
32	Quays Corner	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
33	Southern Woodlands	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
34	Trade Winds Field Preserve	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
35	Wapatequa Woods Reservation	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible
36	Weahtaqua Springs Preserve	Conservation Land - Publicly Accessible

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified better enforcement of existing Town bylaws as a high priority project.



Recognized Historic Buildings

- National Historic Landmark
- National Register

Architectural Protection Districts

- Wesleyan Grove - MV Camp Meeting
- Cottage City Historic District
- Copeland Plan DCPC*

African American Heritage Trail

- Site of Interest
- Open Space/Conservation Land
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

*District of Critical Planning Concern

Community Character

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

2/8/19

File:oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_12_ComCharac.mxd

See Master Plan report for data source information.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

Compiled By: MVC, CL Seidel

For planning purposes only.

Maintaining And Enhancing Community Character	Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Continue to seek and implement ways to maintain and enhance overall community character.	**Town**	
2. Continue to support / encourage unique places (Camp Meeting Association, Flying Horses, etc.).	**Town**	
3. Seek to preserve existing buildings / places that create a "sense of place" (including historic buildings / areas).	**Town**	
4. Continue to identify items of historic and cultural significance and encourage efforts to preserve them.	**HC**	
5. Promote protection of the character of the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association area.	**MVCMA**	**Town**
6. Continue to encourage or require Victorian architecture for residential properties in the Copeland Plan District.	**CCHD**	**CPR**
7. Promote improvement of properties showing evidence of deferred maintenance.	**HD**	**Town**
8. Continue efforts to preserve and enhance scenic resources: a. Scenic views (especially visual access to the water), and b. Scenic areas (such as the Camp Meeting Association and neighborhoods of Victorian-style homes).	**Town**	
9. Maintain the Island Roads overlay district regulations (contained in Section 9.0 of the Zoning Bylaw) intended to protect the scenic character of Barnes Road, Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road, and Beach Road (east side) from around Farm Pond south.	**MVC**	**PB**
10. Maintain harbor area design guidelines (Section 9.0 of the Zoning Bylaw) intended to maximize views to the harbor.	**PB**	

Featherstone Center For The Arts

Flying Horses Carousel

Maintaining And Enhancing Community Character (continued)	Legend on inside back cover	
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. With regard to the Copeland Plan District (Section 9.0 of the Zoning Bylaw): a. Revisit the "as of right" height allowance of 50 feet, b. Revisit District boundaries to ensure they are appropriate, and c. Seek to allow use of maintenance-free products (such as composite siding) when it will maintain desired character.	**CPR**	**PB**
☐ 2. Revisit historic district standards to: a. Focus on "character" rather than strict "authenticity", b. Avoid becoming too rigid or formulaic , c. Simplify the approval process, and d. Promote consistency in outcomes.	**CCHD** **CPR**	**HC** **PB**
☐ 3. To promote appropriate design for redevelopment projects, consider utilizing the Copeland Plan District design guidelines for business redevelopment in the Downtown area.	**CPR**	**PB**
☐ 4. Consider designating lighting "zones" and specifying fixtures for each district which will be "dark sky compliant" and enhance character.	**PB**	
☐ 5. Consider adoption of a town-wide blight ordinance to help address some of the most visible and/or unsafe property maintenance issues while balancing individual property rights with neighborhood impacts.	**BOS** **HD**	**TM**
☐ 6. Consider ways to enhance any blight enforcement program with a loan / grant / assistance program to help as appropriate.	**BOS**	**HD**

Restored Victorian

Stately Victorian

East Chop Bluff

Oak Bluffs is seeking to stabilize about 2,400 feet of the eroding East Chop Bluff. Funding for the $17 to $20 million project is being pursued.

The 2019 BOS Strategic Plan identified repairing and reopening East Chop Bluff as a project on their strategic planning priority list..

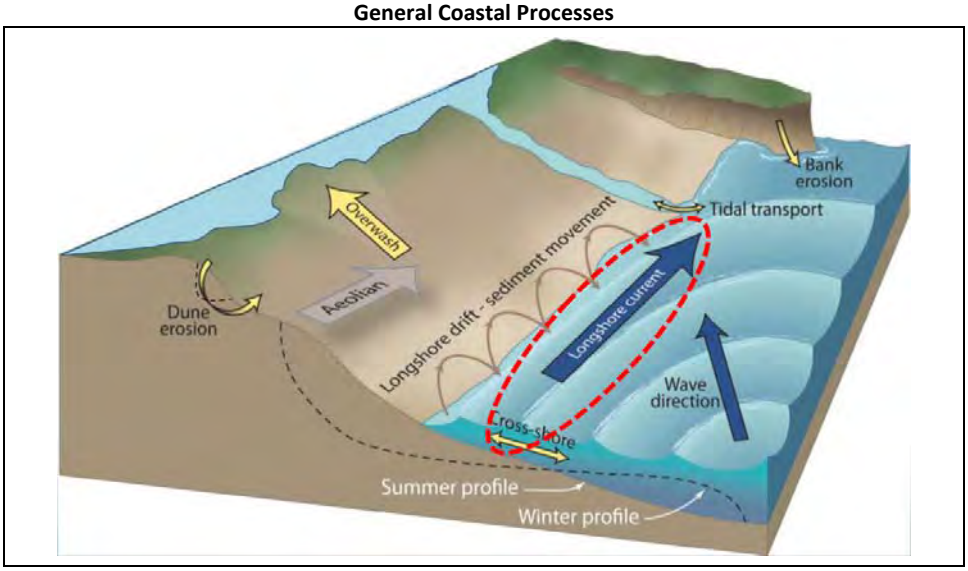
4.6 Managing Coastal Resources

Oak Bluffs has an extensive shoreline area and a variety of coastal resources which it intends to continue to manage carefully including:

- Nearshore / offshore coastal waters,
- Shoreline water features including estuarine embayments, coastal ponds, tidal wetlands, intertidal flats,
- Shoreline land features including bluffs / escarpments, beaches and dunes, and developed shorefront (and coastal hazard areas), and
- Shoreline habitats such as shellfish concentrations and nesting areas.

The following graphic illustrates some of the natural processes that occur in coastal areas. The processes which are particularly relevant to Oak Bluffs include bank erosion (particularly at East Chop Bluff) and longshore drift which pushes sand south towards Edgartown and Vineyard Haven). Interruption of the bank erosion process can "starve" the beaches unless the beach sand is replenished in other ways.

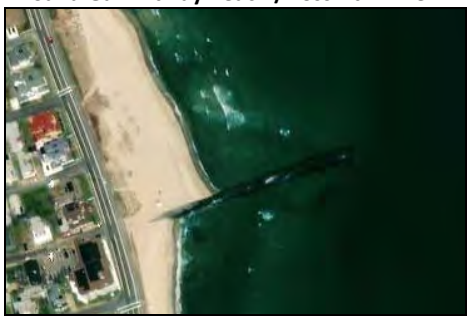
General Coastal Processes



Greg Berman, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute

Siltation At Farm Pond Culvert

Sand Gain At Pay Beach / Loss At inkwell



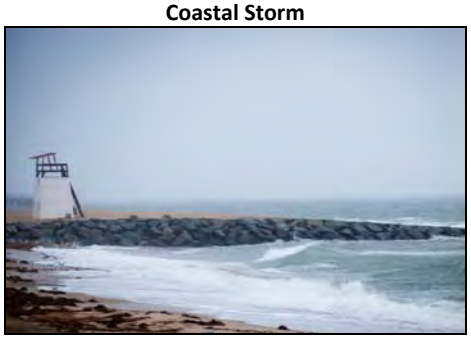
Managing Coastal Resources		Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
	1. Continue to carefully manage coastal resources.	**CA**	**Town**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐	1. Continue to seek ways to address erosion of coastal bluffs, escarpments, and beaches / dunes.	**CA**	**PW Town**
☐	2. Consider permitting aquaculture / shellfish farms in portions of coastal ponds.	**SC**	**Town**

East Chop Lighthouse

Eroding East Chop Bluff

Closed East Chop Drive

Coastal Storm



Extreme Waves In The Harbor

5 MANAGING GROWTH AND CHANGE

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

Barack Obama
American President

Strategies related to managing growth and change were also rated highly by Oak Bluffs residents as part of the planning process.

Housing

Downtown

Resource Materials (partial list)

1. Oak Bluffs Master Plan (1998)
2. Martha's Vineyard Island Plan (MVC, 2010)
3. Affordable and Community Housing Zoning Analysis (MVC, 2014)
4. Housing Needs Assessment (MVC, 2013)
5. Oak Bluffs Housing Production Plan (2017 Draft)
6. Streetscape Master Plan (2015)
7. Consult-Econ Report for Downtown Streetscape Study (2015)
8. Survey of Martha's Vineyard Residents and Visitors (MVC, 2006)
9. Circuit Avenue Business District Peer Review (2013)
10. Cost of Living Study (MVC, 2006)
11. Leakage Analysis of the Martha's Vineyard Economy (Shuman and Hoffer, 2007)
12. Martha's Vineyard Economic Profile (Ryan, 2008)
13. Economic Profile of Martha's Vineyard (MVC, 2006)
14. Agricultural Self-Sufficiency (MVC, 2010)
15. Arts Martha's Vineyard: Planning Report (MVC, 2012)
16. High School Corridor Land Use and Regulations Report (MVC, 2017)
17. Zoning Bylaw / Subdivision Bylaw

5.1 Addressing Housing Needs

Oak Bluffs has over 4,000 housing units and more than half of these units are kept for seasonal use due to the high desirability of Oak Bluffs and Martha's Vineyard. The Island is commonly recognized as one of the top vacation / retirement destinations in the country and this is reflected in the housing market (both in terms of sale prices, rental rates, and seasonal rentals).

Oak Bluffs residents recognize that housing costs are an issue on the Island and they identified addressing housing needs as high priority for the Master Plan.

While market rate housing appears to be taking care of itself, there are a number of housing needs which have been widely recognized for some time:

- **Low/Moderate Income Housing**– housing units for people of low or moderate incomes (less than 80 percent of area median income).
- **Workforce Housing** – year-round housing options for people earning 80 percent to 140 percent of the area median income including:
  - Public safety personnel (fire, police, emergency medical),
  - Health personnel (nurses, home health aides),
  - Retail/service workers, and
  - Tradespeople (plumbers, electricians, HVAC technicians, etc.)
- **Senior Housing**– housing appropriate for an older population (especially since this population is growing quickly) including:
  - Universal design providing accessibility for everyone,
  - In home services for people who choose to age in place,
  - Age-appropriate market rate housing (including assisted living and/or other services), and
  - Income-limited elderly housing (subsidized).
- **Seasonal Employee Housing –** housing for the unique needs of the 5,000 or so seasonal workers that come to the Vineyard to support the busy summer tourist season.
- **Other Housing Needs** –year-round housing options to support the needs of people with disabilities, and individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Organizations working on housing issues in Oak Bluffs and long range solution to this critical problem include:

- The Oak Bluffs Affordable Housing Committee,
- Oak Bluffs Affordable Housing Trust,
- The Island Housing Trust,
- The Dukes County Regional Housing Authority,
- The Martha's Vineyard Commission, and
- Other Island affordable housing groups.

Housing Issues In A Nutshell

The need for additional housing options on Martha's Vineyard has been noted in planning documents for many years.

The 2013 Housing Needs Assessment summarized the Vineyard's affordable housing problem simply:

- The Island's average weekly wage was 71% of the state average,
- The median home price was 154% of the state average, and
- The median rent was 117% of the state average.

Area Median Income?

Each year, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development determines "area median income" to relate affordable housing programs to their regions.

For 2018, the median family income for Dukes County 2018 was $92,700 (generally for a family of 4 persons).

From this, the other income thresholds for affordable housing (generally 80% AMI and below) can be estimated:

Percent	Income
125%	$115,875
100%	$92,700
80%	$74,160
60%	$55,620
50%	$46,350
30%	$28,810

THEN & NOW

In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies with regard to residential growth were:

- Manage growth in Residential Districts in order to stabilize spending for services and maintain the rural character of the neighborhoods in those districts.
- 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.
- Encourage a variety of recreational uses in the R-3 District, including active recreational uses.
- Encourage rehabilitation of aging dwellings as an alternative to new construction, particularly for affordable housing.

Prior to undertaking the Master Plan update process, the Town contracted with JM Goldson Community Preservation / Planning to evaluate local housing conditions and prepare a housing production plan to identify ways to meet identified housing needs.

The recommendations from the 2017 Housing Production Plan are hereby included by reference for consideration as part of the Oak Bluffs Master Plan.

Oak Bluffs Housing Production Plan
FY2018-2022
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Prepared by
JM Goldson community preservation + planning
with RKG Associates, Inc

The Housing Production Plan identified the following possible strategies for addressing local housing needs:

	Repurposing Existing Buildings	New Buildings On Undeveloped Land
• Converting larger single-family houses or other buildings to multi-family / affordable housing	☑	
• Accessory apartments for year-round residents or seasonal employees	☑	
• Home sharing (people sharing a home in accordance with the zoning bylaws).	☑	
• Mixed-use "top-of-the-shop" buildings in commercial areas (adopted by Town Meeting in 2018).	☑	
• Allowing affordable housing on substandard lots.		☑
• Construction of townhouses / condominiums / apartments.		☑
• Co-housing (private homes clustered around shared common space) like MVCMA.		☑

Since most of the "northern tier" of Oak Bluffs was subdivided many years ago, this area of Oak Bluffs might best accommodate housing within existing / expanded buildings or on existing parcels which predated the zoning bylaw.

On the other hand, there are some parcels in the "southern tier" that are large enough to accommodate housing development types that will likely rely on new construction.

Addressing Housing Needs	Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Seek ways to address identified housing needs in Oak Bluffs.	**AHC PB**	**Town**
2. Seek ways to implement the 2017 Housing Production Plan.	**AHC PB**	**Town**
3. Reserve some sewage treatment capacity for meeting local housing needs.	**AHC**	**WW**
4. Support expansion of local/regional affordable housing strategies (resources and funding) identified in the 2017 Housing Production Plan.	**AHC**	**Town**
5. Support establishment of a short term rental fee ordinance to provide funds to address housing affordability.	**AHC**	**Town**
6. Collaborate with other Island communities to address housing needs including seasonal employee housing, emergency shelters, housing for the homeless, and individuals with disabilities.	**AHC**	**Town**
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. Maintain and improve the Zoning Bylaw for ways to create and support housing to address local needs: a. converting existing buildings to affordable housing, b. easing the restrictions on accessory apartments (Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw), c. home sharing / communal housing, d. allowing housing on under-sized lots if deed-restricted as affordable, e. new construction of multi-family townhouses / condominiums / apartments (especially for an aging population), and/or f. co-housing (private homes clustered around shared common space) similar to Camp Meeting houses.	**AHC PB**	**Town**

Woodside Village

Family Accepting Affordable Housing

Housing Production Plan

The 2017 Housing Production Plan recommended that Oak Bluffs support creation of:

- Sixty-eight or more low/moderate income units over five years,
- Ten or more ownership units over five years.

Island Funding Strategies

The 2017 Housing Production Plan recommended the following Island-wide strategies:

1. Advocate for special legislation to increase the existing ***real estate transfer fee*** by 0.5 percent to create affordable housing.

2. Adoption of special legislation to create a ***seasonal rentals excise*** (adopted in 2018).

3. Adoption of ***property tax incentives*** to encourage affordable year-round rental of units to households with up to 80 percent AMI.

Most of the Island-wide strategies would require special legislation, which will require a great deal of local political support to promote state adoption.

5.2 Enhancing The Downtown And Streetscape

Primary Visitor Area

Downtown is the main activity center and focal point in Oak Bluffs for both residents and visitors.

While residents are very familiar with "downtown", visitors (especially first time visitors) have to orient themselves to the community when they arrive. The map in the sidebar shows the likely extent of the "primary visitor area" in Oak Bluffs. While some visitors may take buses or ride services (Vineyard Transit, taxi, shuttle, Uber, etc.) to other parts of Martha's Vineyard, people who visit here would generally assess this area in forming their overall impression of Oak Bluffs.

That is why Downtown improvements are so important to the overall character, ambience, and economy of Oak Bluffs.

Impressions of community character are enhanced when there is a symbiotic relationship and reasonable consistency in terms of appearance, function, etc. between:

- ***The "public realm"*** - includes public streets, sidewalks, and other areas which are open to the public (such as the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association), and
- ***The "private realm"*** – which encompasses other areas (generally privately-owned properties).

Improvements within the public realm generally occur through public funding including municipal budget (capital or operating) or grants. Improvements within the "private realm" are typically undertaken by property owners (and funded / financed by them) when it is:

- legally permissible (such as zoning bylaw or other limitations),
- physically possible (such as soil capability or utility capacity),
- appropriately supported (such as market need), and
- financially beneficial.

THEN & NOW

In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies related to downtown included:

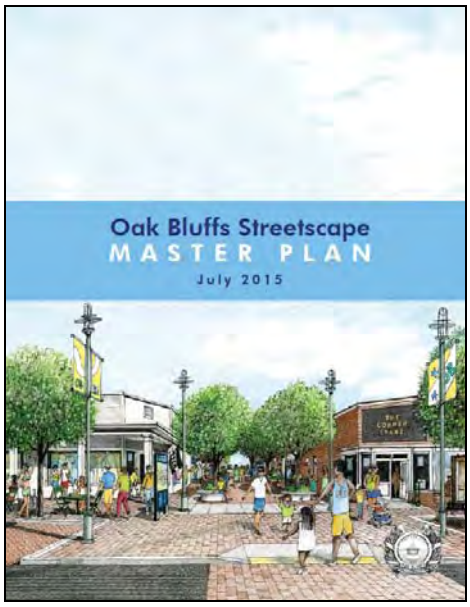
- Upgrade "honky-tonk" image downtown.
- Keep traditional downtown services in place.
- Reduce congestion in town / manage downtown crowds better.
- Manage downtown trash better.
- Supply appropriate lighting, particularly at alleyways.
- Upgrade police presence to control crowds better.
- Review licensing practices.

