

Metcalf & Eddy
Notes & Transcript from Vineyard Gazette Issue on M&E
December 20, 1974

HBH Editorial How Accurate was M&E

Vital to new MVC as it begins work

M&E Parts III-V of summary published as submitted in 1971 to Dukes Co. Planning & Economic Development Commission.

24 – month study aided by Federal grant. Delayed from July 7 to December 2, 1971 – abridged & edited version published by planning commission with Dean Swift (chair) insert.

Philosophical & opinion differences unresolvable – so revised/abridged plan not representative of majority of commission. Summary provides info & etc. for discussion sessions.

Part V omitted – Strategy & Future Land Use Plan.

Entire report should be available. So Gazette publishes the suppressed recommendations and edited section plus intro letter November 11, 1974 from VP of M&E

VP J. R. Woglom -

Gives permission to reprint the attached material from the suppressed section. Draft was unanimously rejected by commission 7-13-1971.

Land use future section – based on work Calvin Cook

Woglom has not been on Vineyard since August 1971

Experience – 1949 & summer/winter 1964-71. Stands behind work.

Part III

Forecasts & Potential Impacts

Seasonal & off season transportation, housing, pop'n, utilities, land use.

Assumes status quo, no major land conservation, no low or elderly housing etc. no new county or regional oversight.

Population – 1980 2x, 1990 3x that of 1970 – Ave pop'n peck & scanner.

Most change up-island. Summer will become tourist oriented. Doubling the day trippers. ↑ older especially female. Most 100+ acre owners will be off-island.

Housing - ↑ % mobile homes, apartment:

Developed Land

1970 – 5850 ac. developed land → 1980 7000 ac. 1980 5800 ac. most growth adj down island urban centers and up-island improved roads.

“In the absence of comprehensive effective and enforced environmental controls urban sprawl or indiscriminate land use will be the order of the day.”

Impacts

“Roads and parking facilities in the centers of Edgartown, Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs by 1980 will be jammed and by 1990 will be beyond the level of tolerability.”

Mix of predictions right on and not

Not – roaming bands of youngsters: need to move hospital to center of island so Lagoon Pond can be pier; oil, gas & sewage spills by boats in harbors.

IV Goals

Fight contamination, overpopulation, over use; vehicular congestion and noise & air pollution; indiscriminate over-use of land & building, loss and destruction of its animal, fish & birdlife.

V Strategy & Plan

Need land use plan; strategy for restrictions, environmental controls, financing

Recognize problems; agree on policies; means & program including assignment of responsibilities; erection as needed of new governmental organizations plan for future land use.

Plan: Key Design Elements (1) Open Space plan, (2) new town with a containment or green belt; (3) plan for ultimate residential densities

Figures 8&9

New town between Lagoon Pond & Where Barnes and County Roads intersect with Edgartown and Vineyard Haven Road.

Eliminate bridge open Lagoon Pond for SSA

Guidelines for development.

A Challenge

The following challenge is addressed to the citizens of Dukes County.

Can you be the exception and protect the rural environment of your own county from the ravages of the despoilers, or will you fall by the wayside with all the others who have been attacked? You and Nantucket are the last bastions of hope for warm water islands lying off the Eastern coastline of the United States.

The next two years are critical. If by June 1973 the recommendations made in this report for this date are not implemented, in our opinion, Martha's Vineyard will have contracted environmental cancer and by September 1975 will have not only been fully "raped" by the despoilers but also have contracted environmental terminal cancer.

Roads and Parking Facilities

Roads and parking facilities in the centers of Edgartown, Vineyard Haven, and Oak Bluffs by 1980 will be jammed and by 1990 will be beyond the level of tolerability. Attempts to widen streets and develop new parking facilities will be ineffective and will literally destroy the past environment. Then the only effective measure will be a banning of all automobiles from the congested areas. The density of people at peak times will resemble a core of a city. As in any city a percentage will be undesirable such as drug addicts and other social outcast.

Even the up-Island roads will be beyond their operating traffic capacities at peak hours. Automobile and bus noise will be the rule. Bicyclists and pedestrians will take their lives into their hands attempting to ride or walk along the roadside.

Roaming bands of youngsters with and without blankets and guitars will be the order of the day. Litter will be distributed in a high density pattern within 100 feet of the roads. Signs, placards, gates, fences, and dogs will not keep out the interested or innocent intruders, photographers, sightseers, etc.

