

TOWN AREA PLAN WORK GROUP
Meeting of August 16, 2024, at 4:00 pm by Zoom
FINAL AND APPROVED MINUTES

Attending: Mary Anne Easley, Marsha Fader, Mickey Rowland, Lee Saperstein, and Henry Terry; Nicky Sheriff (PLUS).

Absent: Regen Horchow and Alison King.

Attendance was verified by a roll call; there was a quorum at all times. The meeting was recorded and can be viewed at the following address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cCro5rYYZY&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhF3WZ8xvh3sdHgJEvCabR6&index=45>.

1.Call to Order.

Chair Henry Terry called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. He then reviewed the rules on remote-attendance meetings and said that this meeting would be recorded.

He also noted that the Zoom log-in would be the same for all Friday meetings through the end of 2024: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86372255725?pwd=eovTDnLsSSnTJzeHbeHOAyipDNIMFe.1>

2.Agenda Approval.

Henry Terry asked if there were any amendments to the agenda; hearing none, he asked for its approval, which was given on a motion by Mary Anne Easley, seconded by Mickey Rowland, and approved unanimously by roll-call vote (Mary Anne Easley, aye; Marsha Fader, aye; Mickey Rowland, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Henry Terry, aye).

3.Approval of Minutes for August 6, 2024.

Next, Henry Terry asked for approval of the minutes for August 6, 2024, and Marsha Fader so moved, Mary Anne Easley seconded, and they were approved by roll-call vote (Mary Anne Easley, aye; Marsha Fader, aye; Mickey Rowland, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Henry Terry, aye).

4.Public and Member Comments.

There were no members of the public present, hence no public comments.

5. Discussion on Draft Final Report.

Henry Terry asked Marsha Fader if her revision of the Housing report was ready; she answered that it was and that it should be in his mailbox. “Share screen” was used to display it for the work group. Marsha Fader began by saying that Mickey Rowland, whose screen was shared, had helped in editing it. This version is attached to these minutes.

She went through the report, giving the work-group members time to read each section. There were various questions but none critical. Comments were generally complimentary. In one section, however, the report says that “a mere one-third or less” of the houses in the area are occupied year-round (Goal 6.) and several members suggested that this was an high estimate. Lee Saperstein complimented her on the report; he had two small suggestions: the word “generator” should be added to Strategy 1.1 in Goal 1 and the word “legacy” should replace “grandfathered” in Strategy 1.3 of the same goal. Mary Anne Easley suggested that the list of properties provided by Nathan Porter, Town GIS Coordinator, should be attached to the report. Marsha Fader responded that there is a suggestion that the Town dig into the information and provide a valid estimate for year-round occupancy. Another suggestion was that the Water Company could provide individual usage data to show which houses are occupied in the winter. It was agreed that the list be appended to the final report and that the Town, if it needs the information, should work with the Water Company.

Henry Terry then suggested that there was time enough to look at another section, to which Lee Saperstein said that Alison King had given him an updated version of her section on Economic Development. He, then, projected it on “Share Screen” and suggested that the work-group members look at the highlighted sections that required action on the part of the work group (report attached). The essence of the first high-lighted paragraph is to recommend size limitations to commercial vehicles parked on narrow streets, particularly construction and landscaping vehicles. A means to require smaller vehicles is suggested. Marsha Fader suggested contacting design and architecture firms to ask for their assistance. Mickey Rowland said that a more effective way would be to put the requirement for smaller vehicles into the building permit. Eventually, it was decided to increase the language about quality of life in Marsha Fader’s report on housing, expanding on issues of noise and parking. Mickey Rowland and Marsha Fader will add language for this into the housing report. Alison King suggested, also in the third high-lighted paragraph, that the work-group should recommend specific ways to encourage or, even require that businesses stay open year-round. It was mentioned that Remain Nantucket requires its businesses to stay open; see their vision statement for references to a vital year-round community (remain.org). It may be that Nantucket Island Resorts could encourage its tenants to remain open longer or even year-round. Henry Terry remembered when restaurants had a year-round opening rota. Lee Saperstein volunteered to strengthen the language in this report on quality of life and year-round opening.

6. Adjournment.

At 5:00 pm, Henry Terry asked if there was a motion to adjourn, which was provided by Mickey Rowland and seconded by Mary Anne Easley. Approved by acclamation, the meeting was adjourned at 5:01 pm.

The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, September 3, 2024, at 3:00 pm. If needed, this meeting will be by Zoom. The Zoom link for Tuesdays is different from today’s link.

For reference: Subcommittee composition.