Tivoli Day

Traffic and Circulation

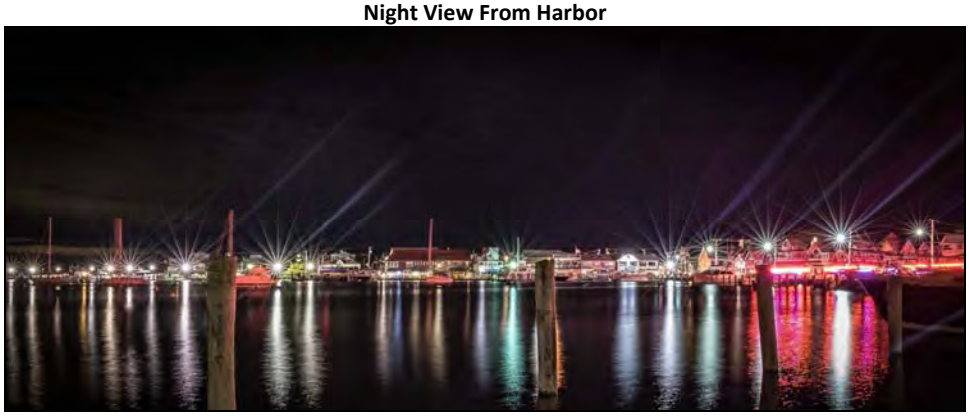
Prior to undertaking the Master Plan update process, the Town contracted with a team led by Horsley Witten Group to establish a framework to guide the planning, development, and design of Oak Bluffs in ways that would be consistent with the existing character of the area and enhance the overall community.

The recommendations from the [2015 Oak Bluffs Streetscape Master Plan] are hereby included by reference for consideration as part of the Master Plan.



The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified sidewalk replacement on Circuit Avenue as a high priority project.

Night View From Harbor



Event At The Tabernacle

Ways To Address Parking

There is limited parking on Circuit Avenue and nearby streets and finding any parking becomes a challenge during the summer season.

Many people would be willing to park and walk to Circuit Avenue if they knew where to park.

The Streetscape Master Plan discussed some ways to improve parking in and near the downtown area and more can and should be done.

Oak Bluffs could explore creating a park and walk system where people park outside of downtown and walk in. This might include diagonal parking on:

- Tuckernuck Avenue
- Naumkeag Avenue,
- Nantucket Avenue,
- Wayland Avenue (off East Chop Drive),
- north side of Viera Park.

Installation of "Park and Walk" signs would help people find parking.

The idea of putting a blue "postal box" (for out-going mail) in a place where people could drive up and not have to park in downtown in the summer months could also help address the parking crunch.

Accessibility

When streetscape improvements are undertaken in the Downtown area, there may be an opportunity to improve accessibility to building entrances at the same time.

The 2015 Streetscape Plan suggested that such an approach could create an expanded area without curbs or steps and improve overall accessibility for everyone.

Experimentation

Downtown has evolved over the years in response to the needs of the times. It is sometimes surprising to realize that Circuit Avenue was laid out and developed decades before the automobile was invented.

Oak Bluffs can and should experiment with different approaches so that Downtown might continue to evolve:

- Experiment with closing Circuit Avenue to cars on certain days in the summertime after the Post Office closes (5:00 PM weekdays, noon on Saturdays, and all day Sunday) so that restaurants could offer outdoor dining, street artists could perform, and people would not to have to dodge cars as they head for ice cream, after dinner or to the arcade.

- Test parallel parking in the shoulder seasons to gauge the impact in the summer seasons.

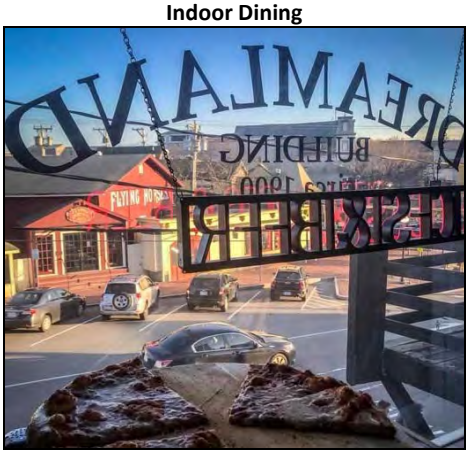
Historic Postcard Image

Historic Postcard Image

Outdoor Dining On Tivoli Day

Tivoli Day

Indoor Dining



Harbor Festival

Enhancing The Downtown And Streetscape	Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Continue to ensure a clean, safe, and well-maintained Downtown area.	**PD** **PW**	**Town**
2. Continue to seek ways to upgrade and enhance the Downtown area.	**PW**	**Town**
3. Reserve some sewage treatment capacity for strengthening of the Downtown area.	**WW**	**Town**
4. Continue to implement the 2016 Streetscape Plan for Oak Bluffs.	**PW**	**Town**
5. Continue to seek grants and funding for Streetscape recommendations: a. Strengthening linkages / connections. b. Enhancing the North Bluff area. c. Improving the Circuit/Kennebec pedestrian experience. d. Improving the ferry arrival welcome experience. e. Installing consistent streetscape materials. f. Investigating "Green Street" principles. g. Incorporating universal design.	**PW**	**Town**
6. Seek ways to reinvigorate the Island Theater.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. Experiment on Circuit Avenue with: a. Closing the street to vehicles in the evening in the summer months (after the post office closes), b. Configuring the parking differently in different seasons, on different days of the week, and/or different hours of the day. c. Changing the angle of the parking spaces (including using parallel spaces). d. Widening the sidewalks to favor the pedestrian experience over vehicular circulation.	**PD** **PW**	**Town**
☐ 2. Seek an increase in the embarkation fee collected from the Steamship Authority to help fund downtown improvements.	**BOS**	**SSA**
☐ 3. Investigate ways to implement a "park and walk" system (including signage) during the summer months.	**BOS**	

The maps on the following pages are "conceptual plans" from the 2015 Streetscape Master Plan.

Improvement Districts

Chapter 40.O of the Massachusetts General Laws allows for the organization of a "business improvement district" (BID) based on a petition from affected property owners.

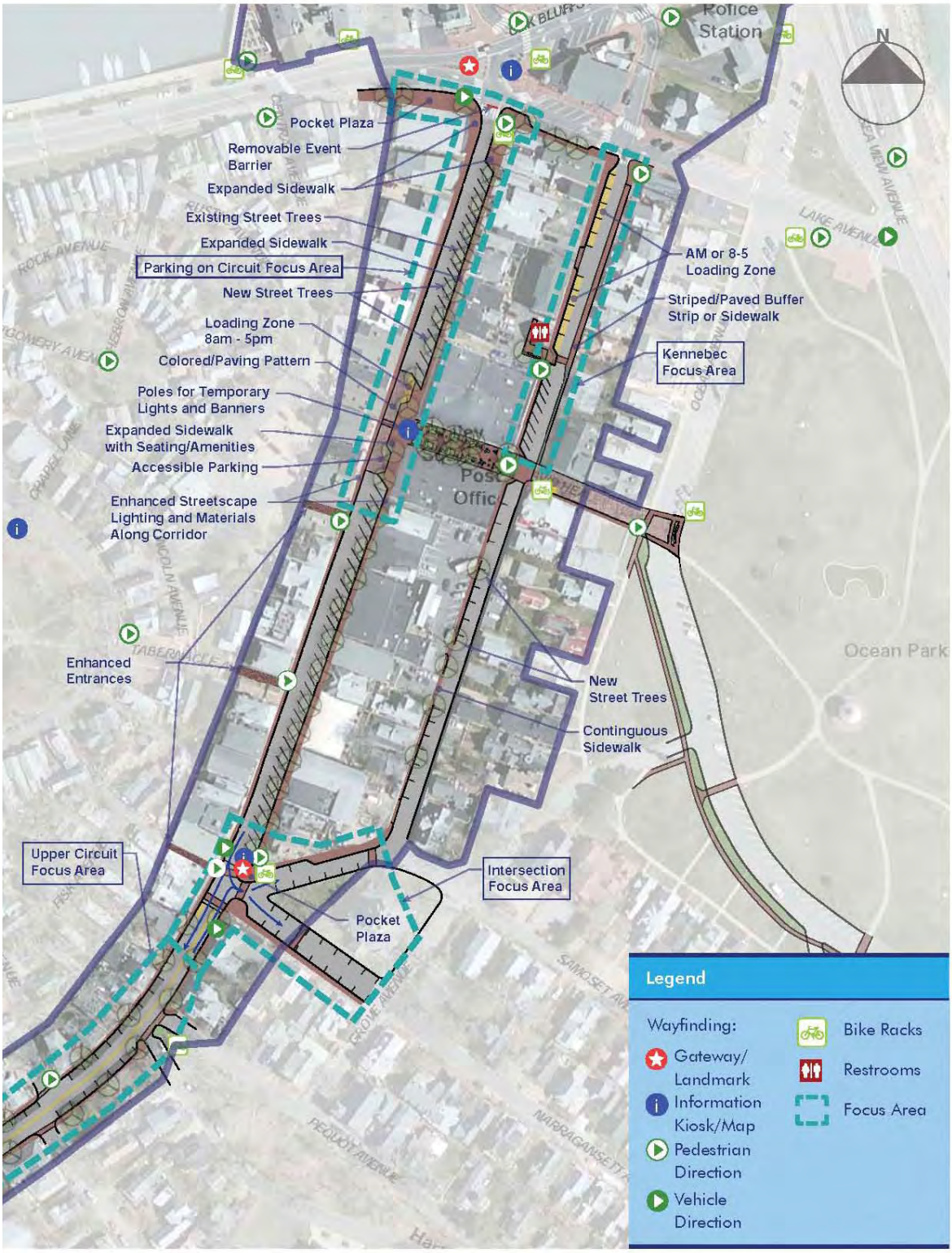
Communities which have formed BIDs have used them for:

- Supplemental services (such as sidewalk cleaning, flower planting, etc.),
- Supplemental programs (such as common marketing, special events, etc.),
- Revitalization (facade improvements, streetscape improvements, etc.), and
- Other common services or programs.

Connections *Proposed Concept Overview* 3.1

North Bluff *Proposed Concept* 3.2

Circuit/Kennebec *Proposed Concept: Circuit & Kennebec* 3.3



SSA Welcome *Proposed Concept* 3.4

Wayfinding would be added in strategic locations around the intersection and at the front of the SSA pavillion and entrance to the ferry. A gateway/ landmark element and information kiosk positioned in a new pocket plaza adjacent to the police station draws pedestrians coming off the ferry who see it from across the street. Benches, shade and some landscaping in the plaza makes it a comfortable place to stop and figure out directions and become oriented. The element is visible along Sea View as well as Oak Bluffs Ave.

Legend

Wayfinding:
- Gateway/ Landmark
- Information Kiosk/Map
- Pedestrian Direction
- Vehicle Direction
- Bike Racks
- Restrooms

THEN & NOW

The survey conducted as part of the 1998 Oak Bluffs Master Plan also indicated an overall desire for stabilization of business growth rather than expansion.

Cost Of Living

Diversifying the economy on Martha's Vineyard is a challenge since an economy needs workers and workers need housing and goods/services.

Since the cost of living on Martha's Vineyard was estimated in 2006 to be about 57 percent more expensive than the national average (and about 12 percent more expensive at that time than the cost of living in Boston).

Promoting Festivals / Events

Local festivals and events are key contributors to the overall attractiveness and ambience of Oak Bluffs. Some of the festivals and events, which are recognized as a key asset by residents and visitors, include:

- Harbor Fest
- Portuguese Feast
- Annual Fireworks
- Concerts in Ocean Park
- Illumination Night
- Tivoli Day
- Kite Festival
- Memorial Day Race
- Columbus Day Race
- Halloween In OB
- Tree Lighting Ceremony
- And many more

5.3 Balancing The Economy With Quality Of Life

In terms of the local economy, Oak Bluffs would like to:

- diversify the local economy,
- increase tourism activity levels in shoulder seasons and off-seasons, and
- balance business activity in the summer with overall quality of life.

Economic Diversification

The Oak Bluffs economy is heavily reliant on summer and tourist-related activities. While diversifying the local economy may be a challenge (see "cost of living" sidebar), doing this would help support year-round employment and a stronger local economic base. The 2010 Island Plan prepared by the Martha's Vineyard Commission also recommends transitioning to a stronger, more diverse, and more balanced year-round economy.

Since more people are working out of their houses, continuing to allow appropriate home-based businesses could help support the overall economy.

Extending The Summer Season

Local festivals and events are key contributors to the overall attractiveness and ambience of Oak Bluffs. These festivals and events, which are also recognized as a key asset by residents and visitors include:

- Harbor Feast
- Portuguese Fest
- Annual Fireworks
- Concerts in Ocean Park
- Illumination Night
- Tivoli Day
- Kite Festival
- The Best Fest
- Lady Fest
- Cottagers House Tour
- Sunday Farmers Market
- And many more.

Over the last 20 years or so, Oak Bluffs has cultivated a reputation as a family-oriented vacation community. With this reputation, Oak Bluffs would like to extend some of the summer season activity into other months of the year.

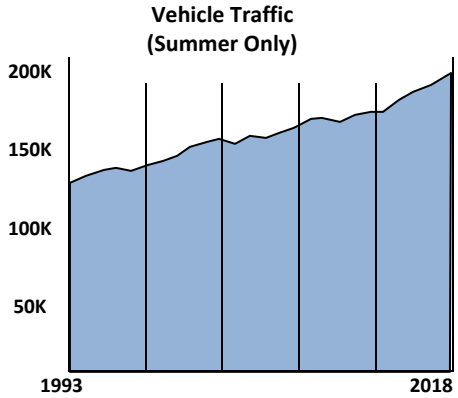
Oak Bluffs has hospitality (food and accommodations) and retail activities which could support extending the season and this would help support the local economy. To do this, Oak Bluffs could try to find ways to:

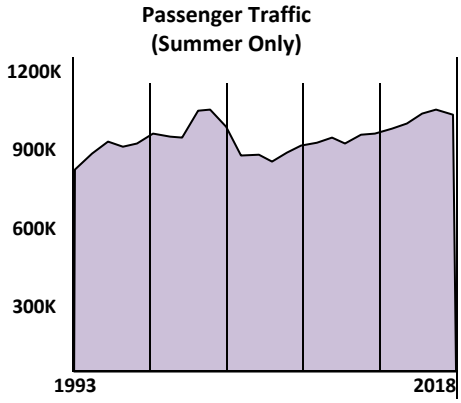
- inform people that Oak Bluffs is "open" in other seasons,
- expand lodging options / conference capabilities,
- expand entertainment offerings at performance spaces / venues, and
- expand other events and activities.

Balancing The Economy With Quality Of Life

Oak Bluffs would like to stabilize the summer season and provide an exceptional experience ***for visitors and for residents***. This may mean finding a balance between quantity (the number of visitors) and quality (the overall experience).

This discussion is not new. For many years, there has been discussion about the capacity of Martha's Vineyard to accommodate all those who want to come here. This discussion will continue since 2018 broke the record for the number of cars and trucks transported to the Vineyard. The following charts illustrate the growth in vehicle traffic and passenger traffic in the "summer months" (June 1 to August 31) since 1993 according to data from the Steamship Authority (SSA). This data does not include other ferry services (Island Queen, Hy-Line, Seastreak, etc.).





For the summer of 2018 (June 1 to August 31), the SSA carried:

- 157,114 cars (an average of about 870 trips/day each way),
- 38,792 trucks (about 220 trucks/day each way), and
- 1,034,008 passengers.

Harborfest

Road Race

Ferry Services

The Steamship Authority provides ferry service for passengers and vehicles between Oak Bluffs and Woods Hole from May to October (eleven ferries per day between June and September and four ferries per day in the shoulder seasons).

The Steamship Authority provides ferry service for passengers and vehicles between Vineyard Haven and Woods Hole year-round.

Other ferry services (passenger only) operate in the summer months between Oak Bluffs and:

- Falmouth (daily)
- Hyannis (daily),
- Nantucket (daily),
- New Bedford, MA (daily),
- North Kingstown, RI (daily), and
- New York City and New Jersey (weekly).

Lessons Of History

According to the *Vineyard Gazette* (September 13, 2018):

Historically, growth in ferry traffic and capacity on ferries has been a sticking point for Islanders. In 1997, voters in every Island town passed a non-binding referendum to restrict cars carried on SSA ferries to 1995 levels. Numbers released this week show that 368,539 cars were carried that year [for the entire calendar year, not just the three summer months].

In 2003 the topic surfaced again when the boat line began planning for the replacement of [a} ferry … with … a vessel with more carrying capacity (76 cars compared to 50 …). At the time, [SSA] assured residents that the authority would remove other vessels from the route to keep carrying capacity the same.

What eventually happened was different. [SSA] said this week that every year from 2010 to 2017 the SSA added more trips on the Vineyard route … [1,200 additional trips] to accommodate demand.

According to the SSA, the increase in vehicle traffic resulted from capacity they added by scheduling the freight ferry *Sankaty* for an additional 15 trips per week due to "demand." The SSA reported they did ***not*** have places to berth more vessels beyond this.

During the summer months, half of the 22 scheduled trips between Woods Hole and Martha's Vineyard are to Oak Bluffs (there are 22 return trips also). Since some trips can be diverted to Vineyard Haven due to weather, the actual number of trips to Oak Bluffs is less than half.

