



This Regional Policy Plan sets forth a vision for protecting the character of historic villages, natural landscapes, historic buildings, and archaeological sites, and for fostering development consistent with surrounding neighborhoods and landscapes.

6. Issue Area: Heritage Preservation/Community Character

Cape Cod is treasured for the traditional historic character of its communities and landscapes and is well known for the preservation of its distinctive historic buildings and villages. Every year, however, the region's traditional small towns are eroded by development. New residential development replaces historic buildings and landscapes that reflect the Cape's history and culture. Commercial development in previously open agricultural and woodland areas draws activity away from traditional villages and erases the distinctive boundaries that once defined the Cape's village centers. As a result, the region is threatened with losing its "character."

With thousands of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, dozens of local historic districts, and numerous well-known, archaeologically sensitive areas, almost all Cape towns have dramatically increased their historic inventory information. The information, gathered by local historical commissions and other preservation organizations, serves as an educational resource for the community and as a basis for regulatory decisions by the Cape Cod Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the towns themselves.

During the last decade, six Cape towns created new National Register Historic Districts, and one Cape town created a new local historic district. Individual historic properties in 10 Cape towns were placed on the National Register. But districts and individual

properties on the National Register receive only limited protection from demolition and alteration under the Cape Cod Commission Act and state and federal historic preservation laws.

Local historic districts, by contrast, protect historic properties from most exterior alterations. They also protect the character of the entire district by requiring the review of new construction impacts. In this way, local historic districts play an important role in preserving the distinctive historic neighborhoods of the Cape. Historic district commissions, charged with reviewing development proposals within these districts, face increasing opposition, however, as more development is proposed, and they struggle to define acceptable ways to accommodate it.

The most effective local historic district commissions have professional staff and detailed guidelines to direct the review process. To be effective, these commissions also must work cooperatively with town planning departments and zoning enforcement officers to ensure consistency of their goals and regulations. Broad preservation efforts are achieved through zoning changes and regulations that specifically identify historic, cultural, and archaeological resources for consideration by town boards during development reviews. For example, the Town of Bourne recently adopted zoning that gives its planning board authority to protect inventoried historic and archaeological resources in the Bournedale area. In Barnstable

and Brewster, a local wetlands bylaw administered through the Conservation Commission provides protection for archaeological resources in wetland areas. Similar provisions should be considered by other Cape towns.

Demolition-delay bylaws, which provide an opportunity to consider alternatives to demolition of an historic property, have been effective in many cases, demonstrating how education can go a long way toward achieving historic preservation goals. Eleven Cape towns have passed demolition-delay bylaws. The most effective of these provides for at least a six-month delay, discourages demolition by neglect, and requires new development plans to be approved by all town boards before a demolition permit is issued. In highly desirable locations, however, the pressure to demolish historic properties continues to be high and will likely increase.

Many historic properties are not protected because they have not been inventoried, are not located within historic districts, and are not addressed through local bylaws and regulations. Other protection measures must be pursued, such as preservation restrictions and conservation restrictions, although by themselves they are not sufficient to protect the character of the region as a whole.

Preservation restrictions—deed restrictions that require preservation of a building’s exterior features—have been useful in protecting important historic properties where other protections did not exist. Rarely used in the past, this tool appears to be gaining acceptance. Seven Cape towns placed preservation restrictions on 12 historic properties in the past decade. Some of these restrictions were required as a condition for receiving state funds for



Brewster. Credit: MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

historic renovation work. Municipalities and property owners who wanted to ensure that the key historic structures they have struggled to preserve would be protected forever have also established other preservation restrictions.

Many distinctive “cultural” landscapes, which define the boundaries between village centers and reflect the region’s agricultural heritage, have disappeared as new development has increased. Conservation restrictions can protect historic landscapes by preventing future development on properties. They have been effective in preserving both natural and cultural resource values and relieving some sprawling development patterns.

This Regional Policy Plan sets forth a vision for protecting the distinctive character of Cape Cod’s historic villages



Dennis. Credit: MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs



Falmouth village. Credit: Nancy Hossfeld/CCC



and natural landscapes and its historic buildings and archaeological sites. The vision also foresees new development and redevelopment that are consistent with the surrounding neighborhoods and landscapes of each community.