Gay Head Cliffs and Menemsha Basin can be listed as disaster areas...

...Edgartown, Vineyard Haven, and Oak Bluff's harbors will be overflowing with boats. By 1980 oil and gasoline spills and the discharge of toilet wastes will pollute all three harbors.

The total inadequacy of public beaches will increase pressures for use of private property by the public. State Beach will look like Coney Island on Labor Day.

Land Use

By 1980 night clubs, drive-in movies, and other entertainment spots will change the four former quiet towns of Edgartown, Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs, and Gay Head into "swinging places"...

- Increased pollution of ground water and harbors will occur. Increased development, more people, and more boats in the absence of public sewerage systems, special boat toilets, and the elimination of oil and gas spills will increase with danger. Eventually fish life will die and/or shellfish will require decontamination. Salt water intrusion of drinking supplies probably will occur

- A real opportunity for the development of the shellfish industry will be gone
- Continued development in wrong places and too close to shorelines and in coastal flood areas, particularly along the southern and eastern shores of the Vineyard, will increase property damage and possibly cause loss of life at the time of the next hurricane.
- Loss of the grass lands on Katama Bay and near Chilmark Pond will kill bird feeding areas and result in their elimination.
- Continued developments of Gay Head and South Beach area will kill rare plants in the areas.
- The egret nesting areas of Little Neck area of Cape Poge and West Basin Beach probably will be gone.

In summary, by 1990 the county, particularly the Vineyard, will have destroyed its rural environment at economic disadvantage to itself and the off-Island despoilers and opportunists will move on to the next unspoiled area.

When the Island contracts environmental terminal cancer is unknown—it has not yet. However, the next five years are critical. If a definite and well-ordered program of preventive and prescriptive medicine is not undertaken almost immediately or within the next two years, by 1975 the Vineyard undoubtedly will have contracted environmental terminal cancer.

(1) Overpopulation and Overuse
POLICY

Restrict the number and type of persons gaining entrance to the county.

MEANS

(a) Obtain during the 1972-73 session of the state legislature for the Steamship Authority to operate all boats over 25 tons or 100 passengers, discharging passengers, goods, or vehicles in the Vineyard.

(b) ...permit the Authority to operate on the mainland from only its present terminal point in the town of Falmouth.

(c) ... limit the number of passengers per any one day brought to the Vineyard to 2,500.

(d) Eliminate all summer seasonal or tourist-oriented promotion and advertising...

(2) Vehicular Congestion and Noise
Pollution

POLICY

(a) Restrict the number and type of vehicles gaining entrance to the county.

(b) Reduce the potential levels of noise and air pollution.

MEANS

(a)... limit the number of vehicles per any one day brought to the Vineyard to 250 passenger cars and 50 other vehicles.

(c) Restrict... the rental of cars and other vehicles to not over 50 vehicles per day

(e)... limit the number of commercial airline flights in the county to five per day...

(3) Indiscriminate Misuse and Overuse of Land and Buildings

POLICY

(a) Regulate the use of land and buildings in accordance with a future land use plan.

(c) Emphasize the location of new urbanized development in new towns or communities separate from and not as an extension of existing down-Island towns.

MEANS

(f) Create an open space system (permanent conservation and recreation land and water system containing the important natural resources of the county)

(4) Loss and Destruction of Vegetation and Wildlife and Endangerment of Human Life from Water Pollution

POLICY

(a) Prevent the loss and destruction of the most important vegetation and wildlife areas in the country...

(b) Coordinate the prevention of the loss and destruction of vegetation and wildlife with a future open space plan.

MEANS

(a) The Dukes County Planning and Economic Development Commission and the county commissioners of Dukes County should adopt as the official policy plan of the county the future open space plan shown in Figure 9...

(b) Private conservation groups on the Vineyard should finance and have carried out during the 1971-72 by a nationally renowned firm of ecologists and planners a detailed ecological-environmental study and conservation open space plan of the Vineyard to be coordinated with this comprehensive plan and the detailed operational soils survey recommended to be sponsored by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

(c) Private conservation-oriented groups in the Vineyard should sponsor action by the U. S. Department of Interior for the establishment of the South Beach area from Squibnocket Pond to Edgartown Great Pond as a national wildlife refuge area and extensions to Gay Head Cliffs and Menemsha Basin areas and Katama Bay as a national park (see Figure 9).

(5) Creation of a Year-Round Economy POLICY

Improve the year round economy of the county and make it less dependent upon the summer season for its capital.

