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Overview: Regional Land Use Vision Map project

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The Cape Cod Commission has been working with towns to create a Regional Land Use Vision Map for Cape Cod. The project is an effort to articulate a growth policy for Cape Cod in an easily understood map format. The Land Use Mapping project is a result of a recommendation made by the 21st Century Task Force that the Commission should play a leadership role in establishing a unified Cape-wide map system for planning and zoning. The Regional Land Use Vision Map is being developed using information about sensitive resources, local planning knowledge, and existing patterns of development to identify discrete areas to focus growth and redevelopment efforts, and to identify resource protection areas that require additional planning or where significant change may not be appropriate. The goal, through identifying appropriate growth areas, planning and implementing necessary infrastructure improvements, and making appropriate regulatory changes, is to create incentives which direct growth and reinvestment to areas where it can be accommodated, and away from areas that require increased protections for ecological, historical, or other reasons.

The Commission has relied on the knowledge and recommendations of local planning staff and boards to identify areas in each community that should be mapped for increased growth and economic activity, and areas where additional development should be discouraged. Up to five broad land use categories have been identified on the Regional Land Use Vision Map. These include: Economic Centers, Villages, Industrial and Service Trade Areas, Resource Protection Areas, and Other areas. Descriptions of these categories are available in the attached document. In order to provide a unified approach envisioned by the Task Force, the Commission has established a “basic” resource protection area applicable to all towns, which includes wellhead protection areas, areas vulnerable to flood damage in a significant storm event, historic districts, and the Cape Cod National Seashore. An Economic Center could overlay one of these basic resource protection areas.

In addition to creating a growth policy vision for Cape Cod, the Regional Land Use Vision Map guides the application of new, flexible Development of Regional Impact (DRI) thresholds. Upon completion of a public forum and endorsement of the town’s draft map by the planning board, the town’s draft map will be incorporated into a Regional Land Use Vision Map and adopted with the update of the Barnstable County Regional Policy Plan (RPP) by the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates. Following adoption of the RPP, DRIs are eligible for Minimum Performance Standards pertaining to Economic Centers to create some initial incentives for investment in these areas. In addition, the Commission is proposing a flexible framework for DRI thresholds to the

Assembly of Delegates that will allow towns to customize DRI thresholds to address local planning goals for these mapped areas.

Following endorsement of the Regional Land Use Vision Map, a town's board of selectmen (or the town manager in Barnstable) may apply for changes to DRI thresholds based on the mapped areas. Strategic changes to DRI thresholds in Economic Centers, Industrial and Service Trade Areas and in Resource Protection Areas are intended to direct growth and reinvestment to appropriate areas, and away from sensitive ones. Modification of DRI thresholds is at the town's initiative; thresholds will remain as they are currently until such time as a town seeks a change.

Towns seeking changes to DRI thresholds will be required to have a design and infrastructure plan adopted by town meeting to address anticipated growth in Economic Centers and Industrial and Service Trade areas, and may adopt a local impact fee system to provide infrastructure funding. In addition, the Commission may require lower DRI thresholds for Resource Protection Areas as part of the town's request for higher thresholds in some mapped areas. The Commission will hold a public hearing on any proposed DRI threshold changes. Upon approval by the Commission, the revised DRI thresholds for the town will be activated on the Regional Land Use Vision Map.

Regional Land Use Vision Map

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Land Use Vision Map?

The Land Use Vision map is a visual growth policy for Cape Cod, identifying discrete areas for economic investment and growth, and areas where additional growth should be discouraged due to the presence of sensitive resources.

Why is the Cape Cod Commission creating this map?

The land use mapping project is a result of a recommendation made by the 21st Century Task Force that the Commission should play a leadership role in establishing a unified Cape-wide map system for planning and zoning. In addition, the Task Force recommended that DRI thresholds should be related to a project’s use and location, providing for higher thresholds in designated growth areas, and lower thresholds in other areas.

What are the goals of the mapping project?

The goal is to create a mapped vision of desirable growth patterns for Cape Cod. Once the vision has been established, changes to local zoning, DRI thresholds, regional review standards, and other non-regulatory changes related to the mapped land use areas may help direct growth into denser and more vibrant economic centers, and reduce sprawl outside these centers.

What land use categories are used to create the map?

The land use categories are summarized in the chart below.

Name	Characteristics could include	Example	CCC Policy Changes
Economic Center	Serves the region or sub-region May draw from larger area/many towns Venue for retail Appropriate for growth, more mixed use Civic and institutional uses (could include town hall, churches, PO) Pedestrian oriented Residential component	Downtown Hyannis East Harwich Orleans Shankpainter Road, Provincetown	•DRI Thresholds may be raised (CCC reviews fewer projects, larger size) with appropriate infrastructure •more lenient or flexible Minimum Performance Standards •cash mitigation available for DRIs
Industrial Service Trade Area	Uses incompatible with residential and village settings High sq ft to employee ratio Public works facilities Landscaping, construction businesses	Harwich Industrial Area Orleans Industrial Area	DRI Thresholds may be raised (CCC reviews fewer projects, larger size) with appropriate infrastructure
Village	Smaller scale uses, compact area with traditional character Historic community Civic uses (could include town hall, churches, PO) Local scale, supports social function	Dennis Village Wellfleet Center Sandwich Center	DRI Thresholds remain the same, or could go down at town’s request

	Can include mixed use Home occupations		
Resource Protection Area	Significant natural or cultural resource areas Transportation corridors	Wellhead protection areas DCPCs Historic Districts	DRI Thresholds may be lowered (CCC may review more projects)
Other	Areas undefined above	Developed residential areas	DRI Thresholds remain the same

How is the map created?