2. Land Use: Liz Almodobar (resigned) and Mary Anne Easley
3. Housing: Marsha Fader and Mickey Rowland
4. Economic Development: Alison King and Mary Longacre (term expired June 30)
5. Natural and Cultural Resources: Liz Almodobar (resigned) and Marsha Fader
6. Open Space and Recreation Plan: Mary Anne Easley and Henry Terry
7. Services and Facilities: Regen Horchow and Mickey Rowland
8. Circulation; Mary Longacre (term expired) and Lee Saperstein

Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary, saperste@mst.edu

HOUSING

Marsha L. Fader & (Mickey Rowland)

8.16.24

INTRODUCTION

The area encompassed by the Town Area Plan, is a dense urban area roughly paralleling (though not adjacent to) the harbor of 404.14 acres, or .63 square miles. The development of this area began with the Wescoe Acre Lots laid out in 1678, the 1717 Fish Lots and 1726 West Monomoy Lots. It is approximately one mile in length and one-half mile at its widest while representing four (4) zoning districts, including the Old Historic District dating to 1955.

The area of the Town Area Plan borders and excludes the commercial downtown which is adjacent to the harbor and adds 37.56 acres, or .058 sq miles to this combined and historic gateway to the island. The entire island totals 30,361.88 acres, or 46.97 sq miles.

This area contains the richest, most abundant and historic housing found on the island - the result of 300+-years of evolution and preservation. It is important to recognize the size, attributes and history of this area for determining a meaningful analysis of M.G. L. 41-81D, as follows:

“The housing element identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This element shall identify policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens.”

The one existing initiative for the preservation of housing - a program that itself is historic - is the establishment in 1955 of the Old Historic District. This initiative, as governed by the Historic District Commission (HDC) has a mission to promote “the general welfare of its inhabitants of the Town of Nantucket through the preservation and protection of historic buildings, places, and districts”. Also a strong contributor to Nantucket’s preservation and related protections is the Nantucket Historical Commission (NHC). The preservation of housing is limited to exterior architectural features only. The HDC and the NHC have no jurisdiction over the development of housing to meet current housing needs. However, believing that the HDC has and can provide adequate protections, a town area plan has never before been created.

Because this area of 404 acres is largely considered to be built out with little or no buildable land, the focus of the analysis of this housing element must shift. Currently there are no existing or forecasted needs or programs for the development of housing in the town area. Therefore the focus herein has shifted to improvement, especially to an ever-changing and challenged quality of life within the existing housing of this area.

BASIS FOR ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

There is a wealth of research about the architectural history of the homes and people who resided in them from the early centuries. The numbers below represent what we know about the number of properties and buildings that exist now. Little to nothing is known about the people who live here now. This lack of

data does not allow for identifying “policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens” as mandated by M.G. L. 41-81D. We do not know what balance or imbalance exists without this data.

What We Know:

From Nathan Porter, Town of Nantucket:

There are 1758 parcels & buildings (larger than 500 sq ft) on Residential parcels Of these 1531 are Residential for 256.25 acres.

There are 53 Developable parcels for 9.98 acres.

There is 1 Potentially Developable lot for .07 acres There are 13 Undevelopable lots for 3.68 acres

From Fisher Real Estate, 2023 Year in Review:

- 2024 average property tax bill has increased by 18%
- sixty-nine (69) real estate transactions in town with a median selling price of \$2,600,000

What We Need to Know:

Demographics: Who lives here?

Of 1531 Residential lots on 256.25 acres, how many are year-round?

What age groups, income, etc., are served?

Lot Study: Identify, Locate & Understand:

53 Developable parcels on 9.98 acres.

1 Potentially Developable lot on .07 acres

13 Undevelopable lots on 3.68 acres

Zoning Changes: What impact will they have on housing?

Housing Issues Identified with No Data - from Observation, TAP Survey & Discussion:

- Quality of Life Challenges
- Plenty of Housing - but Empty, Seasonal Houses
- Not Enough Year-round Use of Existing Housing
- Preservation of Historic Houses
- Zoning Relevance
- Loss of Mixed-Use Zoning
- Vitality of Residential Downtown

GOALS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal 1: Address quality of life challenges - a consistent benchmark from which all of our discussions were derived. The belief is that good, walkable, livable neighborhoods attract + keep year-round residents.

Strategy 1.1: Address and encourage all efforts to manage, reduce and eliminate noise from traffic, landscapers, outdoor HVAC equipment, hospital helicopters, construction, short term rental tenants, etc.

Strategy 1.2: Improve sidewalk safety through maintenance, street signage and enforcement of bylaws prohibiting cars driving and parking on sidewalks. Historic brick sidewalks are a cultural resource intended to provide stability and safety for pedestrians of all ages, wheelchairs, and baby carriages.

