

CCNS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Protecting Cape Cod Character

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CAPE COD COMMISSION

APRIL 7, 2025



CAPE COD
COMMISSION

Introduction/ Outline

Defining Character

Challenges and Threats to Character

Ways to Protect Tangible Character

Questions/Discussion



Defining Character

**Use "Character-Defining Features"
(borrow from historic inventory work)**

Size and Scale of buildings

Style of Historic buildings

**Density and Arrangement of
buildings**

Qualities of landscape



Size and Scale of Buildings

- Height
- Massing
- Roof forms
- Additive Massings
- "Traditional Forms"



Style of Historic Buildings

- Architectural details reveal era building was built (Poodle Skirt reference)
- Form and scale reveal unique history of area



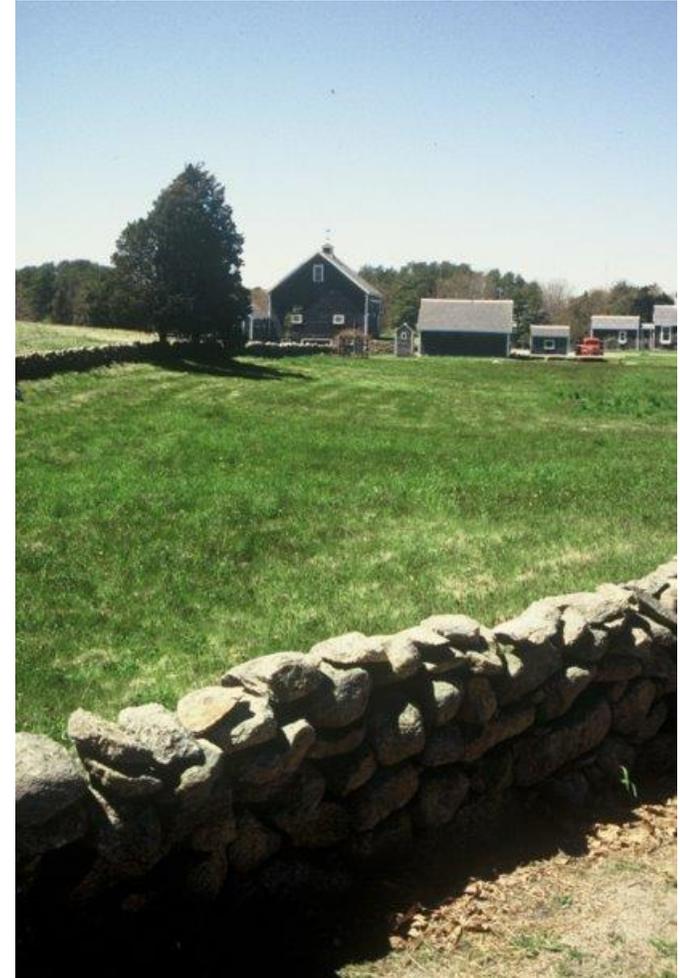
Density and Arrangement of Buildings

- Proximity to road
- Proximity to other buildings
- Organization or layout
- Relation to natural resources
- "Traditional Development Patterns" or "Placetypes" in RPP