The Commission staff met with each town’s planning staff, followed by public meetings with planning boards and other public officials, to draw a draft map. Participants at these meetings utilized GIS maps of significant resources, together with maps of local zoning, local comprehensive plans, and local knowledge of existing patterns of development and local planning concerns to identify the Land Use Categories for a given town. Once the draft map is approved through a local public process, the map is incorporated into the Cape-wide map.

Generally, the Economic Centers, Industrial and Service Trade Areas, and Villages are identified based on local zoning districts in conjunction with goals set out in the Local Comprehensive Plan. In some communities, new Economic Centers have been identified in areas where the town intends to promote economic investment (Sandwich Golden Triangle). The Resource Protection Areas are identified, in part, based on local interests for resource protection.

In an effort to standardize Resource Protection Areas across town boundaries, the Commission has identified minimum, or “basic” Resource Protection Areas that include:

- the Cape Cod National Seashore boundaries
- Zone IIs
- SLOSH zones (Sea and Lake Overland Surge from Hurricanes: worst-case scenario flooding from storm event as modeled by the Army Corps of Engineers)
- National Register, and National Register -eligible historic districts, and local historic districts

Minimum Resource Protection Areas apply across the Cape, though identified Economic Centers, Villages, and Industrial Service Trade Areas that are also approved function as an overlay district. Towns can identify additional Resource Protection Areas, but not less than the minimum.

How is the map adopted?

The map will be adopted by the Assembly of Delegates as part of the RPP. Endorsement of the map by town planning boards will put into effect some of the regulatory incentives within Economic Centers. After local endorsement, a town's Board of Selectmen could propose changes to DRI thresholds in portions of town to create additional incentives for development and reinvestment.

How may a town seek to modify thresholds within mapped Land Use categories?

Following regional adoption of the Land Use Vision map and local endorsement of a town's component of the map, a town may seek to modify the Commission's thresholds for review of Developments of Regional Impact. The Commission has adopted a range of possible thresholds for each of the Land Use categories. A town may seek to raise or lower thresholds within a given Economic Center or the Resource Protection Area within the specified range. A higher DRI threshold for commercial projects would mean that projects larger than the current 10,000 sq ft threshold could proceed with local permitting without CCC review. In order to achieve the goal of directing growth to the Economic Centers and away from the Resource Protection Areas, a raising of thresholds in Economic Centers may require a concurrent reduction of thresholds in Resource Protection Areas, or portions of those areas.

Due to the nature of sensitive resources and existing patterns of development on Cape Cod, most of the identified Economic Centers or Industrial Service Trade Areas are located within at least one resource of regional significance. In an application seeking to raise thresholds in a given Economic Center, a town will have to propose means for addressing each resource issue. For example, a proposal to raise thresholds in an Economic Center located within a wellhead protection area would have to propose means for protecting water supplies, (eg zoning restrictions, sewerage or stormwater management to remove nitrogen, etc.) An Economic Center overlaying an historic district or within a SLOSH zone would have to demonstrate that adequate historic or flood protections are in place. An Economic Center with multiple resource constraints would have to address each in an application to raise thresholds.

Will the Commission impose lower thresholds once the map is adopted?

Thresholds will remain as they are today, regardless of Land Use category, until such time as a town seeks to modify them and those changes are approved by the Commission.

How is DRI review affected by the mapping?

Until such time as a town seeks to elevate thresholds in Economic Centers, projects meeting existing DRI thresholds will still require mandatory referral and review by the Commission. These projects will be reviewed according to the standards for DRI review. However, the revised RPP includes some reductions in Minimum Performance Standards in Economic Centers as an incentive for development to locate in the Economic Centers regardless of whether thresholds have been changed or not, provided a town has endorsed the map.

What are the differences between Growth Incentive Zones and Economic Centers?

A growth incentive zone (GIZ) may be designated according to the GIZ regulations anywhere, including within all or part of an Economic Center, so long as it meets the GIZ criteria. The GIZ tool allows customization of thresholds and other CCC regulations following a comprehensive land use analysis, and development of a plan and regulations for a given area. GIZs that have already been approved prior to adoption of the map will not be affected by the map, and in fact are shown as a separate Land Use category on the Land Use Vision map. GIZs that are approved following adoption of the Land Use Vision map will have their own regulations and thresholds that apply to that area, independent of Land Use category. Regardless of GIZ or Economic Center potential or designation, the CCC will require analysis of the underlying resource constraints for a given area before considering threshold or other regulatory changes.

The process for changing thresholds in Economic Centers is somewhat similar to the process for establishing a GIZ, but is intended to be simplified and formulaic in order to facilitate the elevation of thresholds in these centers.

May the map be modified?

A town may seek to make changes in the mapped areas periodically in order to adjust boundaries, or to identify new Economic Centers or Resource Protection Areas. Changes to the map have to be approved by the Cape Cod Commission and by the Assembly of Delegates; Commission staff anticipate taking proposed map changes to the Assembly during the first year after adoption.

What are the benefits to a town of adopting the map?

The Land Use Vision map provides a simplified approach to thinking about land use goals on a broad scale. Specific fine-tuning of land uses through zoning will continue to rest with towns. The identification of Resource Protection Areas and Economic Centers in the Land Use Vision map may help some communities focus planning efforts and infrastructure investment to consolidate growth/activity areas and reduce sprawl. Together with changes in DRI thresholds, mapped land use areas may create incentives for new development and reinvestment in areas that towns have identified as Economic Centers. The map is a starting point for a continued collaboration on planning issues of local and regional interest.