Strategy 1.3: Encourage the re-use of existing, grandfathered and new commercial uses in the Town Area Plan such as Marden/Main Street, Lighting/North Liberty, American Seasons Restaurant/Centre Street, Something Natural, Cliff Road, etc. Such small business commercial activity has been proven to vitalize neighborhoods.

Goal 2: Short Term Rentals:

Strategy 2.1: Encourage restrictions on the business use of residential properties used as short term rentals. Short term rentals without primary owner residency extends the Commercial Downtown/CDT imperceptibly into the ROH and alters the character of its neighborhoods.

Goal 3: Encourage year-round use of the existing housing:

Strategy 3.1: Provide tax incentives/Land Bank transfer fee exemption.

Strategy 3.2: Encourage the use + sale of existing homes to businesses + organizations for year-round, executive level, professional housing.

Strategy 3.3: Aging in Place: provide tax reductions for year-round senior citizens.

Strategy 3.4: Provide rental conversion assistance including legal, zoning, design help and understanding what is legally and HDC-approvable.

Strategy 3.5: Support 2024 Lease to Locals program. The Lease to Locals program provides financial incentives to property owners for converting housing units, including those currently operating as short-term rentals, into year-round rentals for residents who work on Nantucket for local organizations and businesses.

See <https://placemate.com/nantucket/>.

Goal 4: Preservation of Historic Houses:

Strategy 4.1: With historic interiors at risk, promote/showcase historic interiors.

Strategy 4.2: Require professional HDC staff to review ROH/OHD applications, to address historically-inappropriate side/lateral + deck expansions together with loss of open-space +

historic streetscapes context; create bylaws to restrict expanding existing homes laterally within a specified distance to the street. This is to promote the traditional practice of adding on to the rear of houses rather than the side. This enables zoning to be used to help maintain the existing historic streetscapes and preserve the existing side yards close to the street.

Strategy 4.3: Promote preservation easements, both exterior and interior, and address issues of maintenance and preservation of the historic buildings at a higher level.

Goal 5: Contract a professional study of TAP Housing

Strategy 5.1: Determine demographics data

Strategy 5.2: Identify, locate and understand the status and potential of all developable and undevelopable land

Goal 6: Recognize the decline in year-round residential town area vitality

Strategy 6.1: When year-round occupancy of a major and primary cultural resource such as the residential downtown of Nantucket island has a mere one-third of its homes occupied as year-round residences, it is serious threat to housing and to the preservation of this gateway as one of the island's primary cultural resources.

From <https://www.housingnantucket.org> it is written:

The Nantucket housing crisis presents a serious threat to the preservation of Nantucket's character. Many residents face a dismal choice: live in unsafe conditions, or relocate off-island. This unsustainable cycle deteriorates the community and leaves inadequate human resources for essential services. We can do better.

4. 4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development: *identifies policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities. (M.G. L. 41-81D)*

Economic Development Plan (DRAFT)

"Positively affect[ed] by proximity to grocery, pharmacy, bars, restaurants, coffee, insurance, post office, and the steamship and HyLine. The whole reason for living in a small town is to live in a small town. The point is to be able to walk everywhere."

"Ability to walk to town. It was better when stores like Hardy's and Nantucket Dry Goods were an easy walk because one could get everything needed with a manageable walk. Efforts to reduce noise and light pollution are much appreciated; however, I like the active downtown scene where one can be entertained "watching the pass" almost any time of day."

Vision

- To identify policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities.
- To review how this area connects and integrates with the commercial uses along the edges of the In-Town Area, including the Commercial Downtown District, Commercial Mid-Island (Mid-Island Area Plan), and Commercial Neighborhood (Brant Point Area Plan).
- To consider commercial uses within the area, such as inn and guest houses, restaurants, and shops and whether areas where those are allowed should be expanded or if alterations to those uses should be applied.

Recommendations:

Resources from the town to support the creation of rental space in homes in the Town Area, including providing legal and tax help and possible financial assistance in the creation of the permissible rental space for potential landlords.

Better quality of life for year round residents: robust and reliable wi-fi, more restaurants open year-round, comprehensive health care (consistent and accessible cardiology and geriatric care), more commercial flights available during the winter months, high quality education and day care available for children, consistent and quick responses to address quality of life issues like road repair, more parking enforcement, better and safer bike paths and bike storage, and affordable housing (for themselves and for employees). Reduce or subsidize utility rates: electricity, gas and oil, and water and sewer for year round residents.

Better business conditions for businesses: addressing all of the same quality of life concerns and tax breaks for businesses that stay open year-round.

Review the current bus routes to determine if they best suit the transportation needs year-round. Consider a hub and wheel approach to routes, as opposed to the current loop system.