Qualities of Landscape

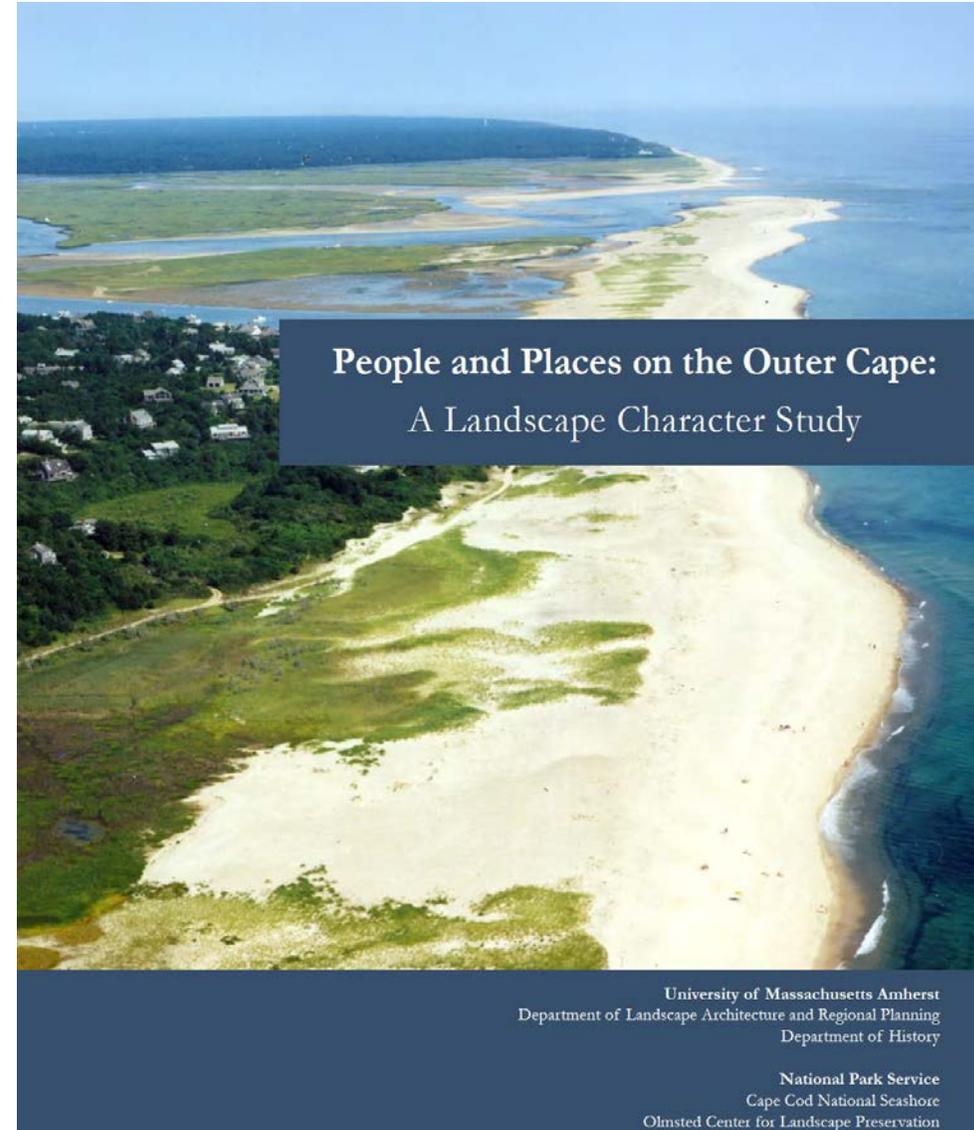
- Open
- Wooded
- Water
- Expansive or closed views
- Traditional industries
- "Cultural Landscapes"



2004 NPS Landscape Character Study

Cultural Landscape Types

- Great Beach
- Waterways
- Town Centers/Harbors
- Farms/Forests
- Transportation Corridors
- Homes



People and Places on the Outer Cape:
A Landscape Character Study

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning
Department of History

National Park Service
Cape Cod National Seashore
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation

Challenges and Threats to Character

**Change is constant, especially in
landscapes**

**Focus on physical changes that can
be addressed:**

Increase in building size

Changes in lot coverage/intensity

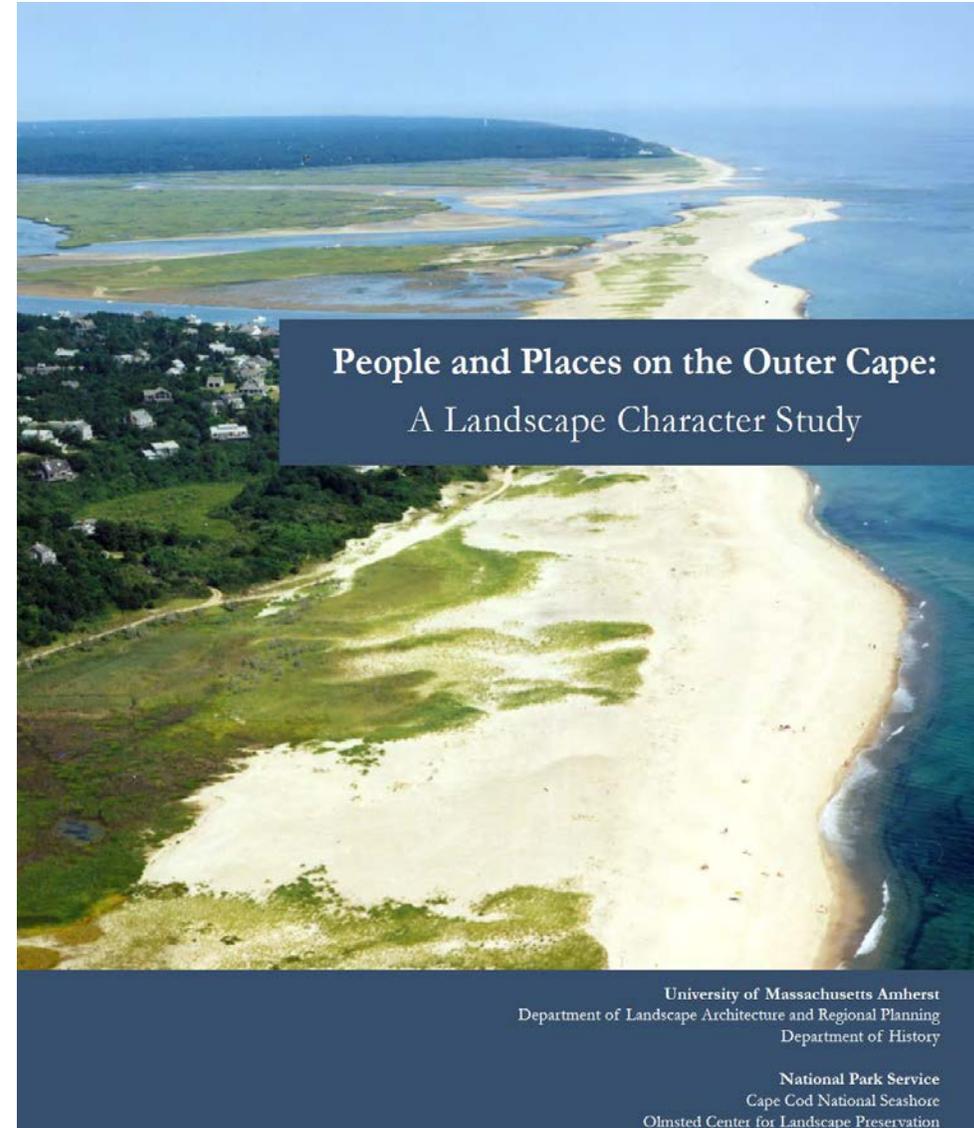
Loss of historic buildings



2004 NPS Landscape Character Study

Challenges & Threats

- Development encroaching on beach
- Increased use of landscapes around waterways
- Development drawn outside town centers
- Decline of agricultural landscapes
- Importance of sand roads to informal character
- Design/location of development along Route 6 corridor



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2008 Cape Cod Times Feature (Blasch house construction)

Threats to Seashore Character

- Expansion of building scale (550+ private properties)
- Permissive zoning regulations

Wellfleet adopted stricter zoning for Seashore in 2008; Truro in 2017

Eastham had already adopted NPS Guidelines and residential scale bylaw

NATIONAL SEASHORE PROPERTIES: HOW MANY?

