



TOWN OF WEST TISBURY HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN Six Towns, One Island

Submitted by the MVC to the town of West Tisbury for local adoption, January 2026



WEST TISBURY HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN
Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many organizations, Town boards and committees, and members of the Martha's Vineyard community who contributed to this Housing Production Plan, including:

The Town of West Tisbury Planning Board
The Town of West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee
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The Town of West Tisbury Select Board
West Tisbury Town Administrator
Dukes County Regional Housing Authority
Harbor Homes
Island Housing Trust
Martha's Vineyard Commission

Report prepared for the Martha's Vineyard Commission and the Town of West Tisbury by
Barrett Planning Group LLC.

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Introduction

The Town of West Tisbury¹

Stretching across the full height of Martha's Vineyard, West Tisbury's landscape reflects all the island's geologic history with rolling hills and bluffs, remnants of the glacial moraine and flat woodland and pasture areas from the outwash plain. The northern part of town lies on Vineyard Sound, and the southern coast borders the Atlantic Ocean. Abundant surface water and wetland areas lie within West Tisbury, along with over 50% of the Island's aquifer and much of the recharge area for several public water supply wells for neighboring towns. About 15% of land area is in the state forest, home to the highest concentration of rare species in the state, some of which are globally rare. Careful stewardship of West Tisbury's natural resources is of Island-wide importance.

The first of the Vineyard's "up-Island" towns, West Tisbury straddles the more populous down-Island towns of Tisbury, Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown and the quieter western towns of Chilmark and Aquinnah. Known for its quaint village center and rural landscapes, West Tisbury was created when western agricultural lands previously part of Tisbury were separated in 1892. Like other towns on the Island, West Tisbury possesses many historic properties, including farmstands, churches, a mill, a school, and seventeenth to nineteenth century homes. Map 1 displays a base map of West Tisbury today, showing major roads, points of interest, waterbodies, and open space.

West Tisbury's current land uses are primarily conservation and residential, with pockets of commercial uses along State Road, at the airport, and along the Tisbury town line (Map 2. Land Use). The tax-exempt state forest stands out as an important aspect of West Tisbury's landscape.² As shown on Map 3. Age of Housing, West Tisbury retains some residential structures from earlier eras, especially in the village center and west of State Road. After holding steady for most of the 1900s, West Tisbury's population began to grow considerably in the 1970s onward. Map 3 shows residential construction corresponding to this timeline, with areas of smaller, more uniform residential parcels primarily made up of housing built in the late twentieth century across town.

Like other Island towns, West Tisbury's population has generally become older and more diverse as it has grown. To discuss a variety of topics related to growth, West Tisbury engaged in a Community Visioning session in 2024. Over two days, 150 residents participated in activities to describe the town's current state, a vision for the future, key issues, and possible projects

¹ Information for this section is sourced from the Town of West Tisbury Housing Production Plan FY2018-2022, prepared by JM Goldson & RKG Associates, Inc. and the *West Tisbury Community Visioning Report*, 2024, https://www.westtisbury-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhli8396/f/uploads/west_tisbury_report_2024_final_0.pdf.

² Although exempt, the state pays a significant State Owned Land offset to the town annually. See MA Dept. of Revenue [Municipal Cherry Sheet Estimates](#).

West Tisbury Housing Production Plan

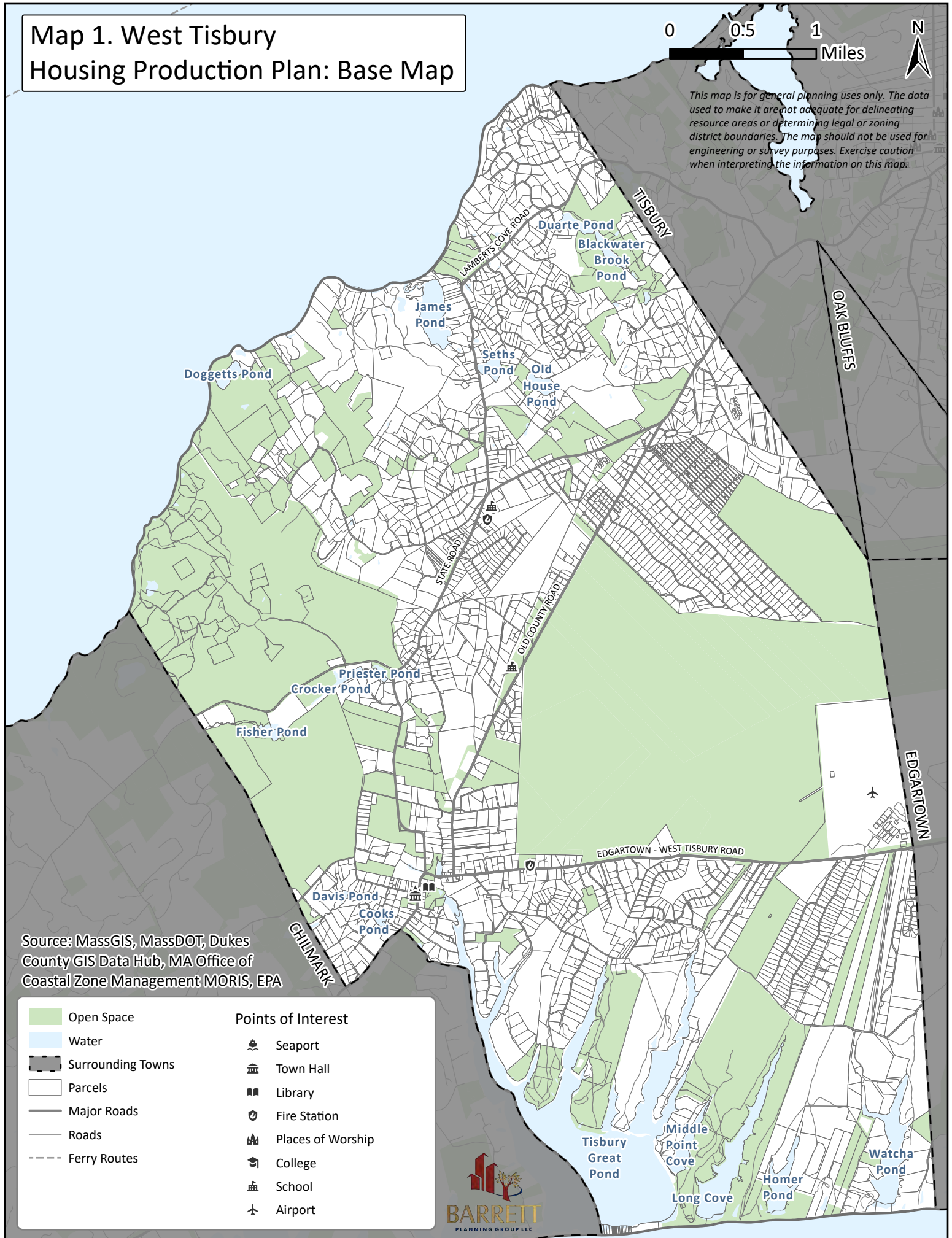
January 2026

and solutions. Participants identified Development, Planning, and Housing as a current key issue, and brainstormed several solutions also discussed in this Housing Production Plan, such as a residential tax exemption, a lease to locals program, a housing bank, and utilizing undersized lots, duplexes, and mixed-use development in existing developed areas for housing.

Map 1. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Base Map



This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.



Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management MORIS, EPA

Open Space

Water

Surrounding Towns

Parcels

Major Roads

Roads

Ferry Routes

Points of Interest

Seaport

Town Hall

Library

Fire Station

Places of Worship

College

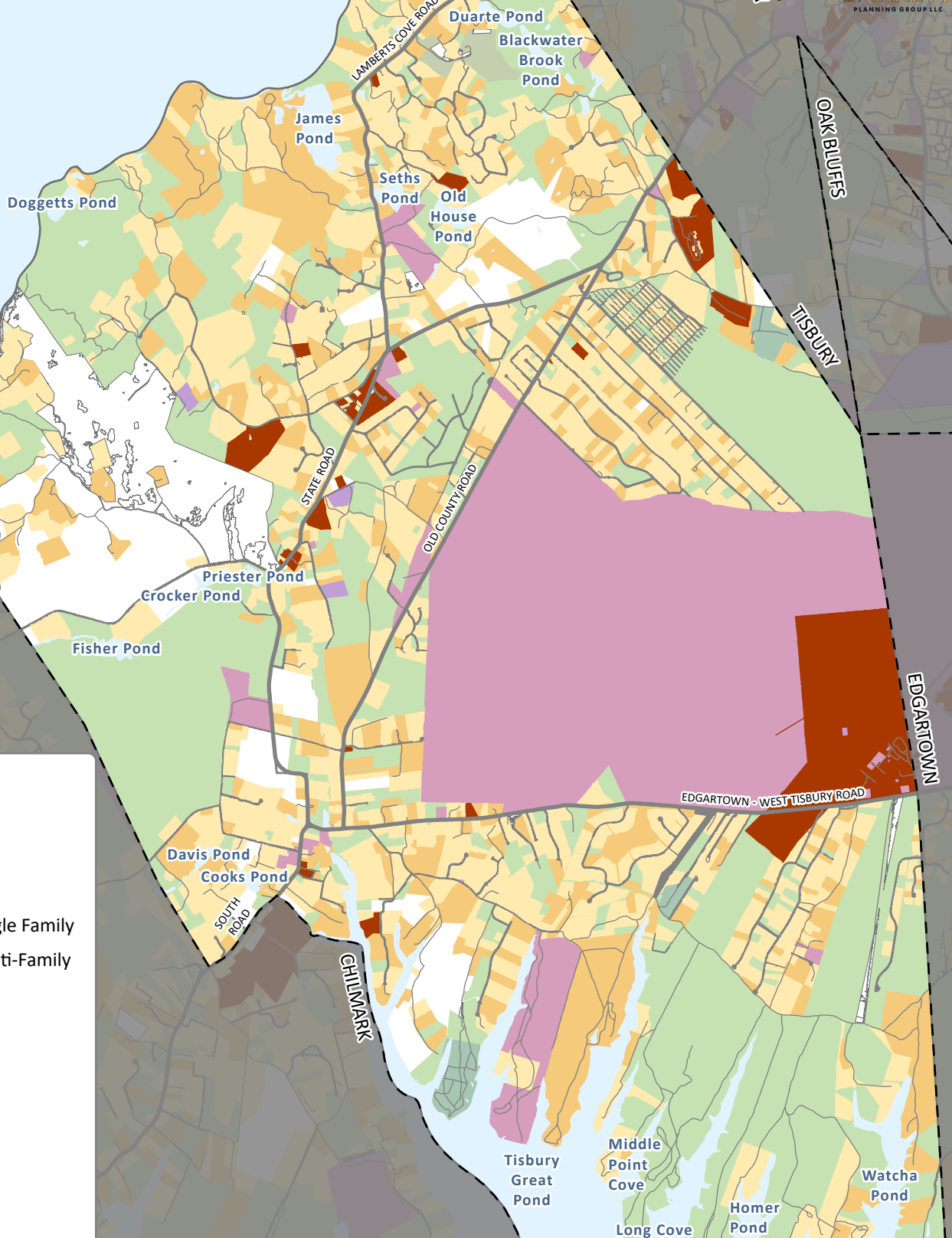
School

Airport



Map 2. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Land Use

0 0.5 1 Miles



Land Use

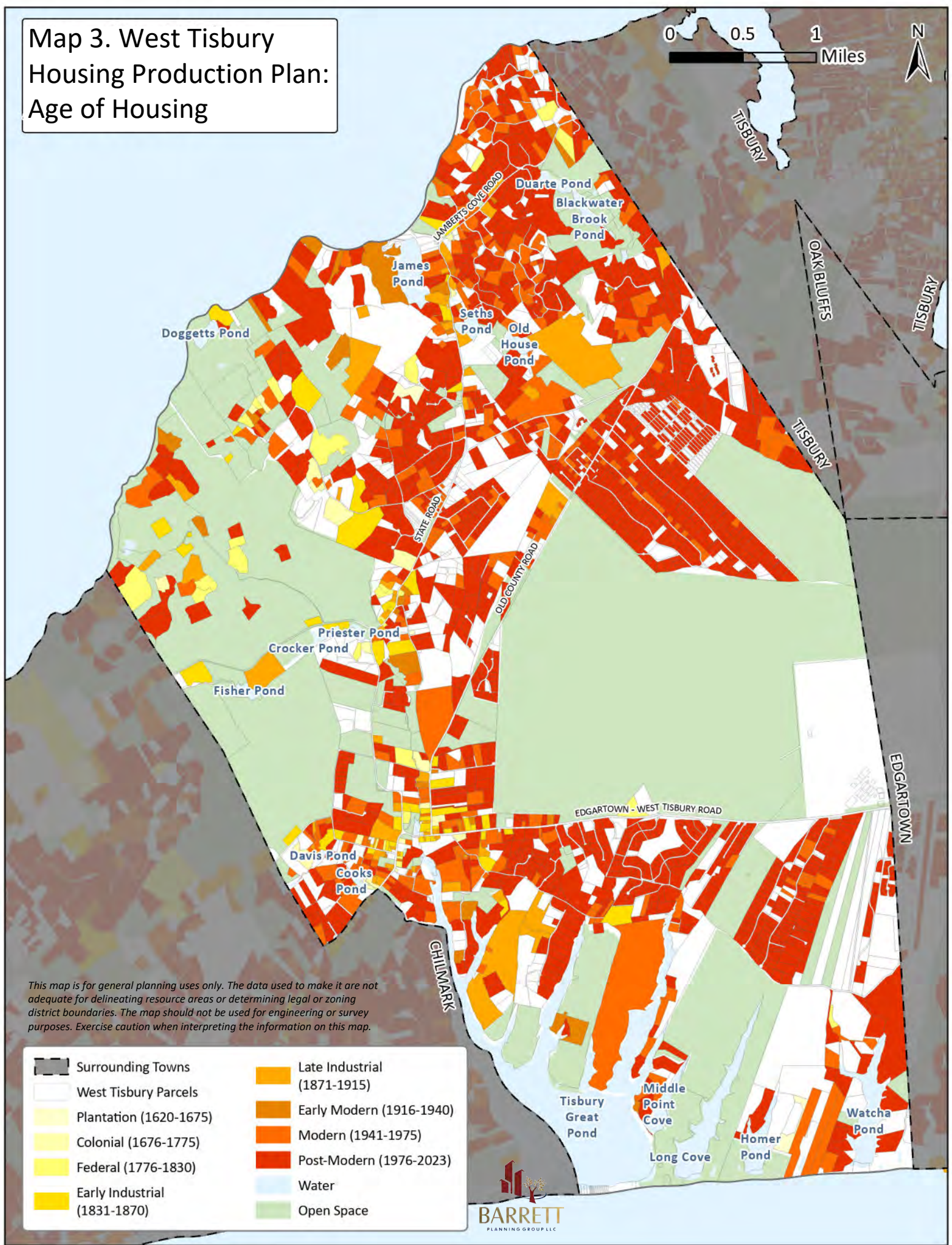
- Open land
- Recreation
- Forest
- Residential - Single Family
- Residential - Multi-Family
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Tax exempt
- Right-of-way
- Water
- No Data
- Major Roads
- Roads
- Ferry Routes
- Surrounding Towns

This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management MORIS, EPA

Map 3. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Age of Housing

0 0.5 1 Miles



This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Surrounding Towns | Late Industrial (1871-1915) |
| West Tisbury Parcels | Early Modern (1916-1940) |
| Plantation (1620-1675) | Modern (1941-1975) |
| Colonial (1676-1775) | Post-Modern (1976-2023) |
| Federal (1776-1830) | Water |
| Early Industrial (1831-1870) | Open Space |



Housing Production Plans

A Housing Production Plan (HPP) provides pathways for a town to meet and stay above the 10% affordable housing goal under G.L. c. 40B, §§ 20-23 (Chapter 40B). Grounded in an analysis of housing needs and barriers to housing growth, the HPP helps towns set housing development goals that address state requirements and local concerns. Once adopted by the Select Board and Planning Board, the HPP requires approval from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), the agency the Town will rely on for certification of compliance after producing new affordable housing units. The West Tisbury HPP has been prepared to meet the EOHLC's requirements.

In 2024, the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) obtained grant funding to help all six towns on Martha's Vineyard prepare and adopt new HPPs. The decision to pursue housing plans to address EOHLC requirements coincides with several recent local events, regional initiatives, and changes in law and policy at the state level. For example, the MVC embarked on an island-wide housing needs study that culminated in the 2024 *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, a major source of information for the HPPs. The MVC followed up on that endeavor by updating a 2014 analysis of zoning barriers to housing in each town. The 2024 *Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions*, also a major source of information for the HPPs, identifies local regulations that complicate or prevent the creation of affordable housing, including but not limited to housing eligible for listing in the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). In addition, passage of the Affordable Homes Act in 2024 introduces new ideas for communities in the Cape and Islands region under the umbrella of the Seasonal Communities designation. Furthermore, some communities on Martha's Vineyard have recently attracted interest from non-island developers interested in pursuing Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permits.

In this HPP, "affordable housing" means homes that low- or moderate-income households can afford and still meet other basic needs: food, health care, transportation, utilities, and essential services. "Low- and moderate-income" refers to the low-income limits set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Massachusetts uses HUD's income limits to determine eligibility for income-restricted Chapter 40B housing. Since West Tisbury needs to conform with the EOHLC's regulations and guidelines, the primary focus of this HPP is low- and moderate-income housing. Table 1.1 reports the HUD low-income limits that determine eligibility for affordable housing on Martha's Vineyard. For purposes of this HPP, HUD income limits will be used to define "low or moderate income" under Chapter 40B as well as the meaning of "SHI-Eligible Housing."

Table 1.1: Dukes County HUD Income Limits, 2025

Household Size	Extremely Low Income (=/- 30% AMI)	Very Low Income (31-50% AMI)	Low Income (51-80% AMI)
1	\$31,550	\$52,550	\$72,950
2	\$36,050	\$60,050	\$83,400
3	\$40,550	\$67,550	\$93,800
4	\$45,050	\$75,050	\$104,200
5	\$48,700	\$81,100	\$112,550
6	\$52,300	\$87,100	\$120,900

Snapshot of Housing Needs

The state definition of affordable housing matches the definition in the *2024 Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, the report that forms the backbone of the needs assessment in West Tisbury's HPP. However, higher-income households also have trouble finding housing in West Tisbury and other towns on Martha's Vineyard. The region's existing housing supply cannot meet demand. Intense competition from seasonal homebuyers and the short-term rental market, regulatory barriers to housing growth, limited infrastructure, and the cost of land all contribute to the region-wide housing constraints and high housing costs on Martha's Vineyard. Accordingly, MVC's analysis delves into three types of housing needs that exist on the Vineyard, and all are addressed in this HPP. These needs include:

- **Affordable housing:** for low- and moderate-income households, i.e., with incomes at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI).
- **Community housing:** for households with incomes between 81% and 150% AMI.
- **Workforce housing:** for local working residents; includes affordable units, community units, and units without income restrictions. Workforce housing may also include employer-based housing and may include units for seasonal workforce.

Lower-wage jobs dominate the employment base on Martha's Vineyard. For example, retail jobs make up 15% of the entire employment base; education or social services, 20%, and accommodations and food services, almost 36%.³ In most cases, the wages paid by island employers do not support the monthly rent and utilities for a year-round unit, estimated at \$3,250.⁴ Of course, the average annual wage for a job does not always indicate what a household can afford because the household may include more than one wage earner. Also, the number of jobs on Martha's Vineyard varies dramatically between winter and the height of

³ Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Economic Development, Department of Economic Research, ES-202, Annual Report 2024.

⁴ Karen Sunnaborg Consulting and Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment* (2024), 27.

summer, so the state's snapshot of average local wages is not a good indicator of what residents can afford to pay for housing. In addition, many people on Martha's Vineyard work more than one job, often in some form of self-employment. Nevertheless, the available estimates of housing cost burden on Martha's Vineyard - i.e., households paying more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs - paint a daunting picture of the disconnect between the cost of the year-round supply and the financial means of the island's homeowners and renters. The most current information available today indicates that 18.5% of the low- or moderate-income households living year-round on Martha's Vineyard pay more than *half* their income on housing.

Table 1.2: Households by Housing Cost Burden on Martha's Vineyard

Income Cohort	Housing Costs Percent Income		Households in Income Cohort	Percentage of Households in Income Cohort	
	More than 30%	More than 50%		More than 30%	More than 50%
Extremely Low Income	625	580	885	70.6%	65.5%
Very Low Income	535	185	905	59.1%	20.4%
Low Income	560	390	1,170	47.9%	33.3%
Moderate Income	355	40	835	42.5%	4.8%
Household Income > Dukes County Median Household Income	510	65	2,995	17.0%	2.2%
Total	2,585	1,260	6,800	38.0%	18.5%
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.					

The lack of affordable housing on Martha's Vineyard is an island-wide problem that requires cooperation and teamwork from all six towns. As a result, the analysis of island demographics and housing in this HPP takes a regional view, drawing primarily from the *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*. Many strategies in the Five-Year Action Plan are similar, too, though infrastructure differences mean that feasible strategies in one town may not work in a neighboring town. In 2024, the MVC hired a consultant to review the zoning bylaws for all six towns and provide zoning reform recommendations tailored to each community. Accordingly, this HPP incorporates selected strategies from the *2024 Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions*. Every town on the island has steps it can take to increase the supply of affordable housing, and every town has choices about when, where, and how to work toward the 10% minimum under Chapter 40B.

That said, even when all six towns have met the 10% statutory minimum, Martha's Vineyard will continue to have difficult housing challenges and unmet housing needs. Chapter 40B helps to permit affordable housing developments, but the 10% minimum is not a measure of housing needs. Rather, it is a "fair share" indicator that a community has met its affordable housing

obligation to the region. Every town on Martha's Vineyard should be planning now for the "post-10%" period in which the entire island will still be faced with housing needs.

Community Engagement

West Tisbury provided three opportunities for public participation by local officials and the community at large. Supported by a grant to the MVC and local funds, the Town sponsored the following community meetings:

- April 17, 2025: Visioning and Goals
- May 5, 2025: Strategies to Create and Preserve Affordable Housing
- June 17, 2025: The Plan – Goals and Strategies

The consulting team also created a project website on Social Pinpoint. The site provided information and online engagement opportunities for all six towns and served as a repository for recordings of all the community meetings.

Sources of Information

Information for the West Tisbury HPP comes from a variety of sources, including the Town itself, the community engagement process, previous plans and studies, the Martha's Vineyard Commission, state agencies, proprietary data, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Bureau of the Census. The most frequently used sources of data are as follows:

- The Census of Population and Housing
- The American Community Survey (ACS)
- HUD Consolidated Planning/Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data
- MassGIS
- Martha's Vineyard Commission
- UMass Amherst/Donohue Institute
- *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment (2024)*
- *Martha's Vineyard Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions (2024)*

A complete list of cited works and other sources can be found in the List of References.

A note on US Census Bureau data

Much of the data in this report draws from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which provides annual data estimates related to social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics for select topics. While the decennial census aims to account for the entire population, the ACS uses random sampling of about 295,000 households each month. The U.S. Census Bureau bases the annual ACS data on rolling averages of survey responses over the previous five years. They release ACS results every year but capture data trends over five-year increments; the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, for example, include data

from 2018-2022. This presents a more accurate picture, since the 5-year estimates have a smoothing effect and do not necessarily reflect year-by-year changes.

While the 10-year Census counts more accurately depict trends related to housing units and other characteristics, the ACS estimates data in years between the 10-year Census, tracking sociodemographic changes not included anywhere else. For example, income data is no longer available through the Census and must be drawn from the ACS.

For more information, we recommend that readers consult the [ACS handbook, Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data](#), and view the ACS and Census data sets directly on the [US Census website](#). The website includes the margins of error and other information. Find a guide to ACS subject definitions [here](#), and a Census Glossary [here](#).

Housing Needs Analysis

Key Findings

1. **Affordability gaps and cost burdens have intensified since the pandemic and remain at unprecedented levels.**

Since the Martha's Vineyard economy relies largely on the tourism and service industries, there must be adequate, reasonably priced housing available to the workers that Island businesses depend on, but they are priced out of the existing housing market.

2. **The Island's socio-economic diversity is eroding, while income disparity is increasing.**

The Island's steady loss of naturally occurring affordable and community ownership units and loss of affordable rental units threatens its social, economic, and cultural diversity. Lower-income households are dwindling in number and in proportion to the population beyond normal inflationary trends. Many of these residents are critical to the Island's functional infrastructure and the seasonal tourism and service economy. Meanwhile, the increase in higher-income residents and cost-burdened lower-income residents intensifies economic disparity.

The American Community Survey (ACS) estimates a shortfall of at least 2,849 affordably priced housing units on Martha's Vineyard, including 677 rental units and 2,118 owner units, based on the affordability threshold of spending no more than 30% of a household's monthly income on housing.

3. **According to the ACS, the Vineyard's year-round housing inventory remains substantially smaller than seasonal inventory and has not kept pace with population growth.**

Island-wide, the total number of housing units increased by 2.6% between 2013 and 2023, the seasonal housing stock decreased by about 9% (-1,022 units), and the year-round occupied housing stock increased by about 25% (1,471 units). However, this increase in housing should be viewed in light of escalating housing costs, the shifting income distribution noted above, the large population increase over the same period (24%), and the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 2023, year-round housing now makes up 42% of the Island's housing stock, up from 34% in 2013.

4. **Housing insecurity affects critical service workers. Martha's Vineyard needs more workforce housing.**

Many workers in the Island's critical service and public sector industries find it extremely difficult to secure reliable long-term housing due to the inventory shortage and out-of-reach prices for the supply that is available to purchase or rent. Until recently, county and local government employers have not been able to use public funds to build or subsidize housing exclusively for their employees. The Dukes County Regional Housing Authority operates a Rental Assistance program used by municipal employees, among others.

The Affordable Homes Act helps address this, but the six towns on Martha's Vineyard still need funding to provide the housing their workers need. Passage of "An Act Establishing the Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank," proposed legislation that would create a regional housing bank funded by a real estate transfer fee, will be an essential piece of the solution for these communities. The Seasonal Communities designation, which all six towns have adopted, includes a new ability for participating towns to create ongoing public sector employee housing preferences. Draft regulations for Seasonal Communities were released by EOHLC in September 2025 for public comment, and the final regulations are expected in December 2025. Since all six towns on Martha's Vineyard have adopted the Seasonal Communities designation, they will be able to offer a public employee housing preference if they choose.

5. Homelessness is a persistent and growing problem for the Island.

The pandemic elevated homelessness as a high-priority public health problem, yet there has been no centralized response across the Island's towns. The Island still has no year-round shelter facility or any transitional housing for its unhoused population, and the limited number of permanent supportive housing units (two congregate homes) does not begin to address the needs that exist here.

On any given day in Dukes County, in 2024, up to 130 individuals face homelessness, according to the former Dukes County Associate Commissioner for the Homeless.

6. The Island is losing naturally occurring affordable year-round units much faster than it is producing deed-restricted replacements.

Intentional retention, preservation, and adaptive re-use of existing year-round rental and ownership units needs to be elevated as a priority focus in tandem with ongoing production. This will require new strategies, significant funding mechanisms, and close monitoring of market-driven unit transaction data. Maintaining the current level of deed-restricted housing production at about 50 units per year does not address the substantial level of unmet housing need.

7. Priority housing needs identified in previous reports are not only still evident but growing.

The most pressing housing need continues to be year-round rental housing that is affordable to people with a wide range of income levels who are priced out of the Island's exorbitant housing market, with a continued focus on the most vulnerable residents.

8. Many of the recommendations that were included as part of previous plans are of even greater urgency today, including:

- Adopt zoning and regulatory changes that will better utilize existing developable property with an emphasis on infill and Smart Growth⁵ and include affordable and community/workforce housing considerations in any zoning changes.
- Using Smart Growth principles, identify development opportunities that provide greater scale and density in appropriate locations.
- Update and implement the Island towns' Housing Production Plans (HPPs) to acknowledge market pressures driving a shortage of year-round housing, including strategies to preserve and expand the year-round inventory of both rental and ownership units.

⁵ From [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov): "Smart growth is a principle of land development that emphasizes the mixing of land uses, increases the availability of a range of housing types in neighborhoods, takes advantage of compact design, fosters distinctive and attractive communities, preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas, strengthens existing communities, provides a variety of transportation choices." It is typified by walkable neighborhoods with density focused on transit lines to reduce automobile reliance, and preservation of open space.

- Access new and expanded funding resources to preserve and produce housing.
- Explore new and innovative approaches to protect water quality.
- Increase town resources to the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA) to support capacity.
- Pursue more collaborative planning and other types of collaboration among Island towns.
- Pursue greater regional collaboration across the Cape and Islands.
- Pursue educational opportunities through the Island Housing Trust (IHT).⁶
- Promote compliance with Fair Housing laws.

Population Characteristics

Seasonal Variation

About three-quarters of the Island's year-round population live in Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and Tisbury, making Chilmark, West Tisbury, and Aquinnah very sparsely populated towns. However, it is almost impossible to talk about the population of Martha's Vineyard without recognizing the impact of the seasonal home market. According to the Martha's Vineyard Commission's (MVC) 2024 *Seasonal Population Estimate Report*, the Island's likely peak summer population is about 94,650, or 4.6 times the year-round population. Town-by-town estimates for seasonal population totals range from 2,843 in Aquinnah to 30,078 in Edgartown.⁷ Map 4 displays the year-round and seasonal population density of Martha's Vineyard towns.

Table 2.1 shows the distribution of residents across the towns based on the duration and timing of residency. The 2020 Census counted 20,530 permanent residents on Martha's Vineyard. According to the Census Bureau, the resident population includes all people who lived and slept on the Island most of the time or for whom a different usual residence could not be determined. Overnight Guests and Seasonal Tenants of Permanent Residents, along with Overnight Guests and Seasonal Tenants of Seasonal Residents, includes the 4,059 short-term rentals (STRs) on the Island. The SPE Report defines seasonal residents as Island property owners and their households who live on the Island for less than six months of the year.⁸ Figure 2.1 shows the year-round population on Martha's Vineyard by town as of 2024 compared to the estimated August peak population.

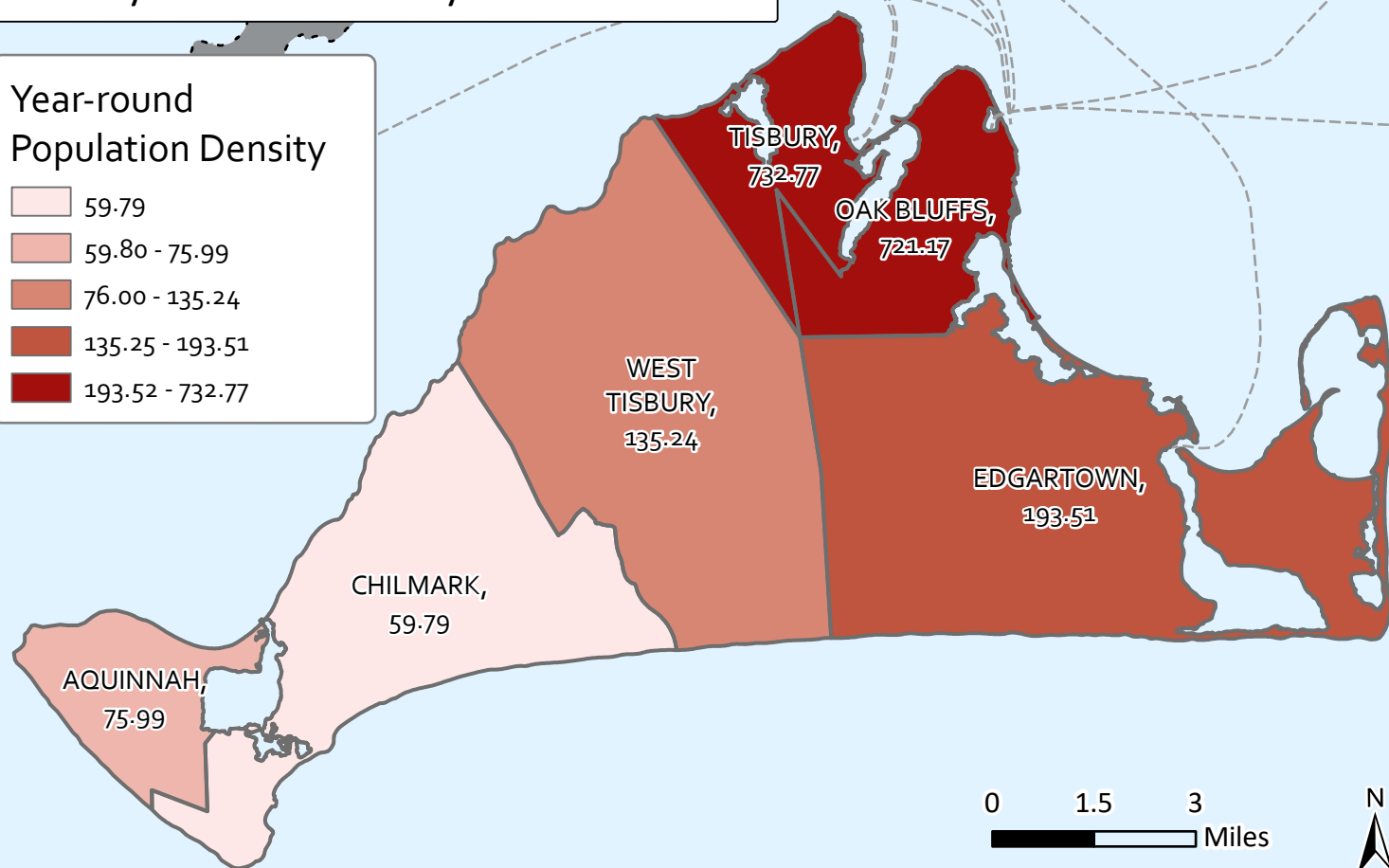
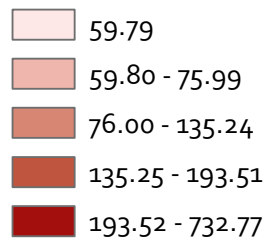
⁶ Martha's Vineyard Commission 2024 *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment* states: "Pursue educational opportunities through the Island Housing Trust (IHT), a community land trust and state-certified community development corporation, including in regard to proactively leveraging state housing funds for local projects, utilizing the nationally recognized "ground lease" model to create permanent affordability of ownership units, exploring models for public/private housing partnerships, and pursuing smart growth pocket neighborhoods and cluster developments to preserve open space. (See <https://www.ihmtv.org>.)"