However, assuming that Oak Bluffs gets half the vehicles and passengers, this could mean an influx of:

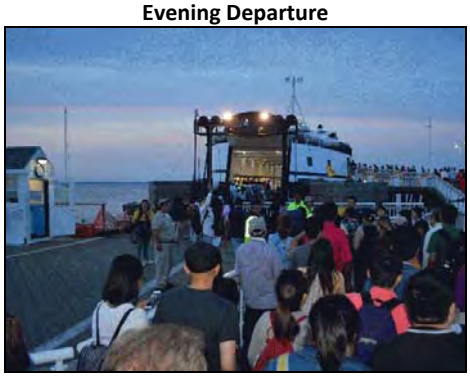
- over 78,000 ***vehicles*** arriving and departing in the summer months (an average of about 870 vehicles per day with about 40 vehicles per arriving and departing ferry, and
- almost 520,000 passengers arriving and departing in the summer months (an average of about 260 passengers per arriving and departing ferry.

This level of activity supports the local economy and is part of what makes Oak Bluffs unique but it also can have impacts on the community.

Oak Bluffs will continue efforts to find a balance between quantity (the number of visitors) and quality (the overall experience). Some strategies for enhancing the visitor experience are contained in the following section of the Master Plan.

Morning Arrival

Evening Departure



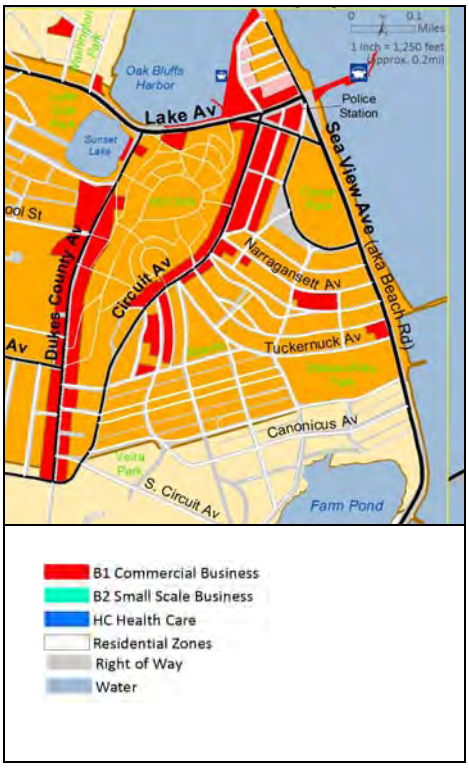
Downtown Business Zoning

In order to help find an appropriate balance in the Downtown area, it is Oak Bluffs intention to accommodate business activities within the existing business zoned areas. Within the Downtown area, the Master Plan does not recommend any geographic expansion of the B-1 or B-2 business zoning districts. Rehabilitation of existing properties (including intensification of uses) is anticipated and encouraged.

At the same time, it may make sense to revisit the distinctions between the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts to see of the distinctions are meaningful in this day and age. Since one of the goals of the Master Plan is to better connect the "gateways" to the downtown area, eliminating some or all of the distinctions between the business zones may help make for a more seamless experience.

Downtown Business Uses

Downtown Business Zones



See pages 70-73 for a discussion of zoning in the Southern Tier.

THEN & NOW

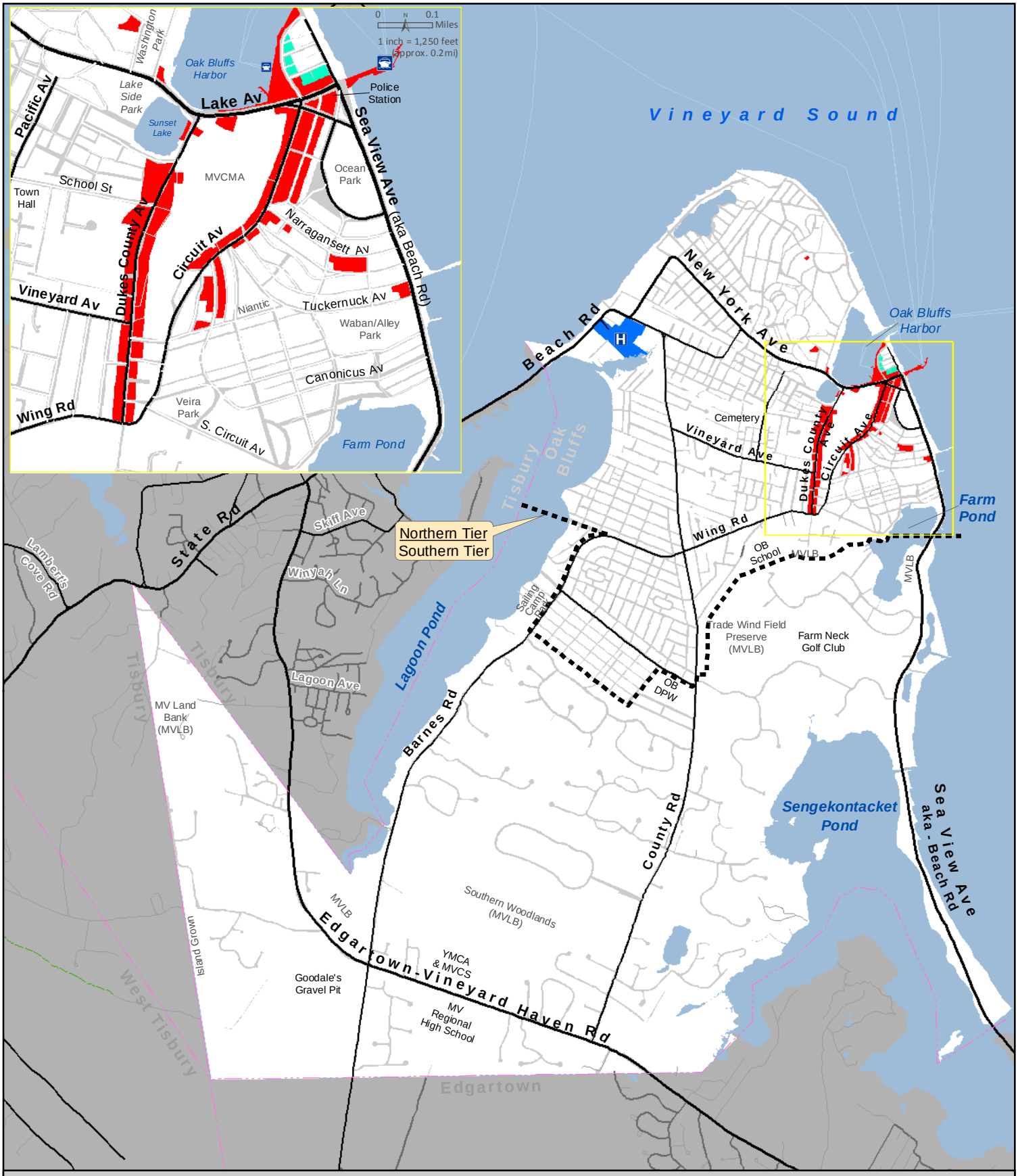
In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies related to business growth were:

- Guide downtown business growth to manage wastewater and crowds.
- Use a sewer growth management plan to manage commercial flows and hookups.
- Do not expand business districts (restrict business to existing business districts)
- Allow a resurgence of grand Victorian hotels.

Strengthening The Brand

While Martha's Vineyard has strong name recognition around the country, Oak Bluffs does not really have a consistent presentation in terms of signage (gateway, way-finding, Town facilitiers, etc.) and this is something the community may wish to consider.

Balancing The Economy With Quality Of Life		Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Seek to diversify the local economy.	**Town**	
2.	Continually evaluate whether sea level rise, climate change, or other factors may accelerate the need to diversify the local economy.	**Town**	
3.	Continue to encourage / promote unique festivals / events / traditions, especially in the shoulder seasons and off-seasons (September to May)	**Town**	
4.	Focus retail activities and visitor services in the Downtown area.	**PB**	**Town**
5.	Support efforts to increase the Steamship Authority fee for non-residents to bring a vehicle to the Island or consider a way to charge for multiple cars at a rental property.	**BOS**	**SSA**
6.	Continue to maintain home occupation regulations to allow appropriate businesses in residential homes.	**PB**	
7.	To reduce tourist's feeling that they need to bring vehicles to the Island, improve provisions for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.	**PD PW**	**Town**
8.	Carefully consider the possible impacts if there is any proposal to expand the B-1 / B-2 zoning districts beyond their current extent.	**PB**	
9.	Continue to be receptive to the possibility of a "grand Victorian hotel" as recommended in the 1998 Master Plan.	**PB**	
10.	Seek to define and strengthen Oak Bluffs as a "brand" to help attract visitors and enhance property values.	**Town**	
11.	Seek to preserve existing year-round businesses, keep seasonal businesses open longer, and maintain the diversity of local businesses.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Investigate ways to increase the Steamship Authority "embarkation fee" (including converting it to a percentage) to help support services provided in Oak Bluffs for visitors to Martha's Vineyard.	**BOS**	**SSA**
☐ 2.	Re-evaluate the distinction between the B-1 and B-2 zoning districts and whether having one district would remove some limitations.	**PB**	



Business Zoning

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

4/2/19

- B1 Commercial Business
- B2 Small Scale Business
- HC Health Care
- Residential Zones
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_04_BusZn_v3.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

Compiled By: MVC, CL Seidel
For planning purposes only.

Expanding The Focus

The Oak Bluffs visitor experience could be expanded to include the authentic cultural, social and historical aspects that make Oak Bluffs unique. Such a focus might draw a different kind of visitor, one who would be more interested in exploring the rich history of Oak Bluffs in depth.

- Encourage tours that focus on Oak Bluffs' unique history, architecture, Art District, and its diverse communities. Oak Bluffs' architecture is a time capsule of the Victorian Period and the campground is one of the best preserved of many that swept the East Coast during the Methodist Revival.
- Strengthen the "Arts District" by better promoting the existing galleries, encouraging the formation of new galleries, and promoting weekly art strolls led by a docent and ending with a dinner or lunch at local restaurant.
- Work more closely with the Featherstone art center to promote their exhibits and activities. Visitors might come here for a week just to take one of Featherstone's art workshops.
- Create small history exhibits in hotels, perhaps by working with the Martha's Vineyard Museum.

(continued on next page)

5.4 Enhancing The Visitor Experience

Visitors to Oak Bluffs are key drivers of the local economy and they have unique needs. Past surveys found that about 31% of all visitors taking the ferry came for one day and another 25% stayed for only a night or two. In other words, Oak Bluffs has only a short window of time to make a positive impression on these visitors and entice them to return.

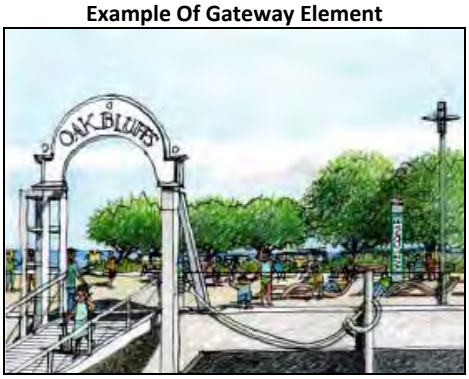
Enhancing Gateways / Wayfinding

To help visitors feel oriented to Oak Bluffs and the opportunities available, Oak Bluffs should explore ways to:

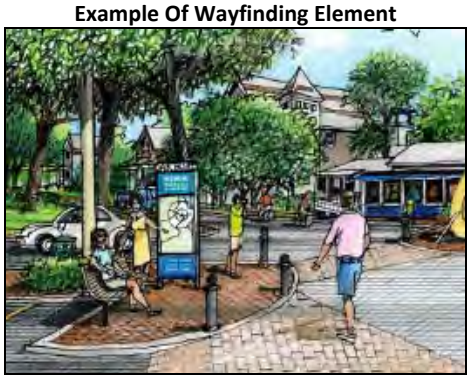
- **Create Gateway Elements** - Gateways are community design elements that promote a sense of arrival at a desirable place. Since many visitors to Oak Bluffs have never been to Oak Bluffs or Martha's Vineyard (and even for people who have), it would be nice to greet the when they arrive. Oak Bluffs should seek to establish gateway elements at key arrival points into the community.

- **Create Wayfinding Elements** - Wayfinding is the use of maps, signage, street elements, and other devices to help people feel oriented within a place and to guide them to their destinations (beaches, major destinations, walking trails, bicycle routes, parking areas, etc.). While residents know their way around Oak Bluffs, visitors do not. Sharing information on local destinations and activities (including where they are and how to get there) will enhance their overall visitor experience.

Example Of Gateway Element



Example Of Wayfinding Element



Amenities / Accoutrements

In addition to gateways and wayfinding, there are also amenities and accommodations that can enhance the visitor experience:

- More water fountains in the primary visitor area,
- Longer hours / months for public comfort stations,
- More bathrooms (at beaches, at MVCMA, and year round),
- Increase number of waste receptacles (and empty more often),
- Make more provision for bicycle parking,
- Provide covered shelters at Lake Avenue (bus) and at Harbor (ferry),
- Adding phone charging stations at bus stops (with solar power), and
- Widen sidewalk areas (for everyone but especially for people who need or use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, strollers, etc.).

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified improving the bath houses as a high priority project.

Visitor Experience

Visitor Experience

Enhancing The Visitor Experience		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Seek to expand / improve facilities which would enhance the visitor experience, especially for people traveling without vehicles.	**Town**	
2.	If an opportunity arises, consider repurposing the Police Station (or a part thereof or another nearby facility) as a Visitor Center and integrate that with public transportation and other amenities.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Improve "quality of experience" staff to clean public restrooms, collect garbage and recyclables, etc.	**PW PR**	**Town**
☐ 2.	Establish gateway elements at key arrival points into Oak Bluffs.	**Town**	
☐ 3.	Establish wayfinding elements (maps, signage, pavement markings, etc.) within Oak Bluffs.	**Town**	

Expanding The Focus

(continued from prior page)

- Celebrate the African American heritage of Oak Bluffs which is so unique that the National Museum of African American History devotes a great deal of exhibit space to presenting that heritage.
- Bring more attention to the African-American Heritage Trail and the variety of festivals that celebrate Oak Bluffs' heritage - Illumination night, the Portuguese American Festival, the African American Cultural Festival, the Chilifest, Lady-fest, various Tabernacle events. The coming together of this variety of different cultures and people makes Oak Bluffs unique.
- Work on a new festival, focused on Oak Bluffs' culinary heritage and culinary arts. Recognize and celebrate the oyster farm and hatchery for its providing a sustainable source of protein for many generations of Islanders and it's positive impact on water quality.
- Work with the MV Film Center to show movies at the Strand Theater that celebrate our history such as Stanley Nelson's "A Place of Our Own."
- Create an audiovisual kiosk that celebrates Oak Bluff's heritage.
- Create "cellphone tours" that celebrate Oak Bluff's heritage.

THEN & NOW

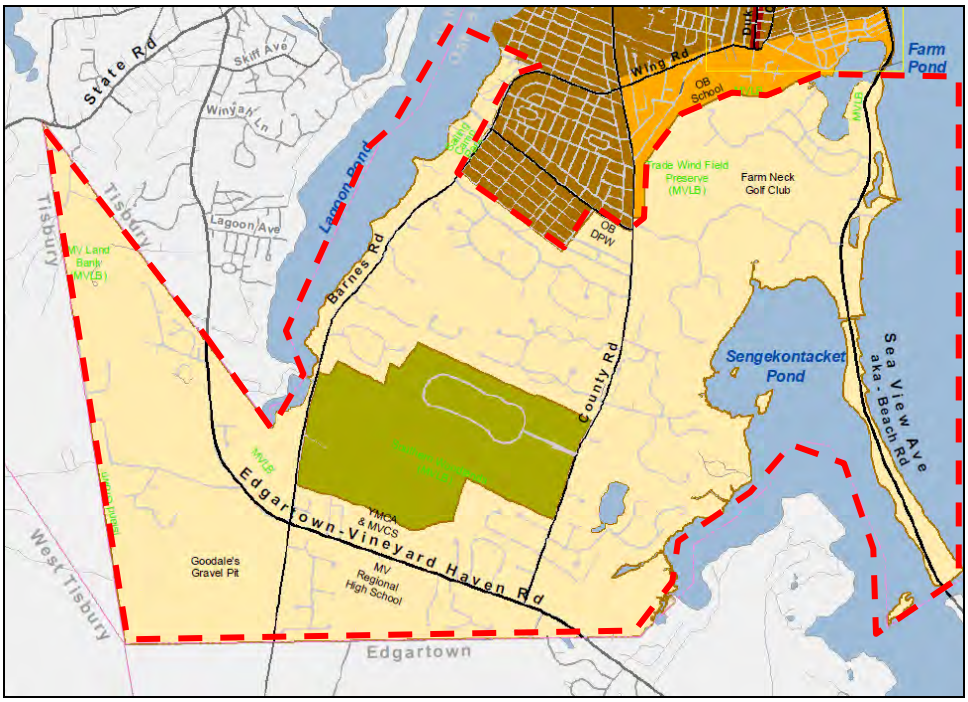
With regard to the "southern tier", the 1998 Master Plan indicated:

- This area faced considerable development pressure with no discernible plan and this was resulting in subdivisions with cul-de-sacs and circular roads (in contrast to the planned nature of development of the "norther tier").
- There was interest at that time for purchase of the area by the Land Bank and/or the Town.
- There was interest at that time for preserving as much of this area as possible for open space use including a golf course, wooded tracts with walking trails, a picnic area, and modest, nonintrusive recreational elements.
- The Planning Board wanted to discourage continued development of this area for community uses that impact on the services provided by the Town of Oak Bluffs without producing any tax revenue for the Town.