Town	Number of Properties	Size of Properties
WELLFLEET	251	105
EASTHAM	105	211
TRURO	1	1
ORLEANS	1	1
PROVINCETOWN	1	1

CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE FACTS

- The great Outer Beach of Cape Cod, otherwise known as the Cape Cod National Seashore, consists of about 43,500 acres along 40 miles of coastline. There are about 27,000 acres of upland and 16,000 acres of submerged lands in the entire Seashore.
- The Seashore enabling legislation was filed in September 1959. The park was authorized by Congress in June 1961 and President Kennedy signed the bill into law on Aug. 7, 1961.
- The National Park Service owns about 27,000 acres of upland and submerged lands. The boundary extends one-quarter mile out to sea.
- The Outer Cape towns of Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans and Chatham own about 2,600 acres. The state owns about 12,000 acres, 20% of which are submerged lands, such as ponds, ocean and bay.
- About 1,570 acres are privately owned, 0.6 percent of the total 43,500 upland and submerged acres.
- About 600 privately owned structures have "improved property" status within the Seashore.

WELLFLEET HOME EXPANSION POTENTIAL WITHIN THE SEASHORE

- Great potential
- Modest potential
- Little potential

WELLFLEET TOWN HALL
Around 5,000 square feet

WELLFLEET PUBLIC LIBRARY
Around 10,000 square feet

NATIONAL SEASHORE COTTAGE (1959)
750 to 1,000 square feet

AVERAGE 3-BEDROOM HOME
Around 2,000 square feet

15,000 square feet

15,000-square-foot home on 3 acres

Q&A
A closer look at the Cape Cod National Seashore

What was the arrangement made by the federal government with the owners of properties within the National Seashore?

Owners of developed property who have "improved property" status, may remain in residence and freely transfer or sell their property to others. Provided to the Seashore's highest standards that under certain conditions the National Park Service (that meet the statutory standards by condemnation (purchase of land)). They are eligible for a "Certificate of Suspension from Condemnation." A private property owner has improved property status if their residence was begun before Sept. 1, 1960, as established by legislation, and the land and structures were in the same ownership. An "improved property" owner can obtain a Certificate of Suspension of Condemnation for the property if the use of the property since that time has been in conformance with zoning.

What about houses that were built or bought by people between the time of the original proposal to create a park (1959) and when Congress approved the legislation in 1967? Are they subject to different rules?

Yes. Structures begun after Sept. 1, 1960, are not classified as "improved property" as defined by the park's legislation. However, even the owners of the "improved" properties that were purchased or taken by the government were allowed to live in their structures for 25 years, or sometimes for life. Many owners negotiated with a term of years, some with life rights, or to the next generation if they were named in the deed or other settlements. Also, the National Park Service has been in conformance with zoning.

Threats to Seashore Character Today

Expansions

- Large building additions
- Increased heights
- More outbuildings
- Pools and designed outdoor spaces



Community Design

This guidance is intended to clarify how the Community Design Goal and Objectives of the Regional Policy Plan (RPP) are to be applied and interpreted in Cape Cod Commission project review. This technical bulletin presents specific methods by which a project can meet these goals and objectives.

Community Design Goal: To protect and enhance the unique character of the region's built and natural environment based on the local context.

- **Objective CD1** – *Promote context-sensitive building and site design*
- **Objective CD2** – *Minimize the amount of newly disturbed land and impervious surfaces*
- **Objective CD3** – *Avoid adverse visual impacts from infrastructure to scenic resources*

Threats to Seashore Character Today

Historic Buildings

- Increase in historic buildings under demolition delay
- Few areas where demolition is prevented – Local Historic Districts in Provincetown, Eastham
- Limited number of National Register properties protected under CCC Act