⁷ Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Seasonal Population Estimate Report* (2024), 1.

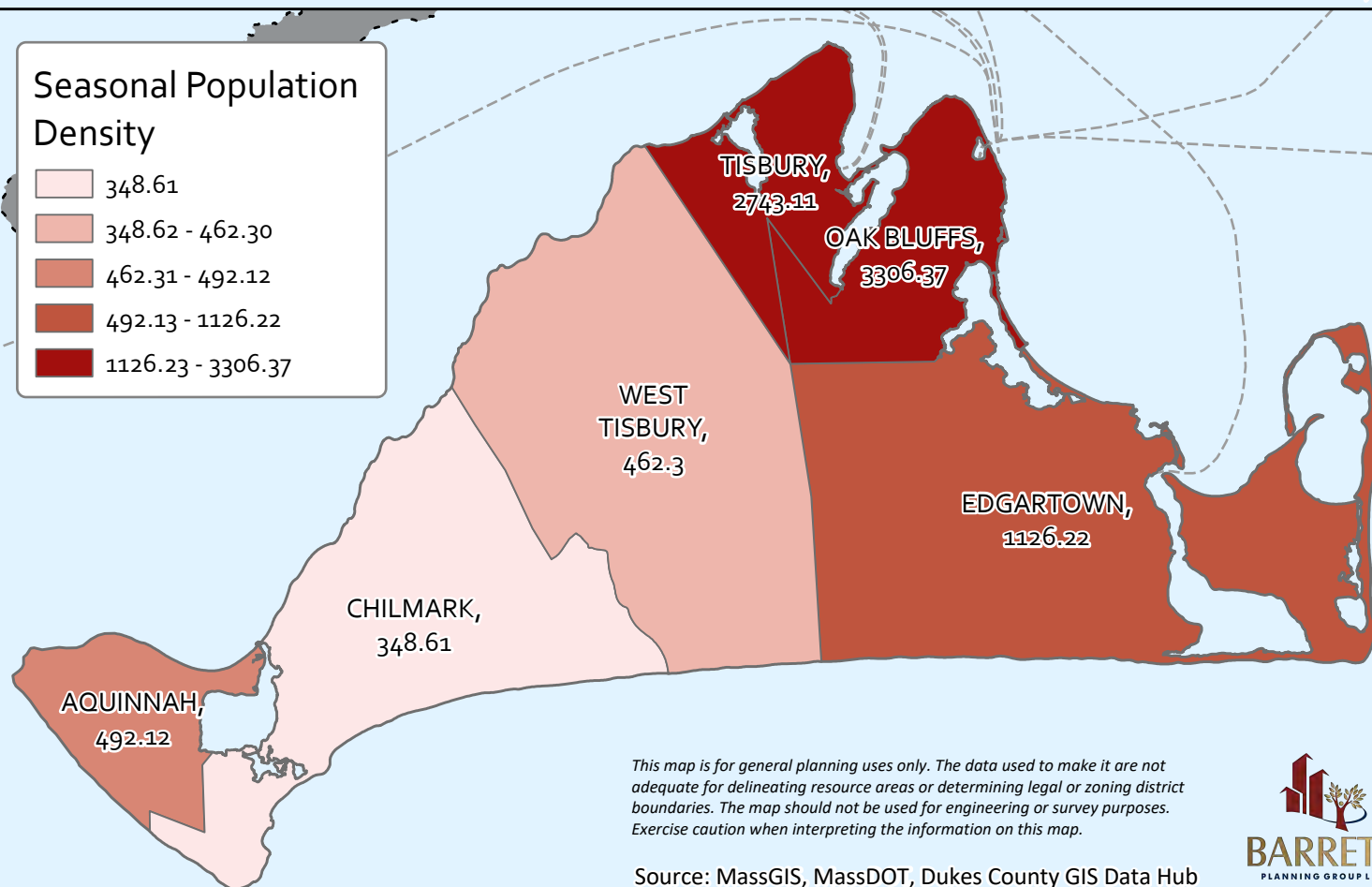
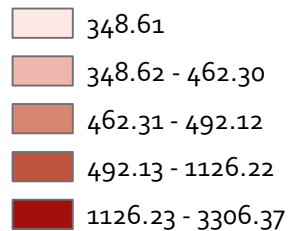
⁸ Ibid, 2 & 3; A significant portion of Island properties that contain bedrooms are classified as other than residential, such as hotels or other transient group quarters or tax-exempt properties like those owned by a housing authority. These properties are likely occupied year-round and are assumed to be included in the "year-round"/permanent resident numbers. Residential or mixed-use properties with at least one potentially habitable structure, where the structure was not clearly being used for other purposes, count in the "Likely Seasonal Residents" category in Table 2.1.

Map 4. Year-round & Seasonal Population Density of Martha's Vineyard Towns

Year-round Population Density



Seasonal Population Density



This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

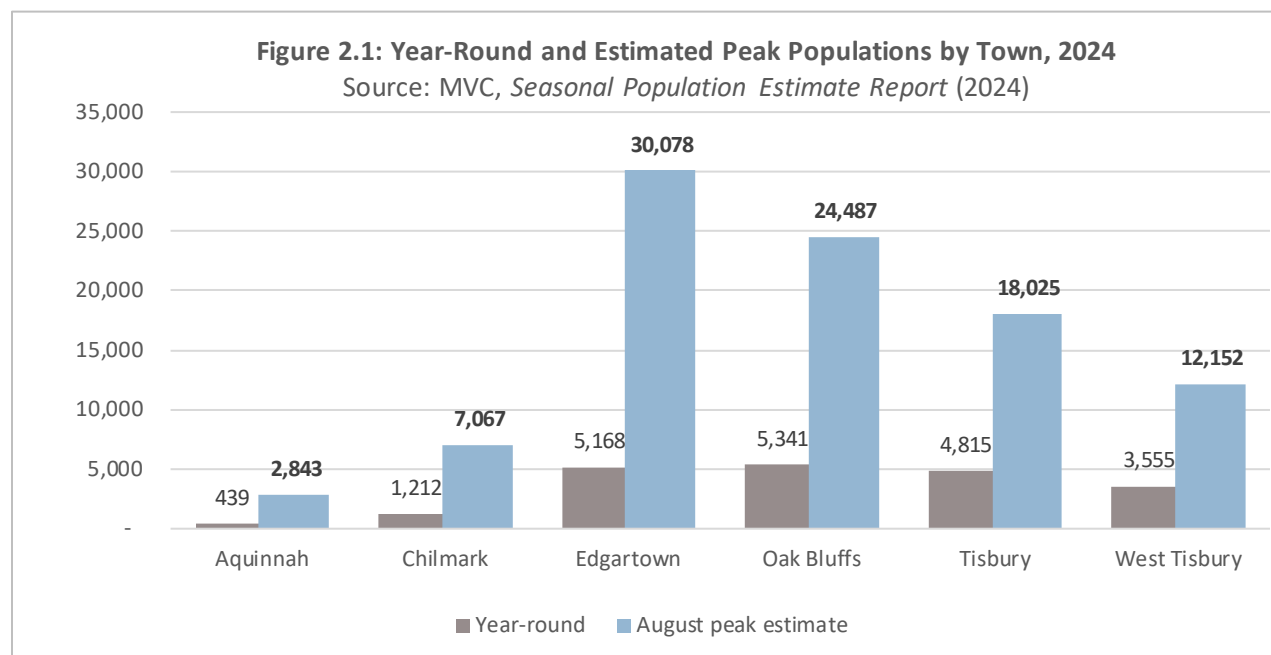
Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub

Table 2.1: Population by Resident Type and Town, 2024							
	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	West Tisbury	TOTAL
Year-Round Residents (2020)	439	1,212	5,168	5,341	4,815	3,555	20,530
Overnight Guests/Seasonal Tenants of Permanent Residents	573	1,858	4,022	4,935	4,381	2,924	18,693
Seasonal Residents	732	2,059	6,926	5,204	2,536	1,847	19,304
Overnight Guests/Seasonal Tenants of Seasonal Residents	960	1,372	10,352	7,064	4,082	2,896	26,726
Likely Additional Seasonal Residents	15	17	120	61	59	37	309
Additional Overnight Population (hotels + boats)	28	280	2,340	696	499	104	4,678
Day Visitors							4,411
						TOTAL	94,651
Source: <i>Seasonal Population Estimate Report (2024)</i>							

Population Trends

According to the Census Bureau, Aquinnah and Chilmark experienced the highest level of population growth between 2000 and 2020, with growth rates of 41% and 40% respectively. Dukes County and Nantucket County (the smallest counties in the state) had the greatest population changes in Massachusetts, 25% and 40% respectively between 2010 and 2020.⁹ Map 5 shows the population change by Martha's Vineyard town between the 2010 and 2020 Decennial censuses. These high rates of year-round population growth and the associated influx of new households have put pressure on local and regional infrastructure and public services already stressed by the environmental limitations of island living. Additionally, Island residents who have relied on winter rentals in the past have been outbid by more affluent families from other places. Table 2.2 illustrates how the permanent resident population has changed in the last few decades. Every town on Martha's Vineyard has experienced population growth to varying degrees.

⁹ *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, 5.



Town	Census 2000	Census 2010	Census 2020	ACS 2023 (5-Year)
Aquinnah	344	311	439	667
Chilmark	843	866	1,212	1,726
Edgartown	3,779	4,067	5,168	5,212
Gosnold*	81	75	70	51
Oak Bluffs	3,713	4,527	5,341	5,370
Tisbury	3,755	3,949	4,815	4,860
West Tisbury	2,467	2,740	3,555	2,865
TOTAL	14,982	16,535	20,600	20,751

Source: U.S. Census 2000-2020, ACS 5-sss
 *Gosnold is part of Dukes County and included here but is not part of the island of Martha's Vineyard or this HPP process.

Age of Population

Martha's Vineyard has seen significant gains in older adults. In 2020, older adults (aged 65 and up) made up 27% of the population in Dukes County, second only to Barnstable County (32%).¹⁰ The percentage of children has declined significantly over time. Notably the number of children under eighteen decreased from 23% of all residents in 1990, to 19% in 2010, and 16% in 2020. The number of older adults increased 171% between 2000 and 2020, making up 14% of the

¹⁰ U.S. Census, 2020.

population in 2000 and 27% in 2020. The upward trend in median age in Dukes County reflects the recent increase in older residents, with a median age of 37.3 in 1990, 40.7 in 2000, 45.3 in 2010, and 49.3 in 2020.¹¹

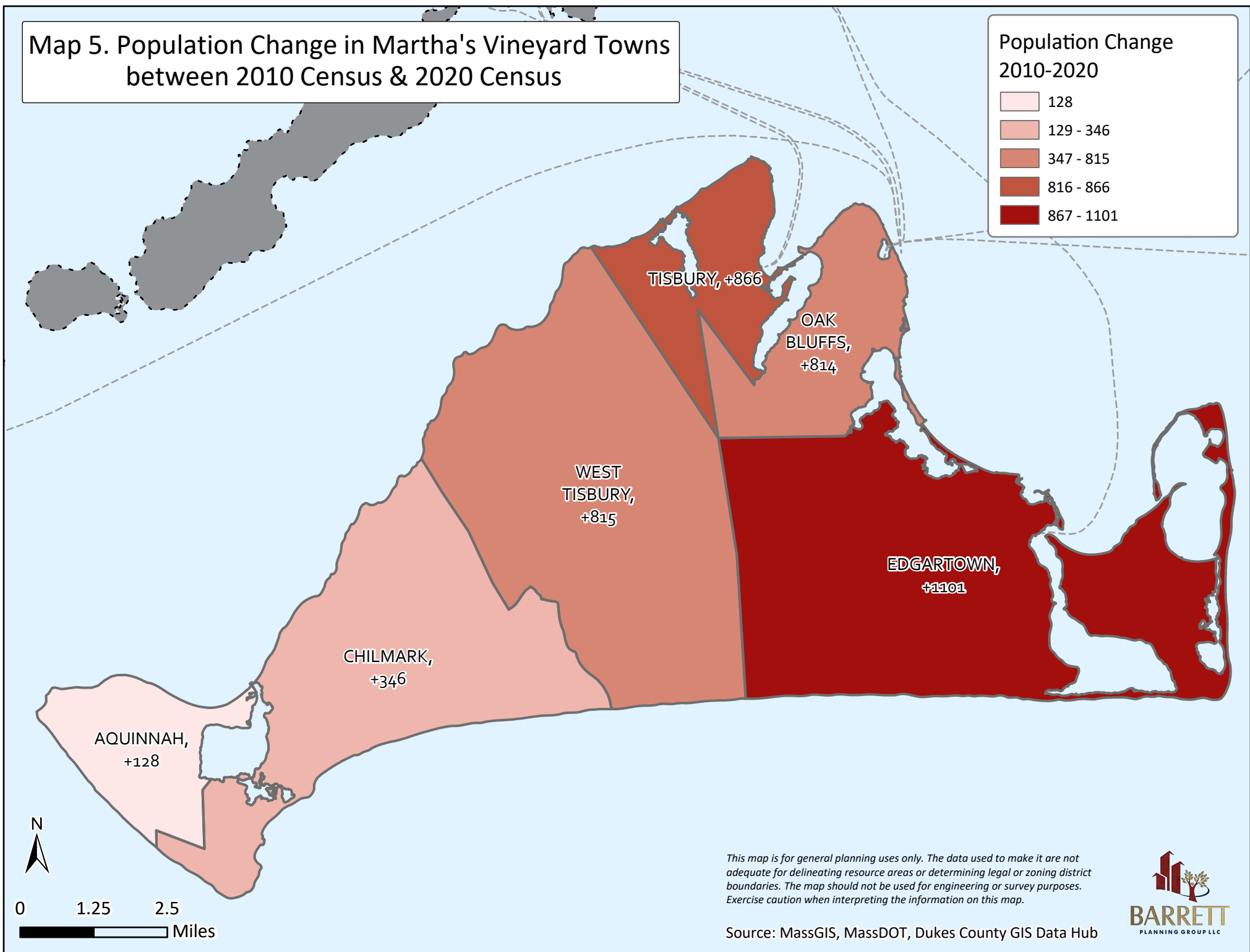
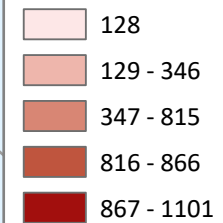
Table 2.3 displays the change in population by town over ten years between 2013 and 2023 as reported in the ACS. While the percentage change for the total population on Martha's Vineyard is about 24%, the population of adults over sixty-five increased by 86%. This shows that much of the recent growth in population on the Vineyard has been in the older adult age group.

Table 2.3: Age Distribution by Town, 2013-2023									
	Under 18 Years Old			18-64 Years Old			65 and Older		
	2013	2023	Percent Change	2013	2023	Percent Change	2013	2023	Percent Change
Aquinnah	86	160	86%	280	298	6%	30	209	597%
Chilmark	169	284	68%	560	898	60%	155	544	251%
Edgartown	512	591	15%	2,865	3,381	18%	756	1,240	64%
Gosnold	0	0	--	93	32	-66%	41	19	-54%
Oak Bluffs	976	1240	27%	2,641	2,771	-5%	944	1,359	44%
Tisbury	866	821	-5%	2,596	2,894	11%	531	1,145	116%
West Tisbury	567	494	-13%	1621	1,500	-7%	438	871	99%
TOTAL	3,175	3,590	13%	10,656	11,774	10%	2,895	5,387	86%
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101									

¹¹ *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, 7.

Map 5. Population Change in Martha's Vineyard Towns
between 2010 Census & 2020 Census

Population Change
2010-2020



0 1.25 2.5
Miles

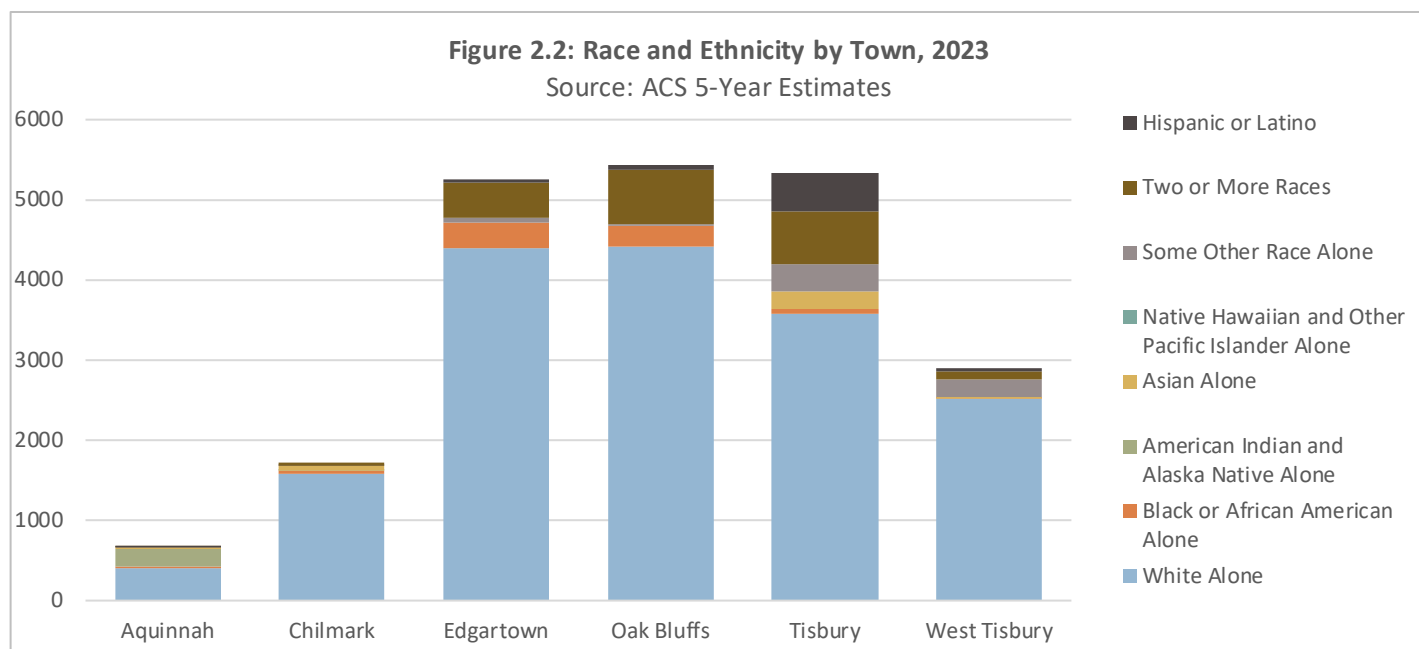
This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub

Race and Ethnicity

Estimates from the ACS show increases in African American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino residents between 2013 and 2023, as well as people of “some other race” and of two or more races, with a relatively stable Native American population mostly comprising the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).¹² About 2,839 residents of Martha’s Vineyard (14%) were foreign-born in 2023. Among them, about 83% were from Latin America, 10% from Europe, and 4% from Asia.¹³ Figure 2.2 displays the racial and ethnic composition of the Towns in Dukes County.

The 2023 ACS estimates that 18% of Dukes County residents are non-White (including people with two or more races), up from 8% in 2013, owing largely to a ten-fold increase in the number of people identifying as having more than one race. This represents an increase from 1,298 to 3,793 minority and multi-racial residents since 2013, and a growth rate of 192%, compared to a 24% estimated increase in the overall population during this period. Apart from Gosnold, every town in Dukes County has experienced an increase in non-White households over the ten-year period beginning in 2013.



Primary Language Spoken at Home

The ACS estimates that about 3,005 people, or 19% of the Island population over the age of four, reported speaking a language other than English at home in 2023, including 1,793 or 9% of the population over four, who said they spoke English “less than very well.” Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) figures from the 2023-2024 school year show a

¹² *Martha’s Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, 9.

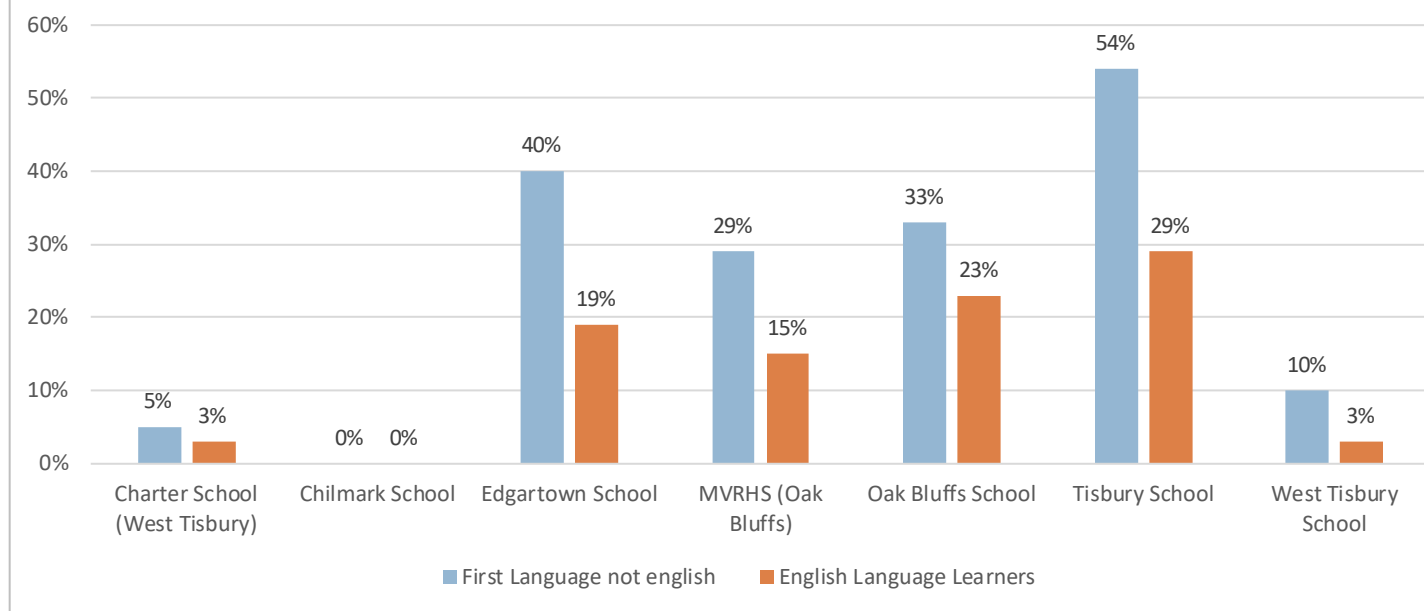
¹³ *Ibid.*

total of 2,330 students in Island schools, including 678 (29%) with a first language other than English, and 371 (16%) are English Language Learners (ELLs). About 94% of ELL students speak Portuguese as their home language, and about 2% speak Spanish. Small numbers of students in recent years also speak Bhutani, Bulgarian, Mandarin Chinese, Italian, French, Haitian Creole, Jamaican Patois, Polish, Serbian, and Ukrainian.¹⁴

The most recent DESE data indicate varying numbers of students who speak a language other than English at home, ranging from 10% in the Up-Island Regional School District (West Tisbury School and Chilmark School) to 54% at the Tisbury School. According to 2023 DESE data, school programs to address student language needs currently serve 19% of students in Edgartown, 15% at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, 23% in Oak Bluffs, 29% in Tisbury, and 3% in West Tisbury. DESE funds the Martha's Vineyard Adult Learning Program, which enrolls approximately seventy students every twenty-six weeks in ESOL classes. Those enrolled speak mostly Portuguese as a first language, but the program remains open to all learners.¹⁵

Figure 2.3: Students Whose First Language is not English and English Language Learners, 2023

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates



¹⁴ Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment, 9.

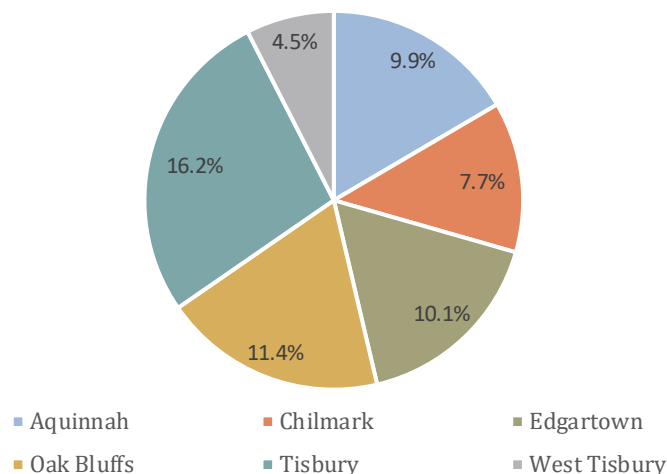
¹⁵ The Martha's Vineyard Times, "MVALP is for all speakers of other languages," September 25, 2018, <https://www.mvtimes.com/2018/09/25/mvalp-speakers-languages/>.

Disability

In Dukes County, 2,246 residents (11% of the noninstitutionalized population) reported a disability in 2023, up from 1,469 (9%) in 2018 – in both cases slightly less than the state average (13%). According to the ACS, ambulatory disabilities are the most common, particularly among people 65 or older. In recent years, most island communities have prepared ADA Self Evaluation Plans, and some towns have incorporated universal design standards as part of conditions on new developments.

Figure 2.4: Residents Reporting a Disability (2023)

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Household Characteristics

For Dukes County, the Census counts show an increase from 5,076 households in 1990 to 6,431 in 2000, 7,368 in 2010, and 8,932 in 2020, while the ACS estimates an increase from 6,367 households in 2018 to 7,362 in 2023. The Census figure for 2020 may reflect an early influx of residents and other anomalies during the pandemic. The Vineyard had previously demonstrated growing numbers of smaller, non-family households, reflecting local and national trends toward having fewer children or “traditional” families, increases in “child-free” and “child-delayed” families, and increases in empty nesters and senior populations, particularly those living alone.¹⁶

The 2023 ACS estimates that while the population grew by 24% between 2013 and 2023, the total number of households grew 25%, but with a notable increase in the number of single-person households (44% growth), and a smaller increase in the number of households with four or more people (8%). There was also a 43% increase in non-family households (including people living alone), compared to a 15% increase for those with family members.¹⁷ The average household size has remained about the same at 2.8. Compared to a state average of 2.45 and a national average of 2.54 in 2023, Martha’s Vineyard hosts slightly larger households. Table 2.4 illustrates the household type breakdown by owner and renter households for each town on Martha’s Vineyard.

¹⁶ Non-family households include individuals as well as unrelated household members.

¹⁷ According to the ACS, family households are those where a householder lives “with one or more individuals related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption.” Family households may also include non-family members. Nonfamily households are those where a householder lives “alone or with nonrelatives only.”

Table 2.4: Household Types in Martha's Vineyard Towns

		Aquinnah		Chilmark		Edgartown	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Owners	Families	168	69.4%	435	78.2%	1,059	63.6%
	Nonfamilies	74	30.6%	121	21.8%	607	36.4%
	Living Alone	70	28.9%	97	17.5%	483	29.0%
	Living Alone, 65+ years	41	16.9%	83	14.9%	98	5.9%
Renters	Families	17	53.1%	45	70.3%	170	48.6%
	Nonfamilies	15	46.9%	19	29.7%	180	51.4%
	Living Alone	13	40.6%	11	17.2%	124	35.4%
	Living Alone, 65+ years	8	25.0%	8	12.5%	15	4.3%
		Oak Bluffs		Tisbury		West Tisbury	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
Owners	Families	1,314	63.7%	795	42.2%	695	75.5%
	Nonfamilies	750	36.3%	1,091	57.9%	226	24.5%
	Living Alone	676	32.8%	879	46.6%	141	15.3%
	Living Alone, 65+ years	330	16.0%	410	21.7%	102	11.1%
Renters	Families	147	24.6%	124	17.3%	75	80.7%
	Nonfamilies	451	75.4%	591	82.7%	18	19.4%
	Living Alone	451	75.4%	581	81.3%	18	19.4%
	Living Alone, 65+ years	205	34.3%	138	19.3%	18	19.4%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

Household Incomes

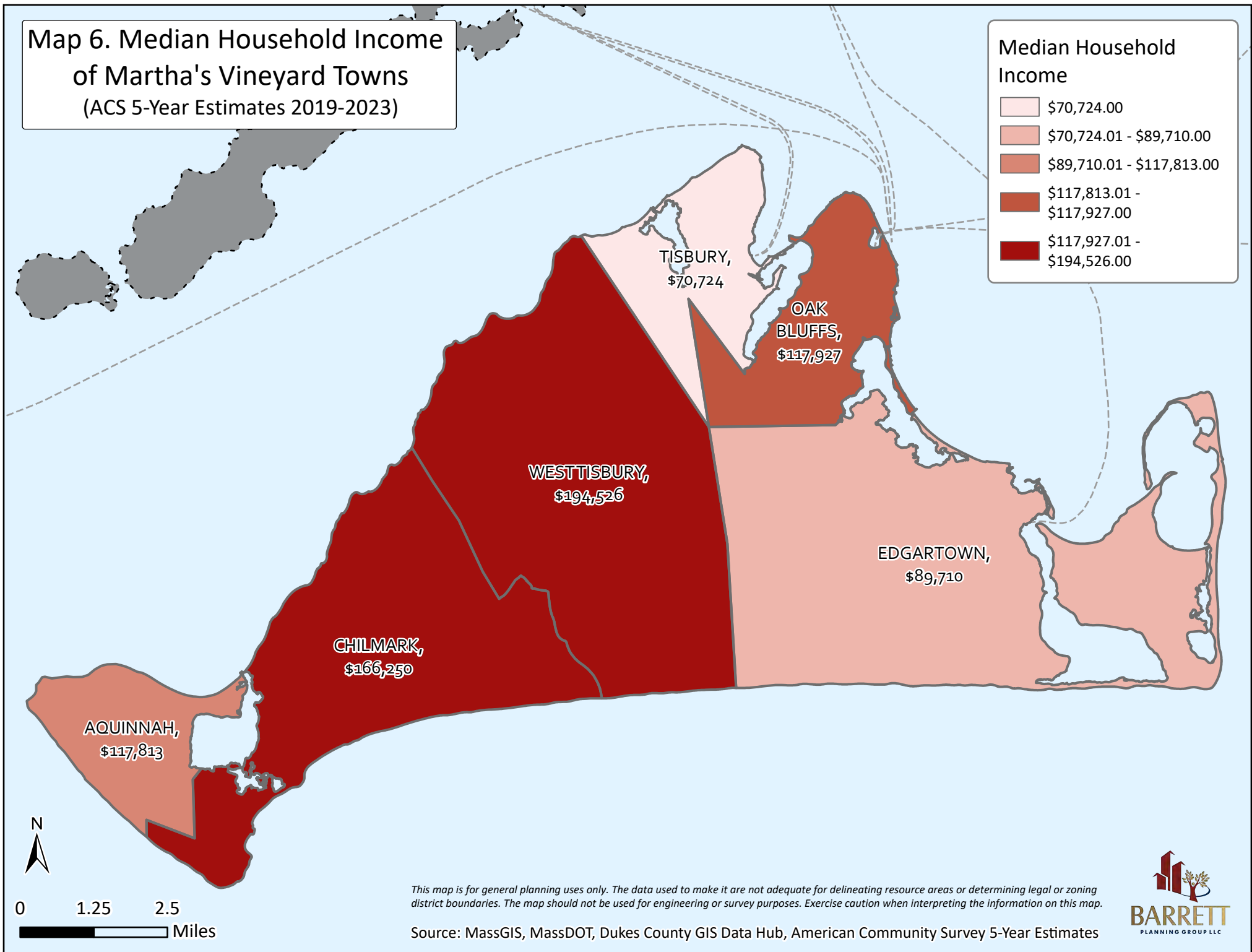
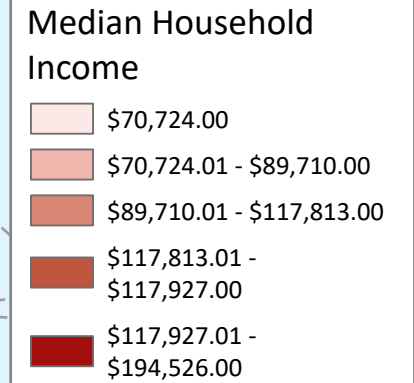
Martha's Vineyard household incomes have changed considerably over the past decade. Between 2013 and 2023, the estimated percentage of households earning \$150,000-\$199,999 more than doubled to 15%, and the percentage of those earning \$200,000+ more than quadrupled to 21%. This may reflect the increasing size of households, the increase in seasonal residents living year-round on-island during the pandemic, and the island housing market in general.

The many affluent new residents who have purchased homes on Martha's Vineyard influence the region's median household income, with the estimated median household income for Dukes County increasing 54%, from \$66,288 to \$102,348 between 2013 and 2023. Table 2.6 displays how the short period between 2018 and 2023 led to a more dramatic increase in median income across towns than the 10-year periods preceding it.

Table 2.5: Dukes County Income Distribution, 2013-2023		
	2013	2023
Total households	5,891	7,362
<\$10,000	6%	3.8%
\$10,000-\$14,999	4.8%	0.8%
\$15,000-\$24,999	6.1%	5.8%
\$25,000-\$34,999	11.2%	5.1%
\$35,000-\$49,999	12.1%	6%
\$50,000-\$74,999	14.6%	16.6%
\$75,000-\$99,999	17%	10.5%
\$100,000-\$149,999	19%	15.8%
\$150,000-\$199,999	5.2%	14.7%
\$200,000+	4%	21%
Median household income	\$66,288	\$102,348
Mean household income	\$83,982	\$176,872
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates		

Income disparities among the towns also widened considerably. See Map 6 for the median household incomes of all Martha's Vineyard towns reported by the ACS 2018-2022 5-Year Estimates. For example, Tisbury saw the smallest increase and had the lowest median income (\$70,724) compared to \$166,250 in Chilmark and \$194,526 in West Tisbury. At the same time, Chilmark counts zero units on its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) with West Tisbury's at less than 2% (although West Tisbury has significant additional inventory of <80% AMI units (21 units) that does not display on the SHI).