Proximity to Downtown

Despite the fact that our Town Area Plan does not include the downtown core, we are adjacent to and surround the area. Our home-based businesses, inns, restaurants, and retail stores are impacted by issues and concerns that we share with the downtown core, such as traffic and parking. See [Parking] and [Traffic].

Housing

The Town Area is an urban population with a history of being dense populated. The economic development of the Town Area is reliant on increasing the density of residents in the area throughout the year in order to support the building of community and connection for our residents. Therefore, this subcommittee surveyed the area residents to ask about ways in which to increase rental housing opportunities and to identify which factors would support or encourage the number of homeowners in the area to become year-round residents.

- Homeowners supported the creation of resources from the town to support the creation of rental space in homes in the Town Area, including provide legal and tax help and possible financial assistance in the creation of the permissible rental space to potential landlords.
- Seasonal residents would be more willing to consider year-round residence and current year-round resident would continue to live here if there was robust and reliable wi-fi, more restaurants were open year-round, comprehensive health care (consistent and accessible cardiology and geriatric care), more commercial flights available during the winter months, high quality education and day care available for children, consistent and quick responses to address quality of life issues like road repair, more parking enforcement, bike paths and affordable housing (for themselves and for employees). One respondent requested that the Town of Nantucket reduce or subsidize utility rates: electricity, gas and oil, and water and sewer for year round residents.

Support for Local Business in our Area

The area subject to this Town Plan is home to many kinds of businesses. There are many inns, restaurants, retail shops (including home-based businesses), and an art gallery. It is also home to other businesses that are not open to the public. Since the building trades comprise a significant portion of the year-round workforce, many small-scale workshops are scattered throughout the area as “cottage industry” type businesses. Artists and other makers also do their work in the area and people have home offices in which they conduct businesses that operate on Nantucket and elsewhere.

The work group has reviewed but is not relying on the WPI survey done for the Chamber of Commerce. There are several structural issues with the survey as it does not capture the makers and other artisans in the Town area. We have also identified various businesses that work within our area but are not domiciled here: Landscapers, constructions crews, caretakers for homes, dog groomers, cleaning crews, sanitation companies, utilities, and other home and lawn care businesses. Ghost tours and other walking tours are also a business activity in a residential area.

The work group surveyed residents and homeowners to identify what assistance they need to support or expand an in-home business or a commercial establishment in the Town Area. The themes of parking and housing continued, and many responses were similar to the responses regarding living on the island year-round. Survey respondents requested that the Town connect the bike-paths, and wanted cheaper and faster internet, more reasonable priced restaurants in the downtown and town area, and tax breaks for businesses that stay open year-round.

Transportation to and from our Area

If the Town wants to encourage economic development in the Town Area, people need to be able to access the area without necessarily increasing the traffic. Many survey respondents and this work group see a need for safer bike routes and more bike storage in Town.

The survey received lots of requests for electric buses due to impacts from noise and fumes. The additions of an electric fleet in 2024 and free fares have been welcome ones, anecdotally. We would also like to suggest that the bus routes be analyzed to create a smoother flow of people from and to different parts of town. For instance, currently, there isn't a direct bus route between Washington Street and the Stop-n-Shop in mid-island. The routes seem to be more circular and less efficient than a hub and spoke approach might be.

Questions for the Working Group:

We would recommend that the construction/maintenance industry be asked to develop best practices to encourage smaller vehicles on the streets in the Town Area: they could consider length and weight restrictions or different routes for the larger vehicles that would bypass the narrower streets. [Is this promoting economic development?]

Amy Baxter was positive about pop-up shops or weekend installations, assuming they would be worth it for the business owner.

What about some kind of help to encourage businesses to be open year-round?

What is the Town already doing? *i.e.*, limits on seasonal alcohol licenses and requiring restaurants to be open year-round. We should consider asking Amy Baxter at the Police Dept to speak to us about which businesses need permits to conduct business.

The following is not part of the Econ report but should be considered to be added to the survey section at the end of the report.

Here are some points we got from other questions when looking at the year-round vs seasonal split:

139 (35%) year-round residents answered the survey, the remaining 261 responses fell into any of the four other categories.

16 of the 17 responses from renters were from year-round residents. 4 of the 8 responses that said they stay with family or friends were also year-round residents.

Year-round resident respondents skewed younger than seasonal resident respondents.

Year-round residents tended to have fewer people in their household in July, with 56% reporting 1-2 people, and only 6% reporting 6 or more people, vs 28% of seasonal residents reporting 1-2 people, and 20% reporting more than 6 people.

In January, year-round residents reported 76% of households had 1-2 people living there, vs 24% of seasonal residents. All but four of the 199 respondents who said their households had no-one living there in January were seasonal residents. Interestingly, 24% of seasonal residents said there were 1-2 people in their household in January, possibly indicating that they are renting the house out in the winter.