Ways to Protect Tangible Character

Range of Options: Toolkit

Refine Zoning

Adopt Design Guidelines/Standards

Use CCC Resources

District of Critical Planning Concern

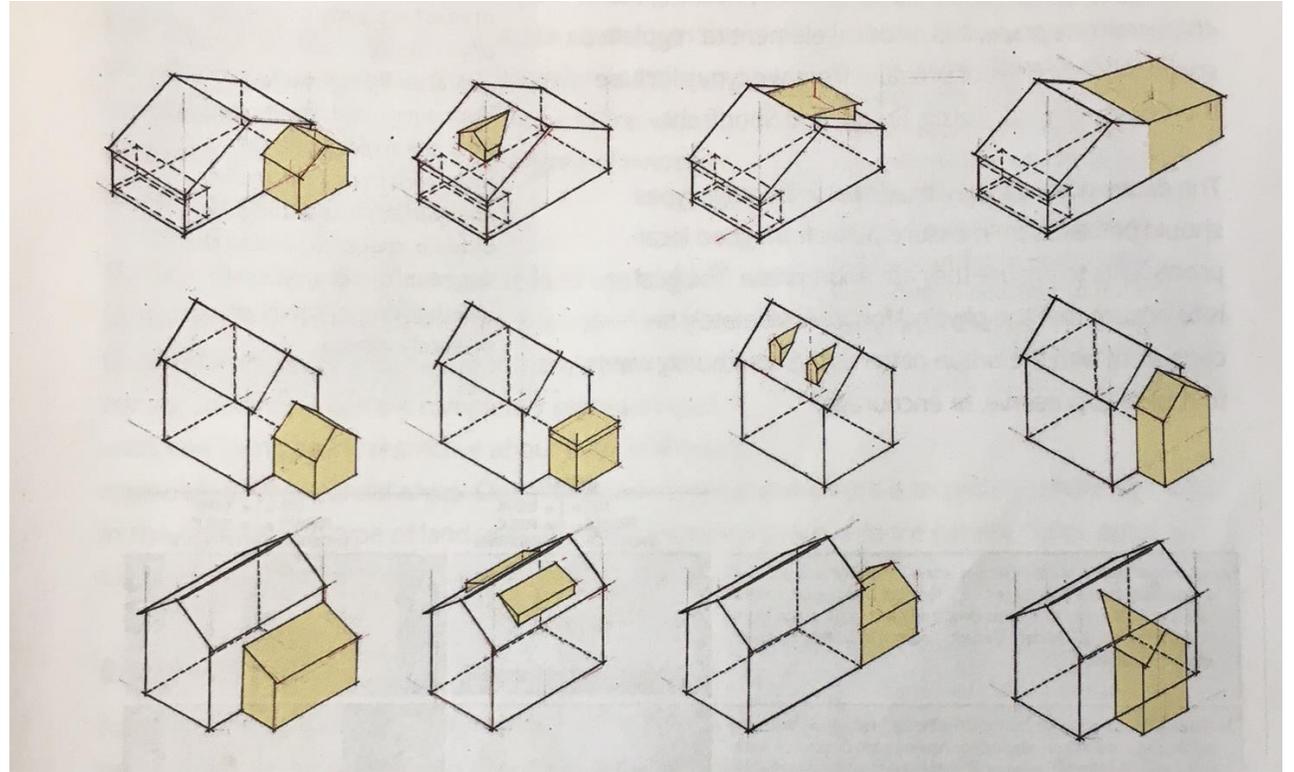
Strengthen Historic Review



Toolkit

Update Zoning and Design Standards