5.5 Guiding Land Use Activities In The Southern Tier

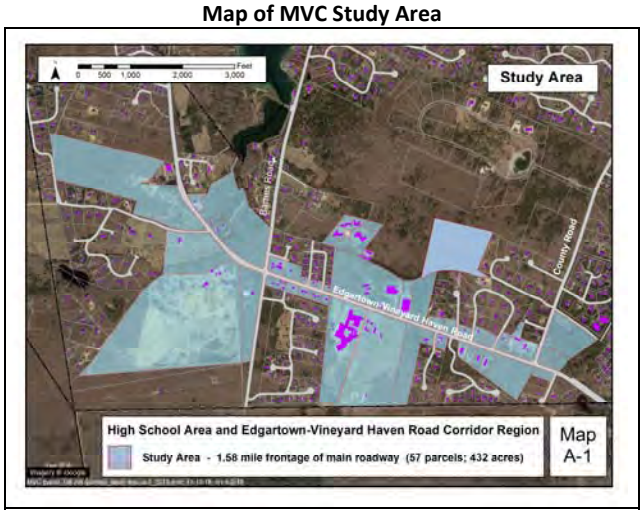
The "southern tier" of Oak Bluffs refers to the land generally located south of Linden Avenue / Grovedale Road / Pennsylvania Avenue and then the northern edge of Trade Winds Preserve / Farm Neck Golf Course. This area is entirely zoned residential (R-3 or R-4) requiring a 60,000 square feet lot size. Land along Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road has evolved into a mixture of public and non-profit services, residential and other land uses, as well as significant amounts of undeveloped land.

Southern Tier



In 2017, the Oak Bluffs Planning Board engaged the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) to assess the potential demand for development in the Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road corridor, and evaluate the implications for zoning, public infrastructure and services.

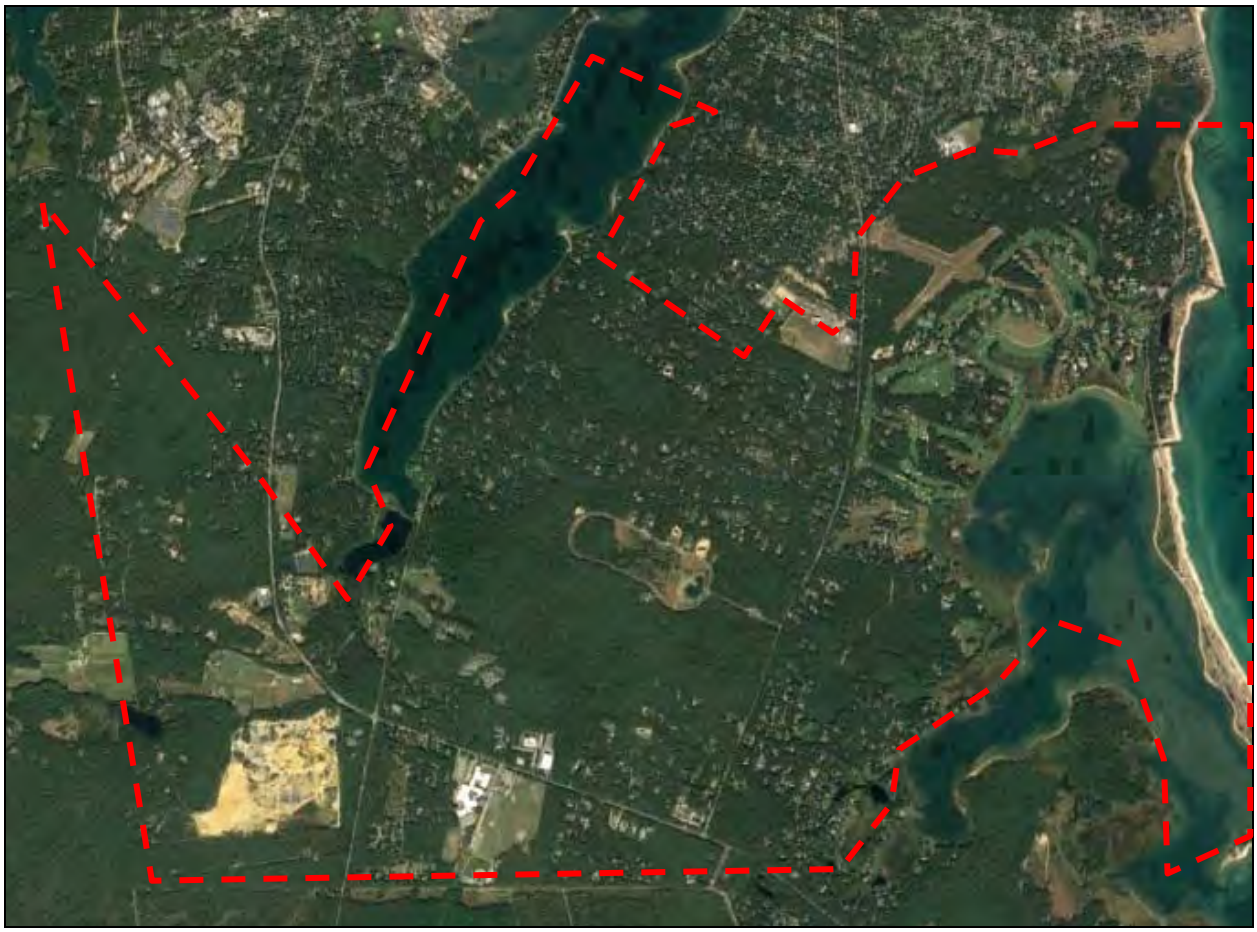
Map of MVC Study Area



The MVC prepared an inventory of maps and regulations for the area (Phase 1) and recommended that further phases evaluate at least three issues:

- Quantify the existing water and sewer usage and the potential demand for these public services,
- Examine improving safe circulation of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists in acknowledgement that this is a primary transportation corridor for Martha's Vineyard,
- Evaluate the fiscal implications of expanded or improved public infrastructure and effects on the study area's tax base.

Southern Tier



The Master Plan recommends that additional studies be undertaken of the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road corridor to evaluate the future zoning for the corridor in terms of:

- Protecting established residential areas,
- Finding the appropriate balance of institutional and non-retail businesses (including light industrial operations) in the corridor, and
- Maintaining an appropriate scale and intensity of uses.

Guiding Land Use Activities In The Southern Tier	Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Continue to seek ways to effectively manage land uses and activities within the "southern tier" of Oak Bluffs.	**PB**	
2. Retain the low intensity approach in this area in order to: a. Minimize impacts on water quality (Lagoon Pond, Sengekontacket Pond, Farm Pond, and Duarte Pond). b. Maintain options for future water supply well sites.	**PB**	
3. Seek to preserve land in this area as open space including: a. Possibly acquiring Chapter 61 lands which may become available, and b. Investigating opportunities for purchase of land in this area by the Land Bank and/or the Town.	**CA** **MVLB**	**PB**
4. Do not allow any retail or restaurant or lodging uses in the "southern tier" since such development has the potential to adversely affect the character of this area and compete economically with Downtown.	**PB**	
5. Continue to investigate the potential of lands in and near the Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road corridor to help address identified housing needs in Oak Bluffs (affordable housing, housing for an aging population, seasonal employees, etc.).	**AHC**	**PB**
6. Address continued development of the Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road corridor area for community uses and the impact on the services provided by the Town of Oak Bluffs.	**FC** **PB**	**Town**
7. Continue to provide for safe circulation of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists along primary transportation corridors.	**MDOT** **PB**	**PD** **PW**
8. Avoid extending sewers to the Southern Tier area unless it provides an identifiable benefit for Oak Bluffs (such as helping address identified housing needs).	**PB** **Town**	**WW**
9. Consider the possibility of allowing package treatment systems to address wastewater needs in this area provided appropriate environmental safeguards are in place to protect water supply wells.	**HD**	**PB**

(action steps on next page)

(policies on preceding page)

Guiding Land Use Activities In The Southern Tier	Legend on inside back cover	
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. Undertake additional studies of the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road corridor to evaluate the future zoning for the corridor in terms of: a. Protecting established residential areas, b. Finding the appropriate balance of institutional and non-retail businesses (including light industrial operations) in the corridor, and c. Maintaining an appropriate scale and intensity of uses.	**PB**	**MVC**
☐ 2. Investigate opportunities to place public water improvements within the "southern tier" including: a. Possible future public water well sites, and b. A possible future water tank site in the "triangle" west of Edgartown - Vineyard Haven Road since the ground elevation (150') will facilitate providing water service to uses in the southern tier (which suffer from low pressure at present) and the higher elevation will facilitate flow to the existing tank in period of high demand.	**Town**	**WD**

Southern Tier

6 ADDRESSING EMERGING ISSUES

"When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change ...."

Paul Coelho
Writer

Strategies related to addressing emerging issues (climate change, sea level rise, sustainability, resiliency, etc.) are presented in this section of the Master Plan.

Climate Change

Sea Level Rise

Sustainability

Resource Materials (partial list)

1. Oak Bluffs Master Plan (1998)
2. Martha's Vineyard Island Plan (MVC, 2010)
3. Martha's Vineyard Coastal Conference Materials (2018)
4. Valuation of Coastal Ecosystem Services Report (2017)
5. Coastal Vulnerability Assessment / Adaptation Plan (2016)
4. Municipal Vulnerability Program Draft Report (2018)
5. Dukes County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (2015)

6.1 Preparing For Climate Change / Sea Level Rise

There is growing awareness of the threats posed by sea level rise and climate change (stronger storms, bigger storm surges, flooding, coastal erosion, etc.) and greater interest in addressing them.

For coastal communities like Oak Bluffs, sea level rise is an issue with serious implications and repercussions:

- Some key shoreline roads will become impassable or washed out.
- Some low areas (including beaches and homes) could be underwater.
- The ferry terminal, harbor, and hospital will be affected.

Additional issues associated with climate change and sea level rise are likely to include salt marsh inundation, coastal erosion, coastal and inland flooding, storm damage, salt water intrusion, impacts to fish and shellfish, extreme weather, public health impacts, and economic impacts.

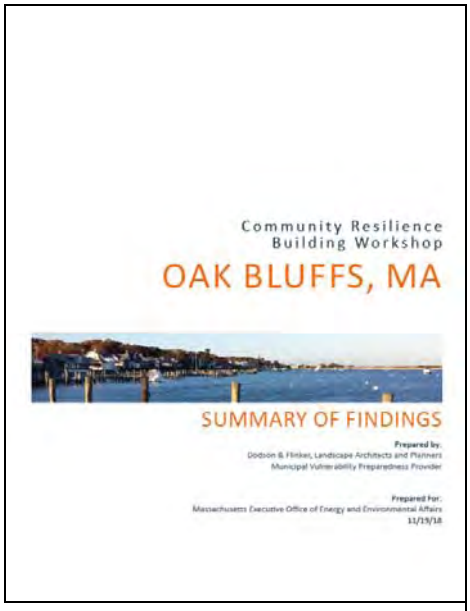
Oak Bluffs has undertaken several studies (see list of "resource materials" at the beginning of this chapter) and has started addressing some of the issues.

In addition, Oak Bluffs received a grant from the State of Massachusetts to undertake an assessment of municipal vulnerability with regard to sea level rise and coastal storms. A series of interactive workshop sessions for the Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) were held in the fall of 2018.

The priorities that emerged from the MVP workshops address:

- Infrastructural vulnerabilities such as protection of the harbor and vulnerable structures.
- Societal vulnerabilities such as access to the MV Hospital and emergency preparedness.
- Environmental vulnerabilities such as fresh water supply and coastal resources such as beaches and salt ponds.

The major findings of the MVP process are presented on the following pages.



The recommendations from the 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Assessment are hereby included by reference for consideration as part of the Master Plan.

Possible Implications

In a 2018 Boston Globe article:

> *In the worst-case scenario, sea levels could rise more than 10 feet by the end of the century — nearly twice what was previously predicted — plunging about 30 percent of Boston under water. Temperatures in 2070 could exceed 90 degrees for 90 days a year, compared with an average of 11 days now. And changes in precipitation could mean a 50 percent decline in annual snowfall, punctuated by more frequent heavy storms such as nor'easters.*

According to information presented at the 2018 Martha's Vineyard Coastal Conference by Jeff Donnelly from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute:

> *On our current emissions trajectory, we should expect global sea level to rise between 5 and 8 feet [on Martha's Vineyard] by 2100 if we include contributions from Antarctica.*

Climate Change Action Plan

The Climate Change Action Plan was informed by the:

- 2018 MVP planning process,
- Oak Bluffs Coastal Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan,
- Dukes County Hazard Mitigation Plan,
- Independent work by Elizabeth Durkee, the Oak Bluffs Conservation Agent.

Climate Change Action Plan Priorities

The priorities from the Community Resilience Building Workshop should be considered a "work in progress" since additional issues are expected to arise and need consideration.

1. **Protect Oak Bluffs Harbor**
   - Protect recreational and economic value of harbor, Lake Avenue (flooding, storm surge, access to downtown), homes and businesses on the harbor, historic MV Camp Meeting Association homes, Sunset Lake/wetlands area inland to Vineyard Avenue
   - Possible options:
     - Reconfigure jetties to protect harbor in NE storms (planning underway),
     - Construct off shore breakwater, hurricane barrier (these will protect against storm surge);
     - Raise harbor bulkhead (protect against sea level rise, protect area surrounding harbor)

2. **Access to MV Hospital**
   - Three of the four access roads to the hospital are in the 100-year flood zone, making them impassable in storms (Beach Road, Eastville Avenue, County Road); the fourth access, Temahigan Avenue, will be inundated in a Category 3 hurricane, eliminating all access to hospital
   - Collaborate with MV Hospital, Tisbury and all Island towns, Dukes County Emergency Management, MA DOT to provide viable access to hospital in storms/floods and per storm surge/sea level rise
   - Possible options:
     - Raise County and Eastville Avenues,
     - Collaborate with Tisbury and MA DOT to address access via Beach Road

3. **Protect Fresh Water Supply**
   - The Lagoon Pond water supply well is vulnerable to salt water intrusion if salt water from Lagoon Pond overtops the causeway into Upper Lagoon Pond (fresh water) due to storm over wash and/or sea level rise.
   - An adequate supply of clean water is essential to public health, the local economy, property values, and the municipal tax base and this well is integral to the ability to provide an adequate supply of water to the town (especially if other wells become contaminated).
   - The herring run at the causeway is vital to herring access to the Upper Lagoon Pond. The causeway protects the freshwater habitat of the Upper Lagoon to enable spawning success of the herring and other species.
   - Possible options:
     - Collaborate with Tisbury to raise the causeway to protect the town well.
     - Work on improving the herring run design and construction to adapt to sea level rise and storm surge.

(continued on next page)

Climate Change Action Plan – Priorities (continued)

4. Emergency Preparedness

- Martha's Vineyard should create a professional Island-wide emergency planner position to plan and prepare for:
  - Storm/hurricane evacuation, shelter, emergency supplies, elderly support, communication to public,
  - The impacts of extreme weather and other events (flooding, hurricanes, wildfire, etc.) which will accompany climate change, and
  - Storm aftermath (clean-up, shelter, food, medical supplies, medical care).

5. Sea View Avenue Access – Steamship Authority to Farm Pond

- There are a number of issues which will affect this major transportation artery between Oak Bluffs and other Island communities including:
  - Protection of Steamship Authority dock,
  - Repair of seawall from Steamship Authority to Farm Pond,
  - Protection of recreational, cultural and storm damage protection values of beaches (including North Bluff, Pay and Inkwell Beaches),
  - Increase size of culvert at Farm Pond,
  - Protect exposed road at Farm Pond for emergency access,
  - Protect Oak Bluffs School (emergency shelter)
- Possible options:
  - Communicate with the Steamship Authority on plans for docking facility per sea level rise
  - Seek funding to repair deteriorated seawall from Steamship Authority to Farm Pond (short-term repairs and long-term stabilization)
  - Beach nourishment (and groin rehabilitation) of Sea View Avenue beaches as long as is economically and environmentally (sea level rise) feasible;
  - Enlarge culvert to Farm Pond for water quality improvement; include storm gate to address storm surge
  - Coordinate with MA DOT to extend (and possibly raise) seawall south across from Farm Pond to protect emergency access to Harthaven, State Beach, and inland areas around Farm Pond, including OB School

6. Address Climate Resiliency Using Green Infrastructure Where Possible

- Strengthen seawalls and hard infrastructure where necessary to protect downtown, harbor, emergency access, but focus on green infrastructure/living shorelines elsewhere for more nature-based climate resiliency
- Examples: green infrastructure for storm water management (coastal and inland flooding) – rain gardens, bios wales; living shorelines for salt marsh protection – thin layer deposition to protect against sea level rise, vegetated dune and bank restoration; a combination of hard and soft engineering for raised causeway at Lagoon Ponds
- Investigate federal and state funding sources for buy-out of vulnerable structures; return sites to natural conditions, and consider retreat options when adaptation options are no longer environmentally or economically feasible

Possible Impacts

Studies of sea level rise have identified the possibility for the following types of impacts on coastal communities like Oak Bluffs:

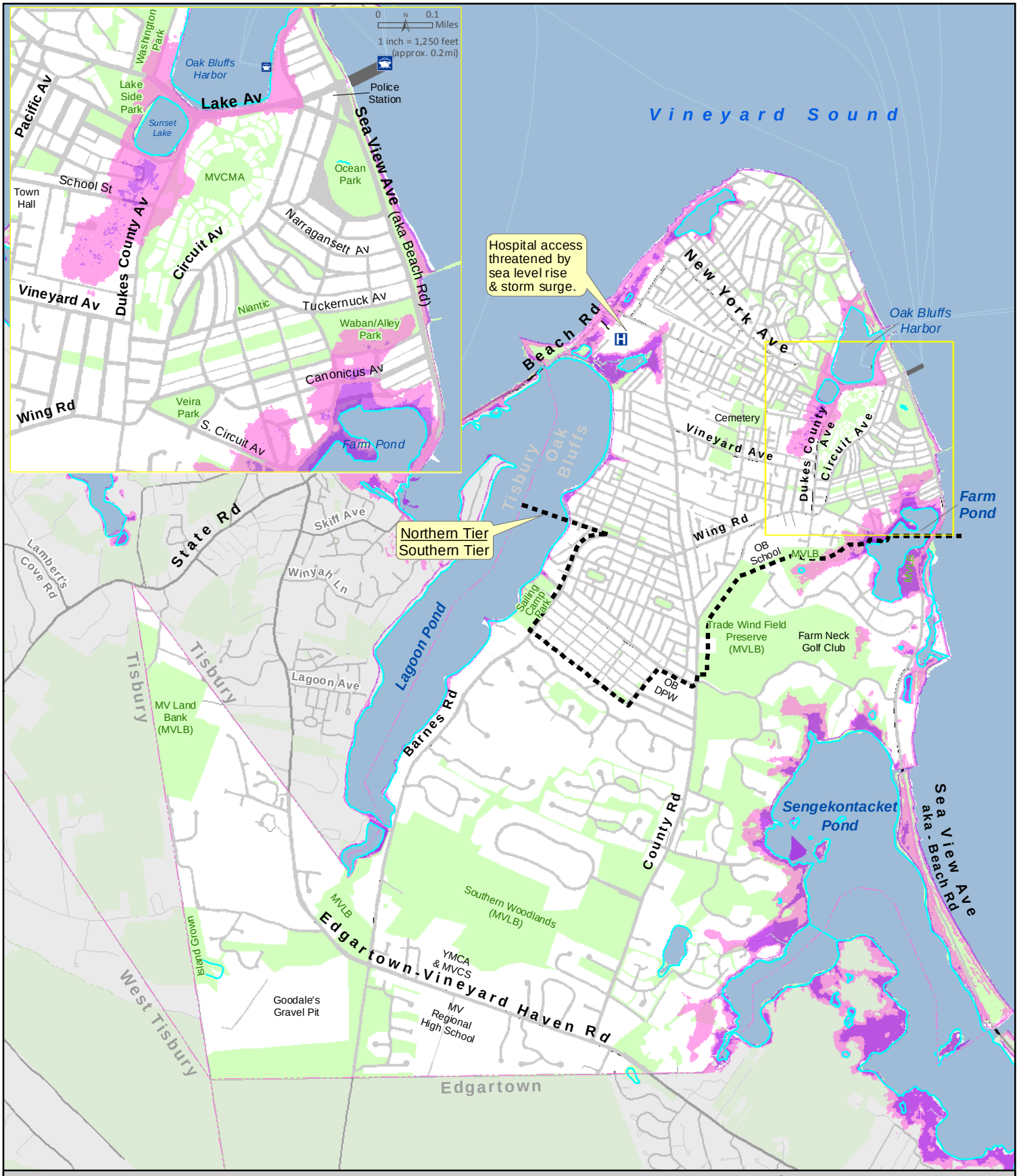
- Declining property values (and tax revenue) from properties in vulnerable areas.
- Increasing costs of repairing, rebuilding, and/or maintaining roads and infrastructure in vulnerable areas.
- Increasing National Flood Insurance program (NFIP) premiums for properties in vulnerable areas.
- Restrictions on rebuilding in vulnerable areas following costal storms.