Achieving this vision requires the promotion of traditional patterns of growth within village centers and the protection of outlying open space. It also requires encouragement of the appropriate reuse of existing historic structures. Alterations should be accommodated in a manner consistent with the properties' essential historic elements and patterns of change over time. Allowing for appropriate changes to accommodate new uses and technologies will help promote the reuse of historic properties and ultimately encourage their preservation.

Cape Cod Commission review of historic properties has focused on allowing for "rehabilitation" as defined by the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties. So defined, rehabilitation is "the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural

values." Cape Cod Commission review should continue to focus on large-scale impacts to historic properties rather than smaller-scale alterations, which local historic districts typically address.

Current residential growth patterns, often referred to as sprawl, are most notable in that they conflict with the region's traditional dense village developments and undeveloped outlying areas. While cluster-development bylaws and changes in minimum lot sizes have been adopted in some Cape communities, additional incentives for traditional patterns of development are needed. The recent trend toward large residential buildings or "trophy homes" has increased the impact of new development on scenic vistas and village character, as many of these buildings have been located on key coastal properties, high elevations, or lots that are too small to accommodate such large structures adequately. Some towns have made changes to the allowable dimensional requirements as recommended in the Commission's model village bylaw to address this issue and others are considering similar actions.

Commercial growth changing the overall scale of buildings also threatens character in every Cape community. Existing zoning and parking requirements can make it hard to accommodate large buildings within historic village centers. The alternative locations—commercial strips—threaten a town's community character by drawing vitality away from historic centers and eliminating open areas that had previously provided rural relief between village centers. The design of these large commercial structures does not fit easily into traditional Cape Cod style buildings. Towns need to encourage designs that retain the Cape's distinctive character. The town of Yarmouth, for example,

recently created an overlay district along the Route 28 commercial corridor that allows relief from certain zoning requirements when a developer incorporates improved design features.

This Regional Policy Plan addresses the scale and design issues by establishing standards that limit the size of new buildings and require architectural standards consistent with community character. Encouraging appropriate redevelopment of commercial strip areas, however, will continue to be a major challenge.

Building design is not the only community character issue relevant to large commercial developments. Roadway changes, such as widening and adding turning lanes, to accommodate larger traffic volumes can significantly change the scale of the roadway and thus the community character, particularly in areas where narrow roadways and wooded buffers predominate. Roadway appurtenances such as signal mast arms, guardrails, and large drainage areas also have negative community character impacts, particularly within historic village centers.

This Regional Policy Plan addresses some of these issues by setting standards for lighting and signs and by requiring suitable landscaping for new development.

A specialized concern for the character of the Cape's communities is the impact of wireless telecommunications facilities, such as towers and antennas to support cell phones. Through its continuing work with the Lower Cape Wireless Working Group, the Cape Cod Commission has promoted better siting and design standards to limit the visual impacts of telecommunications facilities. Commission review standards identify appropriate sites for such facilities and



Cape Cod Mall, Hyannis. Credit: Nancy Hossfeld/CCC

require telecommunications providers to “co-locate” equipment (that is, share the facilities with other providers). The Commission’s model bylaw and guidelines for wireless telecommunications facilities also creates incentives for providers to locate their facilities on existing structures rather than building new ones.

With increased development pressures in recent years, more towns have considered zoning changes, new bylaws, and other efforts to guide growth and protect cultural resources. Many communities, however, are still reluctant to institute zoning changes, and towns continue to need help to enhance community character through local bylaws and regulations. Education about why zoning changes and other protections are warranted remains important, and the Cape Cod Commission will continue to assist towns in meeting their preservation, community character, and land use planning goals.



Chatham. Credit: MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs



Heritage Preservation/Community Character



6.1 Goal:

To protect and preserve the important historic and cultural features of the Cape landscape and built environment that are critical components of Cape Cod's heritage and economy.

Minimum Performance Standards

6.1.1 An historic structure's key character-defining features, including the relationship to its site and setting, shall be preserved. Additions and alterations to historic structures shall be consistent with the building's architectural style and shall not diminish its historic and architectural significance. Removal or alteration of distinguishing original stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship of historic or aesthetic significance shall be prohibited unless the Commission determines that such removal or alteration will not have a significant negative impact on the integrity of the historic property, surrounding historic district, or otherwise distinctive neighborhood.

6.1.2 The distinguishing original features of an historic or cultural landscape shall be preserved. New development adjacent to or within historic or cultural landscapes shall be located to retain the distinctive qualities of such landscapes and shall be designed to maintain the general scale and character-defining features of such landscapes.