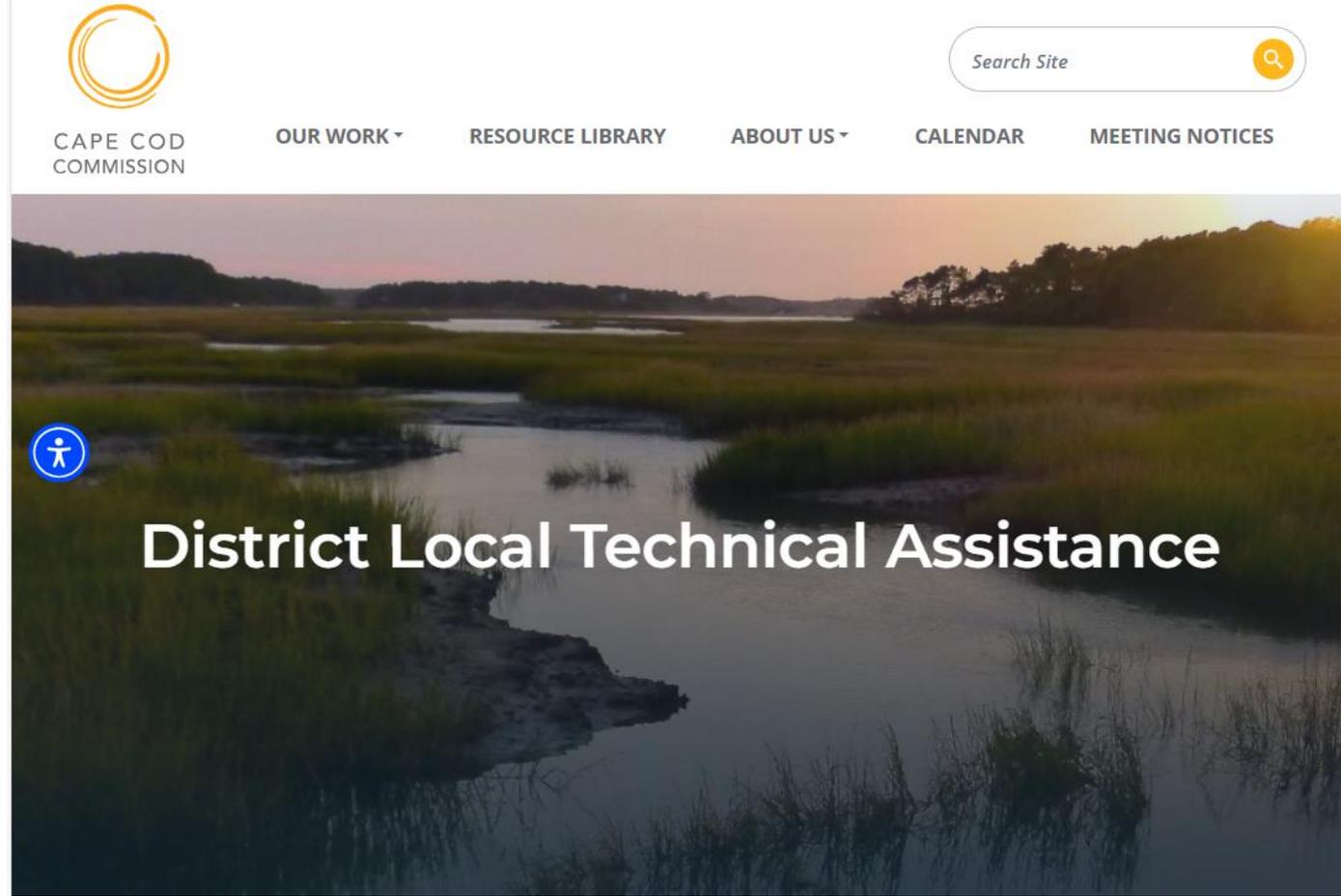
- Dimensional regulations
- Maximum building height
- Maximum building footprint
- Maximum lot coverage
- Uses (allow by right what you want to encourage)
- Design Standard Checklist with measurable features