Map 6. Median Household Income
of Martha's Vineyard Towns
(ACS 5-Year Estimates 2019-2023)



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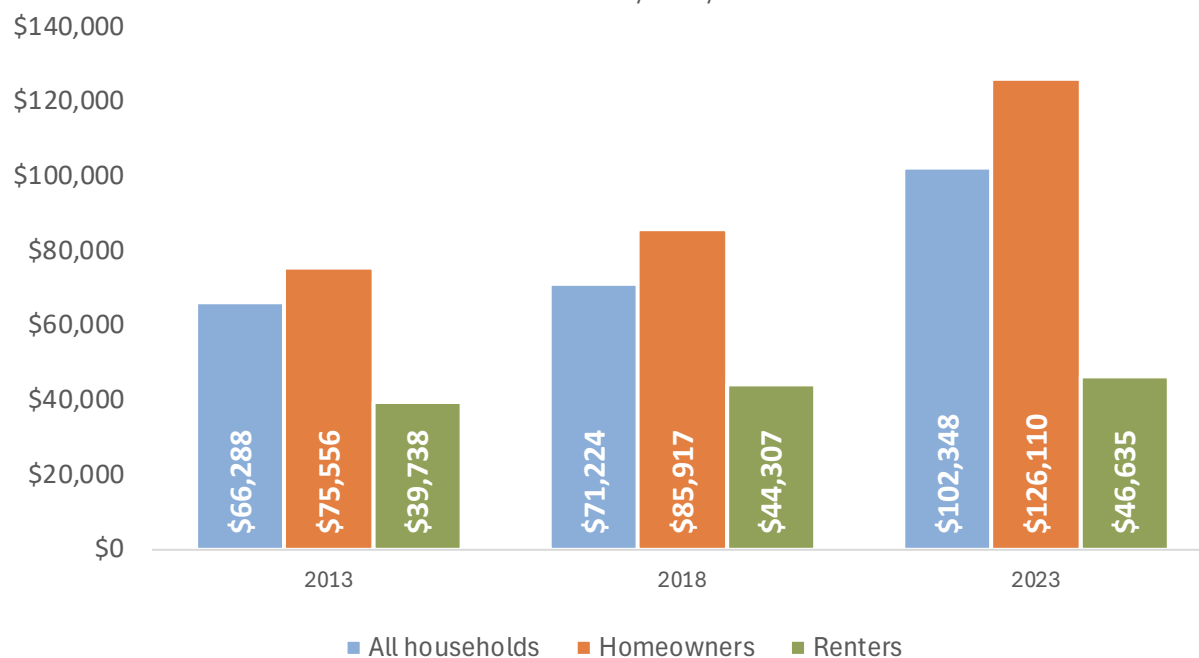
Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Town	2009	2013	2018	2023
Aquinnah	\$44,028	\$76,667	\$87,000	\$117,813
Chilmark	\$82,813	\$64,457	\$106,000	\$166,250
Edgartown	\$69,286	\$66,711	\$64,810	\$89,710
Oak Bluffs	\$57,442	\$69,844	\$82,045	\$117,927
Tisbury	\$55,633	\$48,935	\$50,301	\$70,724
West Tisbury	\$73,791	\$70,963	\$94,306	\$194,526
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates				

In a related trend, income disparities among homeowners and renters have increased as well. The median homeowner household income increased approximately 67% between 2013 and 2023, from \$75,556 to \$126,110, while the median income of renter-occupants increased 17%, from \$39,738 to \$46,635.

Fig. 2.5 Median Household Income by Tenure, 2013-2023

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



In 2023, the estimated Dukes County median family income of \$141,907 was considerably higher than the median household income, in part because families by definition have more than one person in the household. The median family income increased by about 72% from \$82,452 in 2013. County-wide, the median income of non-family households grew about 43% between 2013 and 2023, from \$41,974 to \$60,216, and was about half the median income level for families.

Sources of Income as Indicators of Demographic Change

Changes in sources of income help to explain changes in household incomes overall and median household and family statistics, too. Consistent with the increases in the proportion of residents over sixty-five years old, the proportion of households who report income based on retirement and Social Security is much greater on Martha's Vineyard than the state-wide average. Table 2.5 shows the other sources of income reported by households on Martha's Vineyard in 2023, including the high proportion of households who receive income based on interest, dividends, or net rental income, which seems to reflect, at least in part, the impact of seasonal and short-term rentals, although the data does not distinguish between rentals on the island or off-island.

Table 2.7 Sources of Income by Town Other Than Wage and Salary Income 2023			
	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown
Total Households	242	556	1666
Self-Employment Income	33.1%	31.7%	27.4%
Interest, Dividends, or Net Rental Income	47.1%	50.0%	40.2%
Social Security Income	50.4%	58.6%	38.4%
Supplemental Security Income	0.4%	2.9%	6.7%
Public Assistance Income	0.4%	0.7%	2.8%
Retirement Income	31.4%	49.8%	35.8%
	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	West Tisbury
Total Households	2,064	1,886	921
Self-Employment Income	30.2%	22.4%	38.7%
Interest, Dividends, or Net Rental Income	47.1%	30.1%	64.1%
Social Security Income	45.6%	37.0%	47.3%
Supplemental Security Income	1.8%	5.2%	0.8%
Public Assistance Income	0.3%	1.0%	2.4%
Retirement Income	25.5%	24.2%	37.9%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates			

Poverty and Demographic Factors

Island demographics not only display changes to race and ethnicity but also the experience of extremely low incomes and poverty. For example, households identifying as Hispanic or Latino had a median household income of \$58,995, and the median income of people living alone was higher for men (\$66,250) than women (\$56,010). Among heads of households, there were income discrepancies by age, with median incomes ranging from \$148,750 for householders between 25-44 years to \$126,284 for ages 45-64, and \$80,875 for older adults ages 65 and up. Income disparities among homeowners and renters also increased over time. The median household income of owner-occupants, as estimated by the ACS, increased 67% between 2013

and 2023, from \$75,556 to \$126,110, while the median income of renter-occupants increased 17%, from \$39,738 to \$46,635. (The estimated median for renters has increased slightly since 2017.)

Table 2.8 Population below the Poverty Level by Town, 2023						
	Aquinnah		Chilmark		Edgartown	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Children Under 18	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	84	14.2%
18-64	13	4.4%	96	10.8%	206	6.2%
Age 65 and Over	4	1.9%	9	1.7%	13	1.1%
Total Population	17	2.5%	105	6.1%	303	5.9%
	Oak Bluffs		Tisbury		West Tisbury	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Children Under 18	0	0.0%	39	5.10%	29	6.0%
18-64	296	10.8%	182	6.30%	39	2.7%
Age 65 and Over	10	0.80%	48	4.20%	32	3.7%
Total Population	306	5.8%	269	5.6%	100	3.5%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates						

In 2023, the estimated poverty rate in Dukes County was relatively low, 5.4%, representing 1,102 residents. This was down from 10.1% (1,673 residents) in 2013.¹⁸ Poverty levels among Island towns ranged from 2.5% in Aquinnah to 6.1% in Chilmark. Poverty for those 65 years or older ranged from 0.8% in Oak Bluffs to 4.2% in Tisbury. This also may reflect a greater number of rental units, including affordable housing for low-income seniors. Workers earning the state minimum wage of \$15/hour would have an annual income of about \$31,320 if they were able to work full-time throughout the year, something minimum-wage service workers on the Island seldom realize due to the seasonal economy. It follows that an increasing number of employed residents may face homelessness as housing costs rise.

Employment

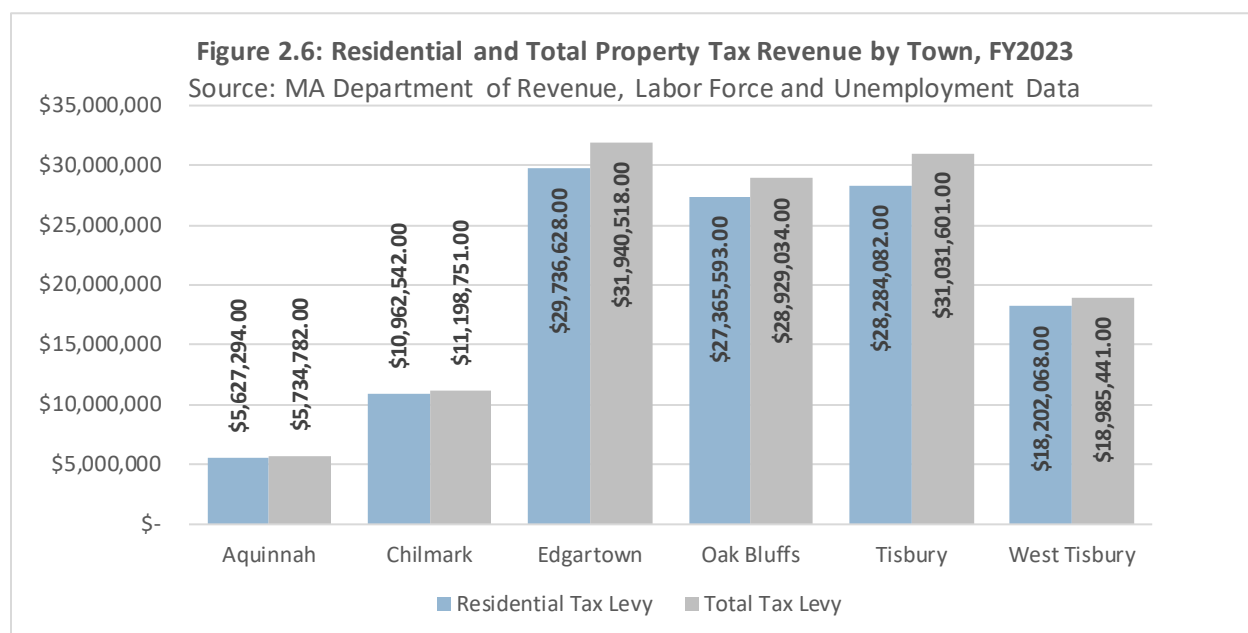
The size of Martha's Vineyard workforce has expanded over the last 10 years, from 9,101 workers in 2013, to 8,977 in 2018, and 11,704 in 2023, according to ACS estimates. This growth roughly corresponds to increases in the population over age 16. According to the Massachusetts Department of Economic Research, the annual unemployment rate in Dukes County decreased from 9% in 2013 to 4.4% in 2023.

Seasonal jobs lead to an increase in employment during the summer in all Island towns. Employment peaks in July and declines as the summer season ends – a trend that continued

¹⁸ The ACS determines poverty thresholds based on household size and the number of related children under 18, using a reference table from 1982 and adjusting for inflation.

through the pandemic. While the Island's seasonal economy has typically caused significant increases in unemployment during the winter, the COVID-19 pandemic immediately resulted in a surge of unemployed workers nationwide; on the island the level of unemployed workers went from 605 in March to 2,059 in April, and a corresponding spike in unemployment from 7.3% to 26%, returning to single digits by July of that year. The economy has mostly rebounded since April 2020. By August 2023, Dukes and Nantucket counties had the lowest unemployment rates in the state (2.3% and 2.2%, respectively), while all counties in the state had rates that dropped to 3% or less that year, except Bristol and Hampden counties (3.3% and 3.6%, respectively).

Tax Revenue Distinctions in Seasonal Communities



Martha's Vineyard remains a destination for visitors, providing significant streams of revenue from several sources in addition to property taxes. The possible revenue streams in Martha's Vineyard discussed below include Local Option Taxes, Community Impact Fees, Meals Excise Taxes, and Seasonal Ferry Revenue. Tax rates vary widely by town, from \$2.63 per thousand of assessed value in Chilmark to \$7.32 in Tisbury. Property values increased dramatically during the pandemic, leading to lower tax rates in every Island town. Extremely high property values lead to some of the lowest property tax rates in the state. However, because of extremely high property values, the average single family tax bill for Martha's Vineyard towns (\$7,891) exceeds the state average (\$6,822). Rising property values offset the low tax rates, so overall collected revenues from property taxes have continued to rise across the Island, especially in Edgartown and Tisbury. Average single-family tax bills also continue to rise across the Island, except for Edgartown, where the figure has declined slightly since 2019. As of 2025, Tisbury, Oak Bluffs, and West Tisbury have adopted residential tax exemptions of 22%, 15%, and 30%, respectively. This option can help to shift the tax burden away from year-round owners of moderately priced homes.

Local Option Taxes

Tax revenue from short-term rentals, introduced in July 2019, increased during and after the pandemic as visitors opted to rent beyond the summer season, given their ability to work and attend school remotely. Consequently, the Island's revenue from the Local Option Room Occupancy Tax and Short-Term Rental Tax increased considerably, from about \$2.1 million in FY19 to \$5.5 million in FY21 and almost \$9 million in FY23, according to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (MA DOR). Edgartown has experienced the greatest benefit from these rental revenues, followed by Oak Bluffs and Tisbury. Revenue for FY23 ranged from a low of \$128,457 in Aquinnah to \$3,929,690 and \$2,476,186 in Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, respectively. To date, none of this funding has been earmarked in direct support of affordable or community housing, except in Chilmark, which recently voted to direct one-third of revenue to its Affordable Housing Trust. Table 2.8 reports the revenue reported from local revenue accrual over the last five years. Aquinnah, Chilmark, and Edgartown all recently increased their tax percentages to the full 6% allowable to align with the other towns; these rates went into effect in Aquinnah and Chilmark in late 2024, and in Edgartown in 2025.

Town	Charge	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Aquinnah	4%	\$10,466	\$30,568	\$100,635	\$123,328	\$128,457
Chilmark	4%	\$55,286	\$144,044	\$355,080	\$458,990	\$442,209
Edgartown	4%	\$1,038,410	\$36,700	\$2,468,569	\$3,809,007	\$3,929,690
Oak Bluffs	6%	\$642,162	\$1,038,482	\$1,420,537	\$2,332,000	\$2,476,186
Tisbury	6%	\$350,156	\$559,197	\$883,159	\$1,401,200	\$1,438,741
West Tisbury	6%	\$0	\$165,874	\$316,045	\$506,675	\$483,110
Total	-	\$2,096,480	\$3,481,594	\$5,544,025	\$8,631,200	\$8,898,393

Source: *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment* and MA DOR

Community Impact Fee

Communities may impose a Community Impact Fee of up to 3% for "Professionally Managed" Short Term Rentals (STRs), as well as STRs within owner-occupied two- or three-family homes by separate vote. None of the towns on Martha's Vineyard have adopted this fee. Other Cape and Islands towns such as Nantucket, Falmouth, Provincetown, Truro, and Wellfleet have adopted the fee, and Truro and Wellfleet have also voted to impose the fee on owner-occupied two- or three-family homes with STRs. Communities must dedicate at least 35% of the revenue from Community Impact Fees to either affordable housing or local infrastructure projects.

Cape Cod and Islands Water Protection Fund

While all Cape Cod communities currently impose a 2.75% tax for the Cape and Island Water Protection Fund, no Vineyard towns have done so. By statute, all revenue contributes to a pooled regional fund to which member towns can apply for wastewater infrastructure funding and water quality remediation projects.

Meals Excise Tax

Communities can choose to impose an additional 0.75% local option meals excise tax over the 6.25% state sales tax on meals. Oak Bluffs and Tisbury adopted the 0.75% local option meals tax in 2010 and 2013 respectively. Chilmark and West Tisbury recently followed suit, beginning July 1, 2025. Table 2.9 reports the revenue for Tisbury and Oak Bluffs since 2019.

Table 2.10: Local Meals Excise Revenue by Town, FY2019-FY2023

Town	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Oak Bluffs	\$361,923	\$353,789	\$409,378	\$417,3113	\$515,717
Tisbury	\$179,933	\$168,878	\$220,332	\$207,844	\$248,735

Source: *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*

Seasonal Revenue

A state law passed in 2003 allows a city or town with a ferry embarkation site to impose a \$0.50 per-person fee for travel originating from the community (\$1.00 round-trip). Oak Bluffs and Tisbury are eligible to impose these fees. There are no ferry embarkment sites in West Tisbury.

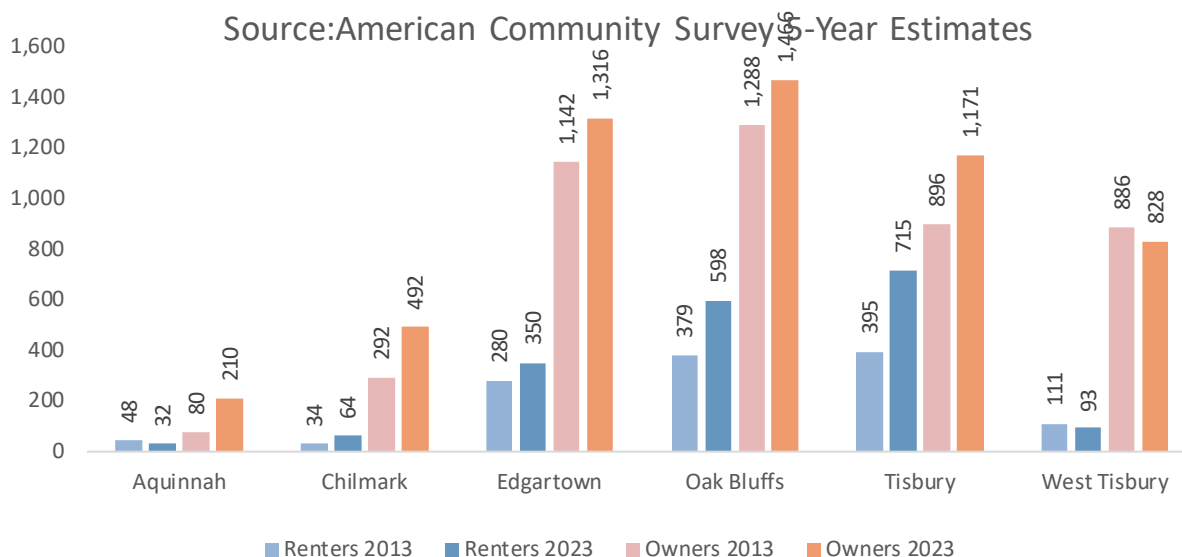
During the pandemic in 2020-2022, the Steamship Authority's ridership declined significantly. In 2023, ridership exceeded 2019 levels during January through April, but not during the summer months. As with the number of passengers, Steamship Authority revenue typically increases significantly during the summer and declines after August. Total revenue in 2022 was \$32,978,471, up from \$30,722,031 in 2021. The MA DOR remits the fees to the respective municipalities. The statute requires the municipality to deposit the money into a special fund used solely to mitigate the impacts of ferry service on the city or town. Vineyard fees in 2022 totaled \$128,505 for Oak Bluffs and \$266,472 for Tisbury.

Housing Market

The seasonality of the vacation rental market, combined with a relative lack of available year-round inventory at all income levels, forces more Martha's Vineyard workers to live off-Island and commute to work by ferry. Census 2020 reveals some effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including an anomalous increase in the "year-round" housing inventory. Similar trends occurred on Cape Cod and in the Berkshires in the same period. The ACS estimates a modest increase in the total housing between 2013 and 2023 of 449 units. Most of this growth occurred in Tisbury, with the most growth relative to population also occurring in Tisbury, followed by Aquinnah. According to the ACS, the total number of units on the Island increased by 3.1% between 2013 and 2023. The year-round occupied housing stock increased by 25% or 1,471 units, accounting for 42% of the total housing stock in 2023. At the same time, seasonal or occasional units decreased by about 9%, or 1,022 units, still accounting for 58% of the total stock. Seasonal or occasional units account for 61% of West Tisbury's total housing stock, compared to 58% for the Island as a whole. Factoring in the small number of vacant properties in town, this leaves West Tisbury's year-round units at only about 39% of its total housing stock.

The ACS estimates that Martha's Vineyard had a total of 1,867 year-round rental units and 5,495 year-round ownership units in 2023. The percentage of housing for rent or for sale throughout the Vineyard is extremely low (0.1% for rentals and 1.1% for ownership units), based on the 2023 estimates. This indicates that people looking to buy or rent in Martha's Vineyard will have a hard time finding available units.

Figure 2.7: Number of Owner and Renter Households by Town, 2013-2023



A relative lack of diversity in housing types persists on Martha's Vineyard, as single-family detached homes comprise about 88% of the housing stock. In comparison, 6% of housing units exist in two-to-four-unit structures and just 3% in structures with five or more units. New multi-family rental housing developments, such as Kuehn's Way in Tisbury, Tackenash Knoll in Oak Bluffs, and Meshacket Commons in Edgartown, will help diversify the housing stock and address a wider range of housing needs.¹⁹ The seasonality of the Vineyard's housing stock and its relative lack of multi-family housing contribute to the limited supply of affordable housing.

About 45% of all rental units on Martha's Vineyard were single-family homes in 2023, which is down from 70% in 2013 due to gradual increases in multi-family rental units. Almost all owner-occupied units were also in single-family homes. Only 3.2% of all units in Dukes County exist in multi-family buildings with five or more units, less than any other county in the state, except Nantucket, where they measure 2%.

¹⁹ *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, 20.

Age of Housing

The median year built of West Tisbury's housing stock is 1985, with over 60% of housing structures built between 1980 and 1999. While older housing stock can have maintenance issues, it is generally also naturally more affordable as the value of housing decreases with age. However, this relationship may not hold true on the Vineyard where older structures may have historic preservation protections, the cost of getting construction materials to the island encourages reuse of existing buildings, considerable capital is spent renovating older structures, and the overall price of housing leaves even older more affordable units out of range for many income levels. For a breakdown of the age of single-family housing stock in West Tisbury, see Map 3 Age of Housing.

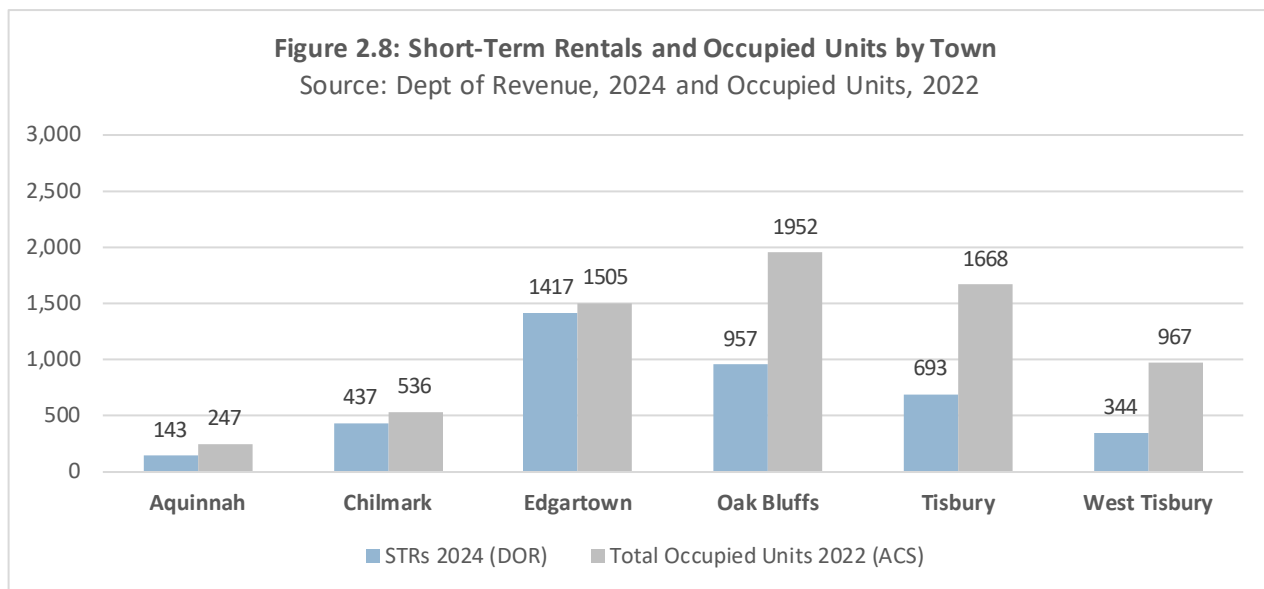
Table 2.11: Number and Percent of Occupied Housing Units and Year Structure Built						
	Aquinnah		Chilmark		Edgartown	
Median Year Built for Town	1981		1983		1982	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total (2023)	242		556		1,666	
2020 or later	0	0.0%	7	1.3%	7	0.4%
2010 to 2019	23	9.5%	20	3.6%	272	16.3%
2000 to 2009	46	19.0%	85	15.3%	79	4.7%
1980 to 1999	92	38.0%	273	49.1%	502	30.1%
1960 to 1979	37	15.3%	80	14.4%	597	35.8%
1940 to 1959	11	4.5%	21	3.8%	37	2.2%
1939 or earlier	33	13.6%	70	12.6%	172	10.3%
	Oak Bluffs		Tisbury		West Tisbury	
Median Year Built for Town	1973		1968		1985	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total (2023)	2,064		1,886		921	
2020 or later	0	0.0%	20	1.1%	0	0.0%
2010 to 2019	60	2.9%	57	3.0%	0	0.0%
2000 to 2009	467	22.6%	93	4.9%	66	7.2%
1980 to 1999	660	32.0%	490	26.0%	584	63.4%
1960 to 1979	176	8.5%	441	23.4%	214	23.2%
1940 to 1959	151	7.3%	181	9.6%	0	0.0%
1939 or earlier	550	26.6%	604	32.0%	57	6.2%
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S2504						

Short-Term Rentals

STRs are defined by the MA DOR as rentals of private residences, or rooms in private homes, with a duration of 31 days or less. While the Cape and Islands have a long tradition of family-owned STRs, the practice has changed significantly across the country due to the popularity and convenience of online platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO. In 2018, the Commonwealth passed

legislation to tax STRs under the provisions of Room Occupancy Taxes, providing towns with the local-option revenue stream described above. Although all six Island towns have adopted the local option, none of the resulting revenue has been directly allocated to support affordable housing except in Chilmark.

While STR units provide a new revenue source for the towns, they place additional pressures on the existing housing stock, further increasing demand and housing prices. According to the MA

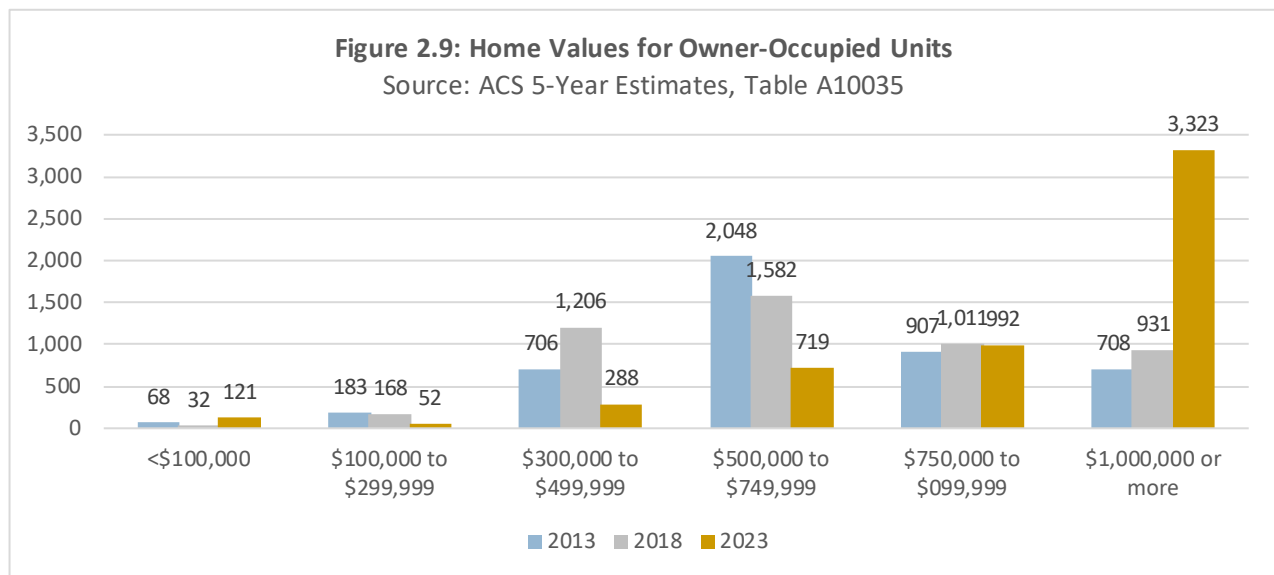


DOR, the number of registered STRs on the Vineyard in April 2024 ranged from 143 in Aquinnah to 1,417 in Edgartown. The Island-wide total of 3,999 STR units far eclipsed the Island's supply of 1,614 year-round rental units. According to Avenu Insights and Analytics, the average nightly rate for a short-term rental in Dukes County in 2023 was about \$930.²⁰ Figure 2.8 compares the number of STRs to the number of year-round occupied units by town.

Housing Costs and Affordability

The number of year-round, owner-occupied units valued below \$100,000 has been scarce for decades, yet they increased from 68 to 121 units from 2013 to 2023, according to ACS estimates. Year-round, owner-occupied units valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999 have declined significantly in the same period, decreasing from 706 units to 288 units. Year-round, owner-occupied units valued at more than \$1 million comprised 15.3% of owner-occupied units in 2013; today, they comprise 60.5% of the total owner-occupied units on Island. Figure 2.9 tracks the value of owner-occupied units on Martha's Vineyard over the last ten years.

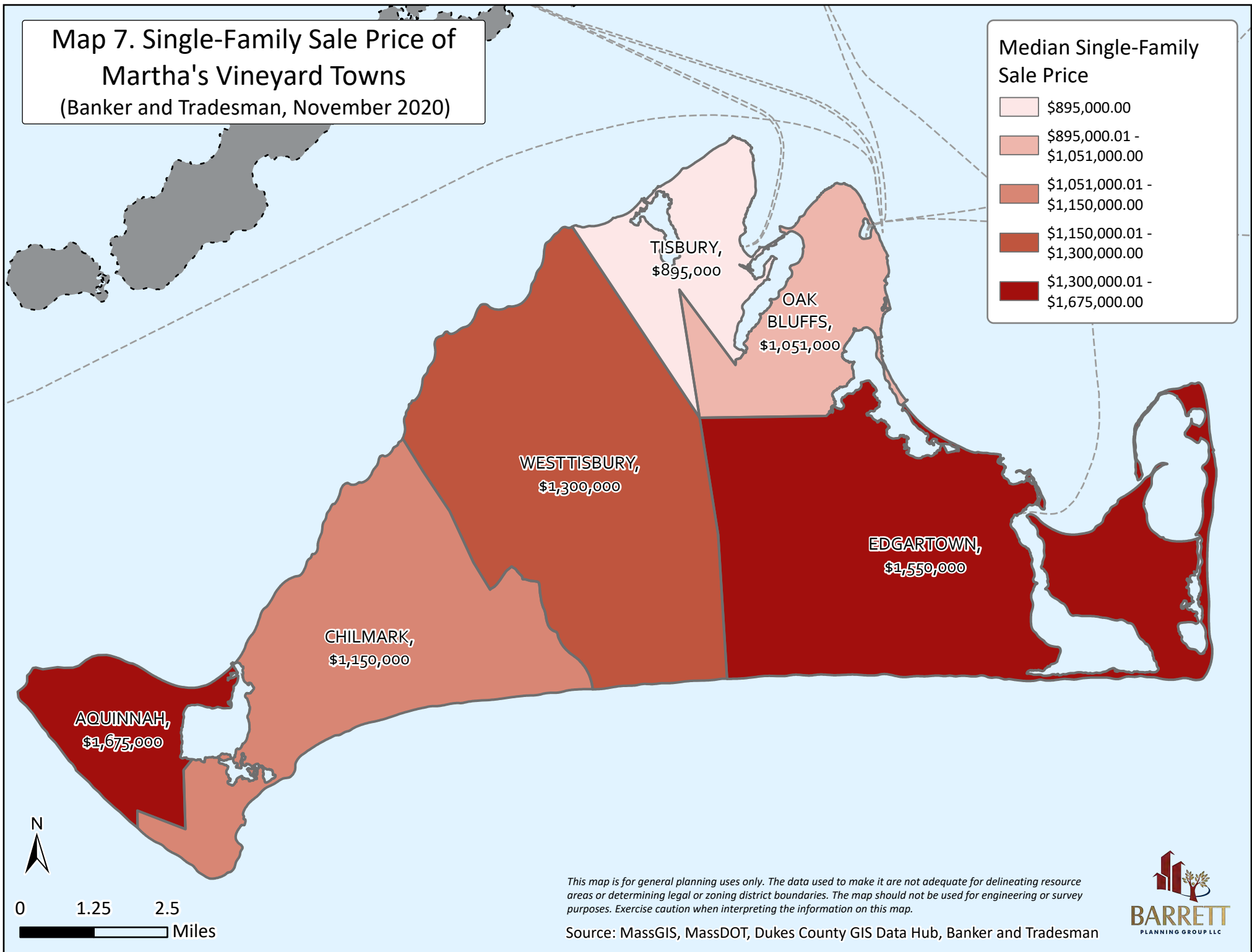
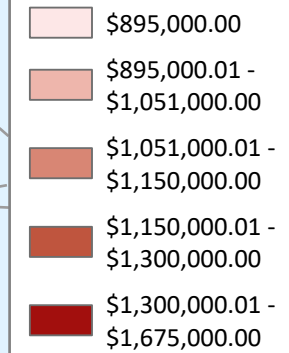
²⁰ Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment, 27.



According to Banker & Tradesman, the number of single-family home sales between January and November 2020 compared to 2023 shows the impact of the pandemic, with major increases in housing demand in the fall of 2020 compared to a relatively flat level of sales in 2023 (data exclude Gosnold). Sales activity in 2023 showed fluctuations by town. However, total monthly sales of single-family homes did not exceed twelve units in any town except Edgartown in March. Although total home sales fell, sales prices escalated. For example, the Island's median single-family home sale price was \$807,000 in 2019, rising to \$960,000 in 2020, and \$1,325,000 in 2022, remaining relatively stable at about \$1.3 million as of December 2023. The Dukes County median single-family home price of \$1,327,500 as of November 2023 (up from \$927,835 in October 2020) was higher than any county in the state except Nantucket, which had a median of \$2,575,000, according to Banker & Tradesman. While there were some fluctuations in the median single-family home prices in 2020, particularly for towns with more limited sales and thus a smaller sample size, the predominant trend during the first year of the pandemic was toward much higher prices. Map 7 illustrates the median single-family home sale price for all Martha's Vineyard towns as reported by Banker & Tradesman for November 2022.

