

Gosnold Community Development Strategy

The following is the Community Development Strategy for the Town of Gosnold, Massachusetts. The intent of this strategy is to guide the identification and prioritization of development projects within the town. This strategy document will be evergreen, subject to periodic review, and updated on at least an annual basis and more frequently as circumstances require.

1) Planning Development and Project Prioritization

Development planning in the Town of Gosnold has historically been ad hoc and generally reactive. In 2012 the Board of Selectmen, at the recommendation of the Gosnold Long Range Planning Committee, retained a consultant, the Cecil Group, to assist in planning for future development. The consultant conducted several town meetings and interviews with town officials. Their objective was “to determine shared goals, and from this develop a list of key actions, responsibilities, level of effort and schedule for proceeding with municipal actions to implement the vision through the drafting of a master plan, strategic plans, or master plan elements that advance the common goals.”

On May 25, 2012, two well-advertised working sessions were held. The first session involved presentations by town departments on their critical planning issues. The second session involved open discussions and prioritization of planning issues. Approximately 40 people attended these meetings. The consultant’s final report includes a Master Planning Matrix that provides a detailed list of planning issues identified in the public planning process.

2) Sustainable Development Principles

The Town of Gosnold consists of a chain of islands and because of this the residents are acutely aware of sustainable development issues. In order to concentrate development and mixed uses, planning and zoning regulations are in place that reflect the differences between the mixed use concentrated village area and the vast areas of undeveloped land, much of which is in various forms of conservation restrictions.

In order to address long-term sustainability issues, among other things, a Long Range Planning Committee has been established to develop plans to address critical issues and advise the Selectmen. This committee studied the future use of diesel fuel on the island in conjunction with the impending expiration of the current fuel oil provider’s contract. This committee also convened a meeting with experts to discuss concerns about the long-term protection of the water supply. They also were asked to identify key potential land acquisitions that will protect environmental resources as well as provide opportunities for affordable housing.

The town also has appointed a Community Preservation Committee that will invest in open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation.

Energy conservation and environmental protection are key issues in an island environment. The Town of Gosnold has been conducting a multi-year program to improve the efficiency of the Cuttyhunk electrical generation facility, upgrading transformers and improving grounding. We received a \$2 million grant from USDA to install a solar photovoltaic system to generate about 50% of the islands demand. The system was completed Winter 2017.

In order to protect the wetlands and sole aquifer of the town, a Conservation Commission was established. Previously this responsibility was vested in the Selectmen, but the increasing criticality of wetland protection deserved the attention of a dedicated commission.

The Solid Waste Department on Cuttyhunk Island operates a compacting and recycling facility that provides for cost-effective management of waste. In 2013 a by-law to address dumping of old vehicles, boats, and other trash was approved at the annual town meeting.

3) Community Development Objectives

From this planning information and input from the public, the Gosnold Board of Selectmen has developed a list of top priority objectives and related projects and supporting activities. They are summarized in Section 4. Some of these activities are described in general terms such as “Investigate alternative community energy systems” and it is expected that more specific actionable projects will be defined over time. The numbered lists of projects and other activities below include both planned and recently completed projects and other activities. Following each of these objectives *in italics* is one or more supporting *Sustainable Development Principles* defined by the MA Department of Housing and Community Development.

- Objective 1: Maintain an Evergreen Community Development Strategy
 - 1) Public review and updating of the strategy document, see chronology of reviews below, most recent public hearing February 19, 2021.
 - Completed:
 - 2) Finalize the Cecil Group report and revise priorities as needed. Completed Spring 2013.

Sustainable Development Principles: 3. Make Efficient Decisions.

- Objective 2: Provide Affordable and Reliable Energy (Cuttyhunk Island Electric Plant)

- 1) Prepare and submit an application to the MA Department of Energy Resources to become a Green Community, Summer 2021.
- 2) Implements reduced winter electric rates, Winter 2019, 2020. Ongoing study of rate structure.

Completed:

- 3) Investigate the feasibility of subsidizing electricity costs for low to moderate income residents and businesses. Contact Martha's Vineyard Commission and Island Institute for advice re. electricity subsidies, October 2018.
- 4) Investigate alternative community energy systems. Selectmen approved a letter of intent to work cooperatively with the Marine Renewable Energy Collaborative of New England, September 20, 2013.
- 5) Design and install a community photovoltaic energy system using a recently awarded USDA Rural Electrification grant (\$2,146,375). Completed February 2017.
- 6) Upgrade the town diesel electric plant. Specifications and costs requested for new generator and controls to integrate with the new solar photovoltaic system. New generator installed Fall 2017.
- 7) Upgrade the town electric department management systems including software upgrades. Completed Spring 2017.
- 8) Obtain a CDBG grant to provide energy audits and weatherization for low to moderate income residents. Grant received 2016 and residents asked to apply for funds. No applications filed possibly due to concerns about requests for personal financial information.