MEANS

(a)...recommendations of the Matthiessen and Toner for improving the shellfish industry.

(c) Private interests should finance and prepare a report proposing and promoting the location on the Vineyard of an institute of higher learning, possibly specializing in oceanography.

(d) The Dukes County environmental protection and economic development agency... should acquire land for an airport industrial park adjacent to the Martha's Vineyard Airport...

(e) The Regional High School district should improve and enlarge both the facilities for and training in vocational and technical education offered at the Regional High School.

(6) Fulfillment of Social Housing Needs POLICY

Recognize and meet social needs of housing for low-income and elderly groups.

MEANS

The Dukes County environmental protection and economic development agency... should acquire land for, construct buildings thereon, and rent them to low-income and elderly families.

Editorial – VG Place for Planning 1.17.2008

M&E envisioned 7th town around High School E-VH Road – social economic center; larger projects.

Never happened but center developed:

Highschool; YMCA; Arena; Skate Park; Woodside Village; MV Community Services; Jardin Mahoney

In retrospect, the E-VH corridor was by far the best bet and place on the Island for such development, given its large amount of buildable land, central location, and easy access.

But problems – septic, traffic, highway strip appearance more like mainland. Should be DCPC

1.11.2008 VG Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road Becomes Busy Corridor

Over 30 years later, the seventh Island town as envisioned by the Metcalf and Eddy study has yet to materialize along the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road. There are no box stores or shopping mall, no research labs or junior colleges.

But what has developed on this one-mile stretch of road between the intersection of County and Barnes Roads does have the hallmarks of a town. There you will find a majority of the larger Island-wide institutions, like the regional high school, Martha's Vineyard Community Services and the Martha's Vineyard Arena.

There is also the skate park, Woodside

Village elderly housing, the Masonic Hall and the Island's only funeral home. And that's not counting the large number of projects slated for the busy corridor which are in various stages of development.

The largest is the 35,000-square-foot YMCA building to be built across from the high school that will feature a gymnasium, child care rooms, meeting facilities and an Olympic-sized swimming pool. The YMCA facility is tentatively slated to open sometime in early 2009.

There are also proposals for three new churches that could turn the corridor into the Island's own religion row. The 5,500-square-foot World Revival Church that will seat 200 people is nearly complete; and work is underway on the New Life Assembly of God church, a building that already exists but has plans to expand to accommodate 150 people and a day care center for 28 children.

A 4,600-square-foot church proposed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and there have also been discussions in recent years by the Catholic diocese about building a large central church along Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road that would serve its Island congregation.

With these Islandwide institutions already built, and several more on the way, the question hangs in the air — have some of the goals outlined in the 1972 Metcalf Study been achieved even though a town never was created?

Of course, the Vineyard's year round population never reached those projections, which perhaps negated the need for a new community in the center of the Island that would accommodate 15,000 people. But despite these unfulfilled predictions, the growth of the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven corridor has so far proven to be a planning success.

"This corridor has kind of worked

itself out — whether through planning or natural inertia," said Mark London, executive director of the Martha's Vineyard Commission. "For better or for worse, this area has evolved on its own and I would say overall the results range from good to very good," he said, adding: "It has shifted a the density and traffic away from the downtown areas, but it has managed to do this without hurting the economy or seasonal businesses."

Vineyard schools superintendent Dr. James H. Weiss agreed.

"It's kind of a no-brainer. The kids get through with school and then they walk across the street to the skate park or [the future] YMCA," he said.

Craig Whitaker, a part-time Vineyard Haven resident and urban planner, said the lack of planning has caused the Edgartown-Vineyard Road to now resemble any other roadway you might find in an urban or suburban area on the mainland.

"There is little consistency along the road; some of the buildings are fronted by parking and some are too close to the road. It would be stretch to call this a rural road, and there is little question it looks quite different [from the rest of the Vineyard]," he said.

Mr. Whitaker suggests an unorthodox approach: narrowing the roadway and planting vegetation along the shoulder to create natural screening while regulating traffic. He cited the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut as proof that such a plan could work. The parkway is known for its scenic layout and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

"I know narrowing the road probably sounds crazy to a lot of people; but it has already proven to work on much busier roads. Whether you are driving down [Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road], through downtown Edgartown or along State Beach; you want to know you are on the Vineyard. We should take steps to make sure this place doesn't start to resemble everywhere else," he said.