There may be other things to consider. For example, Oak Bluffs regulates building heights based on height above grade. If buildings have to be elevated in response to sea level rise and federal flood insurance requirements, should Oak Bluffs change the way it measures building height?

Preparing For Climate Change / Sea Level Rise		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Implement the strategies and recommendation from the 2018 Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) report: a. Protect Oak Bluffs harbor. b. Access to Martha's Vineyard Hospital. c. Protect fresh water supply. d. Emergency preparedness. e. Sea View Avenue access. f. Climate resiliency / green infrastructure.	**CA**	**Town**
2.	Continue to work with regional, state, and federal agencies and other organizations to address issues related to coastal vulnerability.	**CA**	**Town**
3.	Make sea level rise a consideration in all decisions in vulnerable / coastal areas in the future.	**Town**	
4.	Continue preparations for climate change and sea level rise including prioritizing projects, obtaining public input, and seeking funding for implementation.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Develop an action plan for climate change including: a. A conceptual capital improvement program to balance fiscal capacity with coastal issues / needs. b. An analysis of whether certain roads (such as East Chop Drive by Crystal Lake) may be better suited for discontinuance / abandonment rather than continued repair.	**CA**	**Town**
☐ 2.	Study traffic patterns for inland roads should coastal roads become inundated/more frequently flooded.	**Town**	
☐ 3.	Revisit the coastal regulations (contained in Section 9.0 of the Zoning Bylaw) to reflect issues related to sea level rise.	**PB**	

Sea Level Rise

More Frequent / Intense Storms



Sea Level Rise Projection

Oak Bluffs, MA

Sea Level Rise
plus Mean High High Water Offset

- <=2.5ft
- >2.5ft to 6.0ft

- Open Space/Conservation Land
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

Sea Level Rise Scenarios: 1.5ft and 5ft
Elevation Source: LiDAR 2010

Mean High High Water Present Average Offset from NAVD88 Datum = +1.0ft

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See Master Plan report for data source information.

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4
Miles

N

2/13/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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Sustainability

The Town of Oak Bluffs has a fleet of electric passenger-type vehicles as a way to be more sustainable in terms of energy use.

Section 6.1 of the Zoning Bylaw contains provisions allowing wind energy installations under certain conditions.

Section 12 of the Zoning Bylaw contains provisions allowing solar energy systems under certain conditions.

MV Transit Authority has purchased electric buses and is intending to convert its entire fleet to electric buses in the future.

6.2 Becoming A "Greener" Community

For the purposes of the Master Plan, "sustainability" refers to:

- the philosophy of encouraging activities that allow present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- being efficient and economical in our use of resources using approaches that are economically viable, of social benefit, and environmentally responsible.

Some of the items to be considered as part of an overall approach to sustainability could include:

Energy-Related	• Reducing energy use (and considering life-cycle costing) • Becoming more efficient in use of energy resources • Providing for alternative generation approaches (solar, wind, fuel cell, micro-grids, etc.) • Consider establishing a carbon reduction target
Water-Related	• Reducing water use • Regulating lawn irrigation • Reducing water waste / recycling water
Waste-Related	• Reducing waste (including food waste) • Increasing recycling

Becoming A "Greener" Community		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Seek to become a "greener", more sustainable community (and Island).	**CA**	**Town**
2.	Seek ways to reduce energy use by residents and visitors in Oak Bluffs and encourage energy options,	**CA Town**	**UC**
3.	Encourage or require reduction in water usage.	**CA**	**WD**
4.	Maintain sections in the Zoning Bylaw related to: a. Accessory wind generating facilities (Section 6.1). b. Solar energy systems (Section 12).	**PB**	
5.	Partner with utility companies to educate residents and businesses about sustainability concepts.	**Town**	**UC**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Explore obtaining the Massachusetts "Green Community" designation.	**BOS CA**	**PB**
☐ 2.	With other Island communities, evaluate ways to reduce the waste stream and increase on-Island recycling.	**PW**	**Town**

6.3 Becoming More Resilient

For the purposes of the Master Plan, "resiliency" refers to the community's ability and/or capacity to:

- withstand and/or absorb impactful events,
- respond to and/or readily recover from sudden changes or adversity in an efficient and timely way, and/or
- cope with disturbance and respond or adapt to a new equilibrium (not necessarily return to normality).

The elements of being a resilient community can include:

Avoidance-Related	• Identifying potential risks and ways to avoid / reduce impacts.
Mitigation-Related	• Evaluating probability / risk scenarios • Evaluating approaches (protection / adaptation) • Balancing of cost / benefit • Hardening infrastructure (e.g. burying utilities) • Requiring resilient buildings in coastal areas • Promoting grid independence / interconnected community
Response-Related	• Pre-event education / training • Pre-event response plans
Adaptation-Related	• Hardening infrastructure (burying utilities) • Promoting resilient buildings in coastal areas • Promoting grid independence / interconnected community • Balancing cost / benefit

Becoming More Resilient	**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Seek to become a more resilient community in terms of: a. recognizing potential risks, b. avoiding and/or mitigating impacts, where feasible, and c. responding to and recovering from impacts.	**Town** **FD**	**PD** **PW**
2. Continue emergency preparedness planning and preparation such as emergency shelters, equipment, and supplies.	**FD** **PD**	**PW** **Town**
3. Continue adaptation planning and preparation.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. Update the Hazard Mitigation Plan in conjunction with other Island communities.	**Town**	**MVC**

Hazard Mitigation Planning

In 2015, the Martha's Vineyard Commission prepared a Hazard Mitigation Plan for Dukes County and part of the plan focused on hazards specific to Oak Bluffs:

- Short term events (storm surge / flooding, hurricane, wildfire), and
- Long term events (coastal erosion, sea level rise).

Partnerships

Oak Bluffs Elementary School is an emergency shelter and partners with the Hospital for providing food service if needed.

THEN & NOW

In the 1998 Master Plan, one of the strategies was:

- Discourage additional community uses that use town services while providing no tax revenue (or reduced user fees and/or preference on waiting lists for Oak Bluffs taxpayers.

Addressing Impacts

Some possible approaches for addressing regional impacts could include:

- Undertaking a study to understand the impact on Oak Bluffs of providing services but receiving limited revenue from so many Island-wide facilities.
- Seeking ways for non-profit organizations and other Island communities to make payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) for regional facilities / services hosted by Oak Bluffs:
- Discouraging additional uses that use Oak Bluffs services while providing no tax revenue unless:
  - Reasonable PILOT payments will be made,
  - Oak Bluffs residents obtain some tangible benefit (such as reduced user fees or preferences on waiting lists), and/or
  - Other benefits.

6.4 Addressing Regional Issues

There are six separate municipalities on Martha's Vineyard occupying a total of about 87 square miles of land area. Martha's Vineyard is only reachable by sea or by air so all the communities are tied together by this geographic reality.

In the future, regional impacts (inefficiencies and/or inequities) and opportunities (service sharing and/or collaboration) should be explored.

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified working with Tisbury on regional and service sharing projects as a high priority project.

Addressing Local Impact of Regional Activities

In the past, there have been discussions that Oak Bluffs bears a higher impact than some other Island communities with regard to the following facilities / services that serve the entire Island:

Facilities / Services	Possible Higher Impact	Possible Benefits
Martha's Vineyard Hospital	• Emergency readiness / response (police, fire) • Loss of taxable land	• Proximity of services for residents
Martha's Vineyard Regional High School	• Police, fire, medical readiness / response • Dedication of sewer capacity • Loss of taxable land	• Proximity of events, activities, services for residents
YMCA / MV Arena	• Police, fire, medical readiness / response • Dedication of sewer capacity • Loss of taxable land	• Proximity of events, activities, services for residents
Churches / Social Service uses / MVTV	• Police, fire, medical readiness / response • Loss of taxable land	• Proximity of events, activities, services for residents
Ferry Services	• Traffic congestion • Police, fire, medical readiness / response • Harbor / dock space	• Embarkation fee revenue • Dock space revenue • Tourist traffic

Addressing Regional Opportunities

Historically, municipal services have been provided by each municipality to the residents and properties within their borders. However, with the increasing cost of government and the desire for better service at lower cost, there is growing interest in exploring opportunities for sharing.

Services Currently Provided By Municipalities
• Police • Fire • Emergency medical • Public works (roads, drainage, etc.) • Elementary school education • Library • Park and recreation • General government

Services Currently Provided by State / Regional Entities
• State Police • Dukes County (courthouse, etc.) • Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority • Martha's Vineyard Commission • Martha's Vineyard Land Bank • Many other volunteer and non-profit agencies serving the Island as a whole.

Services Currently Shared By Municipalities
• Secondary school education (Martha's Vineyard Regional High School) • Mutual aid fire response • Public safety communications / dispatch • Water supply interconnections • Affordable housing

Services Which Could Be Shared By Municipalities / State / Regional Entities
• Trash collection / Recycling / Disposal • Water supply • Sewage disposal • Internet services • Beach management • Public safety (police, fire, medical) • Harbor management • Emergency communication • Affordable housing

Addressing Regional Issues	Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Seek to address regional impacts borne by Oak Bluffs residents which benefit other Island communities.	**BOS FC**	**Town**
2. Seek ways to enhance regional collaboration and service sharing which will benefit participating communities and be more fiscally efficient.	**BOS FC**	**Town**
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. Undertake a study to better understand and quantify the fiscal impacts to Oak Bluffs from hosting regional services and non-profit organizations (including possible payments-in-lieu-of-taxes).	**BOS**	**FC**

Example Of Shared Services

Oak Bluffs and Tisbury are in the process of setting up an agreement for sharing building officials / inspectors.

This shared arrangement will allow them to hire better qualified people and provide more training than either one of them could afford separately.

7 MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

"If you take care of your [community], it will take care of you."

David Kirsch
Wellness Guru

Strategies related to meeting community needs for facilities and services and mobility (vehicle, walking, biking, and transit) are presented in this section of the Master Plan.

Oak Bluffs Library

Public Transportation

Resource Materials (partial list)

1. Oak Bluffs Master Plan (1998)
2. Martha's Vineyard Island Plan (MVC, 2010)
3. Municipal Buildings Condition Report Oak Bluffs (Town, 2016)
4. Open Space and Recreation Master Plan (2015)
5. OB Harbor Management Plan (MVC, 1998)
6. Solid Waste Management Consolidation Study (MVC, 2011)
7. Regional Public Safety Service Study (2011)
8. Regional Transportation Plan Update (MVC, 2011)
9. Extension of the Martha's Vineyard Network of Shared-Use Paths (MVC, 2009)
10. Port Area Infrastructure Assessment (MVC, 2000)
11. Transportation Improvement Program (MVC, 2014)
12.

7.1 Enhancing Community Facilities / Services

Community facilities contribute significantly to Oak Bluffs' community character and quality of life. A simple assessment was conducted as part of the Master Plan process in order to identify and prioritize policies and action steps.

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified the following as high priority projects in terms of community services and facilities:

- building a new Town Hall.
- maintenance of existing Town facilities and properties.
- repairing/rebuilding harbor jetties, reforming the boat mooring system, and beautification of the marina and waterfront.

In addition, there is growing awareness of the special needs of people with mobility, visual, hearing, and other disabilities. This should be a key consideration in terms of community facilities and services.

Enhancing Community Facilities / Services		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Complete projects currently in process: a. Renovation / replacement of the existing Town Hall b. Repair / renovation of Oak Bluffs Elementary School	**School**	**Town**
2.	Monitor utilization of the Senior Center in order to anticipate possible future space needs (including parking needs).	**COA**	**Town**
3.	So that future expansion of facilities (if needed) will not be impeded by lack of land area, consider acquiring properties (should they become available) adjacent to: a. The Senior Center. b. Oak Bluffs Elementary School.	**School**	**Town**
4.	Consider providing housing (or off-shift bunk space) for: a. Public works staff (year-round and seasonal) b. Fire / ambulance staff who commute from off-Island.	**FD** **PD**	**PW** **Town**
5.	Continue to maintain and enhance the harbor including dredging the entry channel as needed and protecting the harbor entry with higher jetties or installation of a "dog-leg."	**HAC**	**Town**
6.	Work with the Land Bank to address Oak Bluffs' unique needs for recreation facilities (soccer fields, dog park, etc.).	**PR**	**MVLB**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Address community facility needs: a. At the library (roof, boiler, sprinklers, etc.). b. At the public works building (sheathing, roof, interior). c. For parking lot lighting for facilities in use at night (Town Hall, Library, etc.)	**FC** **Library**	**PW** **Town**

THEN & NOW

In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies related to community facilities included:

- 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.

Oak Bluffs Harbor

The harbor is an important facility in Oak Bluffs (and on Martha's Vineyard) that supports commercial fishing operations, residents who keep boats there, transient boaters (boaters from elsewhere visiting Oak Bluffs), and travelers using some off-Island ferry services.

The harbor operations generate approximately one million dollars annually for the Town of Oak Bluffs (fees for slips and moorings, fuel sales, docking fees, etc.).

The sea level rise section in the "Emerging Issues" section of the Master Plan contains additional discussion and strategies related to the harbor.

Harbor

Ferry Services

A listing of community facilities is presented below and keyed to the map on a following page:

List of Community Facilities

	PUBLIC SAFETY
2	State Police Department
11	OB Police Department
24	OB Fire Station / EMS

	PUBLIC WORKS
25	OB Highway Department
25	Transfer Station

	GENERAL GOVERNMENT
8	Oak Bluffs Town Hall

	EDUCATION
22	Oak Bluffs School
32	MV Regional High School

	HARBOR
4	Harbor

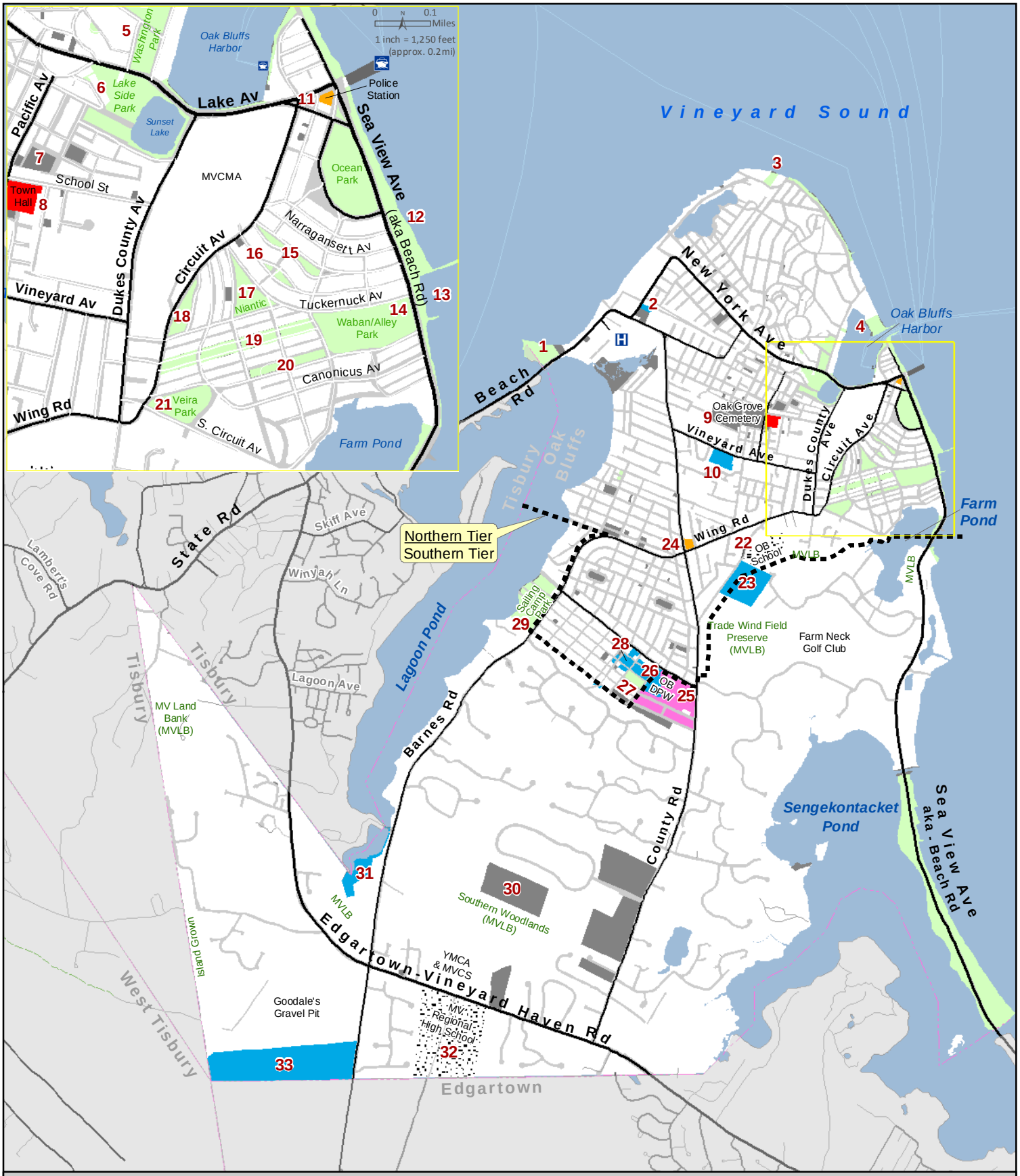
	LIBRARY
8	Oak Bluffs Public Library

	SENIOR CENTER
17	Council On Aging / Senior Center

	OTHER
7	Vacant Town Lot - Truck Parking
9	Oak Grove Cemetery
30	Resident Homesite Comm. Land

	PARK / RECREATION
1	Eastville Beach
3	Telegraph Hill / East Chop Light
4	Jetty Beach
5	Washington Park
6	Lake Side Park
12	Town Beach
13	Inkwell Beach
14	Waban/Alley Park
15	Hartford Park
16	Penacook Park
17	Niantic Park
18	Hiawatha Park
19	Nashawena Park
20	Naushon Park
21	Veira Park
27	Penn Field (Baseball)
29	Sailing Camp Park

	UTILITY
10	OB Water Department Office
23	OB Water Dept. Land
26	Wastewater Plant
28	OB Water Tower
31	OB Water Dept. Land
33	OB Water Dept. Land



Town/County/State Properties
- Town Hall/Library
- Public Safety
- Public Works
- Utilities
- Parks/Recreation
- Education
- Other (i.e. vacant town land, resident homesite, etc.)
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

Community Facilities

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

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2/8/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

Compiled By: MVC, CL Seidel
For planning purposes only.

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_19_CommFacil.mxd. See Master Plan report for data source information.

A Tale Of Two Seasons

During the "off-season" (say October to April), the roadway system in Oak Bluffs generally works like a charm. Intersections are generally congestion free and parking is typically available where people want it.

In the summertime, the situation is reversed as population swells to 20,000 or more residents and visitors. On top of this, every day, the Steamship Authority could deliver or pick up hundreds of vehicles in Oak Bluffs and this is on top of the traffic of people who are already on the Island and are visiting Oak Bluffs.

Possible Congestion Problem Areas

Possible Coastal Vulnerability Areas

Notable Accident Incidence Areas

7.2 Addressing Vehicular Circulation / Parking

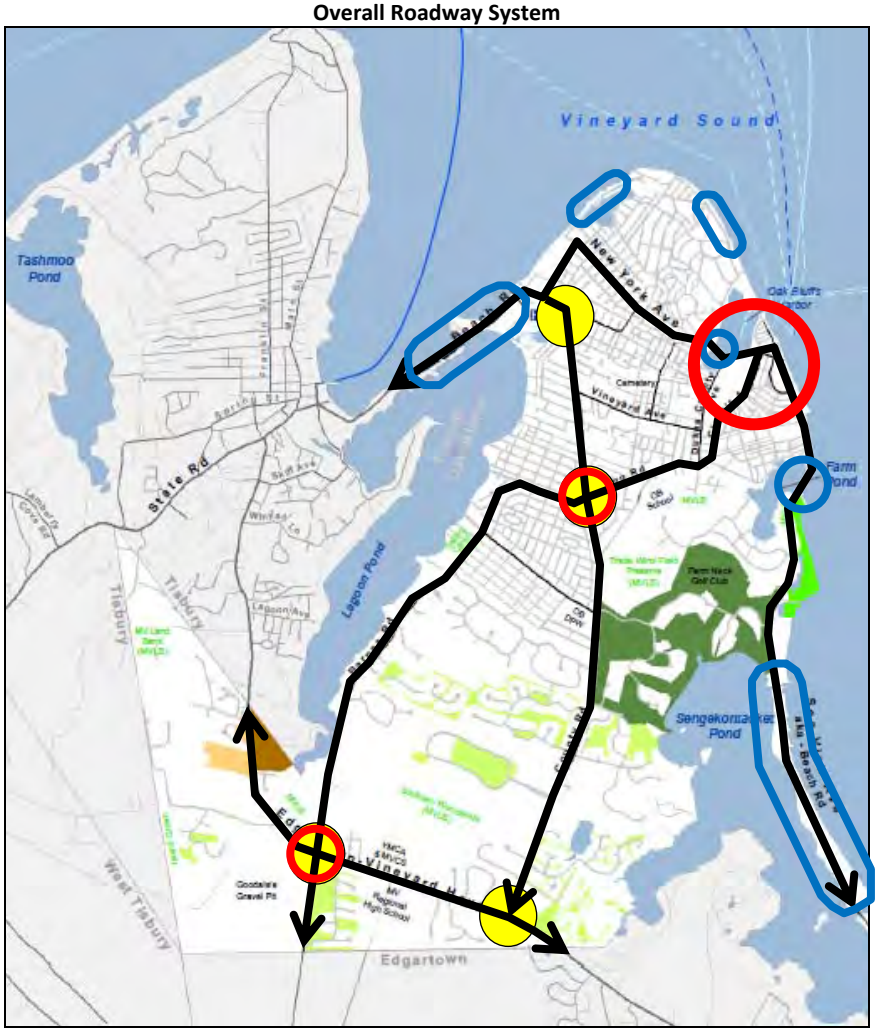
The roadway system in Oak Bluffs provides for overall circulation and mobility for residents and visitors. The main roads in Oak Bluffs which provide for travel between neighborhoods and/or communities include:

- New York Ave. / Temahigan Ave. / Beach Road to Vineyard Haven,
- Seaview Avenue to Edgartown,
- Circuit Avenue / Wing Road / Barnes Road / County Road
- Edgartown / Vineyard Haven Road

Coastal Vulnerability

Both Beach Road and Seaview Avenue are vulnerable to coastal flooding / sea level rise and can become impassable. The overall Oak Bluffs roadway circulation system (and access to Martha's Vineyard Regional Hospital) will be severely affected if only Barnes / County roads are available for access. Multiple parts of the Master Plan recommend that these issues be addressed.

Overall Roadway System



Roadway Safety / Accident Concentrations

While some areas with accident concentrations reflect traffic intensity, some other areas may have intersection geometry, restricted sight lines, or other characteristics which contribute to accident incidence. This may include:

- Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road at County Road
- County / Barnes / Wing intersection
- County Road at Eastville / Temahigan Road

The MVC Draft Transportation Improvement Program recommends funding for intersection improvements at Eastville / County.

The Master Plan recommends that locations with accident concentrations / safety issues continue to be addressed.

Vehicle Parking

Part of the reason for traffic congestion in the downtown area is that many people want to come to Oak Bluffs and they want to find parking when they get here. It is not uncommon to see vehicles circling the block in the summer months as they travel south on Circuit Avenue, north on Kennebec Avenue, west on Oak Bluff Avenue, and then back onto Circuit Avenue.

Parking availability can be a significant issue in and near downtown and the beaches and was recognized as a common "sorry" in the community survey. Although police patrol the main streets during the summer and manage parking time limits, it is reported that people have been observed moving their car around to "game the system." Some parking spaces may be occupied by owners and employees of local businesses as well as Uber drivers. Parking spills over into residential neighborhoods where the streets were not designed to accommodate vehicle parking.

The Downtown Streetscape Study looked at ways to widen sidewalks in the downtown and to retain / expand the supply of parking in and near the Downtown area. It appears feasible to do this by putting diagonal parking on Oak Bluffs Avenue in front of the harbor.

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified continuing development of a park-and-ride lot as a high priority project.

The Master Plan also recommends evaluation / establishment of a "park and walk" system (see page 55).

Pavement Management

Roadway pavement in Oak Bluffs generally appears to be in "good" condition due to favorable soils, adequate drainage, and limited deep freeze cycles.

Autonomous Vehicles

While autonomous vehicles are not expected to have a significant presence on Martha's Vineyard during the next five to ten years, the eventual arrival of such vehicles should be considered.

THEN & NOW

In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies related to traffic and parking included:

- Consider pay parking such as parking meters or pay lots.
- Consider implementation of a resident parking system.
- Develop and promote a park-and-ride system (particularly for employees).
- Alleviate parking problems in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

Addressing Vehicular Circulation / Parking Services	Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies	**Partners**	
1. Seek ways to reduce vehicular traffic and congestion, especially in the summer months including reducing the need for cars (walking, biking, transit, golf carts, transit passes with seasonal rentals, etc.).	**PW PD**	**Town VTA**
2. Work with Mass DOT to address threats to main roads from sea level rise (Beach Road and Seaview Avenue).	**MDOT PW**	**Town**
3. Address areas with accident concentrations (such as at Eastville / County / Temahigan near the Hospital).	**MDOT PW**	**Town**
4. Seek ways to expand the supply of parking in and near Downtown while maintaining the character of the area.	**PW**	**Town**
5. If appropriate, consider other approaches to managing parking in and near the downtown area including: a. "Pay parking" (meters) in the downtown area or lots. b. Implementation of a resident parking system to discourage parking on residential streets by non-residents.	**Town**	
6. Maintain parking mitigation approaches for development in the Downtown area.	**PB**	
7. If appropriate, consider establishment of a business improvement district where property owners and businesses in the Downtown would help fund the remote parking lots and shuttle service (and consider eliminating the parking requirements downtown in return).	**Town**	**PB**
B. Action Steps	**Partners**	
☐ 1. Evaluate ways to provide for park-and-ride lots to reduce parking demand in downtown.	**PB**	**Town**
☐ 2. Work with the Steamship Authority to increase the car fee including congestion pricing approaches.	**BOS**	**SSA**

Parking And Traffic

Parking And Traffic

Roads
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Neighborhood Road
- Local Road

Traffic Crashes (2012 thru 2014)
- Injury - Non-Fatal (39 Oak Bluffs)
- Non-Injury (101 Oak Bluffs)

Ferry Service
- Year-Round - Passengers and Vehicles
- Year-Round - Passengers
- Seasonal - Passengers and Vehicles
- Seasonal - Passengers
- Water

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_20_Vtrans.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

Vehicular Transportation

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4
Miles

N

2/8/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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Overall Accessibility

Oak Bluffs seeks to improve overall accessibility within the community so that everyone will be able to access and/or participate in a full range of activities including housing, employment, recreation, and civic organizations.

While many facilities in Oak Bluffs were not originally designed or constructed with accessibility in mind, the Master Plan promotes making such facilities accessible generally when opportunities arise.

"Complete Streets"

The concept of "Complete Streets" is an approach to the planning and design of road rights-of-way to provide safe access for all users of all modes of transportation, regardless of age or ability.

Complete Streets are intended to "work" for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists, transit users, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities.

In other words, it seeks ways to use existing roadway corridors to provide for pedestrians, bicycles, transit and other users, not just vehicles.

The concept of Complete Streets is also addressed in the Downtown Streetscape Plan (see page 54 for a summary of that plan).

7.3 Promoting Pedestrian Travel / Accessibility

While there is much pedestrian activity in the summertime in the Downtown and near the beaches, more can and should be done to improve the pedestrian experience for residents and visitors. In addition, more can and should be done to improve accessibility (and safety) for residents, workers, and visitors who may be mobility-impaired due to age, disability, or other reason.

Oak Bluffs has a working group that has been looking at ways to enhance the pedestrian experience and overall accessibility:

- Widening sidewalks on main downtown streets,
- Providing ramps, crosswalks, and similar improvements to enhance accessibility for persons (strollers, wheelchairs, etc.), and
- Considering ways to make existing streets "more complete."

Pedestrians

Promoting Pedestrian Travel / Accessibility		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
	1. Seek ways to enhance the overall pedestrian experience in Oak Bluffs.	**BPC**	**PW**
	2. Seek ways to widen sidewalks in and near Downtown (including the harbor, North Bluff, and along Seaview Avenue) to enhance the pedestrian experience.	**BPC**	**PW**
	3. Seek ways to improve ADA accessibility (ramps, crosswalks, etc.) as part of any streetscape improvements in the Downtown area.	**BPC**	**PW**
	4. Maintain a working group addressing pedestrian / bicycle issues.	**Town**	
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐	1. Adopt a "Complete Streets" policy for Oak Bluffs.	**BOS**	
☐	2. Create a "point person" who will be responsible for implementing pedestrian improvements.	**BPC**	
☐	3. Budget funds for extending sidewalks in areas in and near the Downtown and close gaps wherever they may exist.	**BOS FC**	**TM**

Crosswalk
Sidewalk beside road
Trail - Bike/Walk
Cross-town Trail/Route
Wooded Trail
On Road Route
Bike/Walk Path (paved path beside road)
Ferry Service
Open Space/Conservation Land
(May not be publicly accessible)

Pedestrian Circulation
Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = approx. 1,000ft (0.2mi)
0.2 0.1 0 0.2
Miles

N

2/16/19

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_PedCirc.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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Bicycling Challenges

On a busy day in the summer, there could be over 1,000 bicycles on the road in Oak Bluffs (rental bikes plus ferry travelers). However, these bicycle riders can face some challenges:

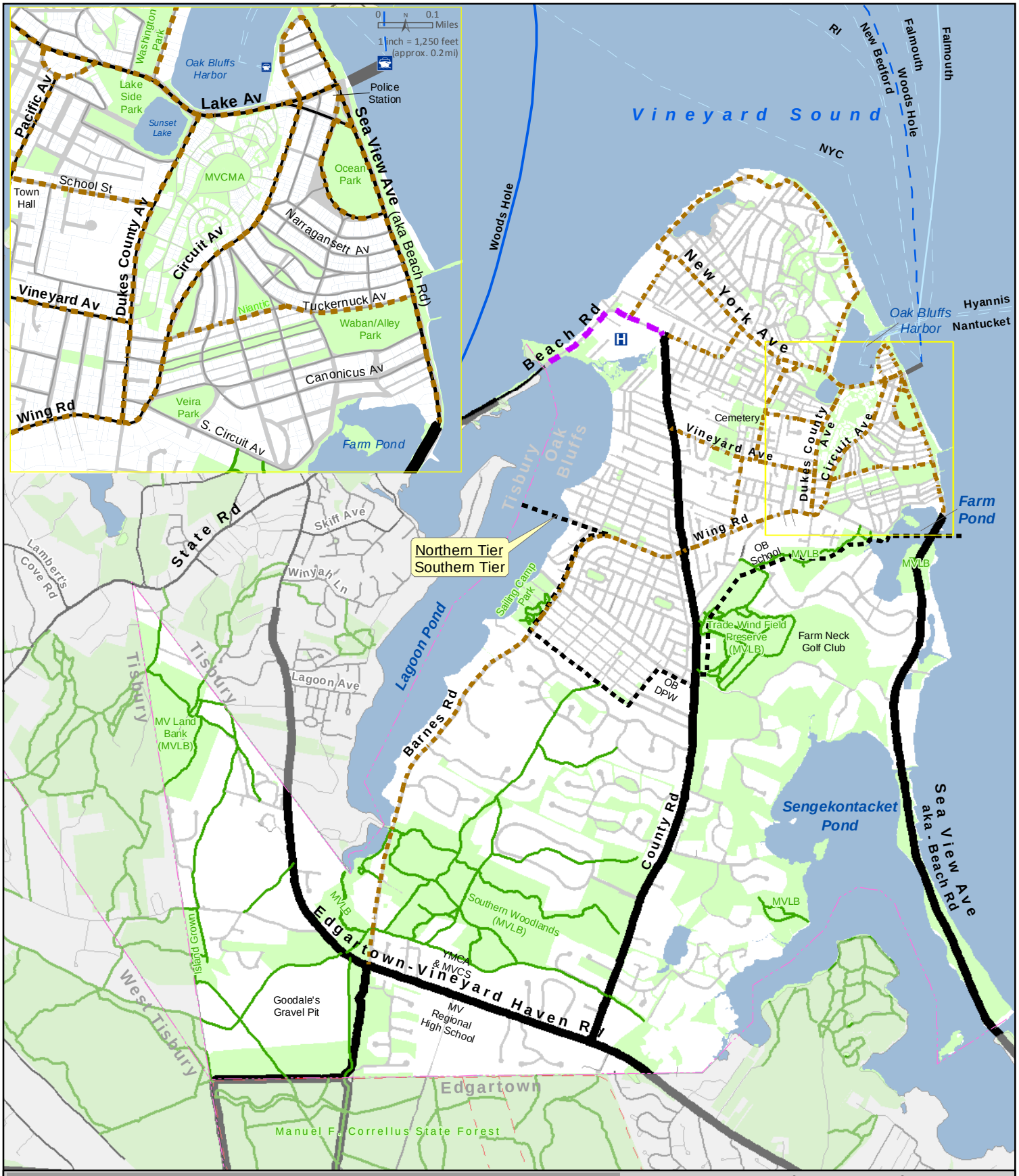
- Riding bicycles on Circuit Avenue is challenging and the sidewalks are extremely narrow for them to be walked so people end up in the roadway.
- Bicycle parking areas are not particularly visible and there does not appear to be enough bicycle parking accommodations.
- Bike paths in Oak Bluffs often stop at (or do not start until) the edge of Downtown and this results in "a disconnect" from ferries and bike rental shops and forces bicyclists into the roadway at the places where roads are most congested.
- There is no marked bicycle route between Oak Bluffs and Vineyard Haven and this forces bicycle traffic into the roadway (although signage directing traffic to a scenic alternate route via East Chop Drive might be a welcome option for cyclists).