Map 7. Single-Family Sale Price of
Martha's Vineyard Towns
(Banker and Tradesman, November 2020)

Median Single-Family
Sale Price



Rental Costs

Many property owners try to rent available units in the summer and shoulder seasons for extremely high prices by the week or night and then lower the price during the off-season from Columbus Day to Memorial Day. Given the seasonality of the rental market in tandem with such high market prices, 12-month leases have become unusual unless the units involve affordability restrictions.

The ACS median rent calculation falls well short of actual market conditions, since about 54% of the Vineyard's rental units receive subsidies or do not require rent payments. While the ACS does not calculate or distinguish separate median rental rates for subsidized and market rate units, the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) indicates that a total of 498 rental units involve government subsidies or financing. In addition, ACS estimates indicate that approximately 512 rental units involve tenants who did not pay rent, likely involving family or friends. Together, these 1,000+ rental units represent approximately 54% of the 1,867 rental units on the Island.

The Dukes County Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA) estimated that the 2023-2024 rent for a deed-restricted one-bedroom at 80% AMI would be \$1,608/month without utilities, and \$1,878 with utilities. For a deed-restricted one-bedroom unit at 100% AMI in 2023-24, DCRHA reports equal \$2,172/month without utilities, and \$2,442 with utilities. Rents have risen considerably during the last decade.

While year-round rental listings are scarce, they suggest market rents for 1-bedroom apartments of approximately \$3,000 per month plus \$250/month utilities, for a total of \$3250/month. It should be noted that the rental stock in most counties, except Dukes and Nantucket, is mostly year-round and not under pressure from exorbitant seasonal prices.

Affordability Gaps

As prices continue to rise, so have affordability gaps, typically defined as the difference between what a median-income household can afford and the median home price. A comparison of all Island towns and the county for September 2012 and November 2020 and 2023 shows widening gaps in all cases. Even between 2020 and 2023, gaps widened considerably, with a more modest increase in Chilmark. Town gaps range from a low of \$599,500 in Chilmark to over \$1 million in Aquinnah. The county-wide gap is \$928,500.

West Tisbury Housing Production Plan

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Table 2.12: Affordability Gaps for Homeownership
Based on Median Household Incomes as of Nov. 2020 and Nov. 2023

	Median Household Income		Affordable Price*		Median House Price (millions)		Affordability Gap (millions)	
	11/20	11/23	11/20	11/23	11/20	11/23	11/20	11/23
Aquinnah	\$95,625	\$114,375	\$513,000	\$475,000	\$1.675	\$1.8	\$1.162	\$1.325
Chilmark	\$96,471	\$155,938	\$557,000	\$680,500	\$1.15	\$1.28	\$0.593	\$0.5995
Edgartown	\$78,902	\$79,127	\$451,000	\$349,000	\$1.55	\$1.65	\$1.099	\$1.301
Oak Bluffs	\$75,294	\$106,284	\$400,000	\$449,000	\$1.051	\$1.18	\$0.651	\$0.731
Tisbury	\$51,456	\$65,789	\$264,000	\$272,000	\$0.895	\$1.08	\$0.631	\$0.808
West Tisbury	\$95,351	\$128,045	\$518,500	\$547,000	\$1.3	\$1.5	\$0.7815	\$0.953
County	\$71,811	\$93,225	\$391,500	\$399,000	\$1.173	\$1.3275	\$0.7815	\$0.9285

Source: MVC, Housing Needs Assessment (2024), 60

*For 2020, based on an interest rate of 3.5%, 30-year term, insurance costs of \$6 per thousand, and property tax rates of \$6.81 for Aquinnah, \$2.86 for Chilmark, \$3.35 for Edgartown, \$7.44 for Oak Bluffs, \$9.33 for Tisbury, and \$6.07 for West Tisbury, also with owners spending 30% of income on housing costs. Annual property tax rate of \$5.93 per thousand for Dukes County (this is based on an average of the tax rates for all six towns, weighted by the number of housing units).

For 2023, based on an interest rate of 6.5%, 30-year term, insurance costs of \$6 per thousand, and property tax rates of \$6.40 for Aquinnah, \$2.63 for Chilmark, \$2.55 for Edgartown, \$5.23 for Oak Bluffs, \$7.32 for Tisbury, and \$4.30 for West Tisbury, also with owners spending 30% of income on housing costs. Annual property tax rate of \$4.43 per thousand for Dukes County (this is based on an average of the tax rates for all six towns, weighted by the number of housing units).

When calculated based on Dukes County 80% AMI limits for 2023 (\$90,150 for a family of 3), the affordability gaps are even larger, as shown in Table 2.13.

Table 2.13: Affordability Gap for 80% AMI (\$90,150),* 2023

Town	Affordable Price	Median House Price	Affordability Gap
Aquinnah	\$375,500	\$1,800,000	\$1,424,500
Chilmark	\$396,000	\$1,280,000	\$884,000
Edgartown	\$396,500	\$1,650,000	\$1,253,500
Oak Bluffs	\$381,500	\$1,180,000	\$798,500
Tisbury	\$371,000	\$1,080,000	\$709,000
West Tisbury	\$386,500	\$1,500,000	\$1,113,500
County	\$386,000	\$1,327,500	\$941,500

Source: MVC, Housing Needs Assessment (2024), 61

*AMI limits here are based on 2023 HUD Income Limits for Dukes County for a household of three.

Table 2.14 reports affordability gaps for a three-person household at 150% of the county AMI. Even at this AMI, the upper range of the MVC's "Community Housing" definition, households struggle to access homes on the private housing market, including Island workers who support the critical infrastructure of community services and public safety.

Table 2.14: Affordability Gap for 150% AMI (\$168,615), * 2023			
Town	Affordable Price	Median House Price	Affordability Gap
Aquinnah	\$698,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,102,000
Chilmark	\$735,500	\$1,280,000	\$544,500
Edgartown	\$736,500	\$1,650,000	\$913,500
Oak Bluffs	\$709,000	\$1,180,000	\$471,000
Tisbury	\$689,000	\$1,080,000	\$391,000
West Tisbury	\$718,000	\$1,500,000	\$782,000
County	\$717,000	\$1,327,500	\$610,500
Source: MVC, Housing Needs Assessment (2024), 62			
*AMI limits here are based on 2023 HUD Income Limits for Dukes County for a household of three.			

Rental Housing

While year-round rental listings are scarce, available information indicates that market rents for one-bedroom apartments are around \$3,000 per month. A \$3,000 one-bedroom apartment, plus an average of \$250 in monthly utility costs, would require a household income of approximately \$130,000 based on standard affordability guidelines. Currently, an annual income in this range would describe a one-person household with income at 150% AMI or a two-person household at about 130% AMI. These incomes are much higher than that of a one-person or two-person household with incomes at the 80% AMI limits (\$70,150 and \$80,150, respectively) and much more than twice the Island's estimated median renter household income of \$53,158. As a result, the rental affordability gap on Martha's Vineyard is about \$920 per month, or the difference between an estimated median rent of \$3,000 and the \$2,080 that a median-income household at 100% AMI can afford. In 2023, the Dukes County AMI was \$80,150. The affordability gap widens considerably to \$1,246 for a two-person renter household with income at 80% AMI.

Housing Cost Burden

Housing affordability measures the income of a household in comparison to housing costs. Many state and federal governments and subsidy programs consider a unit as affordable if a household pays no more than 30% of its income on select housing costs.²¹ Households paying more than 30% count as cost-burdened, and households paying 50% or more count as severely cost-burdened.

Out of a total of 7,362 estimated households on the Island in 2023, 1,711 (23%) spent between 30% and 49.9% of their income on housing, and another 1,138 (15%) spent more than half their income on housing. This means that a total of about 2,849 year-round Island households, or 39%, experienced high housing cost burdens. About 65% of households earning less than \$75,000 paid more than 30% of their income on housing. About half of those, or 1,303 units, were occupied by

²¹ Housing costs are calculated for rentals as the sum of rent and utilities; for ownership as the sum of mortgage payments, property taxes, and insurance.

households that count as severely cost-burdened. This includes 602 renter households and 701 homeowners, many of whom struggle to afford to remain on the Vineyard.

Homeowners

In 2023, an estimated 2,172 year-round owner households spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs. They represented 40% of all homeowners, including 17% with severe cost burdens. The number of households with cost burdens ranged from 97 in Aquinnah to 732 in Oak Bluffs. Homeowners with severe cost burdens ranged from 37 in Aquinnah to 335 in Edgartown. As a percentage of the year-round, owner-occupied housing stock in each town, cost burdens ranged from 33% in West Tisbury to 43% in Edgartown. Severe cost burdens ranged from 11% in Tisbury to 22% in Edgartown.

Year-round homeowners with cost burdens were distributed among a wider range of incomes than renters. There were about 190 homeowners with incomes of less than \$20,000, nearly all with severe cost burdens. Even at higher income levels, many owner-occupied households still struggle with housing costs but do not qualify for the affordable ownership opportunities limited by AMI values. Some homeowners who have significant equity in their home may qualify for affordable housing based on their income but ultimately find themselves ineligible because of their financial assets or age. Precedent exists for integrating income tiers above 80% AMI into new Martha's Vineyard developments, with deed restrictions to maintain their affordability via ground leases.

Renters

Of the 1,867 year-round renter households estimated by the ACS for 2023, about 677 or 36% were experiencing cost burdens, and 226 or 12% were experiencing severe cost burdens. The estimated number of year-round renter households with cost burdens ranged from 13 in Aquinnah to 340 in Oak Bluffs. Towns with small rental inventory still showed notable cost burdening. In Aquinnah, 13 out of 32 total renter households (41%) were cost burdened, and in Chilmark 19 out of 64 renter households (30%) were cost burdened.

Unhoused Populations and Housing Insecurity

Homelessness is a growing public health challenge exacerbated by the severe shortage of affordable housing. Due to the pandemic, homelessness on Martha's Vineyard became recognized as a high-priority public health problem, yet there has been no centralized response across Island towns. To date, no year-round emergency shelter exists anywhere on Martha's Vineyard. Residents have known for years that people move more than once a year due to the lack of long-term leases and seasonal swings in housing costs in what has been called the "Island Shuffle." The use of this term now denotes persistent housing insecurity. Of those who face homelessness, many also contribute to the Island's economy, working at low-paying full-time and part-time jobs that leave them in poverty. Some hold local government jobs. Workers come to the Island for jobs with promises of housing that has durational limits or seasonal availability, leaving them unhoused over the winter months. Some workers may then be displaced from winter housing as seasonal residents return.

None of the Island towns have created structured resources or organized a permanent location for shelter accommodations to address homelessness, despite the increasing risk of economic displacement on Martha's Vineyard. The absence of a county public health department contributes to the lack of an integrated public health response to homelessness.

Harbor Homes of Martha's Vineyard was established in 2019 by a network of faith groups, businesses, housing advocates, and concerned citizens, with support from the Dukes County government and DCRHA, as a year-round permanent supportive housing organization focused on homelessness prevention. This has included grant-seeking and management activities for an overnight emergency winter shelter and warming center, as well as raising funds for buying and operating transitional housing with ongoing case management services, among other efforts. Harbor Homes now has four full-time staff, eleven part-time caseworkers, and a board that offers many hours of volunteer service to the organization. While other housing entities have focused on households with incomes of 30% to 150% AMI, Harbor Homes has historically sought to address the needs of people who earn "too little for affordable housing" because they do not have the income or subsidy to access even the Island's existing subsidized units.

Table 2.15: Harbor Homes Capacity, 2023

	Capacity	Notes
Emergency Shelter, November April	20 beds, adults only	An additional three to five individuals visit the shelter daily to access meals. Fifty-four guests accessed the Emergency Shelter for 2024 winter, a significant increase from past years. Harbor Homes is seeking permission from Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS) to add five beds next winter due to increasing need. A temporary emergency shelter location at MVCS has no showers; YMCA coordinates for arrangements. At the end of the season in April 2024, having no other resources to offer, Harbor Homes provided shelter guests with tents.
Women's Congregate House	6 adults	Based in Oak Bluffs, intended as a transitional facility.
Men's Congregate House	6 adults	Based in Oak Bluffs, intended as a transitional facility.

Source: *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, 62

The 2023 Point in Time (PIT) count on the Vineyard documented sixty individuals:

- About 22% were homeless for the first time, 31% had been homeless for about twelve months, and about two-thirds had been homeless for three years or more.
- About three-quarters were male.

- About 10% were under the age of thirty-four. Almost one-quarter were between thirty-five and forty-four. A little more than 40% were between forty-five and sixty-four. Fifteen% were sixty-five or older.
- About two-thirds were White, 23% were Brazilian, and 13% were Black.
- In terms of disabilities, 20% had mental health problems, 23% had alcohol problems, 15% had drug problems, and 10% had both alcohol and drug problems.²²

Subsidized Housing Inventory

The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is the state's official roster of low or moderate income housing. To be included on the SHI, projects must be: approved by a state subsidizing agency; affordable to households with incomes at or below 80% AMI; restricted for occupancy to income-eligible households; protected by a long-term use restriction; and marketed under an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHMP). The state uses the SHI to determine whether a city or town meets the statutory minimum under Chapter 40B that at least 10% of the community's units are affordable for low- or moderate-income households.

A town that meets the 10% SHI goal may still consider and approve 40B proposals, particularly developments that address the town's own affordable and community housing goals. Municipalities may also use Chapter 40B to advance their own town-initiated housing projects through the Local Initiative Program (LIP). Martha's Vineyard has a total of 486 SHI-Eligible units, the vast majority of which are rental housing. According to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC), the 486 units today represent a net gain of 147 since 2020 for the island as whole. West Tisbury has added two units to its SHI since 2016, increasing the count from twenty-three to twenty-five.²³ Table 2.16 shows information pertaining to the SHI for Martha's Vineyard towns. A town's 10% goal is calculated from the number of year-round housing units as reported by the most recent census.

The Island's inventories vary widely from town to town. The Island's total combined percentage is currently 4.99% of its Census 2020 year-round housing stock. This is a decrease from 5.1% in 2010, largely due to the increase in the 2020 year-round housing count. Map 8 displays each town's SHI percentage, indicating which towns fall below the 10% goal.

²² *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, 36.

²³ JM Goldson with RKG Associates, Inc, *West Tisbury Housing Production Plan FY2018-2022*, 2017, 64.

West Tisbury Housing Production Plan

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Table 2.16: Martha's Vineyard Subsidized Housing Inventory					
Town	2020 Census Year- Round Housing	SHI Units	SHI Percent	10% Requirement	Gap
Aquinnah	215	37	17.21%	22	-15
Chilmark	592	0	0.00%	60	60
Edgartown	2,440	109	4.47%	244	135
Oak Bluffs	2,518	178	7.07%	252	74
Tisbury	2,360	137	5.81%	236	99
West Tisbury	1,619	25	1.54%	162	137
Total	9,744	486	4.99%	976	505*
Sources: EOHLC (9/9/25), and Barrett Planning Group (2025).					
*The Vineyard-wide gap of 505 units represents the shortfall in the five towns that currently fall below the 10% minimum.					

Table 2.17 displays West Tisbury's current SHI, last updated by EOHLC on September 9, 2025. This information is available for all Massachusetts municipalities, including West Tisbury, through EOHLC.

Table 2.17: West Tisbury's Subsidized Housing Inventory				
Project	SHI Units	Project Type/Subsidizing Agency	Comprehensive Permit	Affordability Expiration Date
Sepiessa Apartments	4	Ownership/EOHLC	Yes	Perpetuity
Island Cohousing	4	Ownership/FHLBB	Yes	Perpetuity
Halcyon Way Apartments	2	Rental/MassHousing	Yes	2101
Shovelhead Realty Trust	1	Ownership/FHLBB	Yes	Perpetuity
Sepiessa II	3	Rental/EOHLC	Yes	Perpetuity
Scott's Grove Apartments	9	Rental/EOHLC and MassHousing	No	2117
Old Courthouse Road	2	Rental/EOHLC	No	Perpetuity
Total	25 (1.54%)	-	-	-
Source: EOHLC, as of 9/9/25				
Note: One unit on Red Arrow Road may be SHI Eligible.				

West Tisbury Housing Production Plan

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Several Martha's Vineyard communities expect to have more units eligible for the SHI soon, including:

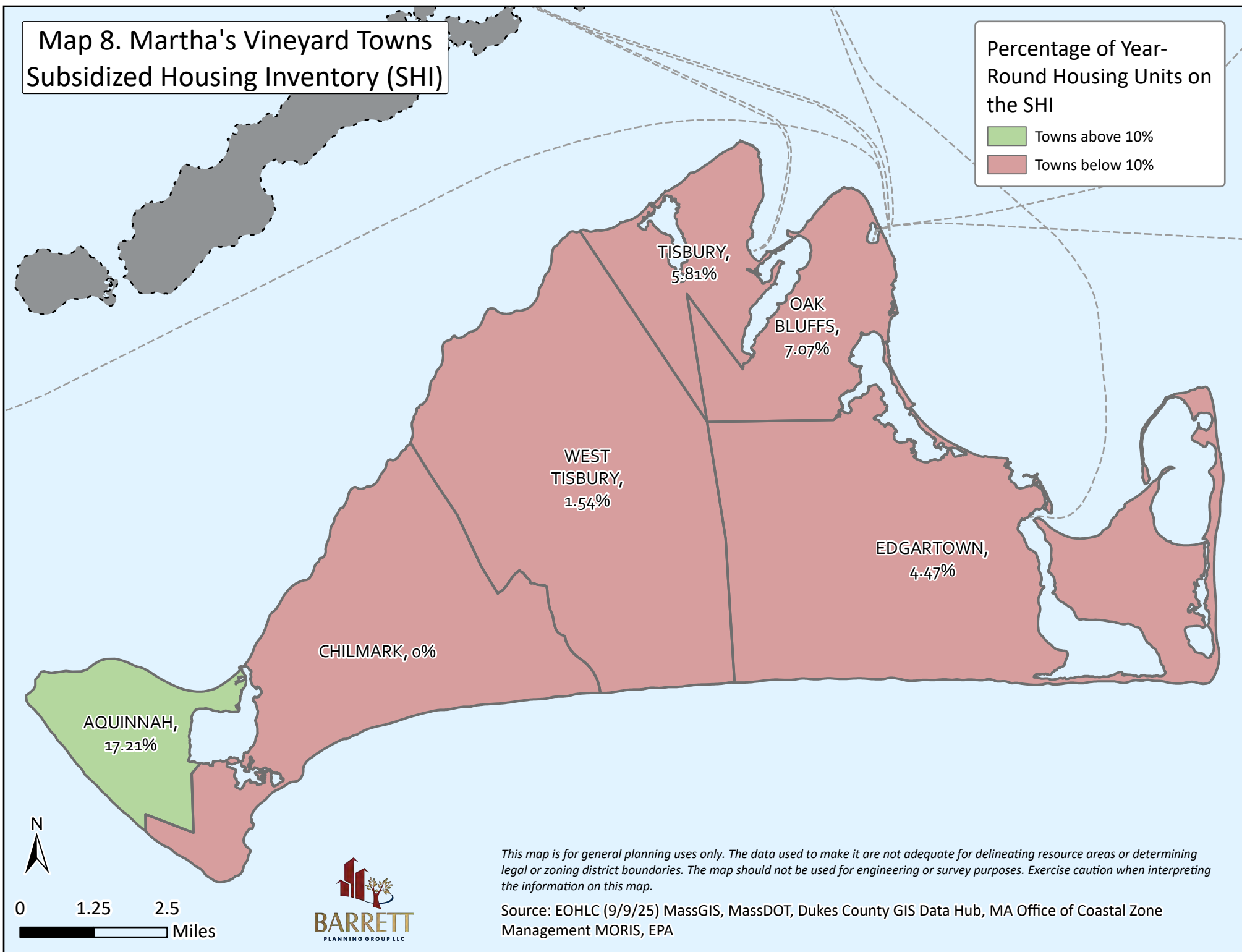
- Twelve units in the Veterans Housing project in Oak Bluffs
- One ownership unit at 60 Andrews Road in Tisbury
- West Tisbury anticipates adding some rental units to the SHI as part of the 401 State Road project, four rentals at 80% AMI and four rentals at 100% all eligible through a Local Initiative Program application to EOHLC²⁴
- Four additional rental units at Carl Widdiss Way in Aquinnah
- Some units in privately-funded developments currently before MVC are planned to be deed-restricted as affordable.

²⁴ Comment from Philippe Jordi, CEO of Island Housing Trust, received on August 19, 2025.

Map 8. Martha's Vineyard Towns Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

Percentage of Year-Round Housing Units on the SHI

- Towns above 10%
- Towns below 10%



Non-SHI Income-Restricted Units in West Tisbury

In addition to SHI units, Island towns have community housing units for households with incomes between 80% and 150% AMI. Moreover, some units restricted to 80% AMI do not meet the other requirements to be included on the SHI. While not contributing to the Town's 10% goal, these units still provide necessary housing for community members, as West Tisbury's housing needs extend beyond the 80% AMI threshold.

**Table 2.18: Martha's Vineyard
Non-SHI Income-Restricted Units**

Aquinnah	11
Chilmark	31
Edgartown	64
Oak Bluffs	37
Tisbury	38
West Tisbury	41
Total	222

Table 2.18 displays the total number of non-SHI income-restricted units on Martha's Vineyard by town. Table 2.19 provides more detail on West Tisbury's non-SHI income-restricted housing stock from information provided by the Town via MVC. Blank cells indicate missing information. These town records indicate a total of forty-one non-SHI income-restricted units and one unit with a year-round restriction in West Tisbury. Twenty-one of these units are ownership units restricted to 80% or below, but were not

reported to the state within the time window required to count on the SHI. These units may be eligible to be added to the SHI if and when they change ownership – the town should consult with EOHLC on procedure for this.

These units are developed and/or monitored by several housing organizations active in the Vineyard, including the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA), Island Housing Trust (IHT), and Habitat for Humanity. The West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee (WTAHC) also monitors twelve units. These housing partners play a crucial role both in developing and maintaining affordable and community units across Martha's Vineyard and as partners and resources for towns trying to address housing needs. These organizations offer several supportive services such as developing ownership and rental housing, owning and managing rentals, stewarding (monitoring and enforcing) ground leases and deed riders, and marketing and selecting homebuyers and tenants.²⁵

Table 2.19: Non-SHI Income-Restricted Units in West Tisbury

Monitor	AMI	Units	Type	Address	Expiration
DCRHA/Town	<140%	1	Ownership	Pin Oak Circle	
DCRHA/Town	<140%	1	Ownership	Holly Lane	Perpetuity
DCRHA/Town	<115%	1	Ownership	Plum Bush Point Rd	
DCRHA/Town	<110%	1	Ownership	Pine Hill Rd	
DCRHA/Town	<80%	3*	Ownership	Bailey Park Rd	30yrs w/ 20yr extension
DCRHA/Town	<80%	1*	Ownership	Charles Neck Way	(.49% FMV)
DCRHA/Town	<80%	1*	Ownership	Rustling Oaks Rd	Perpetuity
DCRHA/Town	<80%	1*	Ownership	Tiahs Cove Rd	

²⁵ Comment from Philippe Jordi, CEO of Island Housing Trust, received on August 19, 2025.

Table 2.19: Non-SHI Income-Restricted Units in West Tisbury (continued)

Monitor	AMI	Units	Type	Address	Expiration
DCRHA/Town	<80%	1*	Ownership	Pin Oak Circle	
DCRHA/Town	<70%	1*	Ownership	Charles Neck Way	
WTAHC	<140%	1	Ownership	Kayleigh Way	
WTAHC	<140%	1	Ownership	Holly Lane	Perpetuity
WTAHC	<140%	2	Ownership	Pin Oak Circle	
WTAHC	<130%	1	Ownership	Old County Rd	
WTAHC	<100%	1	Ownership	Shubael Weeks Rd	
WTAHC	<80%	3*	Ownership	Lotties Lane	
WTAHC	<80%	1*	Ownership	Pin Oak Circle	
WTAHC	<80%	1*	Ownership	Merry Farm Rd	
WTAHC		1*		Holly Lane	30 yrs (2018)
Habitat	<80%	3*	Ownership	Bailey Park Rd	Perpetuity
Habitat	<80%	1*	Ownership	Eliakims Way-East	Perpetuity
IHT	YR [†]	1 [‡]		Pin Oak Circle	Perpetuity
IHT	<140%**	1 [‡]		Pin Oak Circle	Perpetuity
IHT	<140%	2	Ownership	Dr Fisher Rd	Perpetuity
IHT	<120%	1	Ownership	Rustling Oaks Rd	Perpetuity
IHT	<120%	2	Ownership	Eliakims Way-West	Perpetuity
IHT	<100%	1	Ownership	Eliakims Way-West	Perpetuity
IHT	<100%	3	Ownership	Eliakims Way-East	Perpetuity
IHT	<80%	1*	Ownership	Eliakims Way-East	Perpetuity
IHT	<80%	2*	Ownership	Harpoon Lane	Perpetuity

Source: Town of West Tisbury

*Exceeded time limit to apply for SHI.

[†]According to town records, this unit is restricted to year-round residency but is not additionally income-restricted.

[‡]Under construction.

**Town records list this unit as <140% but note that IHT indicates it is <100% AMI.

Note: Town records show a large inventory of 80% AMI income-restricted ADUs in West Tisbury.

Under the Affordable Homes Act, municipalities cannot *require* ADUs (as defined within the Act) to be income-restricted.

Environmental, Regulatory, and Other Restrictions on Housing Growth

Summary

The Town of West Tisbury must design housing policy that meets the challenges associated with Island-wide conditions of a growing year-round population, a significant seasonal influx, and a robust tourism economy. The island geography and limited infrastructure condition future development on the carrying capacity of the natural and built environment. The following section discusses the most significant constraints that may affect West Tisbury's ability to address its housing needs. In housing plans, terms such as "barriers" or "constraints" are typically used as a value-neutral way to describe factors that objectively limit housing development.

Much of the information in this section comes from the 208 Equivalency Report, a comprehensive review of water quality and habitat conditions in five up-Island watersheds, and the Town's Housing Production Plan (HPP) draft from FY2018-2022. The State of the Pond reports for major surface waterbodies from MVC and Massachusetts Estuaries Project reports from the Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection (MDEP) are also incorporated in this section.²⁶ Watershed boundaries that include major surface and groundwater systems often extend across Town limits; therefore, some of the information in this section will refer to several Towns. This speaks to the need for collaboration across the Vineyard in developing policy around housing, watershed impacts, and other environmental constraints.

Environmental Constraints

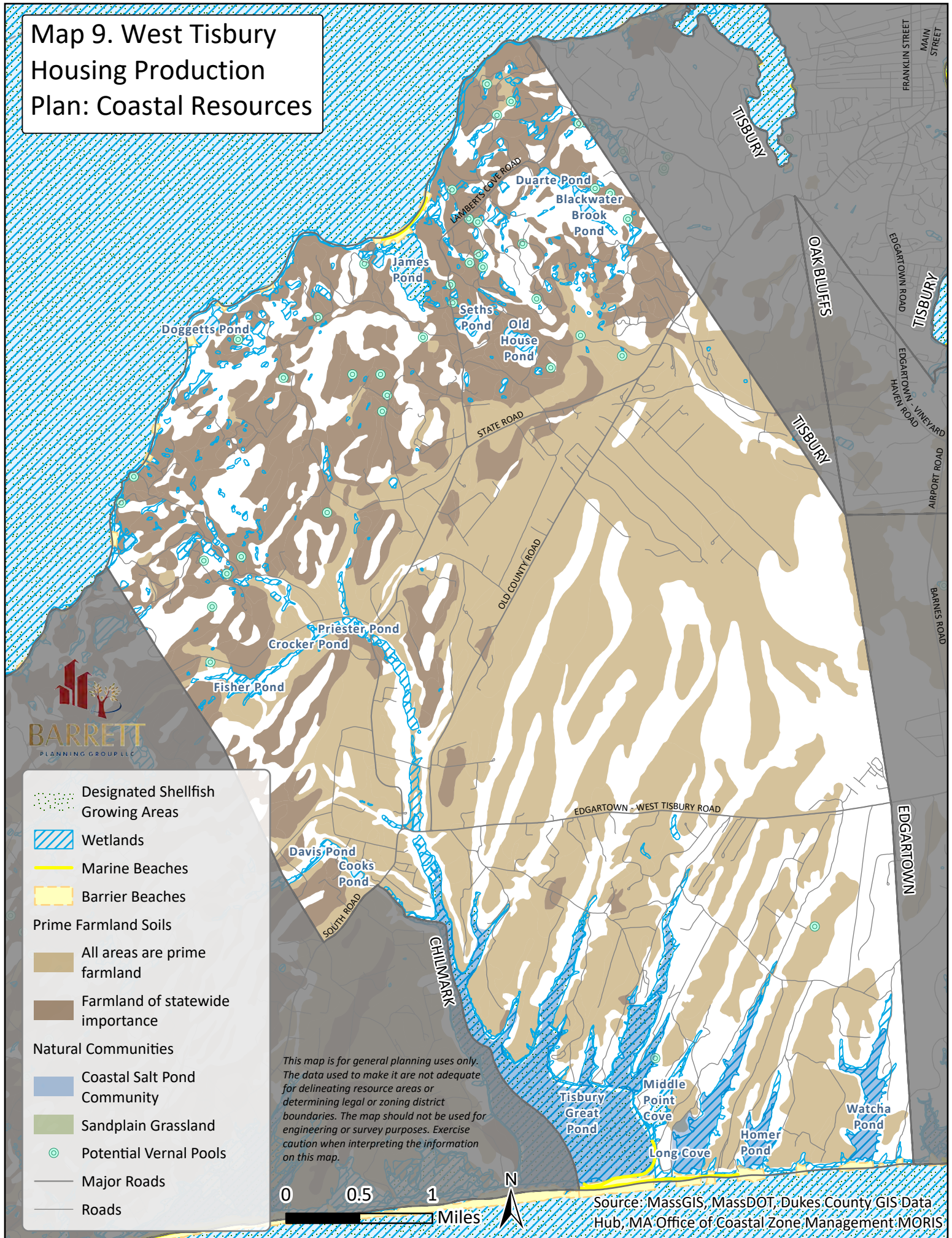
Topography, Geology, and Soils

Chilmark, Tisbury, and Edgartown border West Tisbury, the easternmost "up-Island" town on Martha's Vineyard. The slopes encountered in the outwash plain of West Tisbury are generally in the range of 0 to 3%, and occasionally in the range of 3 to 8%. However, in the hilly northwest, the slopes can range from 8 to 15% and occasionally 15 to 25%.²⁷ West Tisbury's landscape is exquisitely varied, a reflection of its glacial history and soils. The hilly moraine contains the finer soils and consequently provides a richer and moister environment for vegetation than the coarser sandy soils of the outwash plain, commonly known as the sandplain. Map 9 displays West Tisbury's extensive prime farmland soils, beaches, and wetland areas. State-designated shellfish growing areas surround West Tisbury's land mass in coastal areas to the northwest and south. Shellfish growing is prohibited in John's Pond.

²⁶ Many of the State of the Pond reports provide updated TMDL and water quality data from 2023. The MEP Reports established TMDLs for some waterbodies. These reports were published in the early 2010s; while the quantitative assessment of the water quality in these reports are outdated, nitrogen sources, threshold levels, and reduction methods apply to current conditions of the waters.

²⁷ *West Tisbury Housing Production Plan FY2018-2022*, 2017, 64.

Map 9. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Coastal Resources



Watersheds

A pond's watershed is the area of land that contributes water to the pond. This includes the surrounding upland areas from which surface run-off flows into the pond, as well as areas below the surface where groundwater contributes to the pond due to the direction of water flow within the aquifer.²⁸ Map 10 displays West Tisbury's many watershed and watershed protection areas. Much of the data concerning water quality centers on watersheds on the Vineyard.

The federal Clean Water Act requires a total maximum daily load (TMDL), a maximum pollutant level that a waterbody can receive while continuing to meet water quality standards, to be calculated for all impaired waterbodies. Water samples are then compared to the TMDL for pollutants to assess water quality. MVC collects water samples from stations across the island during the summer months to assess the water quality of the Island's waterbodies. While nitrogen is necessary for plant and algae growth, excessive nitrogen loading is harmful to waterbodies. Thus, nitrogen is often sampled and used as an indicator of overall water quality. Figure 3.1 displays the status of water quality-related studies and reports on the Vineyard, including TMDL reports and development of a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) at the town-level.

Six watersheds with notable potential impact on West Tisbury's future housing development are discussed below. Four (James Pond, Lagoon Pond, Lake Tashmoo, and Tisbury Great Pond) have considerable land area within West Tisbury, while two (Edgartown Great Pond and Sengekontacket Pond) predominantly lie within other Martha's Vineyard towns. Data is predominantly pulled from available MVC State of the Pond reports and Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) reports.