Sustainable Development Principles: 5. Use Natural Resources Wisely and 9. Promote Clean Energy.

- Objective 3: Protect Water Quality and Assure Adequate Water Supply

- 1) USDA grant received to replace town wells and water distribution pipes. Appropriated \$2,980,000, Town Meeting 2020. Town contribution financed by loan of \$1,639,000. Contracted with Environmental Partners for design and engineering services 2020.

Completed:

- 2) WhiteWater, Inc. developed a management plan for the Cuttyhunk Island water supply, Summer 2018. Final report supported USDA grant application, 2020.
- 3) Community Compact with the state to protect the water supply on Cuttyhunk Island, January 2018.

- 4) Conduct a leak detection study of the Cuttyhunk Island water distribution system. Phase 1 completed Spring 2015. Phase 2 TBD.
- 5) Well field inspected by WhiteWater, Summer 2017, report received Fall 2017.
- 6) Repair retaining wall at town well complex. Completed Spring 2013

Sustainable Development Principles: 3. Make Efficient Decisions and 4. Protect Land and Ecosystems.

- Objective 4: Environmentally Sound and Cost-Effective Septic and Solid Waste Management

- 1) Investigate feasibility of public toilets at the ferry dock.
- 2) Review solid waste management and develop recommendations for improvement.
- 3) Investigate the cost/benefit of providing residential waste compactors.

Completed:

- 4) Boat pumpout station grant approved from Clean Water Act to be managed by the Buzzards Bay Coalition and installed Spring 2018.
- 5) Install a septic system for the town hall, school, and library complex. System designed, approved, and bids requested, warrant for \$50,000 approved, Spring 2013. Installed Fall 2014.
- 6) Install a septic system for the public toilet building. Public presentation on composting toilet technology, August 9, 2013. Requested cost information from Vineyard Land and Surveying for title V installation, February 12, 2014. Bid package submitted Spring 2015. Installed Fall 2015.
- 7) Submit anti-littering bylaw to 2013 town meeting. Approved May 2013.
- 8) Decommission the sewer outfall pipe to comply with USEPA regulations by 12/31/15. Follow-up with non-compliant residents. Decommission completed 2016

Sustainable Development Principles: 4. Protect Land and Ecosystems and 5. Use Natural Resources Wisely.

- Objective 5: Promote and Assure a Sustainable Year-Round Economy

- 1) Improve speed and reliability of internet service. Internet committee formed, obtaining RFI bids, Fall/Winter 2017. Retained Axiom, Inc for preliminary engineering studies, Winter 2018. Ongoing efforts to gain cooperation from Verizon.
- 2) Strengthen barrier beaches and rip rap to protect channel and harbor. Draft license from property owners obtained, Summer 2013. CZM grant Spring 2015. Barges Beach Conservation Management Plan in process with Mass Audubon, Fall 2017. Planning grant expected for constructing groins off Barges Beach. Coordinate with new owner, Buzzards Bay Coalition.

- 3) Implement Seaport Council grant to improve the ferry dock and renovate the USCG building use as a visitor center and retail space. Dock completed Summer 2017. Visitor center renovation \$300,000 grant. Committee formed to plan renovations, 2020.

Completed:

- 4) Explore the feasibility of a semester at the Cuttyhunk School, Fall 2017. New focus on short term and STEAM programs. School reopened 2020 due to COVID driven demand.
- 5) Build and/or acquire low income and seasonal worker housing. George Shaw and LRP consulting with Martha's Vineyard Commission, Survey completed, decided against pursuing, Fall 2018.
- 6) Obtain a CDBG grant to improve the safety of residences occupied by low to moderate income residents. Received 2016. No applications filed possibly due to concerns about requests for personal financial information.
- 7) Improve public access areas. Harbor Master Plan initiated, Summer 2013. Gateway project completed, Summer 2013. Gosnold Island and Monument lease obtained, Summer 2013. New Fish Pier regulations adopted, Summer 2015. Fish pier addition completed, Summer 2018. New seating area, dingy dock, and picnic tables at fish dock, 2019.
- 8) Identify locations and structures at risk from storms and sea level rise and implement protective measures. MV Commission maps completed Summer 2015. Hazard mitigation plan. Completed Spring 2018.
- 9) Explore opportunities for development of aquaculture business. Community Compact with the state to promote agriculture, January 2018. WHOI kelp farm pilot project approved by the Gosnold Conservation Commission, Summer 2018. Project closed due to lack of funding.

Sustainable Development Principles: 1. Concentrate Development and Mix Uses, 6. Expand Housing Opportunities, and 8. Increase Job and Business Opportunities.

- Objective 6: Control Motor Vehicles and Improve Highways

- 1) Long Range Planning Subcommittee addressing management of golf carts and motor vehicles, Summer 2017, 2018.
- 2) Develop plans and funding for roadways, sidewalks, walls, and drainage. Martha's Vineyard Commission consultation for wall improvement. Mass Works grant application for road and wall repair, Summer 2017. Resubmitted Summer 2020. Awarded \$800,000 October 2020. Town Ch90 contribution \$100,000. Project to start 2021.

Completed:

- 3) Submit abandoned vehicle bylaw to 2013 town meeting. Approved May 2013.

Sustainable Development Principles: 1. Concentrate Development and Mixed Uses and 7. Provide Transportation Choice.

- Objective 7: Land Acquisition

- 1) Negotiations underway to acquire Lot 20 adjacent to the powerhouse.
- 2) Develop plans and funding for acquiring land for public and town use (town equipment storage, school playground, housing). Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan developed by the Martha's Vineyard Commission, July 2018. Accepted by State 2020. Committee formed to plan and fundraise for the playground, 2020. New trail system to be added by Buzzards Bay Coalition, 2021.

Completed:

- 3) Lookout Park deed restriction purchased from the National Park Service for \$180,000, 2021.
- 4) Develop plans and funding for acquiring land for conservation. Coordination with the Buzzards Bay Coalition's proposed 60+ acre acquisition, Fall 2018. BBC presentation to the Selectmen, October 2018. Town acquires ownership of Church's beach, land at the ferry landing, and an easement for a playground near the school for \$160,000, 2020.
- 5) Explore the pros and cons of historic districts. Consultation with Martha's Vineyard Commission, Fall 2017.

Sustainable Development Principles: 1. Concentrate Development and Mix Uses, 4. Protect Land and Ecosystems, 5. Use Natural Resources Wisely, and 6. Expand Housing Opportunities.

- Objective 8: Public Health and Safety

- 1) Implement COVID-19 preventive measures including dissemination of health department advisories, signage, sanitizer stations, and regulations, 2020-2021.
- 2) Develop plans and cost estimates for a new fire truck building.
- 3) Conduct controlled burning to reduce the risks posed by wildfires and reduce tick habitat. Plan completed, Summer 2013. Burning Spring 2015, Fall 2017. Spring 2019, ongoing.
- 4) Tick Illness Control Committee established, 2013. Ongoing efforts include disseminating tick tubes, mowing paths and roadsides, and prevention communications.

Completed:

- 5) Conduct deer count on Cuttyhunk, Winter 2021.
- 6) Acquire and implement four-poster tick control systems. Pilot program unsuccessful, Spring 2017.

4) Community Development Priorities (up to 10)

- 1) Upgrade Cuttyhunk Island wells and water pipes.
- 2) Replace fuel farm.
- 3) Protect Barges beach.
- 4) Renovate the USCG building for use as a visitor center and retail space.
- 5) Improve the speed and reliability of the Cuttyhunk Island internet service.
- 6) Improve management of solid waste.
- 7) Acquire land for public and town use.

5) Geographic Target Areas

The principal target area for these projects and activities is Cuttyhunk Island, one of the Elizabeth Islands that together constitute the Town of Gosnold. Cuttyhunk Island is the seat of town government and all commercial activity. According to the 2010 census, the Town of Gosnold has a population of 75, but there is significantly greater population throughout the year as indicated by the 2010 census count of 215 housing units. The majority of the population is located on Cuttyhunk Island.

6) Community Input

The Gosnold Community Development Strategy is based on a series of community meetings and interviews conducted by a planning consultant, the Cecil Group, during 2012. The strategy and priority list of projects and activities were reviewed and discussed at a public meeting on January 4, 2013 and will be reviewed at least on an annual basis. See dates of reviews below.

7) Development Strategy Reviews

- Approved by Gosnold Board of Selectmen, January 4, 2013.
- Reviewed at a public meeting, October 4, 2013.
- Reviewed at a public meeting, January 10, 2014.
- Public hearing to solicit public comment on a proposed application for Community Block Grant funds, February 3, 2014.
- Reviewed at a public meeting, March 6, 2015.
- Public hearing to solicit public comment on a proposed application for Community Block Grant funds, December 18, 2015.
- Reviewed at a public meeting, October 20, 2017.
- Reviewed at a public meeting, October 26, 2018.
- Reviewed at a public meeting, February 19, 2021.

8) References

- Cuttyhunk Community Survey, 2009
- Cecil Group Report, 2012