6.1.3 Where development is proposed on or adjacent to known archaeological sites or sites with high archaeological sensitivity as identified by the Massachusetts Historical Commission or the Local Historical Commission during the review process, it shall be configured to maintain and/or enhance such resources where possible. A predevelopment investigation of such sites shall be required early in the site planning process to serve as a guide for layout of the development. Archaeological sites determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places shall be preserved and protected from disturbance.

In reviewing projects affecting historic resources, the Commission will refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties and other current guidelines and bulletins prepared by the National Park Service Heritage Preservation Services Division. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has agreed to review any projects that require a state or federal license, permit or funding, as defined by the National Historic Preservation Act, for their conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties and for their effects on the historic significance of the property and any surrounding historic district. The MHC will also assist the Commission in reviewing other projects that will affect properties listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places. A town's Local Historical Commission and, where appropriate, the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs will also assist the Commission in reviewing projects that will affect properties with historic and archaeological significance.

Other Development Review Policies

6.1.4 Historic buildings that may be slated for demolition or relocation should be preserved on site and reused or incorporated into the overall design of the project.

6.1.5 The reuse of historic buildings in village centers is encouraged in order to preserve the distinctive characteristics of each Cape Cod village and to promote revitalization of these areas. Where reuse has been conclusively shown to be infeasible, these buildings should be replaced with structures of similar character, mass, proportion, and scale.

6.1.6 Cultural landscapes and archaeologically sensitive areas should be protected through conservation restrictions or preservation restrictions that ensure their long-term preservation.



Minimum Performance Standards

6.2.1 New development shall be located to preserve the distinctive boundary between village centers and less densely developed areas by focusing on redevelopment/reuse of existing structures or developed sites and on infill construction in designated Growth/Activity Centers and Growth Incentive Zones. Creation or extension of strip development shall not be permitted. Reuse, redevelopment, or infill within existing strip developments in a way that does not extend the linear nature of the development or increase traffic conflicts may be permitted.

6.2.2 New development proposed on local and regional roadways shall be sized such that it can be accommodated without significant changes to the existing character of the roadway. Any necessary structural improvements shall be consistent with the existing character of the roadway, unless the Commission and the community deem alternatives appropriate within the boundaries of Growth/Activity Centers and Growth Incentive Zones.

6.2.3 New development proposed adjacent to scenic roads shall be designed to preserve distinctive features of the scenic road including tree canopy, stone walls, winding road character, and scenic views, and to limit the visibility of new development. New development adjacent to or within scenic open vistas shall be clustered and designed to avoid adverse impact to scenic resources.

Heritage Preservation/Community Character

6.2 Goal:

To encourage redevelopment of existing structures as an alternative to new construction, and to ensure that development and redevelopment respects the traditions and distinctive character of historic village centers and outlying rural areas consistent with "Designing the Future to Honor the Past, Design Guidelines for Cape Cod," Technical Bulletin 96-001, as amended.

Refer to Technical Bulletin 96-001.





6.2.4 New development adjacent to or within historic districts, village centers, cultural landscapes, historic properties, or otherwise distinctive neighborhoods shall be designed to be consistent with the character of the area and to retain the distinctive features of the neighborhood. Elements of the distinctive area's character such as building mass, height, scale, roof shape, roof pitch, building materials, and proportions between doors and windows shall be maintained. Distinctive features of the area such as proximity to the street, views to historic structures, water and/or landscapes, and significant open spaces shall be preserved.



Sandwich Stop & Shop. Credit: Sharon Rooney/CCC

6.2.5 For all new development, no individual structure shall exceed a footprint of 15,000 square feet unless it is fully screened or located within a Growth Incentive Zone. For redevelopment projects, expansion of existing buildings up to an individual footprint up to 50,000 square feet shall be permitted without full screening if the expansion occurs on previously developed impervious or landscaped areas. Full screening may be achieved through the use of traditionally scaled frontage buildings or a vegetated buffer at least 200 feet in depth. The method of screening shall be consistent with the character of the surrounding area and preserve the distinction between village centers and

outlying areas. In all cases, where an individual structure exceeds a building footprint of 10,000 square feet, the massing, façade, and roof configuration shall be varied in order to reduce the apparent mass of the building and shall include a minimum of 10 feet of set-back or projection in the façade footprint for every 50 feet of façade length.