Figure 3.1: Massachusetts Estuaries Project Map

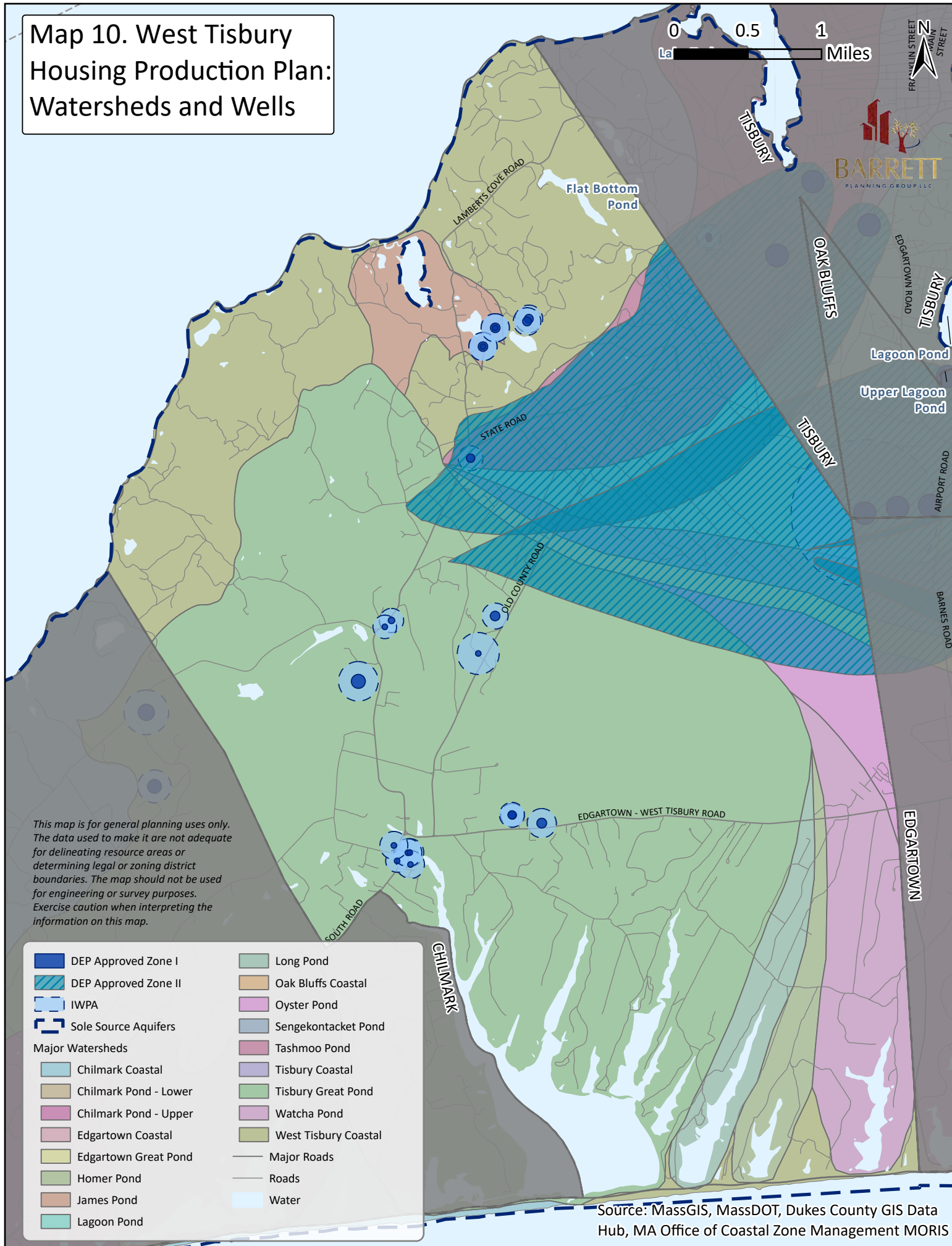
Source: The Massachusetts Estuaries Project and Reports 2024



²⁸ "Watersheds," Martha's Vineyard Commission, <https://www.mvcommission.org/watersheds-marthas-vineyard>.

Map 10. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Watersheds and Wells

0 0.5 1
Miles



This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management MORIS

Edgartown Great Pond Watershed

Edgartown Great Pond is a 4,850-acre coastal salt pond estuary that lies almost entirely within Edgartown, with a small area in West Tisbury. This pond has many embayments and is primarily used for recreational swimming, fishing and boating, as well as commercial fin-fishing and shell fishing. Recent improvements in water quality may be due to decreases in nitrogen loading and regularly scheduled inlet openings. Eelgrass thrives in the lower portion of the pond, south of Swan's Neck, but re-establishment in the tributaries will continue with improvements in water quality.²⁹

Water samples from 2018 to 2023 for total nitrogen gradient show levels that exceed maximum thresholds (See Table 3.1). In 2024, the Edgartown CWMP stated a 17.8% reduction was required in the TMDLs of nitrogen in the pond, attributing most of the loading to septic systems (74%).³⁰

Table 3.1: Edgartown Great Pond Water Quality Indicators	
Year	Nitrogen Gradient (MEP Threshold: 0.50 mg/L)
2018	~0.40mg/L
2019	~0.40 mg/L
2020	~0.55 mg/L
2021	~0.38 mg/L
2022	~0.95 mg/L
2023	~0.80 mg/L
Source: MVC, <i>Edgartown Great Pond State of the Pond Report</i> (2023)	

James Pond Watershed

The entire James Pond watershed, completely in West Tisbury, spans 414 acres, of which approximately fifty acres is surface water (pond) area. Several indicators support MVC's categorization of James Pond as impaired. James Pond is known to be eutrophic in the summer. Eelgrass is not known to be in the pond. It has low dissolved oxygen, high organic nitrogen, and is physically constrained and impacted.

James Pond is currently impaired for dissolved oxygen and Total Pigment.³¹ The current regulatory standard for the main basin of the James Pond is 6.0 mg/L for dissolved oxygen; MVC testing from 2017-2021 exceeds the standard with a range of 3.3 to 10.2 mg/L. All sampling sites exceed requirements for total pigment gradient, another indicator of water quality that measures the level of microscopic plant life in the water. There is no TMDL for nitrogen loading

²⁹ Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Edgartown Great Pond State of the Pond Report*, 2023, https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/EGP_2023_final.pdf.

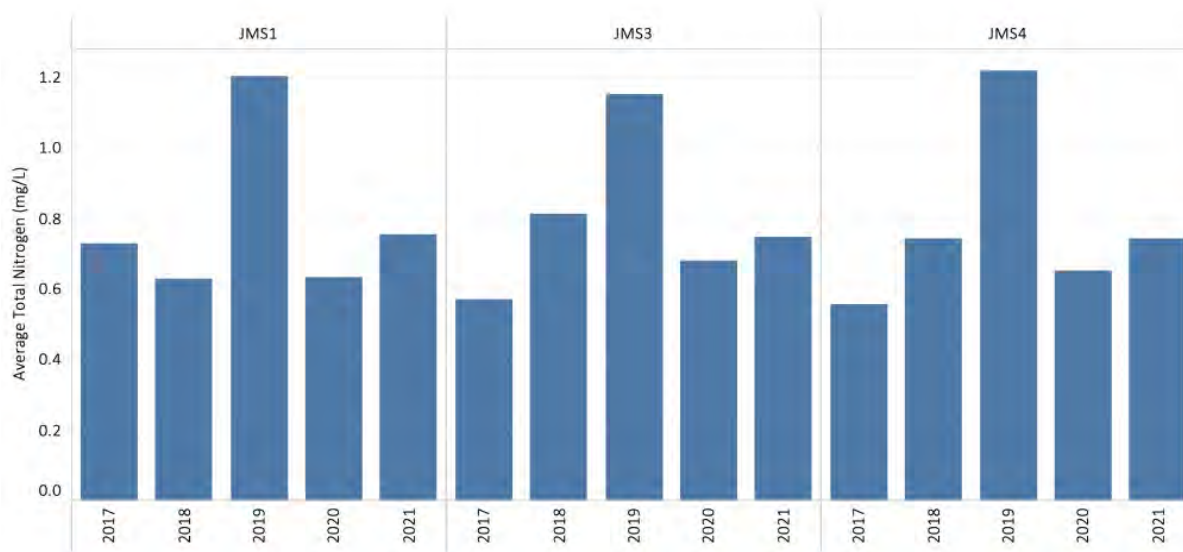
³⁰ Town of Edgartown Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan presentation, slide 18.

³¹ Martha's Vineyard Commission, *208 Individual Assessment (ISA) Report James Pond* (2023), 13.

for James Pond.³² Figure 3.2 displays the levels of nitrogen loading in James Pond between 2017 and 2021 across three sampling sites (JMS1, JMS3, JMS4) within the pond.

Figure 3.2: James Pond Total Nitrogen by Sub-watershed

Source: MVC, 208 Individual Assessment (ISA) Report Appendix, 2023, 9



According to MVC data estimates gathered in coordination with the West Tisbury Board of Health, there are an estimated fifty-one onsite wastewater systems in the James Pond watershed. See Table 3.2 for the distribution of Non-Title 5 and Title 5 systems. Wastewater associated with residential development is the source of 63% of the estimated controllable nitrogen load.³³

Table 3.2: Onsite Wastewater Systems in James Pond Watershed

Non-Title 5	34
Title 5	17
Total	51

Source: *James Pond Individual System Assessment Appendix* (2023), 19.

Lagoon Pond

The Lagoon Pond watershed expands 3,968 acres mainly in Oak Bluffs, Tisbury, and West Tisbury, with a small area in Edgartown. The major watershed area includes concentrated development resulting in high nitrogen inputs from on-site septic systems and to a lesser extent

³² Martha's Vineyard Commission, *James Pond 2023 MVC Sampling Summary* (2023), https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/JAM_2023_final.pdf.

³³ Rachel Sorrentino, *Menemsha Pond Watershed Habitat Restoration* (2024), 7.

from fertilizer, stormwater, and agricultural activities.³⁴ The major watershed area includes concentrated development. Lagoon Pond is used for recreational swimming, boating, fin fishing, and shell fishing.

Nitrogen loading indicates water quality impairment. MVC has identified the following sources of nitrogen loading in the Lagoon Pond watershed: septic systems (76%), fertilizer from lawn use (5%), impervious runoff (11%), and fertilizer from agricultural uses (8%).³⁵ A reduction of 34.6% of nitrogen would be required to meet the TMDL. The average nitrogen levels were higher at all sites in 2023, with most sites seeing averages or spikes above the impairment threshold of 0.35 mg/L.

Table 3.3: Lagoon Pond Water Quality Indicators

Year	Nitrogen Gradient (MEP Threshold: 0.35 mg/L)
2018	~0.30mg/L
2019	~0.28 mg/L
2020	~0.28 mg/L
2021	~0.30 mg/L
2022	~0.28 mg/L
2023	~0.35 mg/L
Source: MVC, <i>Lagoon Pond State of the Pond Report</i> (2023), 2	

Sengekontacket Pond

Sengekontacket Pond is a 726-acre pond and estuary with a 4,464-acre watershed and 11,300-foot barrier beach that separates it from Nantucket Sound. The watershed is located mainly within Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, with a small area in West Tisbury. Forty-nine percent of the pond shore is saltmarsh and brackish marshes which provide habitat for wildlife.

Sengekontacket supports a thriving commercial and recreational shellfishery, town aquaculture projects, and recreational swimming and boating.³⁶ Public access is provided along 38% of its shore with beach facilities managed by the Town and the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts Audubon Society manages an additional 350 acres which include 7,000 feet of natural shoreline.³⁷

The TMDL for Sengekontacket Pond is 0.35mg/L. Nitrogen levels from sampling reported in the 2023 *State of the Pond* report indicate a reduction of 19.4% of nitrogen needed to meet water

³⁴ *West Tisbury Housing Production Plan FY2018-2022*, 63.

³⁵ Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Sengekontacket Pond State of the Pond Report* (2023).

³⁶ Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Sengekontacket 2023 MVC Sampling Summary* (2023).

³⁷ *West Tisbury Housing Production Plan FY2018-2022*, 57.

quality standards. Sources of nitrogen in the Sengekontacket Pond watershed include septic systems (80%), fertilizer from lawn use (12%), and runoff (8%).³⁸

Table 3.4: Sengekontacket Pond Water Quality Indicators	
Year	Nitrogen Gradient (MEP Threshold: 0.35 mg/L)
2018	~0.30mg/L
2019	~0.35 mg/L
2020	~0.30 mg/L
2021	~0.35 mg/L
2022	~0.33 mg/L
2023	~0.35 mg/L
Source: MVC, <i>Sengekontacket Pond State of the Pond Report</i> (2023)	

Lake Tashmoo

The 2,605-acre Lake Tashmoo watershed is in Tisbury, West Tisbury, and a small area of Oak Bluffs. Increased recreational activity combined with shoreline development, road run-off and growing waterfowl populations have caused nitrogen pollution, contaminated runoff and fecal bacterial contamination. The MVC categorized this pond as Impaired. Eelgrass is present but declining. Total organic nitrogen load is high, and there is reduced transparency at the south end.

MEP calculated the TMDL for nitrogen in the Lake Tashmoo watershed to be 0.36mg/L. As of 2023, to reach this target nitrogen level, there would need to be a 31.9% reduction in nitrogen. Sources of nitrogen within the Lake Tashmoo watershed system include septic systems (80%), fertilizer from lawn use (5%), impervious runoff (8%), agriculture animals (3%), fertilizer from agricultural use (2%), landfill (1%), and the wastewater treatment facility (1%).³⁹ MVC collects samples from sites across the watershed during summer months to monitor quality, as shown in Table 3.5. Nitrogen levels reached the TMDL in 2023.

Table 3.5: Lake Tashmoo Nitrogen Loading	
Year	Nitrogen Gradient (MEP Threshold: 0.36mg/L)
2018	~0.28 mg/L
2019	~0.35 mg/L
2020	~0.30 mg/L
2021	~0.35 mg/L
2022	~0.34 mg/L
2023	~0.38 mg/L
Source: MVC, <i>Lake Tashmoo State of the Pond Report</i> (2023)	

³⁸ *Sengekontacket Pond State of the Pond Report* (2023).

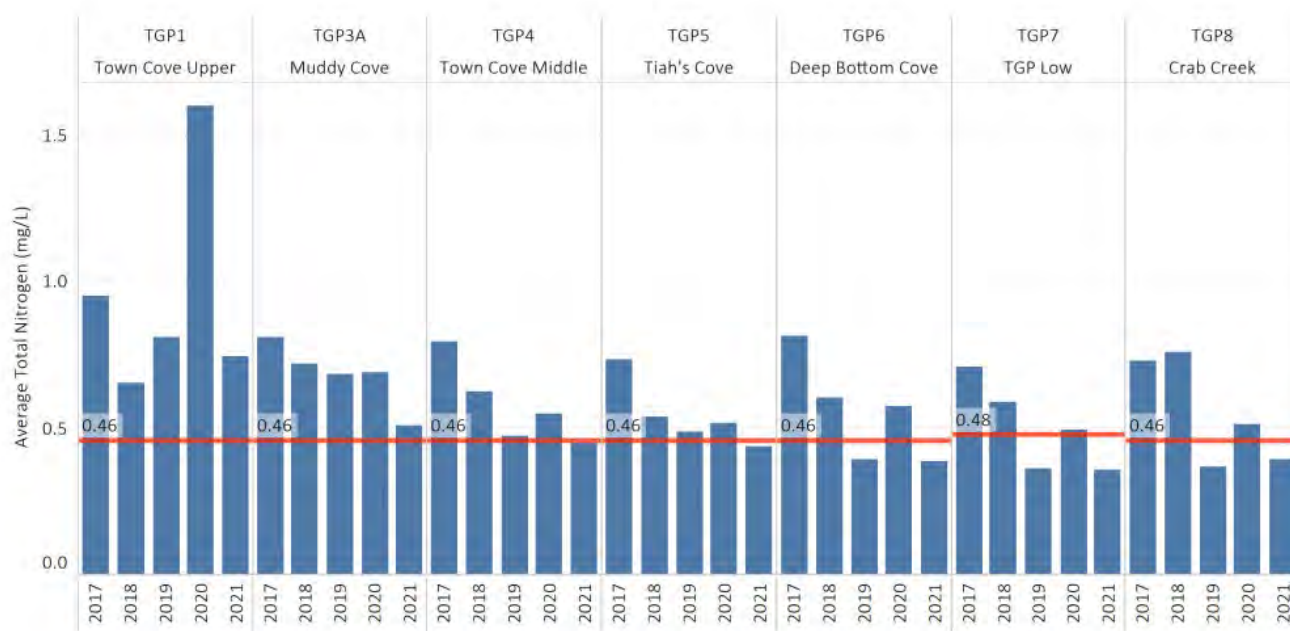
³⁹ Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Lake Tashmoo 2023 MVC Sampling Summary* (2023).

Tisbury Great Pond Watershed

The Tisbury Great Pond is a 743-acre estuary in the towns of West Tisbury and Chilmark. The Pond's total watershed is estimated to be around 11,102 acres that includes eight sub-watersheds. The watershed is supported by four small main tributary coves, two small rivers/streams, a wetland-influenced salt pond, and the large main basin of Tisbury Great Pond.⁴⁰ The Tisbury Great Pond system is particularly vulnerable to the effects of nutrient enrichment, especially considering that circulation is mainly through wind driven mixing in the small tributary coves. Figure 3.3 displays the level of nitrogen loading at seven sampling stations across sub-watersheds between 2017 and 2021.⁴¹ The red line indicates the TMDL as established by MEP in 2013.

Figure 3.3: Tisbury Great Pond Total Nitrogen by Sub-watershed

Source: MVC, Tisbury Great Pond 208 Individual Assessment (ISA) Report Appendix, 2023, 15



Tisbury Great Pond is currently classified as an impaired saltwater body for nitrogen, dissolved oxygen, and biological indicators, such as chlorophyll-a and Total Pigment.⁴² The current TMDL for the main basin of the Great Tisbury Pond is 0.46 mg/L; MVC testing from 2017-2021 exceeds the standard with an average value of 0.53 mg/L. In the Tisbury Great Pond watershed,

⁴⁰ Ibid, 70.

⁴¹ A map of sampling stations may be found on page 17 of the *Tisbury Great Pond Individual System Assessment*, https://mvc33-my.sharepoint.com/personal/seidel_mvcommission_org/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fseidel%5Fmvcommission%5FDocuments%2FMVC%5FDocuments%2FUpland%5F208%5FReports%2FTGP%5FFormatted%5FPublished%5FRevised%5FFebruary%5F15%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fseidel%5Fmvcommission%5FDocuments%2FMVC%5FDocuments%2FUpland%5F208%5FReports&ga=1.

⁴² Martha's Vineyard Commission, *Tisbury Great Pond 208 Individual System Assessment (ISA) Report*, 16.

agricultural uses represent 44% of the controllable nitrogen load source, while wastewater is responsible for 41% of the controllable load.⁴³ Table 3.6 displays the sources of nitrogen loading for the watershed.

Table 3.6: Tisbury Great Pond Nitrogen Load Model Inputs	
Source	Nitrogen Load (kg/year)
Wastewater	6,053
Landfill	102
Fertilizers	1,200
Impervious Cover	1,030
Water Surface (atmospheric deposits)	4,551
Natural Surfaces	2,147
Agriculture*	6,508
Build out**	2,723
Source: <i>208 Individual System Assessment (ISA) Report</i> , 21	
* In 2018, the Dukes Soil Conservation District completed a farm survey to evaluate nitrogen loads presented in the MEP and reported that data gaps underestimated the loading from livestock and overestimated the loading from farms and pastures.	
**Build out load includes wastewater disposal, fertilizer, and impervious surface additions from developable properties.	

The wastewater systems contributing to nitrogen loading in the watershed are in Chilmark and West Tisbury. See Table 3.7 for the distribution of Non-Title 5 and Title 5 systems across the two towns. The Tisbury Great Pond Watershed also has seven innovative alternative wastewater systems across four of its sub-watersheds, all within the town boundaries of West Tisbury. Much of the watershed is conservation land (51%); 28% of land is fully developed while about 21% remains available or potentially available for future development.⁴⁴

Table 3.7: Onsite Wastewater Systems in Tisbury Great Pond Watershed			
	Chilmark	West Tisbury	Total
Non-Title 5	84	301	385
Title 5	192	486	678
Innovative Alternative	0	7	7
Source: MVC, <i>Tisbury Great Pond Individual System Assessment Appendix</i> (2023), 33			

⁴³ *Tisbury Great Pond 2023 MVC Sampling Summary* (2023).

⁴⁴ *Tisbury Great Pond 208 Individual System Assessment (ISA) Report*, 55.

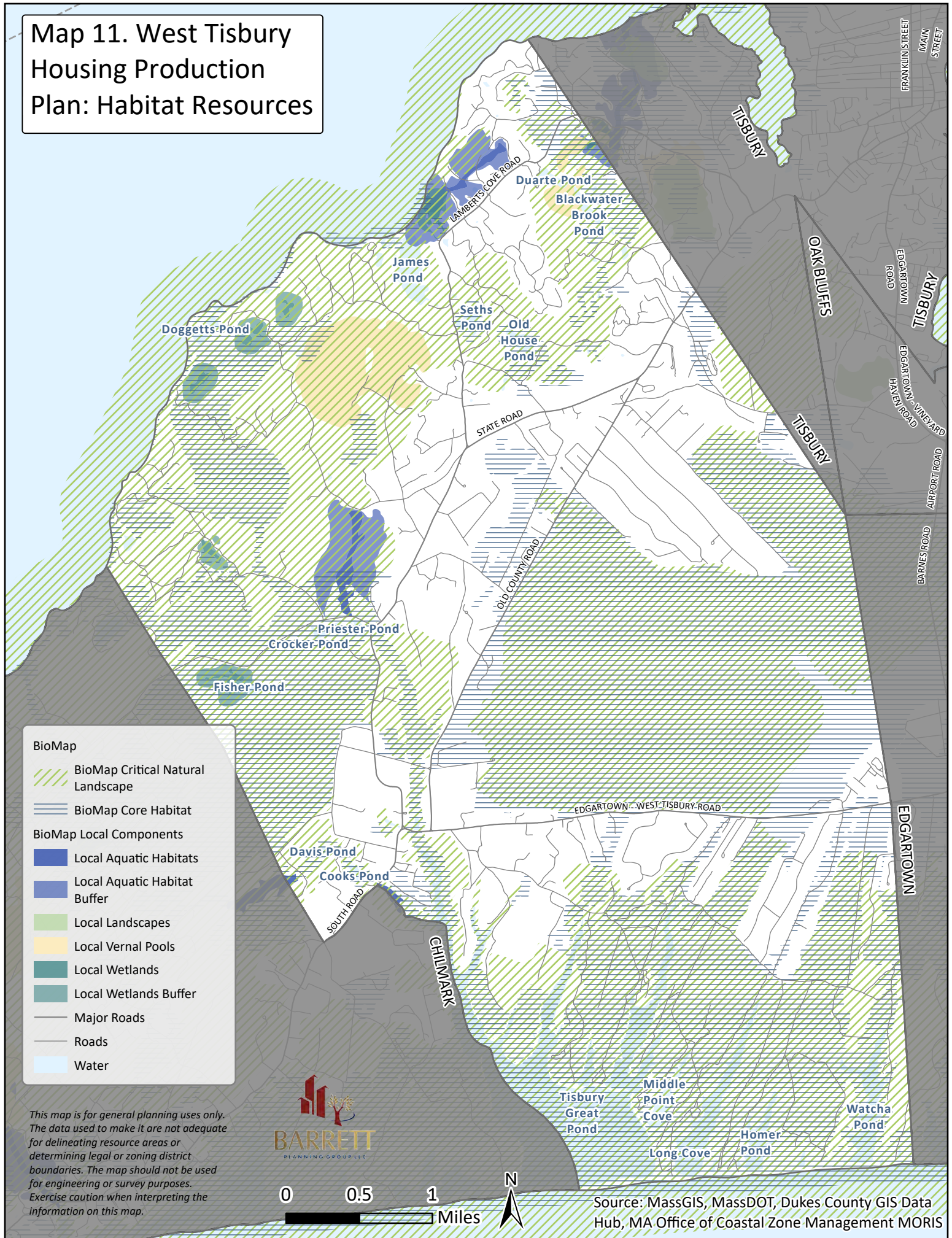
Natural Resources

Mass Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy manage BioMap, an online mapping resource and database, to protect the state's biodiversity in the context of climate change. There are two complementary spatial layers: Core Habitat, which identifies areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems, and Critical Natural Landscape, which identifies large landscape blocks that are minimally impacted by development as well as buffers to core habitats and coastal areas.⁴⁵ Map 11 displays West Tisbury's extensive habitat resources.

Table 3.8: BioMap Data for West Tisbury	
Total	17,281.0 acres
Core Habitat	
Area	9,438.6 acres or 54.6%
Protected CH	5,751.3 acres or 33.3%
Notable Areas	Rare Species Core: 8,722.0 acres Forest Core: 1,332.1 acres Aquatic Core: 699.5 acres Wetland Core: 41.5 acres Vernal Pool Core: 119.3 acres Priority Natural Communities: 698.7 acres
Critical Natural Landscape	
Area	12,020.5 acres or 69.6%
Protected CNL	6,592.9 acres or 38.2%
Notable Areas	Landscape Blocks: 11,153.9 acres Coastal Adaptation Areas: 1,187.3 acres Tern Foraging Habitat: 1,366.3 acres Aquatic Core Buffer: 1,269.7 acres Wetland Core Buffer: 255.0 acres
Source: MassWildlife, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, "BioMap Town Report: West Tisbury"	

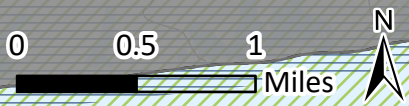
⁴⁵ MassWildlife, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, "BioMap Town Report: West Tisbury," accessed September 2, 2025, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/biomap-town-report-west-tisbury>.

Map 11. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Habitat Resources



- BioMap**
- BioMap Critical Natural Landscape
 - BioMap Core Habitat
- BioMap Local Components**
- Local Aquatic Habitats
 - Local Aquatic Habitat Buffer
 - Local Landscapes
 - Local Vernal Pools
 - Local Wetlands
 - Local Wetlands Buffer
 - Major Roads
 - Roads
 - Water

This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.



Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management MORIS

Development Constraints

Land Use

Map 2 displays West Tisbury's land use as reported by assessors' data available through MassGIS. This map illustrates West Tisbury's success in both conserving open space and making land available for housing to meet its residents' needs through cluster development and targeted density. Large swaths of open space remain intact. Commercial areas are primarily along major roads such as State Road, Old County Road, and Edgartown-West Tisbury Road.

Infrastructure Capacity

Drinking Water

The entire Island has been designated by EPA as a sole source aquifer, since groundwater is the Island's only source of drinking water⁴⁶ Most of the Island, including all town wells, draws its drinking water from the Outwash Plain Aquifer. The MVC estimates a maximum safe withdrawal level of about 16.7 billion gallons per year (gpy), well above the current demand of about 1.5 billion gpy. The USGS estimates that water demand may grow to 3.9 billion gpy.

Over 50% of the Island's aquifer lies within the Town of West Tisbury. Much of the recharge area for several public water supply wells for neighboring towns lies within West Tisbury. As such, it has 3,171 acres of Zone II well protection area, the largest Zone II on the Island. This designation restricts the density of development. In addition, West Tisbury's location over the Island's main aquifer adds another level of review by the Environmental Protection Agency for any proposed development.

Nearly two thirds of Vineyard homes get their water from a public well and distribution system (Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury, Menemsha, and Wampanoag Tribal Housing, the last two being privately owned). About one third of the homes on Martha's Vineyard rely on private wells as the source of their drinking water, including residents of West Tisbury, and these private wells will be the source of drinking water for the foreseeable future.⁴⁷ There is some concern that existing minimum separations between wells and septic fields are not adequate where groundwater flow direction is uncertain.⁴⁸ The Wampanoag Environmental Laboratory offers water quality testing for public, private, and environmental samples.

⁴⁶ The EPA defines a sole source aquifer as one where the aquifer supplies at least 50% of the drinking water for its service area and there are no reasonably available alternative drinking water sources should the aquifer become contaminated.

⁴⁷ "Water Testing," Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), <https://wampanoagtribe-nsn.gov/water-testing>.

⁴⁸ Department of Water Resources, "Groundwater and Drinking Water," Martha's Vineyard Commission, <https://www.mvcommission.org/groundwater-and-drinking-water>.

Wastewater

West Tisbury relies entirely on septic systems for residential property wastewater disposal. In other Martha's Vineyard towns with some sewer capacity, housing can be strategically placed to tie into existing sewer service. In West Tisbury, housing projects must handle the site's wastewater with a private septic system. As noted by many West Tisbury residents during community engagement events, this is a major limitation to new housing, especially more dense housing. Developers can apply for state funds to help with the cost of adding septic. Meeting attendees also discussed the possibility of shared septic systems to distribute the cost burden between multiple parcels.

Solid Waste

The Martha's Vineyard Regional Refuse Disposal and Resource Recovery District handles West Tisbury's waste along with several private companies independent of any governmental functions involved in collection, consolidation, and off-Island shipment of waste. Each town has its own waste transfer station, often at former landfill sites, all of which incorporate deposits of materials for recycling. The volume of waste the Vineyard disposes of is an energy-intensive and, thus, costly operation. Currently the island ships 33,500 tons of trash off-Island each year, accounting for 15% of the Steamship Authority's freight traffic, or one in seven freight trips. The Vineyard's generation of waste is growing much faster than its year-round population.

Transportation

The Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA) is the Island's regional transit authority. During Fiscal Year 2024, the VTA operated ten year-round routes, plus four additional summer peak season routes and paratransit service in accordance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).⁴⁹ The fixed routes, as shown on Map 12, are organized into a hub and spoke system around four hubs, which are in the Vineyard's largest communities (Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs, Edgartown and West Tisbury). With one exception, all VTA routes serve at least one hub. The VTA routes cover nearly all island major roads and all parts of the Island including the main public beaches and two park-and-ride lots. Timed transfers at various locations on the Island allow passengers to plan efficient longer trips. In addition to paratransit trips, the VTA provides the Medivan, a medical transportation to Boston provided to senior and disabled persons.

VTA Fixed Route ridership continues to make a gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic but has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. Ridership in 2022, 772,214 riders total, was about 41% less than FY 2019 (1,305,195 riders).⁵⁰ The VTA has also supported three iterations of fare-free service since 2022. The pilot fare-free program ran for a month in 2022. Fare-free service then returned from November to March of 2024. Currently, the VTA is fare free until

⁴⁹ Vineyard Transit Authority, *2024 Annual Report*, 3.

⁵⁰ *Draft Martha's Vineyard Regional Transportation Plan 2024-2044*, 2023, 117, <https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/Martha%27s%20Vineyard%20Regional%20Transportation%20Plan%202024-2044%20DRAFT%202023-07-19.pdf>.

September 30, 2025, using a \$30 million grant from the Massachusetts Fair Share Funding.⁵¹ From November 2023 to March 2024, ridership increased over 25% during this program. Annual ridership in FY 2024 was 1,038,650 people, reflecting the slow recovery from the drastic decrease in ridership from the first year of COVID (FY2020 ridership was 894,055 people).

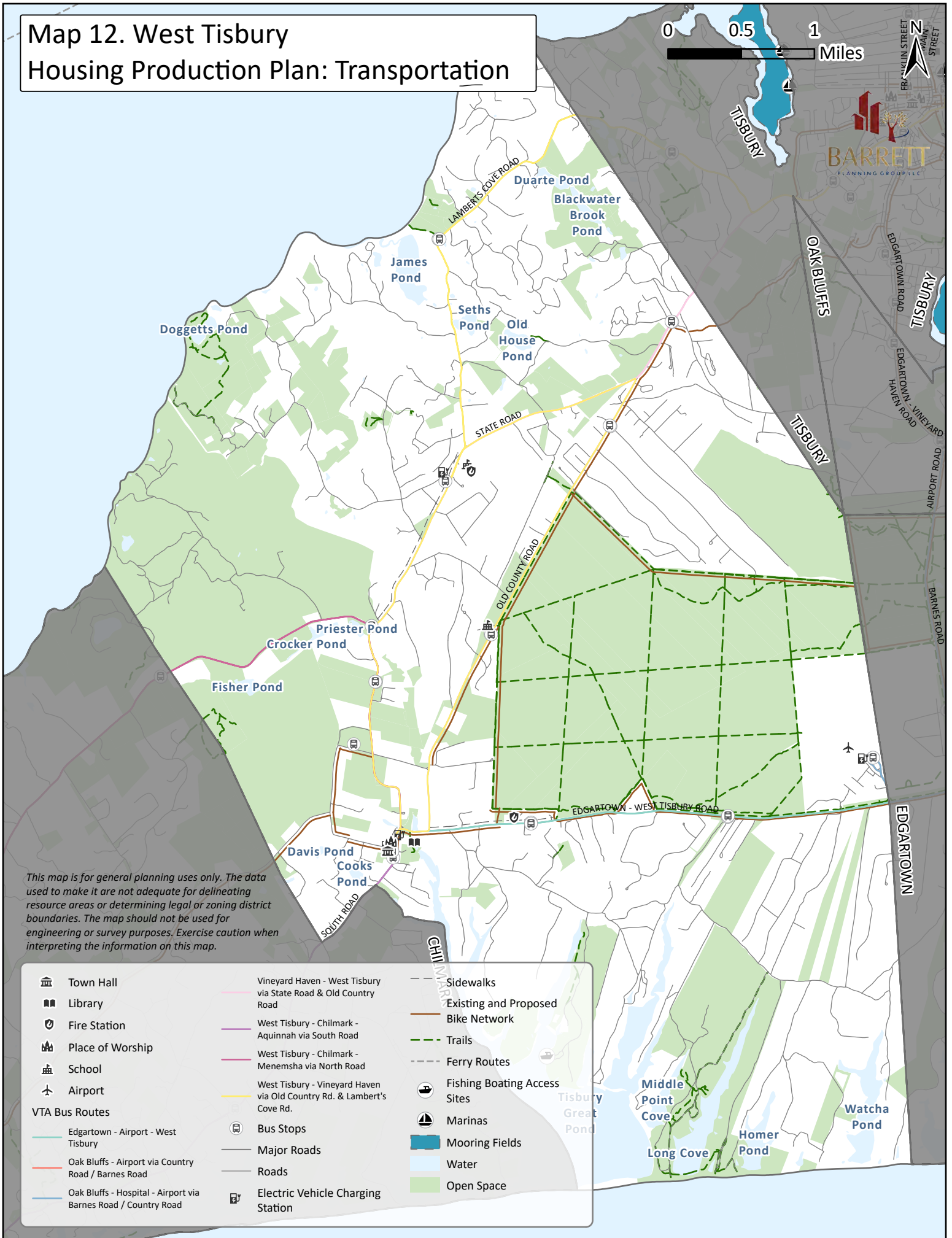
Two major roads run through West Tisbury: State Road and the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road. While traffic volumes generally trend upward on the Island, especially during the summer season, down-Island towns with busier downtowns and port access experience more congestion than up-Island towns like West Tisbury.

Trail systems connect residents and visitors to many open space areas in West Tisbury, as shown on Map 12 in the state forest, around Doggetts Pond in north West Tisbury, and along Long Cove on the southern shore. The Martha's Vineyard Airport lies on the town boundary between Edgartown and West Tisbury.

⁵¹ Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority, "Press Release: Fare Free Initiative | 1/29/24 – 9/30/25," accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.vineyardtransit.com/home/news/press-release-fare-free-initiative-112924-93025>.