7.4 Promoting Bicycle Travel

Martha's Vineyard has undertaken a number of projects over the years to provide for bicycle routes (both on-road and shared use paths) in key locations and this has helped the Island get a reputation as a bicycle-friendly place. As a result, there is much bicycle activity in Oak Bluffs in the summertime.

However, there are some challenges in Oak Bluffs (see sidebar). Oak Bluffs should seek to become the premier place on Martha's Vineyard for cyclists.

Promoting Bicycle Travel		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A.	**Policies**	**Partners**	
	1. Seek ways to expand the use of bicycles as a form of transportation and recreation in Oak Bluffs.	**BPC**	
	2. Seek to provide visible and designated bicycle lanes in the Downtown, to the Downtown, to the ferry docks, and elsewhere.	**BPC**	**PW**
	3. Support the creation of more bicycle lanes (and similar accommodations) where feasible.	**BPC PD**	**PW**
	4. Seek ways to create a system of bicycle routes that would be of interest to visitors (including mapping and signs): a. To East Chop lighthouse. b. To Eastville Beach / Lagoon Pond. c. To Joseph Sylvia State Beach. d. Along Barnes Road.	**BPC**	
	5. Promote bike-share options on Martha's Vineyard.	**BPC**	
	6. Maintain a working group addressing pedestrian / bicycle issues.	**Town**	
B.	**Action Steps**	**Partners**	
☐	1. Create a "point person" who will be responsible for implementing bicycle improvements.	**BPC**	
☐	2. Establish ample and visible bicycle parking areas in the Downtown area (even replacing some parking spaces with bicycle racks).	**BPC**	
☐	3. Add signage to promote bicycle use and direct people to the most appropriate routes.	**BPC PD**	**PW**



Paved Bike/Walk Path
- Existing Shared Use Path Beside Road
- Proposed SUP Beside Road

Recommended
- Strengthen Bicycle Connections

Unpaved Bike/Walk Path
- Trail
- Fire Trail (caution - emergency vehicles)

Ferry Service
- Year-Round - Passengers and Vehicles
- Year-Round - Passengers
- Seasonal - Passengers and Vehicles
- Seasonal - Passengers
- Right of Way
- Water

Bicycle Circulation

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

2/16/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_21_BikeCirc.mxd; See Master Plan report for data source information.

THEN & NOW

In the 1998 Master Plan, the strategies related to transit included:

- Reduce parking and traffic congestion at Sylvia State Beach.
- Promote implementation of a beach shuttle.

Para-Transit

The Transit Authority provides "dial-a-ride" service on a reservation basis for persons qualified in advance.

The Transit Authority also operates "Medivan" service to medical appointments in Boston on Tuesdays.

Since the number of older residents is expected to increase in the future, a growing demand can be anticipated for these services.

Beach Shuttle

While VTA busses go by public beaches, there is no direct shuttle service from the Oak Bluffs ferry landing to public beaches.

The 1998 Master Plan suggested consideration of a beach shuttle.

7.5 Promoting Transit Service

Martha's Vineyard has an excellent and extensive transit system operated by the Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA). Oak Bluffs is served by four routes as part of the Vineyard Transit Authority system:

- Route 1 = Vineyard Haven to Edgartown (inland)
- Routes 7/9 = Hospital to OB Center to Airport
- Route 13 = Vineyard Haven to OB Center to Edgartown (shore)

The system is intensively used in the summertime and this helps support an environment where cars are not needed for many trips. Bus frequency is adjusted seasonally to match ridership. The VTA is in the process of converting their fleet over to electric buses.

Oak Bluffs should continue to support the transit system and service improvements for residents and visitors.

Transit Use

Promoting Transit Service		Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
	1. Support the Vineyard Transit Authority and bus routes serving Oak Bluffs.	**Town**	
	2. Encourage improvements to VTA transit in order to improve its viability as an alternative to automobile use.	**Town**	
	3. Maintain the "dial-a-ride" service and "Medivan" service operated by the VTA for those who need them.	**COA**	**Town**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐	1. Expand the number of bus stops with shelters and/or benches (such as on Lake Avenue at Ocean Park).	**PW Town**	**VTA**
☐	2. Investigate the viability of providing one or more shuttle bus services connecting Downtown Oak Bluffs to: a. Remote park-and-ride lots (employees and visitors). b. Public beaches (a "beach shuttle") to reduce parking and traffic congestion at Sylvia State Beach. c. Each ferry in Vineyard Haven in the months that ferry service is not provided to Oak Bluffs (an "Oak Bluffs Express").	**Town**	**VTA**

Signed Bus Stop

Bus Routes Serving Oak Bluffs

- Route #1
- Route #7
- Route #9
- Route #13

Distance to Bus Route

- 1/4 Mile

Ferry Service

- Year-Round - Passengers and Vehicles
- Year-Round - Passengers
- Seasonal - Passengers and Vehicles
- Seasonal - Passengers
- Right of Way
- Water

Transit Circulation

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 4,250 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

2/17/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_21_TransitCirc_51K.mxd; See Master Plan report for data source information.

8 PROVIDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

"Infrastructure is an investment ...in health, in economic growth, and environmental solutions."
Oren Etzioni
American Entrepreneur

American entrepreneur

Strategies related to utility infrastructure are presented in this section of the Master Plan.

Public Water

Public Sewer

Electricity

Communications

Resource Materials (partial list)

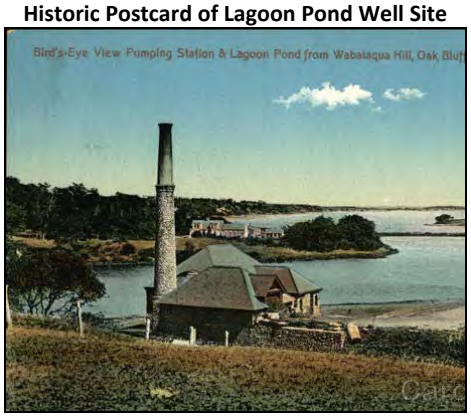
1. Oak Bluffs Master Plan (1998)
2. Martha's Vineyard Island Plan (MVC, 2010)
3. MV Source Water Assessment (MVC 2003)
4. Oak Bluffs Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan of Study (2017)
5. Oak Bluffs Wastewater Treatment Facility Evaluation (2017)
6. MV Wastewater Management Study (MVC, 2010)
7. Wind Energy Plan for Dukes County (MVC, 2012)

8.1 Maintaining An Adequate Water Supply

Public water in Oak Bluffs is provided by the Oak Bluffs Water District (OBWD). The OBWD is considered a public water system since it provides water service to the community although it is a separate and distinct entity from the Town. Most areas of the community have public water service available (potable and fire supply). Over 4,000 properties are served by OBWD.

While the Water District has an adequate supply of water for community needs (domestic and fire) at the present time, the capacity of the system can be stressed during the summer months and water advisories have been put in place. Additional well sites are being investigated. Sites have been considered in or near the Trade Winds Preserve, the State Forest, and/or the Southern Woodlands (County Road at Woodlands Drive).

Historic Postcard of Lagoon Pond Well Site



Lagoon Pond Well Site Today

Water Tank

Water Advisory

Land Use Restrictions

There has been some concern that additional well sites in the "southern tier" will result in the expansion of land use restrictions in the well recharge areas (known as Zone 2).

To reduce water use and forestall the need for more wells (and avoid land use restrictions), the Town has also been promoting:

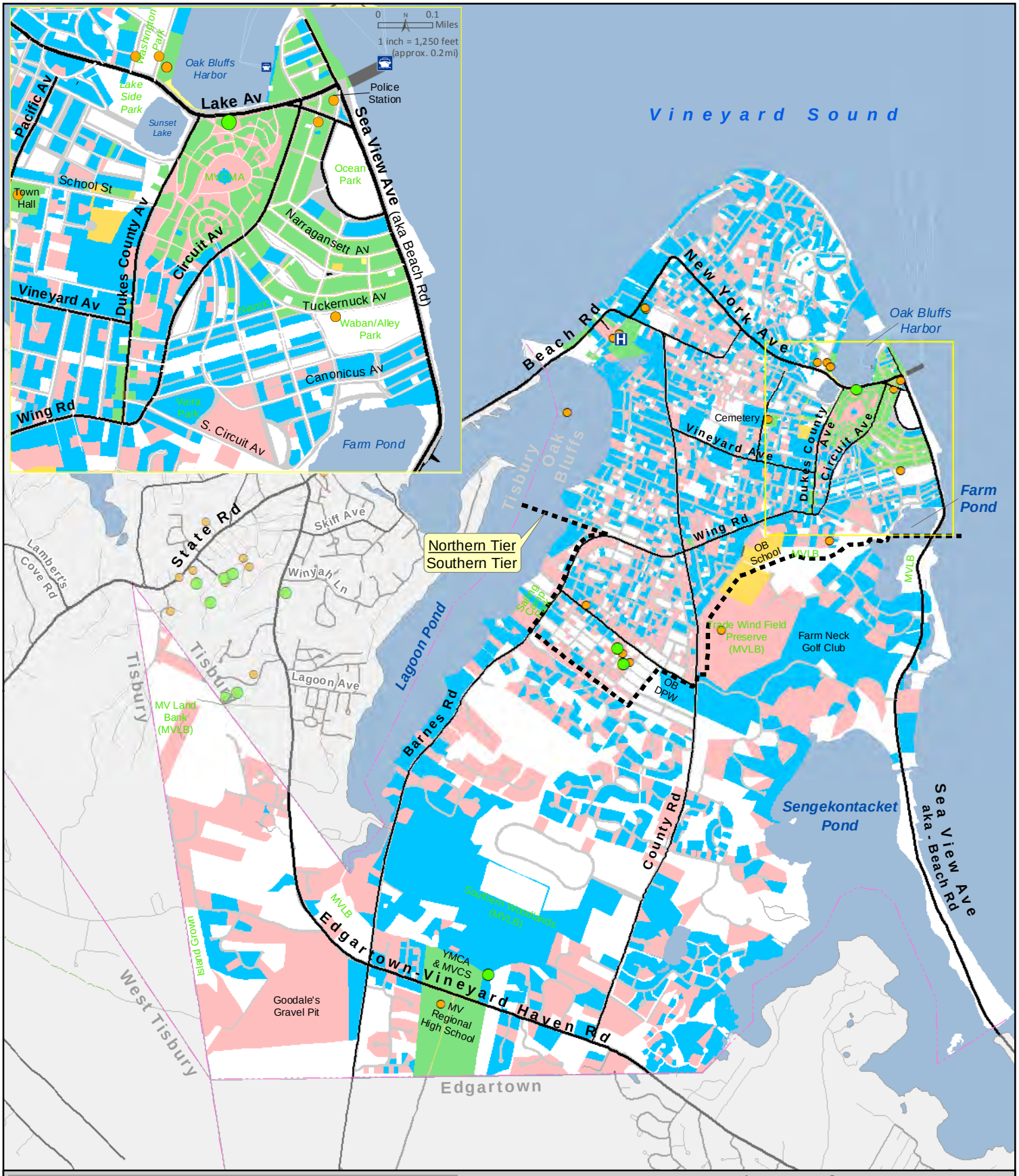
- greater conservation efforts, and
- limiting irrigation system use (which accounts for a large portion of water usage in town).

Other efforts might include adoption of a water use restriction bylaw adopted by the Town. Greater storage capacity (such as an additional water tank) might help relieve some stress on the water system during periods of high demand.

Maintaining An Adequate Water Supply		Legend on inside back cover	
A.	**Policies**	**Partners**	
	1. Support efforts by the Water Department to protect existing wells.	**HD CA**	**WD**
	2. Support and encourage water conservation efforts to forestall the need to bring additional wells on line.	**Town**	**WD**
	3. Replace older pipes where needed and interconnect water lines to improve service and flow.	**WD**	
	4. Maintain water interconnections with the Edgartown and Tisbury water systems.	**WD**	
B.	**Action Steps**	**Partners**	
☐	1. Consider implementing a formal water use policy (or water use restriction bylaw) with different voluntary and mandatory restrictions depending on water conditions, including limitations on lawn irrigation.	**BOS TM**	**WD**

Fire Hydrant

Fire Supply



- Wireless Towers*
- Transmitters

Connected Parcels

- Connected to Town Water Only
- Connected to Town Sewer Only
- Connected to Town Water and Sewer

Unconnected Parcels

- Developed**
- Undeveloped
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

*For cellular, paging, and other radio services. **Building value > $25,000.

File: oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_22_Utility.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

Utility Infrastructure

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4
Miles

N

2/12/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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8.2 Managing Wastewater Disposal

Public sewer in Oak Bluffs is provided by the Oak Bluffs Wastewater Department. The Department is affiliated with the Town and activities are overseen by wastewater commissioners

Approximately 700 properties in and near Downtown are served by public sewer. In addition, sewer service has been extended to include Martha's Vineyard Hospital, the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, the YMCA, Woodside Village, and the Ice Arena.

While the sewer system has a discharge permit from the State for 350,000 gallons per day (GPD), operational limitations in the system limit the ***effective*** treatment capacity to about 275,000 GPD. Existing flows to the treatment facility are about 250,000 GPD.

An updated comprehensive wastewater management plan (CWMP) is being prepared to evaluate ways to:

- Eliminate or reduce operational limitations,
- Reduce ecologic impacts (nitrogen loading in estuaries - see water quality discussion elsewhere in the Master Plan),
- Address community needs and desires (economic development, downtown redevelopment, affordable housing, etc.), and
- Address overall water quality / public health.

Wastewater management solutions (including nitrogen management) being considered as part of the CWMP may include a combination of approaches:

	Could Reduce Nitrogen Load / Address Water Quality	Could Address Community Needs And Desires	Could Address Operational Limitations
• Wastewater collection and centralized treatment	☑	☑	☑
• Package treatment systems	☑	☑	
• Innovative/alternative on-site septic systems	☑	☑	

While there are several ways that nitrogen reduction can be accomplished, the public sewer system may be the only way to effectively accomplish other goals of the community:

- Improvement / redevelopment of the Downtown business area,
- Provision of affordable housing, and
- Support for key institutional uses (such as the hospital).

At the present time, the Town is contemplating utilization of zero percent (0%) loans from the State of Massachusetts to fund the improvements recommended as a result of the CWMP process. Eligibility for such loans requires that the Town establish a "flow neutral" outcome meaning that a property connecting to the sewer would have to demonstrate that it could accommodate the proposed development with a Title 5 compliant septic system. Then, the property would be allowed to connect that amount of development to the sewer system. This approach is intended to ensure that development is controlled and wastewater flows are managed (and not accelerated or expanded) as a result of the availability of sewers.

Oak Bluffs should address the thousands of properties on septic systems. Since these properties continue to discharge nitrogen rich wastewater and offset the effectiveness of any improvements to the sewer system, Oak Bluffs should consider requiring that any new development (or any replacement septic systems) install an innovative/alternative on-site septic system that reduces nitrogen and other nutrients.

Managing Wastewater Disposal		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
	1. Continue to ensure appropriate provision is made for wastewater disposal as part of development in Oak Bluffs.	**HD**	
	2. Reserve capacity in the sewer system improvements being considered in the CWMP for: a. Redevelopment of properties within the existing Downtown business area, b. Provision of affordable housing, and c. Support for key institutional uses (such as the Martha's Vineyard Hospital).	**Town**	**WW**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐	1. Complete and implement the comprehensive wastewater management plan (CWMP).	**WW**	
☐	2. Consider adopting an ordinance or other approach which would require regular pumping, inspection, and maintenance of local septic systems.	**HD**	**Town**

Addressing Septic Systems

If there are 4,000 housing units in Oak Bluffs and 700 of them are connected to the sewer system, that means 3,300 housing units (about 82% of all units in town) are not.

Even if Oak Bluffs doubles the sewage treatment capacity and doubles the number of properties connected, there will still be about 2,700 properties still on septic systems and ***about two-thirds of all nitrogen discharged*** in septic waste will still be going into the groundwater table and eventually to the coastal embayments and coastal ponds.

8.3 Maintaining Adequate Storm Drainage

Due to the sandy soils on Martha's Vineyard, there are few major stormwater drainage issues in Oak Bluffs. The map on the facing page shows that soils in most areas of Oak Bluffs drain at a high rate and are amenable to infiltrating rainwater and runoff.