6.2.6 In industrial parks or areas not visible from scenic or regional roadways or other distinctive areas noted above in 6.2.4, use of nontraditional materials and forms may be appropriate. In such areas, maintenance of adequate buffers on the subject property is required to ensure that the proposed development will not be visible from scenic or regional roadways such as Route 6A.

6.2.7 The building and layout of parking lots shall reinforce the character of existing buildings and traditional village streetscape patterns. Parking shall be located to the rear or the side of a building or commercial complex in order to promote traditional village design in commercial areas unless such location would have an adverse or detrimental impact on environmental or visual features on the site, or is infeasible. Parking structures shall be provided where feasible to reduce the amount of paved parking areas supporting a proposed development, provided the structure still meets the Design Manual goals. The use of shared parking, on-street parking, and community parking lots in Growth/Activity Centers and Growth Incentive Zones shall be provided, where feasible, in order to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking.



walkways within the development and linking to other buildings should be provided where appropriate.

6.2.16 In general, the size and color of all signs should be in scale and compatible with the surrounding buildings and street. When more than one sign is used, the graphics should be coordinated to present a unified image. Wooden signs, either painted or carved, are usually most appropriate.

6.2.17 All exterior lighting should be part of the architectural and landscape design concept. Fixtures, standards, and exposed accessories should be concealed or harmonious with other project design materials.

6.2.18 Undergrounding of overhead utility lines as part of any roadway improvement project is encouraged.

Implementation

Commission Actions:

A. The Commission will assist town boards and committees in protecting community character through new or revised zoning bylaws and regulations. Efforts will promote village-style development, limit strip development, foster redevelopment and infill construction, establish appropriate vegetated buffer standards, and encourage preservation and reuse of historic properties.

B. The Commission will inventory the region's distinctive cultural landscapes and sites of potential archaeological significance. The Commission will pursue preservation of significant resources through a variety of means such as land protection, preservation or conservation restrictions, regulatory changes, and educational efforts to increase public awareness.

C. The Commission will expand the existing design manual, *Designing the Future to Honor the Past*, to address moderate- to large-scale commercial projects and how they can be designed consistent with the region's traditional development patterns.

D. The Commission will work with towns and state agencies to develop guidelines for appropriate improvements to scenic and historic Cape Cod roadways.

E. The Commission will work with towns and utility companies to encourage placement of existing utility lines and associated structures underground in locations where these elements are deemed to detract from historic and cultural features, community character, and scenic views.



Refer to Technical Bulletin 96-001.

Route 6A in Dennis. Credit: CCC file photo



Recommended Town Actions:

A. Towns should revise zoning to encourage village-style development through setback, parking, building footprint, and incentives for redevelopment as discussed in the Commission's model village-development bylaw. Towns should also develop a design review process and local design guidelines for areas of distinctive development as discussed in the Commission's design manual, *Designing the Future to Honor the Past*.

B. Towns should continue to inventory their historic resources and, where appropriate, structures, landscapes, or sites of historic significance should be protected through means such as Local Historic Districts, nomination for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, demolition-delay bylaws, and subdivision regulations that provide for review of potential impacts to historic and archaeological resources.

C. Towns should identify scenic roadways and establish local bylaws or guidelines that preserve the character of these areas including:

- guidelines for clearing and planting to limit disturbance of natural resources;
 - rules for placement of signs and utilities;
 - plan review procedures for key locations;
 - measures to preserve scenic views;
 - restrictions on height of buildings;
 - controls on removal or alteration of stone walls and other historic features;
 - restrictions on the cutting of large trees (greater than 6 inches in diameter);
- and
- the institution of tree planting programs to replace trees in areas where older specimens have died.

D. Towns should reduce/institute more flexible parking requirements such as allowing shared parking lots, reducing the number of spaces required per development, requiring secure bicycle parking in shopping and business districts, allowing reserve parking strategies and, where safety permits, encouraging curbside parking in village centers in order to slow traffic and buffer pedestrians.

E. Towns should adopt a bylaw that limits land clearing and alteration of natural topography prior to development review, as discussed in the Commission's model land clearing, grading, and protection of specimen trees bylaw, and a local landscape ordinance that protects existing trees and requires landscaping and screening of new development from major roads.

F. Where feasible, towns should require the placement of new utility lines underground and actively encourage the undergrounding of existing lines and structures in locations where they detract from historic and cultural features, community character, and scenic views.



Provincetown Heritage Museum. Credit: MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs