

Long Range Comprehensive Plan Preface

The Comprehensive Long-Range Plan provides the Town of Chatham with a formal approach for maintaining and improving the community's quality of life, for both present and future generations.

The primary components of the quality of life in Chatham are the community's:

- w Economic health – the ability of the townspeople to have adequate income and housing.

- w Environmental health – the ability of the townspeople and other living things to co-exist in an environment that does not compromise their physical health.

- w Social health – the ability of citizens to have positive social interaction, as individuals and in groups.

Because Cape Cod is a unique environment with its own set of complex issues, new approaches to sustainable development for Chatham are necessary. That involves striking a balance among economic, environmental and social health.

Sustainability means continued economic and social development which does not cause damage to the environment and natural resources. It resolves the conflict between the sustenance of human life and the integrity of nature. Living beyond our ecological means will lead to the destruction of the character and uniqueness that is Chatham.

As diverse as Chatham's population is, there is agreement: People are happy with the Town. They want it to stay as it is. That is not possible. With present zoning bylaws and regulations, Chatham is quickly changing before our eyes. Is there a neighborhood that has not seen small homes either added to with additions larger than the original home or demolished to make way for an oversized trophy home?

There is great concern that Chatham is falling victim to development forces which deteriorate its uniqueness and turn it into Anyplace, U.S.A. The overriding concern of residents and visitors alike for Chatham is to hold on to what it has and ward off changes which could undermine its character, beauty and quality of life.

We are a seaside resort town and, at the same time, home to year-round residents who work here or have retired here. Existing housing stock can house 16,000 to 35,000 people — and often does so. However, infrastructure, particularly drinking water and wastewater facilities are not adequate to sustain the Town. Nitrogen, a product of population growth, is polluting our precious groundwater, our ponds, estuaries, and seashores.

Preservation of our natural resources is at the heart of assuring a strong

economy. Accelerating social and economic growth can adversely affect the town's character and dangerously threatening the quality of life. It is imperative that, with citizen participation and strong leadership from our elected officials, visionary regulations and bylaws be passed to foster sustainability so that economic demands placed on the environment by population and commerce can be met without reducing the ability of the environment to provide for future generations.

The Comprehensive Long Range Plan reviews the areas which impact Chatham's community environment. Each chapter addresses the specific actions needed to achieve the goals set forth which are aimed at preserving Chatham's way of life. Because of the time involved in producing this Plan, certain actions included in the Plan are fact. However, many more must be implemented.

Development should be sustainable growth. Commerce should be concentrated in the existing Neighborhood Centers to prevent urban sprawl along Route 28. Affordable Housing should focus on redevelopment and rehabilitation of existing housing stock and/or developed land wherever possible.

Providing affordable housing for our residents sustains the health, vitality and diversity of our community. Without affordable housing, we will lose our working families, our schools, our kids and regress into a community of retirees and summer people.

An Economic Development Committee should be established, made up of townspeople who are focused on creating new jobs, attracting business and managing community development recognizing the criteria for sustainable community facilities and infrastructure.

A program should be instituted to obtain data on private home rental use and water management software must be acquired to provide water usage data essential for the wastewater management study and accurate population counts throughout the year.

Pressure on our natural resources continues as Chatham's population expands. It is necessary to identify measures to counter damage already done, to repair that damage and to prevent further damage if we are to preserve Chatham's natural assets so vital to the Town's character and economic health.

Chatham's older population calls for enhanced emergency and rehabilitation services. Larger numbers of people of all ages are coping with handicaps. Children and young people are at risk to factors that were unknown in years past. Resources for public health should meet the needs of townspeople so all can be productive members of our community.

The future begins now. The Long Range Planning Committee urges citizens to accept this long overdue Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Chatham so that quality of life goals may be achieved and Chatham will continue to be a desirable place to live and work.