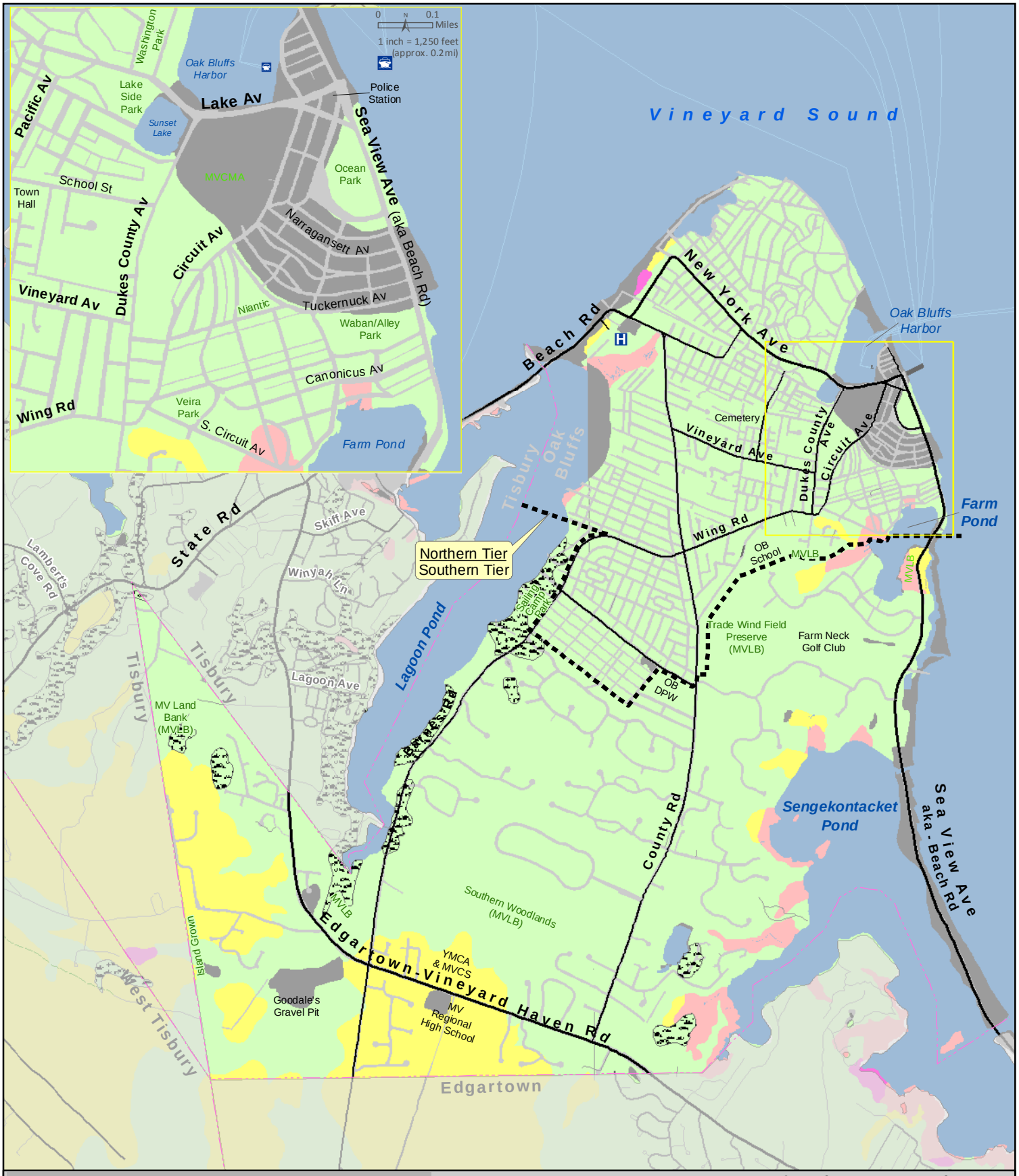
Oak Bluffs is applying "low impact development" approaches (such as rain gardens to infiltrate runoff) to stormwater drainage, when and where appropriate, and this has the potential to help address stormwater quantity and stormwater quality issues.

Stormwater drainage may become more of an issue in the future due to the anticipated increase in storm severity and frequency as a result of climate change. While soils in Oak Bluffs are very permeable in most locations, severe storm events may still result in inland and coastal flooding.

Maintaining Adequate Storm Drainage		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A.	**Policies**	**Partners**	
	1. Continue to apply "low impact development" (LID) approaches to stormwater drainage, when and where appropriate, to help address stormwater quantity and stormwater quality issues.	**PB** **PW**	**Town**
	2. Prepare for the possible future application of regulations for municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s).	**PW**	
B.	**Action Steps**	**Partners**	
☐	1. Develop, implement, and enforce a stormwater management program (SWMP) If and when required,	**PW**	**Town**

Rain Garden

Rain Garden



Hydrologic Soil Group

Group - rate of water transmission

- A - High Rate
- B - Moderate Rate
- D - Very Low Rate
- B/D*
- Unassigned

- Steep Slopes (>=15%)
- Right of Way
- Water
- Ferry Service

*B/D - High water table impacting drainage. Once drained, classified as 'B'; when undrained, classified as 'D'.

File:oak_MasterPlan; oak_MP_08c_HydroSoils.mxd
See Master Plan report for data source information.

Hydrologic Soils

Oak Bluffs, MA

1 inch = 3,000 feet (approx. 0.5mi)

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 Miles

N

2/12/19

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

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The Oak Bluffs Zoning Bylaw permits solar installations and wind installations in certain situations.

8.4 Improving Electricity Supply

Historically, electricity to Martha's Vineyard has been supplied through an underwater cable. However, with increasing electrical demand on Martha's Vineyard, some electrical supply concerns have arisen:

- Peak demands in the summer that can stress the overall system,
- Voltage spikes / drops that can affect sensitive electronic equipment,
- Reliance on essentially one underwater electrical cable.

Eversource is in the process of addressing these issues and is working on installation of a large "utility-scale" battery storage system at their property in Oak Bluffs that will significantly improve electric service reliability on Martha's Vineyard. The battery will help prevent outages during peak-use times and will replace diesel generators which have been used for emergency backup.

Electrical distribution in Oak Bluffs generally involves overhead wires although there are some areas (such as Downtown) where the electrical wires are contained in underground conduits. Over the years, significant progress has been made in improving the reliability of the electrical distribution system although there can be service disruptions during major storms due to damage from trees.

Improving Electricity Supply Issues		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Continue to work with Eversource to strengthen the electrical supply system, including a battery storage system.	**Town**	**UC**
2.	Support the use of fuel cells, solar panels, wind turbines, and other generation sources to help meet demand.	**Town**	
3.	Support periodic tree trimming to help minimize power outages due to storm events without using chemical treatments.	**Town**	**UC**
4.	Seek ways to put more utility lines underground.	**Town**	**UC**

8.5 Enhancing Communications Infrastructure

There is adequate land-line telephone and cable communication (television and internet) service in Oak Bluffs although higher speeds and greater capacity to serve the needs of residents and businesses are desired by some people.

Many people are using wireless phones and other devices (some people are relying exclusively on them) and the capacity of the wireless system is an important consideration. There can be challenges in Oak Bluffs due to:

- A limited number of telecommunication towers,
- Differing antennae locations for different providers, and
- High seasonality of use / demand.

Since it may be difficult to site additional telecommunications towers in Oak Bluffs, it may make sense to consider supporting deployment of a distributed antenna system (DAS) along major roads in order to eliminate gaps in existing coverage and provide better coverage town-wide for data and voice.

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified a the following as high priority projects:

- Improving two-way communication with boards, committee's and departments.
- Improving communication and outreach (including website and social media) to residents and the community.

Enhancing Communications Infrastructure		**Legend on inside back cover**	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Continue to work with communication companies to strengthen communications infrastructure in Oak Bluffs.	**Town**	**UC**
2.	Seek to establish higher internet speeds and greater capacity to serve the needs of residents and businesses.	**Town**	**UC**
3.	Seek to improve wireless coverage and capacity in Oak Bluffs.	**Town**	**UC**
4.	Consider supporting deployment of a distributed antenna system (DAS) along major roads in Oak Bluffs in order to eliminate gaps in existing coverage and provide better coverage town-wide for data and voice	**Town**	
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
1.	Review the provisions of the Wireless Communications Overlay District (Section 8.3 of the Zoning Bylaw) to ensure that provisions (and locations) reflect current technologies and approaches.	**PB**	

9 IMPLEMENTING THE MASTER PLAN

"Successful [communities] imagine what their future could be and then work every day toward that goal."

Brian Tracy
Motivational Author

9.1 Importance of Implementation

Implementation of Master Plan recommendations is the whole purpose behind the planning process. The planning process should not be all about producing a plan but to identify strategies, policies, and action steps that should be undertaken in Oak Bluffs in order to:

- Meet community needs,
- Preserve community character, and
- Enhance the overall quality of life.

If strategies, policies, and action steps to make Oak Bluffs a better place are identified but not implemented, the planning process will not have produced the changes desired by the community or realized the full potential of what Oak Bluffs could and should be.

Ribbon Cutting

Resource Materials (partial list)

1. Oak Bluffs Master Plan (1998)
2. Martha's Vineyard Island Plan (MVC, 2010)

It should be understood that implementation of the Master Plan will be a gradual and continual process. Many of the policy recommendations in the Master Plan will be implemented by the Planning Board through zoning amendments, application reviews, and other means.

Some policy recommendations will require the cooperation of other local boards and commissions such as the Board of Selectmen. A number of the Master Plan recommendations will require approval by the Town Meeting.

However, if the Master Plan is to be successfully realized, the recommendations must serve as a guide to all residents, applicants, agencies, and individuals interested in the future of Oak Bluffs.

Many sections of the Master Plan also identify specific action steps which can be itemized, scheduled, managed and completed. Action steps lend themselves to monitoring implementation and measuring progress. It is hoped that, over time, Oak Bluffs will continue to identify and undertake new action steps to help implement the Plan.

This type of process (reviewing the Master Plan and adding new policies and action steps) will help the Master Plan (and plan strategies) be relevant over a long timeframe.

Implementation Challenges

The inability to fund all the recommendations in the Master Plan is a significant impediment to implementation of recommendations

As a result, it is anticipated the Master Plan will help serve as a road map to things the community wishes to accomplish but the availability of funding will determine the speed that Oak Bluffs will be able to get there.

There is no doubt that implementation is a priority. It is just that the timeframe to accomplish community goals may be longer than anyone wants.

Plan Priorities

There are a number of recommendations in the Master Plan and it will be impossible to implement them all at the same time. How should Oak Bluffs approach making decisions about which strategies, policies, or action steps to tackle first? Several approaches come to mind:

1. **Community Priorities** – The results of the community survey on Master Plan priorities (see page 27) could be used to guide implementation.
2. **Functional Areas** – Oak Bluffs could decide to devote time and attention to certain chapters or strategies in the Master Plan and coordinate the efforts of the various boards and organizations with responsibility for different components.
3. **Funding Availability** – The availability of grants or loans could accelerate implementation of relevant Master Plan strategies .

There may also be other approaches that work for Oak Bluffs and these should be considered if they aid in implementation of the Master Plan.

9.2 Using Implementation Tools

Establishing A Master Plan Implementation Committee

Some communities have found that a Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) can be effective at coordinating implementation of the Plan.

The PIC includes representatives of various Town boards and commissions. The PIC meets quarterly (or more often, if needed) to discuss ways to facilitate or accelerate Master Plan implementation, assess the status of specific recommendations, evaluate the priorities, and even suggest new implementation techniques.

Oak Bluffs may wish to consider establishing a Plan Implementation Committee to coordinate implementation of the Plan. Some communities have reconstituted the Master Plan Update Committee as the Plan Implementation Committee.

Updating Zoning / Subdivision Bylaws

Since land use regulations (such as the Zoning Bylaw and the Subdivision Bylaw) are critical elements in guiding new development and redevelopment, making sure these regulations are consistent with Master Plan goals is an important way to implement Master Plan recommendations.

Following adoption of the Master Plan, the Planning Board should undertake a review of the Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Bylaw, making whatever revisions are necessary to:

- Implement Master Plan recommendations, and
- Promote consistency between the Master Plan and the Bylaws.

Implementing The Master Plan Through The Operating Budget

The annual operating budget guides municipal spending and so it is an important indicator of municipal priorities. Incorporating Master Plan recommendations in the operating budget and adequately funding them will certainly help to implement Master Plan recommendations.

Oak Bluffs should strive to incorporate Master Plan priorities into the annual operating budget and adequately fund them.

Implementing The Master Plan Through The Capital Budget

Capital projects tend to be long-term investments in the future of a community. When these capital projects help accomplish recommendations in the Master Plan, the community benefits in a number of ways. A capital improvement program is an evaluation of anticipated capital projects in the next 5 to 10 years and a program for how they might be sequenced and financed given financial capacity and other considerations.

Oak Bluffs should strive to consider Master Plan recommendations in the preparation of the capital budget and prioritization of projects.

Using The Master Plan To Guide Municipal Decisions

Land use applications could and should be measured and evaluated in terms of compliance with the Master Plan and its various recommendations. Implementation of the Master Plan can be facilitated by using the Master Plan as a basis for land use decisions by the Planning Board, especially:

- Special Permit applications, and
- Zone changes and text changes.

Implementation of the Master Plan can also be facilitated by encouraging the Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting, and other agencies to consider the Master Plan when making their decisions.

The 2019 strategic planning priorities of the Board of Selectmen identified creating and improving permit processes as a high priority project.

Maintaining The Master Plan

A Master Plan should be a dynamic document that is used, reevaluated, and amended as necessary. When a Master Plan is considered strictly a reference document rather than a working document, its effectiveness in guiding the community can diminish over time.

Oak Bluffs should consider keeping this Master Plan current and not waiting 20 years to update it. The simplest way to maintain the Master Plan might be to review major sections of the Plan every year by:

1. Holding a workshop session to summarize current Master Plan recommendations and discuss potential new Master Plan strategies,
2. Revising Master Plan sections including any changes to the maps, as appropriate, and
3. Re-adopting the Master Plan.

Using Implementation Tools		Legend on inside back cover	
A. Policies		**Partners**	
1.	Implement the Master Plan.	**BOS FC**	**PIC PB**
2.	Regularly review Master Plan strategies, policies and action steps to ensure they are relevant to community needs.	**PIC**	**PB**
3.	Coordinate implementation efforts with Island municipalities and regional agencies.	**BOS PB**	**PIC**
4.	Use the Master Plan to guide land use decisions such as Special Permits, map changes, and text changes.	**PB**	
5.	Use the Master Plan as a guide with regard to preparation of the annual Operating Budget.	**BOS FC**	**Town**
6.	Use the Master Plan as a guide with regard to preparation of the Capital Budget.	**BOS CIPC**	**FC Town**
7.	Increase local capacity for implementation including professional / technical staff.	**BOS FC**	**PB PIC**
B. Action Steps		**Partners**	
☐ 1.	Establish a Plan Implementation Committee made up of representatives of various boards to prioritize, coordinate, and refine implementation of the Plan.	**PB**	
☐ 2.	Update the Zoning Bylaw (and Zoning Map) to implement strategies, policies, and action steps in the Master Plan.	**PB**	
☐ 3.	Update the Subdivision Bylaw to implement strategies, policies, and action steps in the Master Plan.	**PB**	
☐ 4.	Continue to enforce local bylaws and ordinances.	**Town**	

9.3 Future Steps

The Master Plan has been prepared to meet the challenges that will confront the Town of Oak Bluffs in the future. The Master Plan is intended to serve as a guide to be followed in order to enhance the Town's quality of life, the overall economy, and community character.

The Master Plan is also intended to be flexible enough to allow adjustments that achieve specific goals and objectives while maintaining the integrity of the long-term goals of the community. Still, the most important step of the planning process is implementation of the Plan's strategies, policies, and action steps.

During the next few years, some of the goals will be achieved, some circumstances will undoubtedly change, and some conditions may arise that will suggest that it is time to reconsider some of the Master Plan strategies, policies, and action steps. Such situations are to be expected. Programs that help achieve community consensus, establish community goals, and promote community welfare will all turn out to be positive steps in the history of Oak Bluffs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Numerous Oak Bluffs residents who came to meetings, contributed to discussions, participated in surveys, and helped produce this Master Plan For Oak Bluffs.

Master Plan Update Committee

Brian Packish	*Chair*
Ewell Hopkins	*Vice-Chair*
Bill Cleary	*Resident*
Lisa Crisp	*Resident*
Elizabeth Durkee	*Conservation Agent*
Jamie Kageleiry	*Resident*
Mike Santoro	*Board of Selectmen*
Bonnie Stacy	*Resident*
Chuck Sullivan	*Resident*
Kim Leaird	*Administrator*

Planning Board

Ewell Hopkins	*Chair*
Erik Albert	
Mark Crossland	
JoJo Lambert	
Bill Cleary	
Kim Leaird	*Administrator*

Technical Support

Glenn Chalder, AICP - President

Adam Turner - Executive Director
Chris Seidel - GIS Coordinator

Planimetrics

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION

Designations Of Partners In The Policies / Action Steps Tables

AHC	Affordable Housing Committee	**PB**	Planning Board
		PC	Parks Commission
HD	Board of Health	**PD**	Police Department
BOS	Board of Selectmen	**PH**	Public Health Department
BPC	Bicycle / Pedestrian Committee	***PIC***	*Plan Implementation Comm.* ***(NEW)***
		PR	Parks & Recreation Department
CA	Conservation Agent	**PW**	Highway Department
CCHD	Cottage City Historic District Comm.		
CIPC	Capital Imp. Program Committee	**School**	Public Education Department
COA	Council On Aging	**SC**	Shellfish Committee
CPC	Comm. Preservation Committee	***SSA***	Steamship Authority
CPR	Copeland Plan Review Committee		
		TM	Town Meeting
FC	Finance & Advisory Committee	**Town**	Town agencies and departments
FD	Fire Departments		
		UC	Utility companies
HAC	Harbor Advisory Committee		
HC	Historic Commission	**VTA**	Vineyard Transit Authority
HD	Health Department		
		WD	Oak Bluffs Water District
LBAB	Land Bank Advisory Board	**WW**	Wastewater Department
LIB	Oak Bluffs Library		
		ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals
MDOT	Mass. Dept. of Transportation		
MVC	Martha's Vineyard Commission		
MVCMA	MV Camp Meeting Association		
MVLB	Martha's Vineyard Land Bank		

In the above table, entities which do not yet exist are highlighted in italic text.