Map 12. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Transportation

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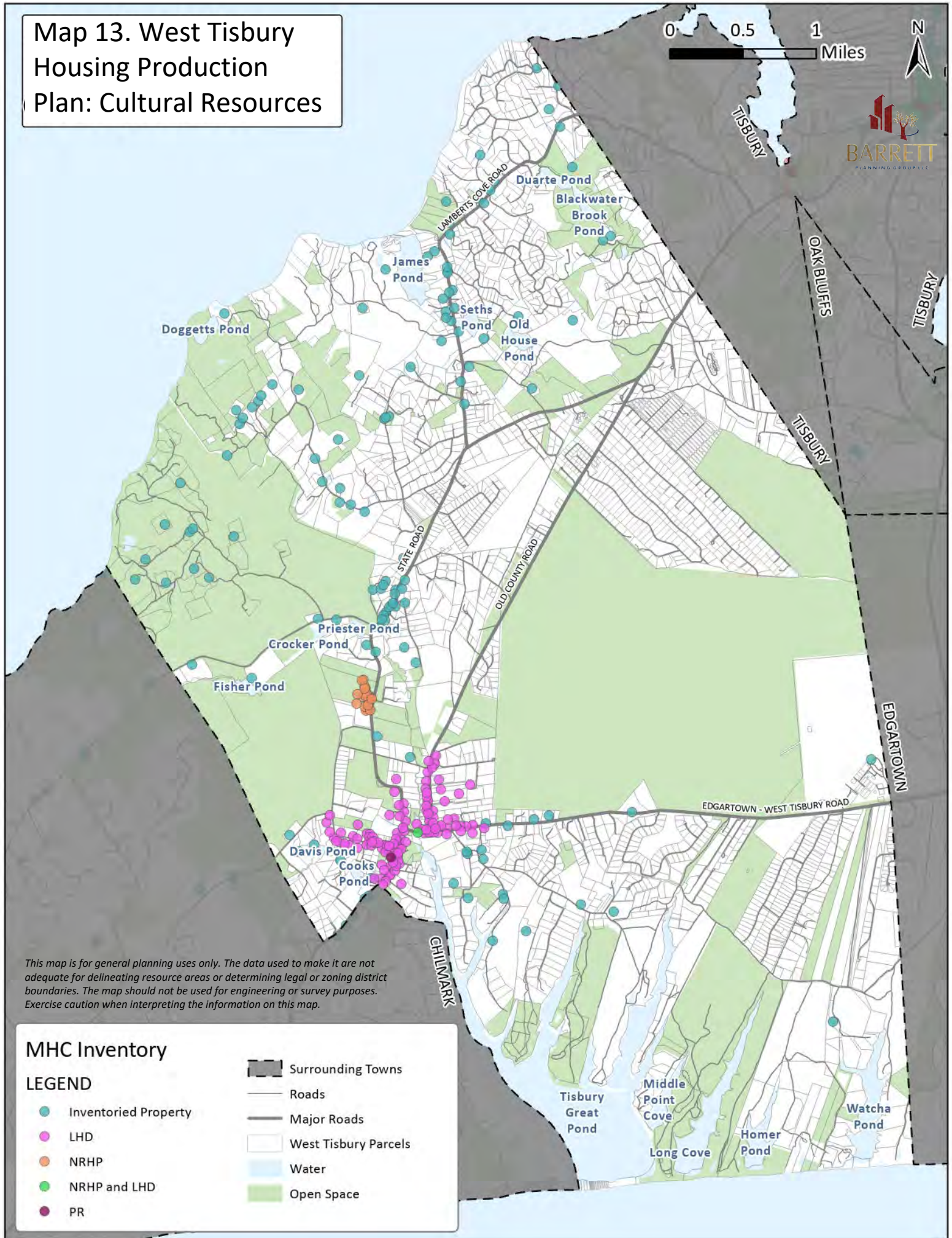
Historic and Cultural Resources

Like other Martha's Vineyard towns, West Tisbury has historic properties such as eighteenth and nineteenth century homes as well as remnants of previous industries. Map 13 displays data from the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), including properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and within the Local Historic District. Many sites are concentrated in the area at the convergence of State Road and Edgartown-West Tisbury Road. In addition, several sites across West Tisbury have been inventoried but do not hold a separate historic designation. West Tisbury's Historical Commission and Historic District Commission oversee the historic resources in West Tisbury, although the HDC is more active.

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw states that structures in MACRIS should be retained as much as possible, limiting their redevelopment potential. Moreover, several overlay districts which aim to protect the Town's environmental and historic resources warrant additional consideration for housing development. Please see the following section for more information.

Map 13. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Cultural Resources

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This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

MHC Inventory

LEGEND

- Inventoried Property
- LHD
- NRHP
- NRHP and LHD
- PR

- Surrounding Towns
- Roads
- Major Roads
- West Tisbury Parcels
- Water
- Open Space

Regulatory Constraints

Zoning

Zoning for affordable housing creates units that can be purchased or rented by people trying to live and work in the town or region. In resort communities like the Islands and Cape, including consideration of community and workforce housing units can be the means to help keep year-round residents in the community by giving them opportunities to live affordably over the long term. Furthermore, it can be the key to attracting and retaining local workers, including vital municipal, public safety, public health, and school employees. Incorporating consideration of seasonal workforce housing acknowledges the need for units that meet the unique requirements of a seasonal economy.

Maps 14 and 15 display West Tisbury's current zoning districts and overlay districts, respectively. The Rural District (RU) covers the majority of West Tisbury. A smaller Mixed Use Business District (MB) lies along State Road, a Light Industrial District covers the airport and a smaller area along State Road, and the Village Residential District (VR) covers the area where Old County Road, State Road, and Edgartown-West Tisbury Road converge and lead into Chilmark.

In 2024, Barrett Planning Group conducted a *Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions* for the MVC. This analysis focused on thirteen important housing issues that directly affect the supply and make-up for the island's housing stock. The local regulatory constraints below are taken from the findings of that 2024 report. Moreover, many of the regulatory strategies in this HPP are rooted in the recommendations to address zoning issues covered by that analysis and updated based on the engagement proceedings of this HPP. For more information, please see the 2024 *Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions* available on the MVC website [here](#).

At the most basic level, Martha's Vineyard towns are not aligned on how affordable housing is defined in zoning and thus understood by residents, local officials, and developers. While all towns reference affordability and other affordability-related terms in their zoning bylaws, not every town defines them the same way. The differences in definitions may be due, in part, to the provisions of Chapter 445 of the Acts of 2004, the special legislation providing for Affordable Housing Covenants on Martha's Vineyard. While West Tisbury has the most comprehensive set of definitions, they do not match state and regional definitions. While each town has crafted affordability definitions that suit local needs, it is difficult to tell how the towns on Martha's Vineyard think of regional housing needs. The absence of standard definitions across the six towns further complicates conversation around shared goals. Tables 3.9 and 3.10 display an overview of zoning for affordable housing and other housing types in Martha's Vineyard towns.

Table 3.9: Overview of Zoning for Affordable Housing by Town

Review Criteria	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	West Tisbury
Existing Provisions	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clarity	Low	Low	N/A	Moderate	High	High
Ease of Permitting	Moderate	Low	N/A	Moderate	High	High
Criteria Definitions	Existing Provisions: Are there provisions explicitly relating to affordable housing? Clarity: The level of clarity and consistency provided in the bylaw regarding the guidance and expectations for affordable housing. Ease of Permitting: The level of utility of the provision in practice due to policy requirements, board discretion, complexity, or other systems.					
Source: <i>Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions</i> (2024)						

Table 3.10: Zoning for Different Types of Housing by Town

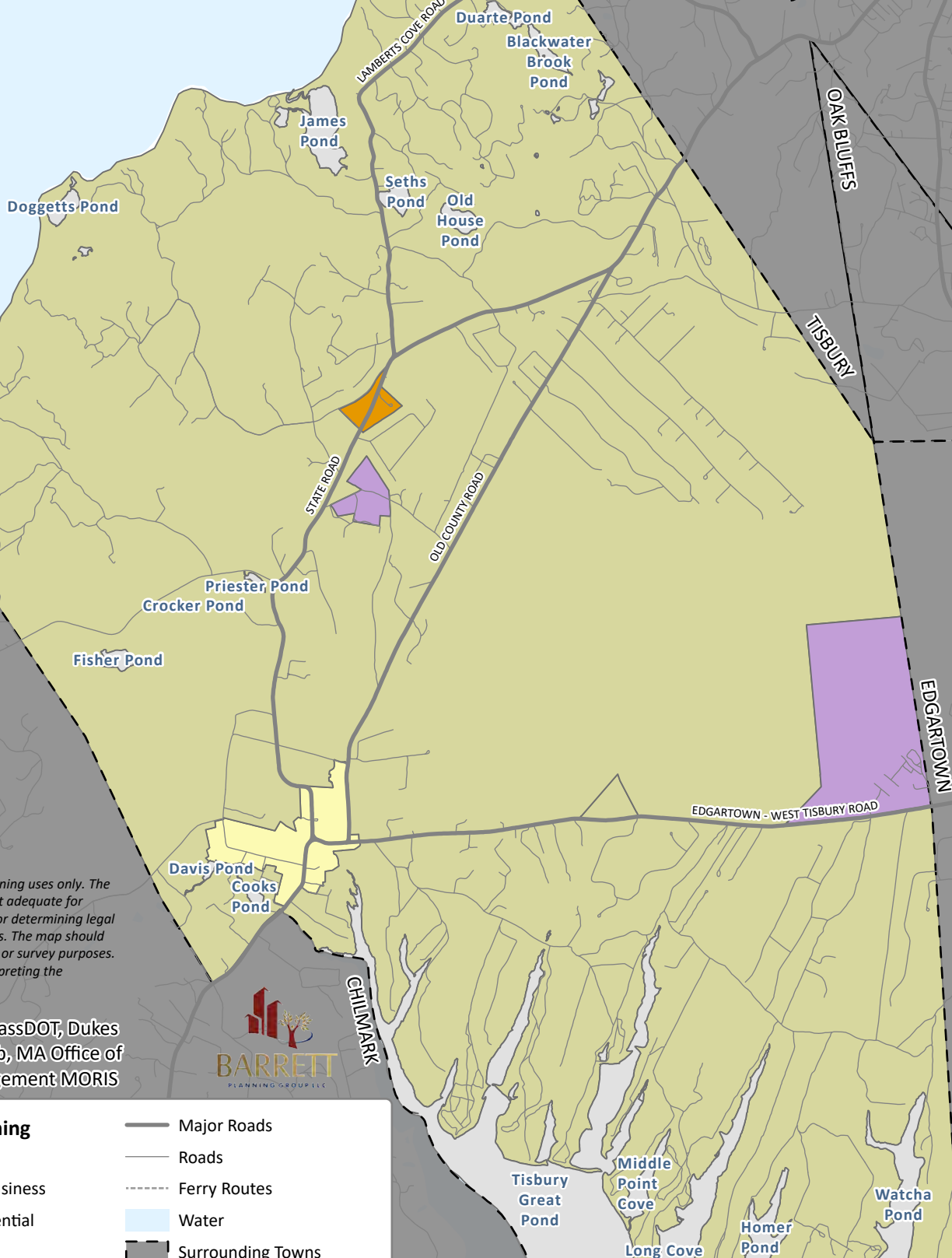
	Review Criteria	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	W. Tisbury
Multifamily Housing	Existing Provisions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Allowance	Special Permit	Special Permit	Special Permit	Special Permit	Varies by District	Varies by District
	Clarity	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low
	Ease of Permitting	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
	Effectiveness	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Alternative Housing Types	Existing Provisions	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Allowance	Special Permit	Special Permit	Special Permit	Special Permit	Varies by District	Varies by District
	Clarity	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
	Ease of Permitting	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
	Effectiveness	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employee Housing	Existing Provisions	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Allowance	Special Permit	Prohibited	Special Permit	Prohibited	Prohibited	Special Permit
	Clarity	N/A	N/A	Moderate	N/A	N/A	Moderate
	Ease of Permitting	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Low
	Effectiveness	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3.10: Zoning for Different Types of Housing by Town (continued)

	Review Criteria	Aquinnah	Chilmark	Edgartown	Oak Bluffs	Tisbury	W. Tisbury
Mixed Use	Existing Provisions	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Allowance	Prohibited	Prohibited	Varies by District	Varies by District	Varies by District	Varies by District
	Clarity	N/A	N/A	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate
	Ease of Permitting	N/A	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
	Effectiveness	N/A	N/A	Low	Low	N/A	Moderate
Demolition Delay	Existing Provisions	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Allowance	N/A	N/A	Required	N/A	N/A	Required
	Clarity	N/A	N/A	Moderate	N/A	N/A	Moderate
	Ease of Permitting	N/A	N/A	Moderate	N/A	N/A	Moderate
	Effectiveness	N/A	N/A	Moderate	N/A	N/A	Moderate
Source: <i>Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions</i> (2024)							

Map 14. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Zoning

0 0.5 1 Miles



This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Source: MassGIS, MassDOT, Dukes County GIS Data Hub, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management MORIS



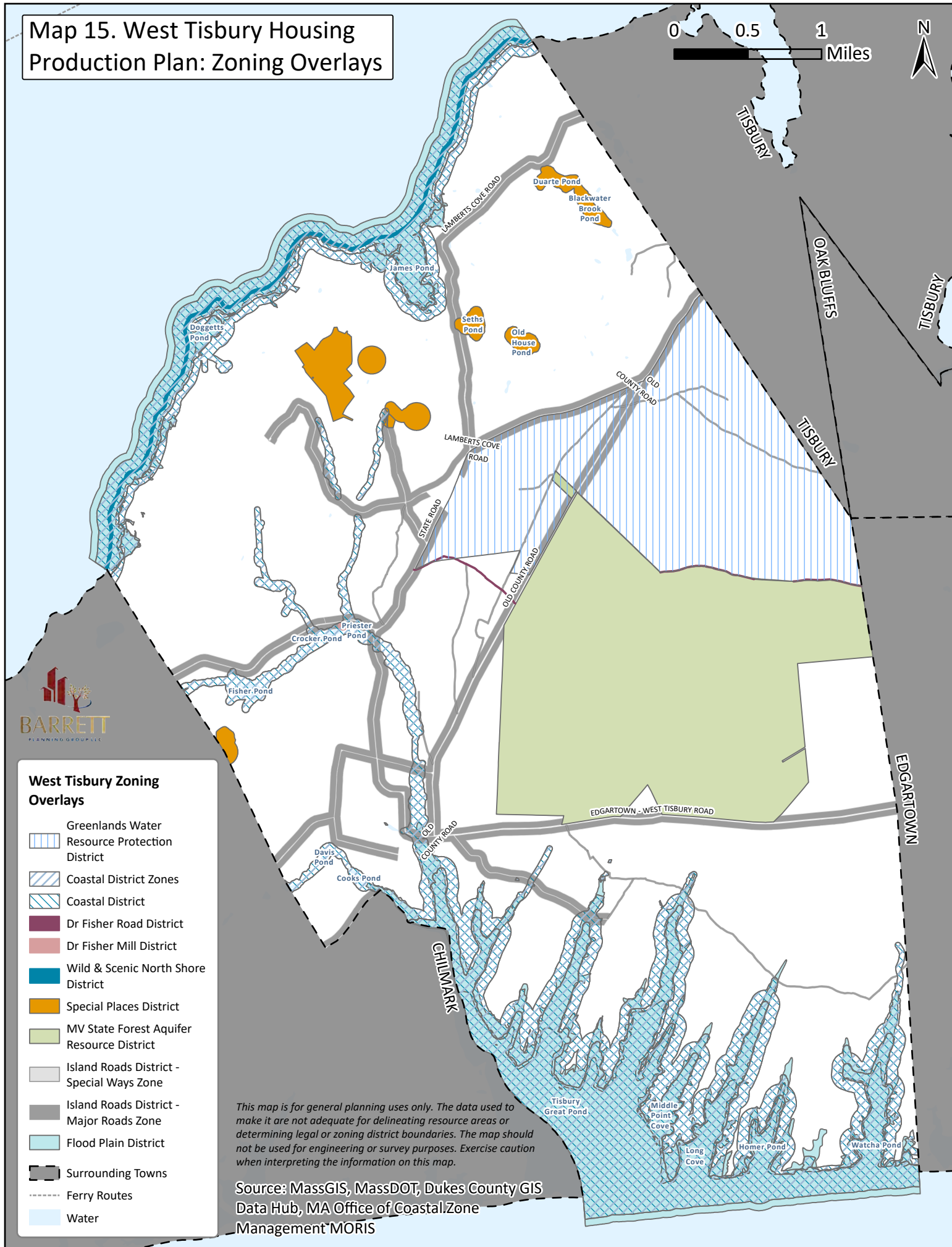
West Tisbury Zoning Districts

- Mixed Use Business
- Village Residential
- Rural
- Light Industrial
- No Zoning

- Major Roads
- Roads
- Ferry Routes
- Water
- Surrounding Towns

Map 15. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Zoning Overlays

0 0.5 1 Miles



The following subsections provide an overview of the housing issues for West Tisbury's as reported in the *2024 Zoning Analysis for Housing Solutions*.

West Tisbury Definitions for Affordable Housing and Related Terms

The Zoning Bylaw provides definitions for Affordable Accessory Apartments, Affordable Housing, and the Affordable Rule of Thumb (Sec. 14.2). Having definitions helps remove uncertainty in the permitting process. However, the definition for Affordable Housing sets the maximum household income at 140% AMI, which does not align with the definition used in other Island towns and across the state.

West Tisbury Multi-family Zoning and Conversion of Single-family Dwellings

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw permits new construction multi-family dwellings by special permit in the RU and VR Districts and by-right pending site plan review in the MB District (Use Table). The allowed density for all housing types in West Tisbury is the total buildable land divided by the minimum lot size for the district (Sec. 4.4-1). The Zoning Bylaw does allow a reduction to the minimum lot size for multi-family dwellings by special permit to 10,000 square feet per bedroom (per Board of Health regulations for Zone II areas) if 25% of all bedrooms are restricted as affordable year-round housing.

Multi-family dwellings do not benefit from a higher unit density, which is a key to affordability. Higher density allows land and construction costs to be divided among more units, reducing the per-unit cost. Under the standard zoning, a three-unit multi-family complex in the RU district must be sited on nine acres. Even in cases where the developer seeks the density bonus for creating affordable housing, three three-bedroom units would still require over two acres of land.

Requiring a special permit for the affordable housing lot size reduction adds administrative time and expenses to the process, creating uncertainty and unpredictability for developers. In two of the three districts where multi-family housing is allowed, this would require a developer to seek two special permits, and in the MB District, it would effectively change the use from permitted to special permit.

The Planning Board must consider the neighborhood character and architectural design, impact on neighborhood roads and traffic, alternative best uses of the land as agriculture or conservation, and other considerations not required of other development types (Sec. 4.4-3B). Requiring that the land be considered for other uses raises equity issues, as it forces multi-family development, which typically serves lower-income, younger, and more diverse populations, to justify its purpose on a case-by-case basis and pre-supposes that conservation and open space are better uses than housing of this type. The process also adds discretion on the part of the Planning Board and opens the possibility of a multi-family project being rejected due to a perceived better use as preservation or agriculture, neither of which is guaranteed or even expected to occur on the lot.

West Tisbury also places restrictions on second story apartments in the MB district. Under Section 4.4-4, properties that receive a special permit for these uses are limited to one unit unless additional units are restricted to rental as an affordable year-round unit or to someone employed seasonally in West Tisbury.

West Tisbury Employee Housing

West Tisbury allows employee housing by special permit in all districts (Sec. 4.4-5). The housing is limited to seasonal workers and households that qualify for affordable housing. While seasonal workers are a group whose housing needs are often not met, this provision would be more useful if updated to include year-round residents in a wider range of income levels to reflect current community needs.

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw restricts cohabitation in a single residence or dwelling unit to no more than four unrelated individuals. As federally protected uses such as group homes are not exempted from this requirement, this could potentially have Fair Housing implications.

West Tisbury Special Provisions for Small/Undersized Lots

West Tisbury allows the reduction of minimum lot sizes for cluster subdivisions (Sec. 5). The density of the housing may be increased by up to 50% if 20% of the units created are deed-restricted for affordable housing (Sec. 5.02-3). While the Bylaw does provide helpful benefits and incentives to encourage the creation of affordable housing, the Bylaw also creates unnecessary confusion.

The Bylaw does not state what housing types are allowed in the development. A lack of clear direction can create confusion for builders, who are not sure what types of housing they can propose. If multi-family is not allowed, it will also likely limit the use of the affordable provisions, as the cost of building single-family homes at prices that qualify for affordable housing is challenging, even with the cross-subsidy created by the added density.

West Tisbury Rate of Development and Managed Growth Bylaws

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw limits how much of a proposed subdivision can be built each year (Sec. 7.1). Under the Bylaw, only 20% of the total proposed buildings or eight dwellings, whichever is less, counting both primary and accessory dwelling units, may be constructed in a calendar year.

The Bylaw gives the Planning Board a high level of discretion in the decision-making process. Should they wish, the Planning Board may waive in part or in whole the rate of development requirements, should the project be deemed to provide affordable year-round housing, serve the needs of seasonal employees, preserve significant open space, or provide public access to trails, beaches or other important natural resources (Sec. 7.2). The provisions can also be waived or amended due to financial considerations. Both exceptions encourage affordable

development and allow for more use of these provisions. However, the complete discretion of the Planning Board in waiving the provisions adds uncertainty to the process.

West Tisbury Demolition Delay Bylaw

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw delays any proposed demolition of a residential structure to encourage the reuse of the structure if possible (Section 10.1-2). Under the Zoning Bylaw, the Zoning Inspector must determine if a building for which demolition is proposed could be used at another location. If the building is deemed usable, the owner must place a public notice in the local newspaper seeking someone interested in moving and reusing the structure. The ad must run for twenty days, and any proposed move must be completed within fifty days.

Special Overlay Districts

Districts of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC) Overlay Districts⁵²

A district of critical planning concern (DCPC) is a planning tool used by a town or group of towns to control development in some of the most significant and beloved parts of the Vineyard. Special regulations guide the type and manner of development in DCPCs, and the MVC crafted three Island-wide DCPCs to regionally protect the Island's most sensitive areas: the Coastal District, Island Roads District, and Special Places District. Towns can additionally designate other DCPCs through a nomination process to the Commission. Additional DCPCs in West Tisbury include the Doctor Fisher Mill District and the Doctor Fisher Road District.

Development in DCPCs is specially regulated and restricted for the purposes of protecting the Island's sensitive environmental and significant historical and cultural areas. Any proposed housing development in such areas will need to meet the regulations outlined in Article V of West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw as overviewed below.

Coastal District

In West Tisbury, the Coastal District includes the land, streams, and wetlands which lie below ten-foot elevation above mean sea level or within 500 feet of mean high water of a coastal water body exceeding ten acres or the ocean as well as all land within 100 feet of the streams and wetlands draining into coastal Great Ponds. The Zoning Bylaw defines Shore Zones and Inland Zones within the Coastal Districts, the former being closer to water resources and thus more restrictive. In the Shore Zone, uses are limited to those that are consistent with the fragile nature of the areas, such as outdoor recreation, agriculture, fishing, and conservation purposes. The Inland Zone allows the same uses as the Shore Zone as well as one single-family dwelling and non-habitable minor accessory structures. There are additional height restrictions on structures to maintain the existing skyline and creation of impervious surfaces trigger a Development of Regional Impact review by the MVC. Developments within 500 feet of any area of major public investment must be compatible with the area and enjoyment of the area, and developments within forty feet of a place listed on the MVC Special Places Register are

⁵² "DCPCs," Martha's Vineyard Commission, <https://www.mvcommission.org/dcps>.

prohibited. Other uses may be granted through Special Permit. Anything besides construction of a single-family dwelling in the Coastal District Inland Zone will require a Special Permit granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals with Site Plan Review by the Planning Board.

Roads District

The Road District includes Major Roads and Special Ways. Major Roads consist of the area lying within 200 feet of the right of way of designated Major Roads, including all or portions of: State Road and South Road, Middle Road, Music Street, Scotchman's Bridge Land, Panhandle Road, Old County Road, Lamberts Cove Road, Christiantown Road, Indian Hill Road, South Indian Hill Road, North Road, New Lane and Tiah's Cove Road, and Edgartown Road.

Special Ways Zones protect old cart paths and walkways that are of cultural and historic significance to the Town of West Tisbury. These restrictions are more protective than traditional scenic roads bylaws, including paving, use, and height limitations for abutting properties. West Tisbury's Bylaw requires a Special Permit through the Planning Board if a new land use increases vehicular traffic along a Special Way beyond the level of use prior to acceptance of the Special Way nomination by MVC. New housing along a Special Way would likely increase vehicular traffic and thus require a Special Permit. Special Ways in West Tisbury include all or part of: Old Holmes Hole Road, Old Courthouse Road, Tiah's Cove Road, Scrubby Neck Road and Watcha Path, Roger's Path and Burying Ground Road, Stoney Hill Path, Checamo Path, Pine Hill Road, Red Coat Hill Road/Motts Hill Road, Shubael Weeks Road, and Old Coach Road.

Special Places District

The Special Places District in West Tisbury serves to assure the compatibility of development and protection and buffering of natural resources within areas of environmental and historical significance. Special Places in West Tisbury include Seth's Pond, Duarte Pond, Old House Pond, Firetown Hill, Indian Hill, and Waskosim's Rock, and all land within 500 feet of the land owned by Dukes County containing the Mayhew Chapel and the Indian burial ground. The Zoning Bylaw prohibits all development, except for historic preservation, within forty feet of a Special Place as listed on MVC's Special Places Register.

Greenlands Water Resource Protection District

West Tisbury protects the groundwater resources of the Greenlands property and the head of Martha's Vineyard's sole source aquifer with the Greenlands Water Resource Protection District. Uses which pose significant threats to the quality of groundwater are prohibited. The careful management of land use within this area is of importance for the entire island.

Flood Plain Zone

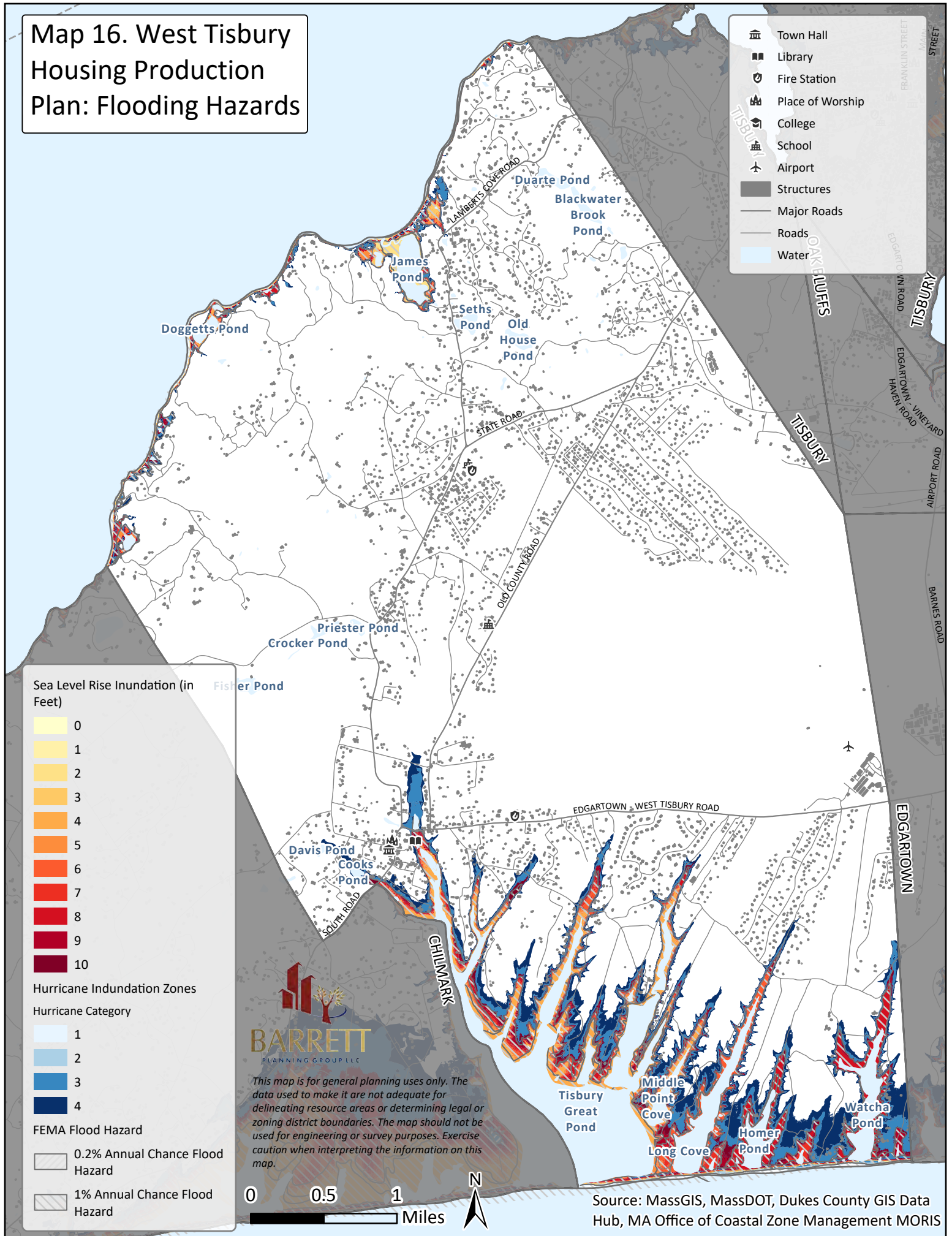
West Tisbury's Flood Plain Zone includes all special flood hazard areas on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Map for the Town of West Tisbury. Regulations in floodplains aim to ensure public safety by reducing threats to life and property in these hazardous areas. The Town requires a permit for all proposed construction or other

development in this district. Edgartown's Zoning Bylaw exempts historic buildings from the floodplain overlay district regulations, as is customary across the Commonwealth. Map 16 shows West Tisbury's flooding hazards, including FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer, projected sea level rise in feet, and hurricane inundation zones. Any potential development in a floodplain should consider the implications of placing structures and people in flood-prone areas and follow state and local regulations carefully.

Wild and Scenic North Shore District

West Tisbury's Wild and Scenic North Shore District contains the waters and lands beginning at the boundary of Tisbury and then along the Mean Low Water Line of Vineyard Sound to the boundary with Chilmark and extending seaward for 100 feet. This area possesses wild and scenic natural beauty, and regulations aim to protect the area from undue visual intrusion, harm to natural processes, wildlife, and navigation in the area, and storm damage due to inappropriate development. Only uses consistent with the fragile nature of the environment are permitted, such as commercial fishing, shellfishing, and aquaculture.

Map 16. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Flooding Hazards



Housing Goals

Framework

Under the Commonwealth's Chapter 40B regulations and Housing Production Plan (HPP) Guidelines, communities must present two types of goals: quantitative (new housing production targets) and qualitative (e.g., preferences for housing types, design, levels of affordability, etc.).

Quantitative Goals

Quantitative, or numerical, goals need to include an annual increase in the community's affordable housing equal to at least 0.50% of its year-round housing stock. Meeting the minimum annual goal can make the community eligible for certification of compliance with its HPP (provided the HPP has been approved by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)). Certification means that for at least one year, the community has more flexibility to impose conditions on proposed Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit developments without fear of having those conditions overturned on appeal. Increasing the affordable housing inventory by at least 1.0% of the community's year-round housing stock may qualify the community for a two-year certification period.

The 0.5% and 1.0% quantitative goals for West Tisbury are as follows:

	2020 Census Year-Round Housing Units	1-Year (0.5%)	2-Year (1%)
West Tisbury	1,619	8	16

GOAL 1. Create eight or more low- to moderate-income units each year over the next five years, for a total increase of at least forty units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

For example, if West Tisbury receives approval of its HPP and increases the number of affordable units on its SHI by eight units in one year, it would be eligible to request certification from EOHLC. Certification would give West Tisbury greater control to impose conditions on Comprehensive Permits for twelve months from the day it became eligible for certification.

If West Tisbury receives approval of its HPP and increases the number of affordable units on its SHI by sixteen units in one year, it would be eligible to request certification from EOHLC. Certification would give West Tisbury greater control to impose conditions on Comprehensive Permits for twenty-four months from the day it became eligible for certification.

Assuming West Tisbury meets its 0.5% or 1.0% quantitative goals yearly until 2030, the revised SHI count and percentage are shown by year in Table 4.1. The number of year-round housing units in a community is taken from the US Census Bureau's Decennial Census and used until

new counts from a new Decennial Census are finalized. EOHLC will use year-round counts from the 2020 Decennial Census until counts from the 2030 Decennial Census are available. This is unlikely to be finalized in 2030. Consequently, the table below only includes the years up to 2030. After that time, EOHLC will revise the 0.5% and 1.0% targets based on the 2030 year-round housing count when it is available. Additionally, West Tisbury will need to update its HPP in 2030, assuming a five-year lifespan and approval of this HPP in 2025.

Table 4.1: West Tisbury One- and Two-Year Targets through 2030							
Year-round Housing Units in West Tisbury as of 2020 Decennial Census: 1,619 Current SHI Units: 25 Current SHI Percent: 1.54% 1-Year Production Goal: 8 [0.5% of 1,619=8] 2-Year Production Goal: 16 [1% of 1,619=16]		2025 (Current)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
	1-Year Target: 8 SHI-Eligible Units						
	Revised SHI Count	33	41	49	57	65	73
	Revised SHI Percent	2.05%	2.53%	3.03%	3.52%	4.01%	4.51%
	2- Year Target: 16 SHI-Eligible Units						
	Revised SHI Count	41	57	73	89	105	121
	Revised SHI Percent	2.53%	3.52%	4.51%	5.50%	6.49%	7.47%
	*Year-round counts from the 2030 Decennial Census counts are unlikely to be finalized in 2030; EOHLC will continue to use 2020 figures until counts are available.						

Qualitative Goals

Qualitative goals should describe the types of housing a community will encourage to address its low- and moderate-income needs, thereby increasing the number of affordable units on its SHI. In addition, qualitative goals can address other housing needs that do not necessarily produce SHI-eligible housing but support local and regional housing affordability and availability. The following goals will guide West Tisbury's implementation of its HPP from 2025 to 2030.

GOAL 2. Through targeted changes to existing zoning bylaws, make more diverse and more affordable housing options more likely to be developed within infill, cluster, adaptive re-use, and mixed-use development.

Existing zoning can stand in the way of producing the type of housing that is needed in and desired by a town. Regulations that are unclear, inconsistent, or overburdensome may add to administrative costs for the Town, confuse and discourage interested developers, and ultimately cost the Town and its residents much-needed housing. Amending zoning to clearly

articulate what is allowed and where is a crucial step in making the housing desired the housing built.

Goal 2 addresses the need for an increase in the number of housing units as well as an increase in the types of housing available in West Tisbury. This goal supports the creation of housing that is SHI-eligible and housing that is not SHI-eligible but meets other local needs. It articulates the desired type of development and calls for modification of current regulations to support SHI-eligible units as required by EOHLC's HPP requirements.

GOAL 3. Provide year-round housing for a diversity of household types, sizes, and income levels, prioritizing maintaining the existing year-round housing stock and developing housing for families, older adults, the workforce, and the unhoused.

Goal 2 addresses the local and regional need for more year-round housing that is truly affordable to the Island's many types of residents. It necessitates strategies to support housing through new regulations and non-regulatory measures. This goal supports housing production of SHI-eligible units at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI) as well as housing units restricted to affordability levels above 80% AMI and non-AMI restricted housing that meets other local needs.

GOAL 4. Encourage balanced and thoughtful growth in year-round housing supply that keeps resource limits in mind and fits with the conservation-based development pattern of West Tisbury.

Martha's Vineyard faces a housing crisis in the context of an ecologically-significant and sensitive natural environment. In West Tisbury, almost half of the Town's land area is conserved, reflecting the abundance of important natural areas and the value the Town places on them. This natural landscape pairs with a quaint built environment that is well-known and well-loved. Along with the inherent challenges of being an island, the built and natural environments on Martha's Vineyard create infrastructure limitations and aesthetic desires that require careful attention when creating new housing in a style consistent with existing development.

GOAL 5. Increase capacity to produce affordable housing through leadership development, advocacy, staffing, funding, and relationships with non-profit and for-profit developers.

The ability to address housing needs in any community hinges on multiple factors beyond the contents of any single housing plan. The reliance on local officials and often volunteer boards and committees limits capacity to implement strategies. Funding is needed to support that capacity as well as to build housing itself. Funding can also be used to spread public awareness, support regional entities who can facilitate collaboration across municipal boundaries, incentivize private action, and construct the infrastructure necessary to support new housing. This goal addresses the need to bolster the multiple local and regional resources that must be aligned to effectively implement the contents of this HPP.

GOAL 6. Collaborate with other Martha's Vineyard towns to establish regional housing services capacity, ideally with existing organizations.

Several strategies to support housing needs are better implemented regionally. It is inefficient to silo housing work by town borders in the Vineyard and unlikely many programs could be implemented through one municipality. While all six towns have an individual responsibility and goal of reaching 10% of year-round housing on the SHI, regional services can increase the likelihood of preserving and building housing, both SHI-eligible affordable housing and non-SHI eligible community and workforce housing.

Five-Year Implementation Plan: Housing Development Strategies

Many of the recommendations included in previous housing plans for the towns on Martha's Vineyard remain urgent today, including:

- Zoning and regulatory changes that will better utilize existing developable property with an emphasis on infill and Smart Growth and include affordable and community/workforce housing considerations in any zoning changes.
- Identify development opportunities that provide greater scale and density in appropriate locations.
- Acknowledge market pressures driving a shortage of year-round housing, including strategies to preserve and expand the year-round inventory of both rental and ownership units.
- Access new and expanded funding resources to preserve and produce housing.
- Explore new and innovative approaches to protect water quality.
- Invest resources in increasing regional housing services capacity.
- Pursue more collaborative planning and other types of collaboration among Island towns.
- Pursue educational opportunities through the Island Housing Trust (IHT).⁵³
- Promote compliance with federal and state fair housing laws.

With these objectives in mind, the Town adopts and intends to carry out the following strategies by 2030.

Strategy 1: Remove regulatory barriers to affordable and community housing development in existing zoning.

⁵³ See footnote 4 for more details regarding educational opportunities available through IHT.

- **1a. Update and/or add clear definitions for affordable, community, and workforce housing to West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw to align with terminology used across Martha's Vineyard.**

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw defines several affordability-related terms, including affordable accessory apartments, affordable housing, and the Affordable Rule of Thumb. However, these definitions do not align with the state or the region. For example, West Tisbury currently defines the maximum household income at 140% Area Median Income (AMI) for affordable housing. However, the standard threshold for affordable housing in Massachusetts, which is also included in the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC)'s 2024 *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment*, is 80% AMI. Units between 81% and 150% AMI are termed "Community Housing" in the *Housing Needs Assessment*. When discussing, planning for, and trying to build housing, it is crucial that all parties have a shared understanding of these terms and who in the community will be served by proposed developments and programs. West Tisbury should remove its current definitions and adopt terminology that aligns with the state and the region.

- **1b. Allow more workers to benefit from employee housing by updating the current provisions.**

West Tisbury allows employee housing by special permit in all districts. However, the current provisions limit who can benefit from this existing allowance. Implementing the following recommendations could meet more housing needs in West Tisbury.

- Current zoning limits employee housing to seasonal workers only. While the housing needs of seasonal workers are often not met, opening employee housing to year-round workers will allow year-round West Tisbury residents to live in this type of housing. Increasing the potential pool of eligible tenants will better address the need and encourage the creation of employee housing.
- Current zoning restricts employee housing to households that qualify for "affordable housing." If West Tisbury updates its definition for affordable housing and adds definitions for other income levels as recommended in Strategy 1a, the Town should ensure its employee housing provisions are updated to reflect this and expand the range of allowability to the income levels desired.

- **1c. Encourage as-of-right multi-family housing and apartments within the RU, VR, and MB districts through targeted changes to existing zoning.**

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw permits new construction multi-family dwellings by special permit in the Rural (RU) and Village Residential (VR) Districts and by-right pending site plan review in the Mixed Business (MB) District. It also allows single-family conversions to multi-family in the RU and VR districts by special permit. Several opportunities exist for West Tisbury to update zoning provisions to encourage the development of affordable, multi-family housing.

- **Remove the cap of four unrelated persons in West Tisbury’s definition of a “household.”**

West Tisbury’s current definition of a “household” (Article XIV) restricts cohabitation of a single residence or dwelling unit to no more than four unrelated individuals. Removing this requirement will remove a potential Fair Housing concern as federally protected uses such as group homes are not exempt.

- **Amend Section 4.4-B to require affordable units in multi-family developments be SHI-eligible or allow all multi-family developments the density bonus currently provided to proposed multi-family developments with 25% affordable units.**

The allowed density for all housing types in West Tisbury is the total buildable land divided by the minimum lot size for the district (Sec. 4.4-1). Multi-family dwellings do not benefit from a higher unit density under current zoning, which is a key to affordability. Higher density allows land and construction costs to be divided among more units, reducing the per-unit cost. Under the standard zoning, a three-unit multi-family complex in the RU district must be sited on nine acres. The Zoning Bylaw does allow for a reduction to the minimum lot size for multi-family dwellings by special permit to 10,000 square feet per bedroom if 25% of all bedrooms are restricted as affordable year-round housing.⁵⁴

The current zoning incentivizes construction of affordable units within multi-family developments with a density bonus. However, because West Tisbury’s current “Affordability Rule of Thumb” does not align with the state definition of affordable housing, West Tisbury is granting density bonuses without receiving SHI-eligible units. If the Town would like this existing density bonus for multi-family developments with affordable housing to result in progress towards their SHI goal, the Town should require those affordable units be SHI-eligible.

Alternatively, if the Town does not wish to require those units be SHI-eligible (income-restricted at or below 80% AMI, among other requirements), the Town should give the density bonus to all multi-family housing to encourage this housing type. Increasing the maximum per unit density for all multi-family housing would allow for more small-scale multi-family development. Allowing small-scale multi-family development will improve the chances of infill development and preserve undeveloped land for other uses.

- **Remove the existing requirement for a separate special permit for an affordability density bonus for multi-family development.**

Requiring a special permit for the affordable housing lot size reduction adds administrative time and expenses to the process, creating uncertainty and

⁵⁴ Board of Health requirements suggest 10,000 square feet per bedroom for units in Zone II Areas of Wellhead Contribution. Exceptions may be made with enhanced septic systems.

unpredictability for developers. In two of the three districts where multi-family housing is allowed, this would require a developer to seek two special permits, and in the MB District, it would effectively change the use from permitted by right to special permit. Removing this requirement would make the provisions more appealing for developers and make affordable development more likely to occur.

o Allow conversion of single-family dwellings to multi-family by-right pending site review in the RU and VR districts.

Existing zoning allows single-family conversions to multi-family in the RU and VR districts by special permit. However, if this type of development is desired by the Town in these areas, removing the special permit requirement will encourage more use of this allowance and promote targeted density. The Town could also require units added to each building be restricted for year-round occupancy to ensure this allowance is not used to create seasonal housing and add clear design parameters to ensure development still meets West Tisbury's architectural and aesthetic desires.

o Remove discretionary approval language from the permitting process for multi-family dwellings.

Under existing zoning for multi-family units, the Planning Board must consider the neighborhood character and architectural design, impact on neighborhood roads and traffic, alternative best uses of land as agriculture or conservation, and other considerations not required of other development types (Sec. 4.4-3B). Requiring that the land be considered for other uses raises equity issues, as it forces multi-family development, which typically serves lower-income, younger, and more diverse populations, to justify its purpose on a case-by-case basis and pre-supposes that other land uses are better. The process also adds discretion on the part of the Planning Board and opens the possibility of a multi-family project being rejected due to a perceived better use as preservation or agriculture, neither of which is guaranteed or even expected to occur on the lot when a proposal comes before the Board.

West Tisbury can instead remove discretionary language and adopt more straightforward zoning with design parameters to ensure proposed structures meet West Tisbury's desired character and architecture. The Board can also require a traffic study to estimate the impact on roads.

● 1d. Loosen requirements in existing zoning on top-of-the-shop units to encourage much-needed apartment inventory in walkable locations.

West Tisbury places restrictions on second-story apartments in the MB District (Sec. 4.4-4). Properties that receive a special permit for these uses are limited to one unit unless additional units are restricted to rental as an affordable year-round unit or to someone employed seasonally in West Tisbury (see Strategy 1b). Top-of-the-shop units in mixed-use areas are more likely to be developed if it is more economically feasible, which would

require loosening of the current requirements for affordability and seasonal employment. This will also support targeted density in areas of town that are already developed, walkable, and close to amenities.

To further increase the likelihood of mixed-use developments, West Tisbury can allow the same provisions by right in the Limited Industrial (LI) District instead of by special permit as written in the current Zoning Bylaw. This will reduce the administrative barriers to mixed-use housing and increase infill opportunities in the walkable areas of West Tisbury.

- **1e. Update the current provisions and permitting process for homesite lots to increase the likelihood of their creation and use for affordable units.**

West Tisbury allows a small lot to be used for affordable housing by special permit. In these cases, an applicant may create a deed-restricted affordable unit on an existing substandard lot, or a new lot created through the Approval Not Required process or subdivision. Homesite lots allow otherwise unusable land to be used to meet a community need to create homes for households that cannot find housing affordable to them elsewhere on the island.

The existing special permit process for homesite lots relies on discretionary approvals rather than straightforward zoning provisions. The approval board must determine if the proposed use will be beneficial for or consistent with the character of the neighborhood. Removing this determination requirement will reduce board discretion and improve consistency of rulings. Instead, West Tisbury can set design parameters in homesite lot provisions.

The West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee (WTAHC) and Planning Board are considering a reduction in the acreage requirement in existing zoning for homesite lots. Members of the WTAHC suggested that a property owner be entitled to designate a homesite lot of half an acre from a 3.5-acre lot.⁵⁵ While discussions are still ongoing, this update would provide more West Tisbury residents the opportunity to take advantage of existing homesite lot allowances and increase the supply of affordable units in Town.

- **1f. Clarify existing provisions and reduce board discretion within existing zoning regulations for undersized lots.**

West Tisbury allows the reduction of minimum lot sizes for cluster subdivisions (Sec. 5) by up to 50% if 20% of the units created are deed-restricted for affordable housing. While the bylaw provides helpful benefits and incentives to encourage the creation of affordable housing, it also creates unnecessary confusion.

- Actual density bonuses are at the complete discretion of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), making it more difficult for builders to determine feasibility and secure loans. Setting clear expectations of what is required to receive approval and

⁵⁵ West Tisbury Planning Board Minutes May 19, 2025.

what types of reductions will be granted will improve clarity and develop confidence and consistency in ZBA rulings.

- o The bylaw does not state what housing types are allowed in the development. Clarifying that multi-family housing is allowed in cluster developments provides predictability for interested developers and allows the use of affordability provisions.
 - o The bylaw allows a reduction of lot size by special permit but does not allow an equal reduction in setbacks. Allowing a reduction of setbacks to match the reduction in land area within the same special permit reduces administrative costs and encourages the developer to take advantage of these benefits. These changes will reduce confusion and thereby increase the likelihood that cluster housing will be built on small lots where the Town wants development and targeted density.
- **1g. Revisit West Tisbury's Demolition Delay Bylaw to make it more likely that homes will be reused.**

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw delays any proposed demolition of a residential structure to encourage the reuse of the structure if possible (Section 10.1-2). The Zoning Inspector must determine if a building for which demolition is proposed could be used at another location. If the building is deemed usable, the owner must place a public notice in the local newspaper seeking someone interested in moving and reusing the structure. The ad must run for twenty days, and any proposed move must be completed within fifty days.

The Town should clarify this existing language to specify that residential structures proposed for demolition are marketed both to the public and specifically to affordable housing organizations. This clarification would increase the chance of reuse and preservation and make it more likely for existing structures to be used to create affordable or community housing. In addition, the length of time a property is placed on public notice should also increase considerably from the current twenty days to allow interested parties more time to make arrangements. Nantucket's bylaw delays demolition for a period of 180 days.

In addition, creating a structure relocation program such as that available in Nantucket will alleviate the burden placed on organizations that wish to take advantage of the bylaw. This structure relocation program could occur at the regional level given the limited capacity for individual towns to implement such a program.

- **1h. Clarify the allowed reductions and the requirements to receive the reductions under existing rate of development zoning.**

West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw limits how much of a proposed subdivision can be built each year to only 20% of the total proposed buildings or eight dwellings, whichever is less, counting both primary and accessory dwelling units. As it is written, the Planning Board holds a high level of discretion in the decision-making process. Should they wish, the Planning Board may waive part or all of the rate of development requirements, should the

project be deemed to provide affordable year-round housing, serve the needs of seasonal employees, preserve significant open space, or provide public access to trails, beaches or other important natural resources (Sec. 7.2). The provisions can also be waived or amended due to financial considerations. Both exceptions encourage affordable development and allow for more use of these provisions. However, the complete discretion of the Planning Board in waiving the provisions adds uncertainty to the process. This clarification would increase predictability for developers interested in providing affordable housing or housing that supports other community needs.

Strategy 2: Use regulatory strategies to provide housing choice for year-round residents and seasonal workforce, mainly through adaptive reuse of existing housing stock and infill in developed areas.

- **2a. Integrate affordable homes in all neighborhoods by reusing existing structures and redeveloping underutilized properties, particularly within walking distance of schools, services, and amenities.**

An HPP must describe the characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments that would be preferred by the municipality. Through community engagement events for this HPP, West Tisbury residents described their desire for balanced and thoughtful housing growth with pockets of density and a more populated and diverse town. Meeting attendees provided several housing ideas to support this desire, suggesting infill development on undersized and small lots, mixed-use developments with top-of-the-shop residential units in already developed areas of town, and redevelopment and preservation of existing structures. Integrating affordable homes in existing neighborhoods, which will naturally be at a smaller scale, fits into the existing development pattern and streetscape, takes advantage of existing infrastructure, supports a vibrant year-round downtown, and ensures low- and moderate-income members of the West Tisbury community benefit from the amenities and sense of place beloved by all residents.

- **2b. Clarify the process for the creation or dedication of land for affordable housing from a subdivision.**

The WTAHC and Planning Board discussed the possible need to clarify how developers and owners may create affordable units through subdivisions during a joint meeting on May 19, 2025. While conversations are still underway, the Town should consider whether it wishes to create SHI-eligible units through such subdivisions and implement the necessary components in the permitting process if so desired.

- **2c. Define and provide for congregate housing, shelter housing, single-occupancy housing, studio, co-living, co-housing, or live-work units.**

These terms are not currently defined in West Tisbury's Zoning Bylaw and are thus presumed not allowed.⁵⁶ These alternative types of housing typically support residents with non-traditional housing needs, such as an unhoused person staying in a shelter or temporarily living in transitional housing or people with disabilities living in congregate housing with supportive services. Moreover, the lack of an exemption for federally protected uses, such as group homes, could pose Fair Housing concerns. West Tisbury and all Martha's Vineyard towns should define and provide for these housing types in their zoning bylaws to support Island residents whose housing needs are not met through single-family, two-family, or multi-unit dwellings.

- **2d. Consider enabling as-of-right infill development on underutilized lots, subject to year-round housing restrictions.**

An underutilized lot is one that is not built out to the maximum level allowed under current zoning. For example, an underutilized lot could be a vacant lot in a zoning district that allows single-family homes or an existing structure on a large lot that is well under the maximum allowed density. While this would not necessarily produce SHI-eligible units, it would open opportunities for additional housing based on what is already allowed under the Zoning Bylaw. Restricting infill to year-round housing would ensure this allowance would not be used to create more seasonal housing.

- **2e. Encourage ADU construction as a means of infill development.**

Affordable dwelling units (ADUs), now allowed in all zoning districts where single-family homes are permitted, have the potential to add many units to West Tisbury's housing stock. While allowed through the state's Affordable Homes Act (AHA), EOHLC is still promulgating regulations to guide implementation. Towns do know that they may not require income restrictions on ADUs (as defined within the AHA), so these units will not inherently contribute to affordable housing on the Island and in West Tisbury. However, towns can still position ADUs to meet local housing needs. West Tisbury and all Martha's Vineyard towns should work with regional and state partners to advance programs that provide technical assistance, site-planning, and financing for the construction of ADUs. Additionally, the state and towns can incentivize optional restrictions by offering assistance to homeowners who construct an ADU and deed-restrict it to affordable and/or year-round housing in perpetuity.

In addition, during community engagement events some West Tisbury residents expressed a desire to investigate the potential for separate ownership between a principal structure and its ADU. Meeting attendees stated that this would encourage more ADU construction as they could provide homeownership opportunities. The Town should seek clarity from the

⁵⁶ West Tisbury is home to the Island Autism Center, which will provide supportive housing for individuals with autism with low-income status and Section 8 voucher eligibility. The Island Autism Center was permitted via a special permit process. Source: "Center," The Island Autism Center, accessed August 6, 2025, <https://islandautism.org/about-us/island-autism-center/>.

state regarding separate ownership as the current state ADU law requires the units to be under the same ownership.

- **2f. Update the Zoning Bylaw to help execute the allowances granted to West Tisbury as a designated Seasonal Community to address a variety of local housing needs, including:**
 - Defining and providing for public sector employee workforce housing
 - Defining and providing for tiny homes

Strategy 3: Expand capacity to get SHI-eligible housing on the SHI.
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- **3a. The Select Board, Planning Board, and WTAHC engage with each other to adopt a joint goal of increasing the SHI by at least eight units per year.**

Beyond taking production steps, the Town government needs policy consistency across leadership and a shared responsibility to reach the goals set in this HPP. The Select Board, Planning Board, and WTAHC should all adopt a joint goal of listing at least eight new SHI units per year to reflect this Plan's quantitative goal in Town policy. They should also meet together annually to review progress toward this and other HPP goals. Reporting on the progress made towards this goal in the Annual Town Report and at Town Meeting will help keep the effort to create affordable housing in West Tisbury active and leadership accountable.

Joint meetings between town boards can also serve as an opportunity to engage with known housing developers on the Island. IHT has expressed their willingness and eagerness to be a resource and partner for Martha's Vineyard towns working toward their SHI numerical goals. IHT also has a unique relationship with Island towns resulting in nearly 50% of IHT housing being developed on municipal land. Their nationally-recognized ground lease model makes financing options for purchasers easier and more competitive and could be expanded to help Island towns meet their numerical production goals by permanently restricting town-owned land for affordable housing. This model has already resulted in a range of ownership homes on Martha's Vineyard, including seventy-six ground leased ownership homes and fourteen ownership homes in development (twenty-six affordable and sixty-seven workforce units).⁵⁷

- **3b. Work with the MVC and Dukes County Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA) to maintain an up-to-date inventory of deed-restricted, SHI-eligible affordable units, community units, workforce units, and units with year-round restrictions.**

While the SHI maintained by EOHLC keeps track of how many SHI units a town has, it does not provide a full picture of housing in a town. Affordable units may not be on the SHI for a variety of reasons. Community units over 80% AMI will not be on the SHI but may still be

⁵⁷ Comment from Philippe Jordi, CEO of Island Housing Trust, received on August 19, 2025.

deed-restricted to higher income levels that meet a local need. Workforce housing is not SHI-eligible but is still needed across the Island to support teachers, healthcare providers, and other workers. West Tisbury should work with MVC and DCRHA to maintain an up-to-date inventory of affordable, community, and workforce units. Tracking progress the Town has made to provide housing to residents with a variety of housing needs ensures units continue to meet those needs and are not lost to the market. Table 2.16 captures the current records maintained by West Tisbury, but there are several information gaps.

Careful attention should be paid to ascertain whether any existing affordable units not currently included on the SHI are eligible for inclusion. In addition to requirements for income, affordability, and marketing, projects must be approved under an eligible state or federal subsidy program through a state subsidizing agency identified in a long-term use restriction. For non-comprehensive permit projects with no outside state or federal financial subsidy, this approval generally comes as Local Action Units (LAUs) under the Local Initiative Program (LIP) administered by EOHLC.

- If such a project is already occupied but did not receive approval under LIP, the Town should confer with EOHLC to determine the feasibility of getting the project approved under LIP retroactively; this may be difficult, particularly if the marketing and resident selection process did not conform to EOHLC requirements. In this case, approval may be delayed until subsequent unit turnover under an approved marketing plan.
- If such a project is not yet occupied, the Town should aim to ensure that the project receives LIP approval before occupancy.

For occupied projects that received approval by a state subsidizing agency but are not included on the SHI, the Town should check to see if they submitted a Requesting New Units form to EOHLC. Sometimes this final step is all that was missed, and such cases are easier to rectify as long as the Town submits the request with supporting documentation indicated on the form.

If further investigation reveals any SHI-eligible units in West Tisbury are not currently on the SHI, the Town should assemble the documentation necessary to add these units to the SHI. West Tisbury can seek assistance and guidance from MVC and EOHLC.

Strategy 4: Create and provide a variety of incentives and programs to create and preserve permanently affordable and community housing.

- **4a. Work to acquire year-round deed restrictions on existing housing stock in West Tisbury to preserve existing naturally occurring affordable and year-round housing.**

The Town should consider purchasing deed restrictions on current homes to preserve community housing for year-round, income-eligible workers and families. In this arrangement, the property owner agrees to place a restriction on their home, either for a set period or in perpetuity, and transfer a share of the property's equity in return for a lump

sum payment from the Town. The deed restriction may have occupancy and affordability conditions for when the owner eventually sells the property. For example, the agreement may restrict the future sale price, limit resale to income-eligible workers, or require year-round occupancy, provided it complies with fair housing laws. If there are price limits on future transactions, then the payment fills the gap between the market sales price and the negotiated maximum sale price, meaning that the original owner still receives the total market value of the home. The current homeowner may continue living in the home under the terms of the restriction. The deed restriction also applies to any future owners who purchase and occupy the property during the restriction period, helping to ensure the home remains accessible to other residents at an attainable price.

Nantucket plans to introduce a pilot year-round deed restriction program with a budget of \$2 million. The 2024 Affordable Homes Act provided new tools and provisions for municipalities to implement this program, and, as a designated Seasonal Community, West Tisbury may acquire year-round housing occupancy restrictions. The state hopes this allowance will help communities with strong seasonal variation in population and employment build a middle-income year-round housing market. While Seasonal Communities await guidance from EOHLC, IHT's ground lease model could be expanded to acquire year-round restrictions to support this strategy which is also cited in *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment* as a method of prioritizing year-round housing preservation and economic diversity.⁵⁸

- **4b. Pursue incentive programs to convert seasonal and short-term rentals to year-round rentals.**

During the community engagement process, West Tisbury residents noted the loss of housing stock to the seasonal market. A variety of programs may be used to encourage year-round rentals over seasonal.

An existing Rental Assistance Program funded through the CPCs of all six towns has been successfully administered by DCRHA since 2002. This program provides between fifty and sixty market landlords annually with up to 50% of a restricted rent for qualified Island households. DCRHA also provides tenant screening for participating homeowners. After collaboration with town affordable housing committees, the program has been expanded to include a new tier of incomes and rents at the maximum allowed by the CPA (up to 100% AMI). Over the past twenty-three years, the RA program has served its initial function of securing hundreds of working Island households while permanent rentals, ownership opportunities, and other housing options have been developed. The program has earned wide support both in annual committee reviews and Town Meeting funding votes. DCRHA's RA program could be expanded by increasing funding from Island towns to support year-round renters and dissuade landlords from renting seasonally instead.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Comment from Philippe Jordi, CEO of Island Housing Trust, received on August 19, 2025.

⁵⁹ Comment from David Vigneault, Executive Director of DCRHA, received on July 16, 2025.

The Town of Edgartown currently runs a Housing Heroes outreach campaign to promote and advertise this type of incentive program. Landlords are encouraged to become a “Housing Hero” by converting seasonal to year-round rentals, offering monetary support largely from the DCRHA’s existing RA program. Homeowners who rent to income eligible tenants may generate the same amount of revenue with a twelve-month lease that they would by renting their unit as a seasonal rental. West Tisbury could pursue a similar avenue for recruiting participation in the program and dissuading seasonal rentals in favor of year-round.

Lease to Locals is a related program currently active in other Cape and Island communities. It also subsidizes all or a portion of the difference between a typical year-round unit rent and the income a property can derive from short-term rental use. Lease to Locals does not impose a long-term use restriction on the owner, which often appeals to rental property owners. West Tisbury and other Island towns may examine the costs and benefits of a Lease to Locals program, considering DCRHA’s existing RA program and other options for creating homes for year-round residents of Martha’s Vineyard. Though not a mechanism for creating SHI-Eligible units, it would serve a documented housing need on the island. The WTAHC is meeting with the organizers of such a program on Cape Cod.

- **4c. Adopt permit fee waivers or reductions for affordable housing.**

West Tisbury should offer permitting waivers to developers who construct two- and three-family dwellings with a mix of year-round units and units with affordability restrictions to reduce upfront costs of this desired housing type.

- **4d. Design and administer a tax incentive financing program to support the feasibility of developing and preserving affordable housing.**

Collaborate with multi-family and mixed-use housing developers to implement a phased approach to property tax assessments following new development. Instead of immediately taxing the property at its full post-development value, gradually increase the assessed value over a set period up to its full value. During this time, the developer pays reduced property taxes, which helps lower initial financial risk and encourages investment in targeted areas, particularly the Town Center.

In Provincetown, property owners who live in town year-round or who rent to year-round tenants can see their assessed property value reduced by up to 35%, which was the maximum allowed by the state until creation of the Seasonal Communities Designation (the ceiling is now 50%). Additionally, if the unit is rented to a low-income household at or below 80% AMI, that portion of the home is completely exempt from property taxes. As a seasonal community, West Tisbury could increase its residential tax exemption (RTE) to 50%. The Town could also integrate a tiered system, where the percentage exempted increases as the income of the property owner decreases, or alternatively, decreases as the value of the property increases. The Town should also consider a means-tested RTE where qualifying

low- to moderate-income senior homeowners can receive a reduction in their property taxes based on income and assets, the latter of which excludes the home itself.

The Town should also consider a temporary tax exemption for single-family homeowners who convert their homes into duplexes. Combined with the other year-round or low-income tenant exemptions, this additional exemption would incentivize the initial conversion, while the property owner would receive the RTE benefits from the additional units once they are rented out.

Strategy 5: Identify Town-owned land and other sites for affordable housing.

The sites below were identified by Barrett Planning Group based on review of Mass GIS data, discussion at three community meetings, and input from town boards and committees during the West Tisbury HPP process. Map 17 shows these sites along with MassGIS data.

The list of parcels below meet the state requirements for:

1. Town-owned land for which the Town commits to issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to produce affordable housing.
2. Sites on which the Town would encourage a Comprehensive Permit (CP).
 - Land that is not municipally owned may be included for a CP.
 - Town-owned sites where the Town would encourage a CP would meet both criteria.

Municipal Land

475 Old County Road (Parcel ID 21-18)

This is approximately three acres of Town-owned land at the southern tip of a larger Town-owned parcel at 401 Old County Rd (Parcel ID 21-2) containing the West Tisbury Elementary School. According to MassGIS data, this smaller site overlaps with current open space with limited protections and contains two Zone I watershed protection areas. It is not within a FEMA flood zone and has no wetlands.

2 HPP requirements met: Municipally owned land for RFP/CP.

39 Halcyon Way (Parcel ID 21-14-0)

While part of the site is utilized as a playing field and parking lot for the West Tisbury School, the remainder of this site is unutilized and undeveloped. According to MassGIS, this lot has no wetlands and is not within a watershed protection area or FEMA flood zone.

2 HPP requirements met: Municipally owned land for RFP/CP.

Town-owned Vacant Lots/Great Plains Road

The town owns little developable land. Many of the town-owned parcels are scattered across the residential neighborhood off Great Plains Road.⁶⁰ Several lots abut each other and could potentially be combined to allow small-scale new housing opportunities. These parcels lie in an existing residential area close to amenities. According to MassGIS, these lots have no wetlands and are not within a watershed protection area or a FEMA flood zone.

One HPP requirement met: Town-owned land, RFP for affordable housing.

Private Land

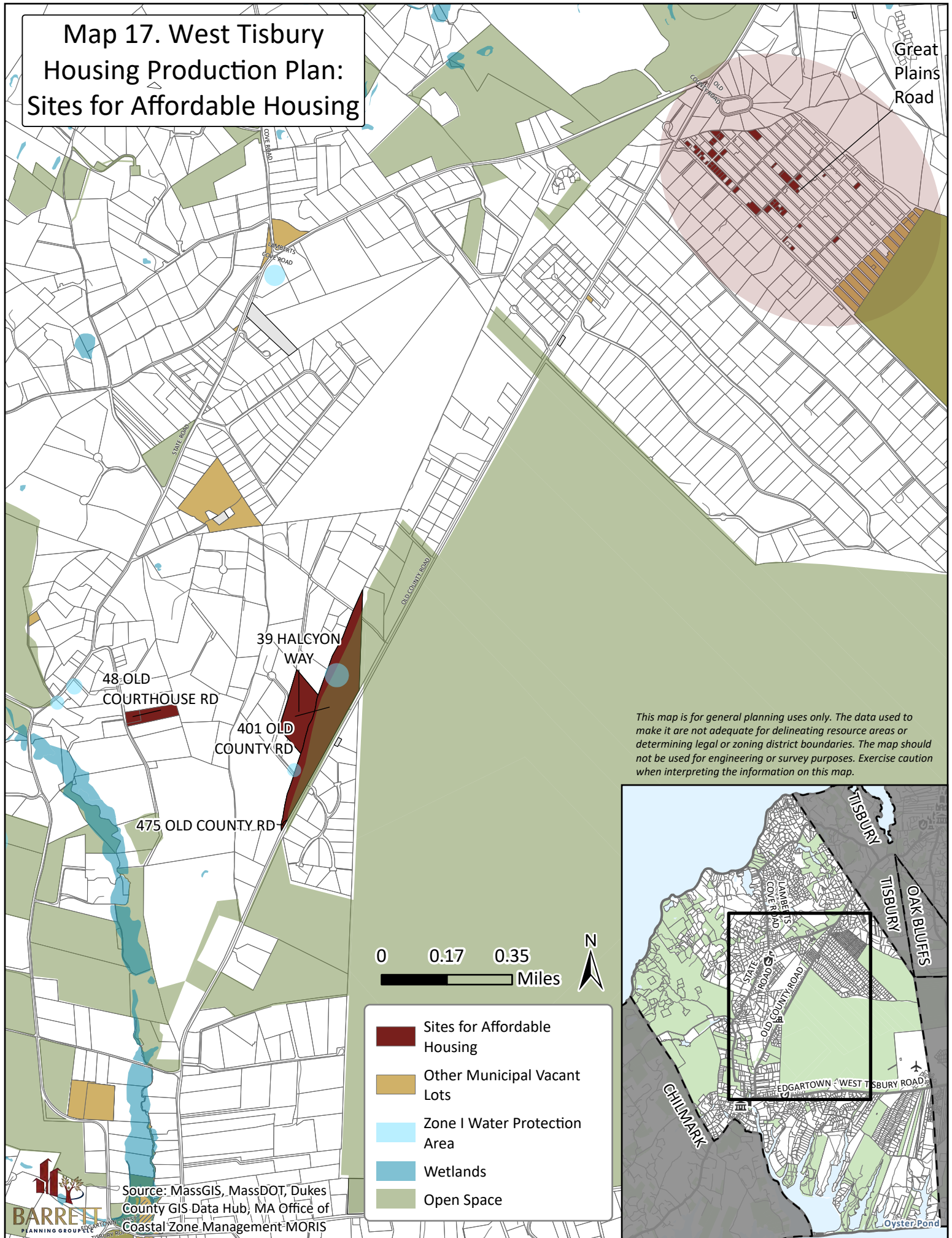
40 & 48 Old Courthouse Road (Parcel 22-7-4 & 22-7-4E)

Island Housing Trust owns 40 and 48 Courthouse Road. The land is subject to a deed restriction requiring school employee housing. IHT's current plan in development includes constructing eight rental units on the site and four ownership units.

One HPP requirement met: CP.

⁶⁰ Parcel IDs 10-109, 10-111, 10-117, 10-118, 10-132, 10-144, 10-154, 10-206, 10-209, 10-210, 10-212, 20-213, 10-214, 10-217, 10-218, 10-219, 10-220, 10-221, 10-222, 10-225, 10-229, 10-230, 10-231, 10-233, 10-234, 10-235, 10-244, 10-245, 10-246, 10-247, 10-248, 10-251, 10-255, 10-256, 10-259, 10-65, 10-67, 10-69, 10-72, 10-74, 10-74-1, 10-76, 10-79, 10-80, 10-81, 10-83

Map 17. West Tisbury Housing Production Plan: Sites for Affordable Housing



This map is for general planning uses only. The data used to make it are not adequate for delineating resource areas or determining legal or zoning district boundaries. The map should not be used for engineering or survey purposes. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Strategy 6: Create and provide a variety of funding and land resources to create and preserve permanently affordable and community housing.

- **6a. Continue to use Community Preservation Act funding to support moderate-income, community, and deeply affordable housing (at or below 50% AMI).**

In towns that have adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), Community Preservation Committees (CPCs) oversee the use of funding generated by a surcharge of up to 3% of the tax levy against real property. CPA funds must be committed towards open space, historic preservation, and housing-related projects or programs. Each year, the Town must allocate 10% of CPA funds to each category but has discretion over most of the budget. Affordable housing, open space and recreation, and historic preservation projects in a town can all apply to the CPC for CPA funds. The CPC then decides what moves forward to Annual Town Meeting where voters decide actual allocations.

West Tisbury passed the CPA in 2005 and has used this funding stream for affordable housing both in West Tisbury and in other Martha's Vineyard towns. For example, the existing Rental Assistance program administered by DCRHA which supports over 50 island households with up to 50% of a restricted rent for qualified Island households is funded by CPA funds from Martha's Vineyard towns.

Martha's Vineyard towns have committed CPA funds to affordable housing and community housing up to 100% AMI and should continue to do so. Additionally, CPCs should put focus on providing funds for deeply affordable housing, meaning housing that is restricted to 50% or lower AMI. This lower income level is difficult to serve, requiring a deeper subsidy than the standard 80% AMI for affordable housing. Many projects may not serve this lower income level as they can fulfill affordable housing requirements otherwise. However, the need for housing at this income level is prevalent on the Vineyard and in West Tisbury. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau analyzed by HUD for 2017-2021 indicates about 165 households in West Tisbury make less than 50% AMI.⁶¹ DCRHA's RA program does support many households earning below 80% AMI, averaging 42% AMI, although households earning up to 100% AMI are now eligible.⁶²

- **6b. Continue to commit municipal property at little or no cost for development of affordable, community, and/or mixed-income housing.**

Considering the prohibitive cost of land and construction on Martha's Vineyard, towns can greatly support affordable housing efforts by committing their own land for the development of affordable housing at little or no cost. The Town should continue to make municipal land available for housing, including the sites listed in Strategy 5, and remain

⁶¹ Consolidated Planning/CHAS Data, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017-2021.

⁶² Comment from David Vigneault, Executive Director of DCRHA, received on August 28, 2025.

aware of opportunities to acquire land that may be made available for housing. To this end, the Town may consider:

- o **Conducting a feasibility study of Chapter 61 land to identify sites that may become municipally owned via a right of first refusal that could be used for open space-based affordable housing.**

Chapter 61 is a property tax program which gives preferential tax treatment to landowners who maintain their property as open space for timber production, agriculture, and recreation. When land classified under Chapter 61 is sold, a right of first refusal option is triggered wherein municipalities or an assigned non-profit conservation organization are granted the right of first refusal to acquire the enrolled land.⁶³ Thirteen parcels in the Town of West Tisbury's assessor database are enrolled in the Chapter 61 program.

In towns with limited municipal land available for affordable housing development, especially larger acreage areas, obtaining Chapter 61 land when it becomes available is a potential avenue for increasing the land resources for housing. However, obtaining all Chapter 61 land that becomes available is financially unlikely. Instead, the Town can conduct a study of existing Chapter 61 land in West Tisbury to see which parcels would be suitable for clustered, open space-based housing, and alternatively which parcels are better suited to remain conservation land, with an eye toward creative solutions that meet both needs. For example, the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank (MVLB) has pursued creative acquisitions with Island affordable housing groups by partnering small-footprint cluster housing adjacent to conservation land, such as the joint purchase of land by the Island Autism Group and MVLB at Child's Farm.⁶⁴

- o **Seeking private donations of property and funding for the development of housing.**

In certain circumstances, there may be several tax, development-related, and civic benefits for donors of property. They include tax deductions, receiving zoning or permitting relief as part of a larger project, and naming rights to create a community legacy. The Town should educate property owners about these incentives and the legal processes to encourage donations and open opportunities for negotiation. The donors may impose conditions on the property's use, but the Town can negotiate using donated properties for affordable, community, or workforce housing.

Private property owners on Martha's Vineyard have donated land and funding for open space and affordable housing on the Island. Actively seeking such donations through the WTAHC or Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) could increase the amount of land the Town

⁶³ Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, *Conservation and Land Use Planning under Massachusetts' Chapter 61 Laws: A Primer for Cities, Towns, & Conservation Organizations*, Second Revised Edition, November 2007, MassWoods.

⁶⁴ Louisa Hufstader, "Autism Group, Land Bank Buy West Tisbury Farm," *The Vineyard Gazette*, November 16, 2020, <https://vineyardgazette.com/news/2020/11/16/land-bank-island-autism-buy-child-farm-west-tisbury-12-million>.

can then make available for affordable housing or increase funding for the variety of housing-related programs and needs described in this HPP.

Strategy 7: Work with other Island towns to provide for the needs of the unhoused and unstably housed.

- **7a. Create a more robust and regional approach to homelessness prevention and intervention.**

The *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment* calls for several efforts to provide permanent and transitional housing options for the Island's unhoused community members. Addressing homelessness and housing instability should prioritize collaboration with organizations who work directly with the Island's unhoused. Expansion of existing organizations, namely Harbor Homes' work, will be more effective than each town attempting to work independently. Additionally, establishing an Island-wide or inter-municipal public health program would support a broader range of health and housing services. Towns can then support organizations and programs monetarily through their affordable housing trusts and provide information to their community members about available resources.

West Tisbury could also provide land and permissive regulations for year-round shelter facilities, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing to address the island's homelessness challenges. This would require defining and allowing these types of housing in the Zoning Bylaw. As the Town reviews land it could commit for affordable housing, it should also consider providing this land for housing that supports the unhoused and those at risk of homelessness.

Strategy 8: Work with other Island towns and the MVC to address infrastructure constraints and align housing goals with other town priorities.

- **8a. Explore ways to collaboratively expand wastewater capacity.**

West Tisbury should work with other Martha's Vineyard towns to explore shared septic system options. Given the island's size and constraints, each Town would benefit from sharing a wastewater treatment system across the island and distributing its costs to build, maintain, and operate.

Martha's Vineyard towns could adopt the local option 2.75% tax for a regional Cape Cod and Islands Water Protection Fund. Throughout community engagement events, West Tisbury residents shared concern for the environment in the event of new housing given limited wastewater infrastructure. By statute, all revenue contributes to a pooled regional fund to which member towns can apply for wastewater infrastructure funding.

- **8b. Continue Island-wide Water Quality and Watershed Planning and explore new and innovative approaches to protecting water quality.**

In June 2023, the MA Department of Environmental Protection passed new Title 5 regulations that require communities in designated nitrogen-sensitive areas to develop a watershed-wide permit that outlines a plan for reducing pollution. In watershed districts that do not obtain a permit, owners of septic systems will have to replace or upgrade their septic systems within five years. The MVC can help facilitate town participation in the MA Department of Environmental Protection's Targeted Watershed Management Plan Program to help address nitrogen loading in watersheds that include multiple towns.

Towns may also explore innovative and alternative methods of nitrogen reduction. The state is currently piloting a urine diversion pilot program on the Cape. All Martha's Vineyard towns should work with MVC to pursue state approval for nitrogen credits for composting toilets and urine-diversions systems. They offer low-cost alternatives to a central sewage system, reduce stress on the existing wastewater treatment facilities, reduce nutrient loads into the island's water to combat eutrophication, and can provide fertilizer for local agricultural use.

- **8c. Institute Visitability and Universal Design Standards for multi-family and mixed-use buildings.**

As West Tisbury creates additional housing opportunities, it is important to construct dwellings that are accessible to all residents and visitors regardless of physical ability. Visitability and Universal Design Standards refer to housing that is designed to be lived in and/or visited by people with disabilities. As the Town moves away from discretionary permitting processes to more straightforward zoning with design parameters, attention should be paid not just to the aesthetic and architectural aspects of a building but to who can comfortably reside in or visit that building. Such standards could be developed and adopted at the same time as the other design parameters suggested in this HPP (see Strategies 1c and 1e). The Town can utilize Requests for Information (RFIs) to solicit information about various development scenarios from developers for town-owned properties for design parameters or standards the Town is considering.⁶⁵ Design parameters are guidelines, while design standards are enforceable regulations. The Town should decide which manner of directing architectural design is best.

Strategy 9: Expand regional and local capacity and collaboration to support housing and planning.

- **9a. Reorganize and scale up current regional housing services capacity to provide the range of services offered by a regional housing services office.**

⁶⁵ Comment from Philippe Jordi, CEO of Island Housing Trust, received on August 19, 2025.

West Tisbury should work with MVC, DCRHA, and other organizations to reorganize and scale up current regional housing services capacity to provide the full expanded range of services offered by a Regional Housing Services Office (RHSO). There are currently several well-established and effective RHSOs in Massachusetts, most notably in [Barnstable County](#) and the [Metro West](#) region. These programs provide valuable assistance to municipalities and property owners who may lack the expertise or capacity to navigate complex housing matters.

DCRHA currently provides numerous crucial regional services, such as the Rental Assistance Program, income qualifications, lotteries, management of units, and management of rental waitlists, but establishing such an initiative for Martha's Vineyard would expand support beyond the current scope of DCRHA and MVC. It would offer all six island towns access to services that existing agencies may not currently be best positioned or resourced to provide. Such an entity can help with monitoring units and filling vacancies and support units restricted above 150% AMI as well as year-round or employment-based restrictions. Moreover, individual towns cannot take on many of the initiatives recommended in this HPP alone, and an island-wide approach to housing services could expand the Towns' capacity to implement the outlined strategies.

Scaling up regional housing services will require additional funding from towns allocated to whichever entity or entities provide those services.

- **9b. Partner with Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP), Abundant Housing Massachusetts, and other housing advocacy groups.**

In many communities in Massachusetts, immense decision-making power lies in local regulatory boards. However, the individuals that devote their time to serving on these boards are often not provided with adequate training to understand their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities to support affordable housing development. CHAPA, MHP, and Abundant Housing Massachusetts all offer support to municipalities for their housing work. Suggested trainings include those available for free through MHP's Housing Toolkit for Massachusetts Communities such as 40B and Municipal Housing Trust trainings. In addition to boards, committees, and housing trusts, other local actors involved in the process to develop affordable housing can be included, such as law firms handling real estate transactions. MHP also offers a 40B Technical Assistance Program which provides municipalities with real-time support throughout the ZBA's Comprehensive Permit process.⁶⁶

Community support for housing projects is often both required and desired. However, waiting for a specific project to come before the town is much more likely to inspire

⁶⁶ "Technical Assistance," Massachusetts Housing Partnership, accessed August 18, 2025, <https://www.mhp.net/community/technical-support>.

opponents to attend public meetings rather than proponents. Building and supporting local housing advocacy by creating a group of housing ambassadors is a great way to foster a local pro-housing culture and alleviate some of the burden put on local officials for housing ideas, education, and outreach. Towns can partner with CHAPA to create such a group that can formally support projects and get community members meaningfully involved in housing issues.

- **9c. Formalize collaboration between the CPC/WTABC/AHT in West Tisbury to streamline the process for committing funds to affordable housing projects.**

Affordable housing projects on the Vineyard often require the stitching together of funding from various sources across multiple towns. These different funding pools come with different restrictions which must be adhered to and should be efficiently allocated depending on project needs. CPA funds are restricted to units available at 100% AMI while West Tisbury's AHT can currently provide funds for up to 140% AMI. As towns try to construct SHI-eligible housing within their town borders and support other housing projects on the Island, the CPC, WTABC, and AHT should formalize the process for committing their funding sources to affordable housing projects to ensure funds are spent strategically and across a range of income levels.

- **9d. Expand the mission and service range of the Affordable Housing Trust from 140% AMI to at least 150% AMI and clarify that this range would include affordable (up to 80% AMI) and community (81-150% AMI) housing.**

The *Martha's Vineyard Housing Needs Assessment* calls for all housing trusts on the Island to expand their service range to at least 150% AMI. Housing instability and housing cost burden is most prevalent among lower income brackets in West Tisbury but does extend into higher income levels than those defined as low- and moderate-income by HUD. By expanding its service range, the West Tisbury AHT would be able to provide funds for projects that support households that make below 80% AMI (affordable housing) and households that make between 81 and 150% AMI (community housing). This opens trust funds for housing that supports a greater number of West Tisbury residents.

As a Seasonal Community, West Tisbury and all other Martha's Vineyard towns can also establish a Year-Round Housing Trust Fund individually or with other seasonal communities. This trust would collect, hold, and distribute funds for the creation and preservation of affordable and attainable housing for year-round residents pursuant to regulations still to be promulgated by EOHLC.

- **9e. Increase monitoring and compliance capacity by providing funding to pay for Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plans, lotteries, and ongoing monitoring of affordable housing restrictions, especially for small developments.**

To be listed on the SHI, an affordable unit must be made available on a fair and open basis through an EOHLC-approved Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHMP). Once listed, SHI units must be monitored for compliance with affordability restrictions to stay on the

SHI. When a unit turns over, it must again be offered via the lottery process described in the AFHMP.

These requirements add upfront and ongoing costs to affordable housing projects beyond land acquisition, planning and design, construction, and maintenance of units. Such requirements are especially burdensome for small developments with fewer units to split costs between. Since West Tisbury desires smaller affordable housing developments over larger ones, the Town should commit funding towards these costs to support the type of affordable units desired and help meet all SHI requirements.

- **9f. Consider adopting additional local taxes and allocating the resulting funds to the Affordable Housing Trust.**

West Tisbury currently collects a 6% tax on all short-term rentals offered as vacation rentals. This is already a significant source of funding for the Town, and West Tisbury could consider adopting the additional 3% Community Impact Fee on professionally-managed short-term rentals (STRs). West Tisbury also recently adopted the Local Option Meal Tax, which will go into effect on July 1, 2025. The Local Option Meal Tax is a 0.75% tax on all restaurant meals and most prepared take-out food that would combine with the state's 6.25% tax for a total of 7% for the municipality. These local option taxes are a considerable potential revenue source for housing on the Island. A portion of these funds should be allocated to the AHT as a regular revenue stream to administer.

- **9g. Continue to partner with other Martha's Vineyard towns to advocate for new resources at the state level, including a transfer fee to fund the proposed Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank and a housing toolkit and funding to assist state-recognized Seasonal Communities.**

A local option for Massachusetts municipalities to implement a 2% transfer fee on most real estate transfers over \$1 million is currently under review by the State legislature. This fee would serve as the funding mechanism for the proposed regional Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank. All six Martha's Vineyard towns have passed the necessary local votes to co-file transfer fee and housing bank legislation and await the state's decision.

All municipalities in Dukes County are designated as Seasonal Communities by the state. Created as part of the Affordable Homes Act, this designation creates a framework for communities with substantial seasonal variations in population and employment to develop policies and programs to unlock housing production opportunities. Guidance for Seasonal Communities will help implement many housing ideas brought up in the community engagement process and discussed in this HPP, such as tiny homes, year-round housing occupancy restrictions, and public sector employee housing. EOHLC created a Seasonal Communities Advisory Council to advise EOHLC on policies and programs necessary to serve the needs of seasonal communities, and three members from Martha's Vineyard sit on the council.

- **9h. Increase local and regional professional governmental capacity for pursuing and implementing housing solutions to meet projected needs.**

Local capacity is extremely limited on Martha's Vineyard. Martha's Vineyard towns do not have professional planning staff. Currently, one Island Housing Planner at MVC works with local boards and committees to address housing needs in individual towns and island-wide. Additional local and regional capacity is needed to realistically address the housing crisis in the Vineyard. The specific method of increasing capacity can take many forms and should perhaps take multiple forms. For example, hiring additional professional staff at the local and/or regional level would move communities away from reliance on volunteers, boards, and committees with diverse responsibilities.

- **9i. Work with MVC and other towns to establish an island-wide definition of "local preference" that includes all Martha's Vineyard towns and seek approval from EOHLC.**

During the lottery process to find a tenant for an affordable housing unit, towns can request local preference for up to 70% of units. Residents of the town in which the affordable housing will be built, employees of businesses within the town, and people with children in the town's school system receive a preference during the housing lottery for the units. Given the regional nature of housing issues on Martha's Vineyard, the sharing of resources and funding across town boundaries for affordable housing developments, and the number of strategies in this HPP that will require collaboration amongst towns and Island organizations, West Tisbury should work with other Martha's Vineyard towns, MVC, and EOHLC to seek state approval of an Island-wide definition of local preference.

- **9j. Work with other Martha's Vineyard towns, MVC, and DCRHA to scale-up the DCRHA Rental Assistance Program and pair AFHMP support with DCRHA's rental waitlist to create a Ready Renters program.**

A Ready Renter program serves to fill vacancies in affordable rental units in a timely manner to ensure that the unit remains in compliance with its restrictions and continues to support housing needs. DCRHA's existing Rental Assistance program offers homeowners tenant screenings along with contracted rental payments in exchange for year-round rental agreements. They maintain rental waitlists for this program, which could be used to create an island-wide Ready Renters program.

9k. Sponsor public information and education events about the island's housing needs and challenges at least once a year.

While specific planning processes such as this HPP are crucial to addressing housing needs on the Island, it is important to keep housing needs and potential avenues for action in constant conversation. Martha's Vineyard towns, MVC, and other housing-related entities can work together to create an Annual Martha's Vineyard Housing Forum. This event can serve as a progress report for HPP implementation, an opportunity to align goals across towns, and a brainstorming session for new ideas and lessons learned. By opening the event

to the public, community members can stay up to date on housing work in the region and show their continued support for addressing housing needs on the Island.

- **9l. Hold joint meetings with local boards across all Island towns to discuss affordable housing and the implementation of regional goals herein.**

Many of the goals and strategies within this HPP are shared with other Martha's Vineyard towns. While zoning changes must be independent, nearly all other strategies can benefit from or require a regional effort to implement. All Martha's Vineyard towns should participate in joint meetings with the specific goal of discussing affordable housing and implementing these HPPs. Local entities to be in attendance include planning boards, select boards, affordable housing committees, affordable housing trusts, and community preservation committees. Other regional entities such as MVC, DCRHA, IHT, and Harbor Homes may find attendance beneficial.

- **9m. Plan for the "post-10%" period of addressing affordable housing needs.**

The HPP process primarily addresses the ways a Town can reach the state goal of having 10% of its year-round housing on the SHI. This HPP also goes beyond SHI-eligible housing, acknowledging the range of income levels in need of housing support on Martha's Vineyard. Continuing to think beyond the state requirements for addressing affordable housing to other housing needs will be necessary to support all of West Tisbury's residents.

Summary of Strategies Addressing HPP Requirements

HPP Requirement	Strategy Addressing Requirement
Identify zoning districts or geographic areas in which the municipality proposes to modify current regulations to create SHI Eligible Housing developments to meet its housing production goal.	1a, 1c, 1e, 1f, 1h, 2b
Identify specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the filing of Comprehensive Permit applications.	5
Describe characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments that would be preferred by the municipality, for example, infill development, cluster developments, adaptive re-use, transit-oriented housing, mixed-use development, and/or inclusionary zoning.	1d, 2a, 2d, 2e
Identification of municipally owned parcels for which the municipality commits to issue requests for proposals (RFP) to develop SHI Eligible Housing, including information on appropriate use of the site, and a timeline for the issuance of an RFP.	5
Participation in regional collaborations addressing housing development.	7, 8, 9

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Appendices

Appendix A. Housing Production Plan Implementation Requirements

Appendix B. Glossary

Appendix C. Procedures for Housing Plan Certification and Safe Harbor

Appendix A. Housing Production Plan Implementation Requirements

760 CMR 56.03(4)(d)

1. the identification of zoning districts or geographic areas in which the municipality proposes to modify current regulations for the purposes of creating SHI Eligible Housing developments to meet its housing production goal;
2. the identification of specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the filing of Comprehensive Permit applications;
3. characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments that would be preferred by the municipality (examples might include cluster developments, adaptive re-use, transit-oriented housing, mixed-use development, inclusionary housing, etc.); and/or
4. municipally owned parcels for which the municipality commits to issue requests for proposals to develop SHI Eligible Housing;
5. participation in regional collaborations addressing housing development.

Appendix B. Glossary

Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan (AFHMP). A plan that meets the fair housing and non-discrimination requirements of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for marketing affordable housing units. The plan typically provides for a lottery and outreach to populations protected under the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, as amended. The plan must be designed to prevent housing discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other legally protected class under state or federal law.

Affordable Housing. As used in this report, "affordable housing" is synonymous with low- or moderate-income housing, i.e., housing available to households with income that does not exceed 80% of area median income and at a cost that does not exceed 30% of their monthly gross income.

Affordable Housing Restriction. A contract, mortgage agreement, deed restriction or other legal instrument, acceptable in form and substance to the Town, that effectively restricts occupancy of an affordable housing unit to a qualified purchaser or renter, and which provides for administration, monitoring, and enforcement of the restriction during the term of affordability. An affordable housing restriction runs with the land in perpetuity or for the maximum period allowed by law. It should be entered into and made enforceable under the provisions of G.L. c. 184, §§ 31-33 or other equivalent state law.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The mechanism used to account for and report revenues and expenditures for affordable housing, including but not limited to Community Preservation Act (CPA) receipts and other affordable housing funding sources.

Area Median Income (AMI). The median family income, adjusted for household size, within a given metropolitan or non-metropolitan area, updated annually by HUD and used to determine eligibility for most housing assistance programs. For Martha's Vineyard, AMI is based on the Dukes County Median Family Income.

Chapter 40A. G.L. c. 40A, the state Zoning Act. The current version of the Zoning Act was adopted in 1975 (1975 Mass. Acts 808), and most recently amended by the 2024 Affordable Homes Act.

Chapter 40B. G.L. c. 40B, § 20-23 (1969 Mass. Acts 774), the state law administered locally by the Board of Appeals in order to create affordable housing. It provides eligible developers with a unified permitting process that subsumes all permits normally issued by multiple town boards. Chapter 40B establishes a basic presumption that at least 10% of the housing in each city and town should be affordable to low- or moderate-income households. In communities below the 10% statutory minimum, affordable housing developers aggrieved by a decision of the Board of Appeals can appeal to the state

Housing Appeals Committee, which in turn has authority to uphold or reverse the Board's decision.

Chapter 40R. G.L. c. 40R (2004 Mass. Acts 149, s. 92), a state law that provides for overlay districts with variable densities for residential development and multi-family housing by right (subject to site plan review). At least 20% of the units in a Chapter 40R district have to be affordable to low- or moderate-income people.

Community Housing. As defined in the Martha's Vineyard Commission's 2024 Housing Needs Assessment, "community housing" is for households with incomes up to 150% of Area Median Income. (Note: this definition of community housing differs from that found in the Community Preservation Act, G.L. c. 44B.)

Community Land Trust. Community land trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations designed to ensure community stewardship of land. They are used primarily to ensure long-term housing affordability. To do so, the trust acquires land and maintains ownership of it permanently. With prospective homeowners, it enters into a long-term, renewable lease instead of a traditional sale. When the homeowner sells, the family earns only a portion of the increased property value. The remainder is kept by the trust, preserving the affordability for future low- to moderate-income families.

Community Preservation Act. See G.L. c. 44B.

Comprehensive Permit. The unified permit authorized by Chapter 40B, §§ 20-23, for affordable housing development.

Disparate Impact. A legal doctrine under Fair Housing that states a policy may be seen as discriminatory if it has a disproportionately adverse effect on groups protected by the Act. The intent does not have to be discriminative; disparate impact looks at the *effect*.

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). The state's lead housing agency, originally known as the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). EOHLC oversees state-funded public housing and administers rental assistance programs, various state-funded affordable housing development programs, and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program. EOHLC also oversees policy and administration of Chapter 40B.

Extremely Low-Income Household. A household income at or below 30% of AMI. (In some housing programs, a household with income at or below 30% of AMI is called very low income.)

Fair Housing Act (Federal). Established under Title VII of the 1968 Civil Rights Act, the federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under the age of 18), sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability.

Fair Housing Law, Massachusetts. G.L. c. 151B (1946), the state Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, children, ancestry, marital status, veteran history, public assistance reciprocity, or physical or mental disability.

Fair Market Rent (FMR). A mechanism used by HUD to control costs in the Section 8 rental assistance program. HUD sets FMRs annually for metropolitan and non-metropolitan housing market areas. The FMR is the 40th%ile of gross rents for typical, non-substandard rental units occupied by recent movers in a local housing market. (See 24 CFR 888.)

Family. Under the Federal Fair Housing Act (FFHA), family includes any of the following:

- (1) A single person, who may be an elderly person, displaced person, disabled person, near-elderly person, or any other single person; or
- (2) A group of persons residing together, and such group includes, but is not limited to:
 - (a) A family with or without children (a child who is temporarily away from the home because of placement in foster care is considered a member of the family);
 - (b) An elderly family;
 - (c) A near-elderly family;
 - (d) A disabled family;
 - (e) A displaced family; and
 - (f) The remaining members of a tenant family.

Gross Rent. Gross rent is the sum of the rent paid to the owner (“contract rent”) plus any utility costs incurred by the tenant. Utilities include electricity, gas, water and sewer, and trash removal services but not telephone service. If the owner pays for all utilities, then gross rent equals the rent paid to the owner.

Group Home. A type of congregate housing for people with disabilities; often a large single-family home.

Household. One or more people forming a single housekeeping unit and occupying the same housing unit. *See definition of Family.*

Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). A five-member body that adjudicates disputes under Chapter 40B. Three members are appointed by the Director of EOHLC, one of whom must be an EOHLC employee. The governor appoints the other two members, one of whom must be a city councilor and the other, a selectman.

Housing Authority. Authorized under G.L. 121B, a public agency that develops and operates rental housing for very-low and low-income households. On Martha's Vineyard, the communities are served by a regional entity, the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority.

Housing Cost, Monthly. For homeowners, monthly housing cost is the sum of principal and interest payments, property taxes, and insurance, and where applicable, homeowners association or condominium fees. For renters, monthly housing cost includes rent and basic utilities (oil/gas, electricity).

HUD. See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Inclusionary Zoning. A zoning bylaw that encourages or requires developers to build affordable housing in their developments or provide a comparable public benefit, such as providing affordable units in other locations ("off-site units") or paying fees in lieu of units to an affordable housing trust fund.

Infill Development. Construction on vacant lots or underutilized land in established neighborhoods and commercial centers.

Labor Force. The civilian non-institutionalized population 16 years and over, either employed or looking for work.

Labor Force Participation Rate. The percentage of the civilian non-institutionalized population 16 years and over that is in the labor force.

Local Action Units (LAU). A program administered by EOHLC that encourages communities to create Chapter 40B-eligible housing without a conventional comprehensive permit, e.g., through inclusionary zoning, purchase price buydowns, a Chapter 40R overlay district, and so forth. LIP grew out of recommendations from the Special Commission Relative to the Implementation of Low- or Moderate-Income Housing Provisions in 1989. The Commission prepared a comprehensive assessment of Chapter 40B and recommended new, more flexible ways to create affordable housing without dependence on financial subsidies.

Local Initiative Program. A program through which EOHLC can issue a Project Eligibility Letter (PEL) for a Chapter 40B development that has local support, as indicated by written approval from the Select Board. Following receipt of the PEL, the developer can file with the Zoning Board of Appeals for a Comprehensive Permit.

Low-Income Household. As used in the terminology of Chapter 40B and EOHLC's Chapter 40B Regulations, low income means a household income at or below 50% of AMI. It includes the HUD household income group known as very low income.

Low or Moderate Income. As used in Chapter 40B, low or moderate income is a household that meets the income test of a state or federal housing subsidy program. Massachusetts

follows the same standard as the rest of the nation, which is that “subsidized” or low- or moderate-income housing means housing for people with incomes at or below 80% of the applicable AMI.

Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP). A public non-profit affordable housing organization established by the legislature in 1985. MHP provides technical assistance to cities and towns, permanent financing for rental housing, and mortgage assistance for first-time homebuyers.

MassDevelopment. A quasi-public state agency that provides financing for commercial, industrial, and multifamily rental developments and facilities owned by non-profit organizations.

MassHousing. A quasi-public state agency that provides financing for affordable housing.

Mixed-Income Development. A residential development that includes market-rate and affordable housing.

Mixed-use Development. A development with more than one use on a single lot. The uses may be contained within a single building ("vertical mixed-use") or divided among two or more buildings ("horizontal mixed-use").

Moderate-Income Household. As used in the terminology of Chapter 40B and EOHL’s Chapter 40B Regulations, moderate income means a household income between 51 and 80% of AMI. In some federal housing programs (including HUD’s income limits), a household with income between 51 and 80% of AMI is called low income. (Note: this definition differs from that found in the Community Preservation Act legislation, G.L. c. 44B.)

Non-Family Household. A term the Census Bureau uses to describe households composed of single people living alone or multiple unrelated people sharing a housing unit.

Overlay District. A zoning district that covers all or portions of basic use districts and imposes additional (more restrictive) requirements or offers additional (less restrictive) opportunities for the use of land.

Regulatory Agreement. An affordable housing restriction, recorded with the Registry of Deeds or the Land Court, outlining the developer's responsibilities and rights

Section 8. A HUD-administered rental assistance program that subsidizes Housing Choice vouchers to help very-low and low-income households pay for private housing. Tenants pay 30% (sometimes as high as 40%) of their income for rent and basic utilities, and the Section 8 subsidy pays the balance of the rent. Section 8 also can be used as a subsidy for eligible rental developments, known as Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers (PBV), which are not "mobile" because they are attached to specific units. The Dukes County Regional Housing Authority administers Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.

Single-Room Occupancy (SRO). A building that includes single rooms for occupancy by individuals and usually includes common cooking and bathroom facilities shared by the occupants.

Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). A list of housing units that "count" toward a community's 10% statutory minimum under Chapter 40B.

SHI-Eligible Unit. A housing unit that EOHLC finds eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory because its affordability is secured by a long-term use restriction and the unit is made available to low- or moderate-income households through an approved affirmative marketing plan.

Subsidy. Financial or other assistance to make housing affordable to low- or moderate-income people.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The lead federal agency for financing affordable housing development and administering the Fair Housing Act.

Very Low Income. *See Extremely Low Income.*

Workforce. People who work or who are available for work, either in a defined geographic area or a specific industry.

Appendix C. Procedures for Housing Plan Certification and Safe Harbor

To qualify for the flexibility that a state-approved Housing Production Plan offers, West Tisbury needs to create (through the issuance of permits and approvals) at least 8 new low- or moderate-income housing units (or an amount equal to or greater than the 0.50% production goal) in a given calendar year and obtain certification from DHCD that the HPP standard had been met. Units eligible for the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) will be counted for certification purposes in accordance with 760 CMR 56.03(2):

(2) Subsidized Housing Inventory.

(a) The Department shall maintain the SHI to measure a municipality's stock of SHI Eligible Housing. The SHI is not limited to housing units developed through issuance of a Comprehensive Permit; it may also include SHI Eligible Housing units developed under G.L. Chapters 40A, 40R, and other statutes, regulations, and programs, so long as such units are subject to a Use Restriction and an Affirmative Fair Marketing Plan, and they satisfy the requirements of guidelines issued by the Department.

(b) Units shall be eligible to be counted on the SHI at the earliest of the following:

1. For units that require a Comprehensive Permit under M.G.L. c. 40B, § 20 through 23, or a zoning approval under M.G.L. c. 40A or completion of plan review under M.G.L. c. 40R, the date when:
 - a. the permit or approval is filed with the municipal clerk, notwithstanding any appeal by a party other than the Board, but subject to the time limit for counting such units set forth at 760 CMR 56.03(2)(c); or
 - b. on the date when the last appeal by the Board is fully resolved;
2. When the building permit for the unit is issued;
3. When the occupancy permit for the unit is issued; or
4. When the unit is occupied by an Income Eligible Household and all the conditions of 760 CMR 56.03(2)(b) have been met (if no Comprehensive Permit, zoning approval, building permit, or occupancy permit is required.)

Requests for certification may be submitted at any time. EOHLC will determine whether West Tisbury complies within 30 days of receipt of the Town's request. If EOHLC finds that West Tisbury complies with the HPP, the certification will be deemed effective on the date upon which West Tisbury created new units on the SHI under 760 CMR 56.03(2). The certification will remain in effect for one year from its effective date. If EOHLC finds that West Tisbury has increased its number of SHI Eligible Housing units in a calendar year by at least 1% of its total housing units (16 units), the certification will remain in effect for two years from its effective date.

The certification process would allow the Zoning Board of Appeals to deny a comprehensive permit for twelve months (or twenty-four months, as applicable), or continue to approve

projects based on merit. However, if the Board decides to deny a comprehensive permit or impose conditions during the Housing Plan certification period, it must do so according to the following procedures. 760 CMR 56.05(3) and 56.03(8):

- Within fifteen days of opening the public hearing on a comprehensive permit application, the Board has to provide written notice to the applicant, with a copy to EOHLC, that denying the permit or imposing conditions or requirements would be consistent with local needs, the grounds that it believes has been met (e.g., a Housing Plan certification is in effect), and the factual basis for that position, including supportive documentation.
- If the Applicant wishes to challenge the Board's assertion, it must do so by providing written notice to EOHLC, with a copy to the Board, within fifteen days of receiving the Board's notice, and include supportive documentation.
- EOHLC will review the materials provided by the Board and the applicant and issue a decision within thirty days. The Board has the burden of proving that a denial or approval with conditions would be consistent with local needs, but any failure of EOHLC to issue a timely decision constitutes a determination in favor of the Town.
- While this process is underway, it tolls the requirement to complete the public hearing and final action.