Toolkit

Use CCC resources

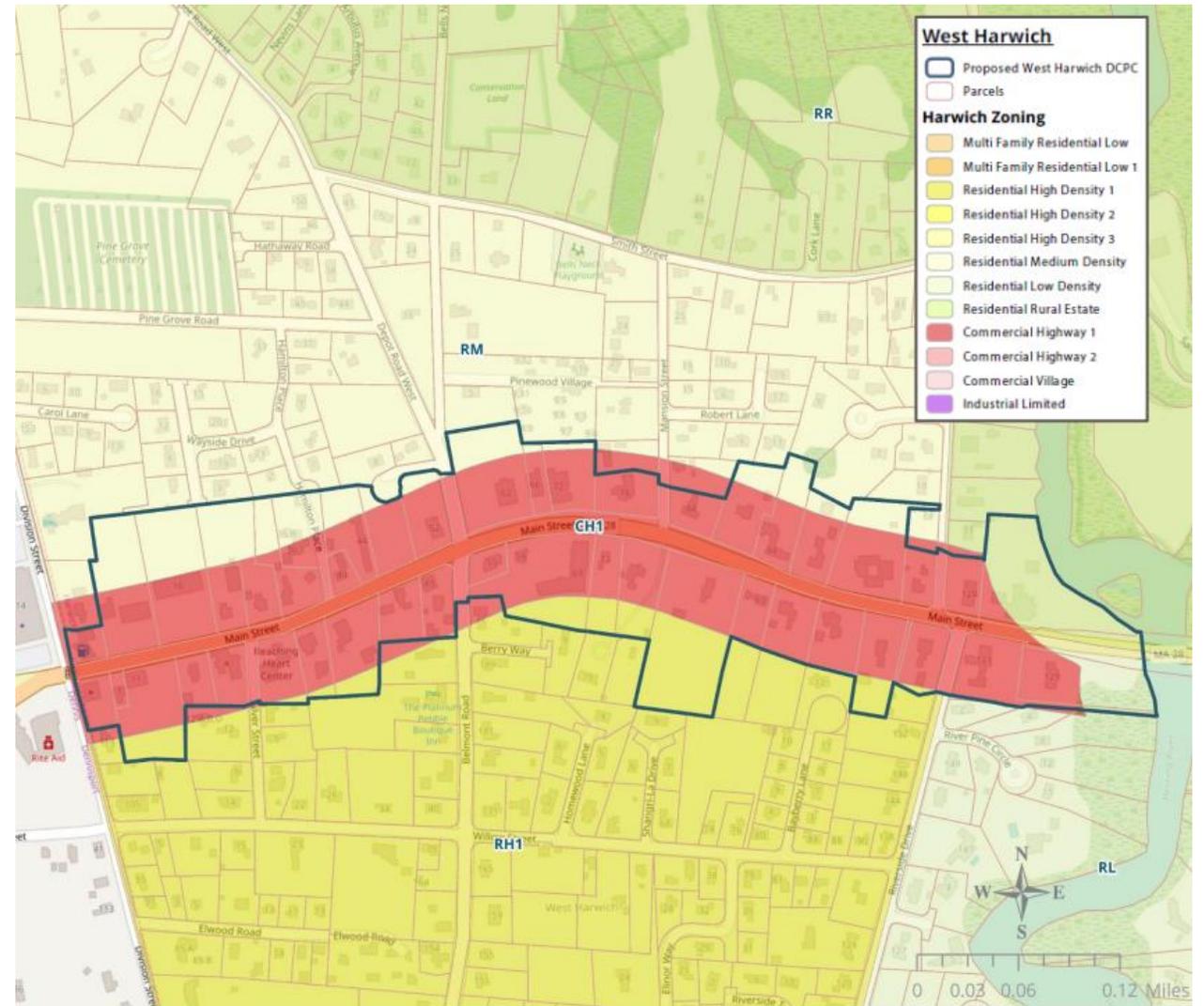
- Regional Design Guidelines
- Model Bylaws: Mixed Use Model may be appropriate for crossroads within CCNS
- Direct Local Technical Assistance grants (DLTA): Tailor zoning or design guidelines to specific neighborhoods
- Wellfleet & Truro scale bylaws



Toolkit

District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC)

- Moratorium during Planning
- Craigville – dimensional standards for 4 Neighborhoods
- Discourage historic demolition by limiting reconstruction to existing floor area and height
- West Harwich – maximum building footprint
- Flexible dimensional regulations and uses if historic building is preserved on property



Toolkit

Historic Structure protection

- Local Historic Districts – single properties or groupings
- Enhanced Demolition Delay – some towns have 21- or 24-month delays
- Historic Preservation Incentives – Chatham adopted flexible setbacks and lot coverage if historic building is preserved
- National Register listing – CCC review of demolitions and substantial alterations if outside local historic districts



Referring Historic Properties to the Cape Cod Commission for Review

OCTOBER 2019

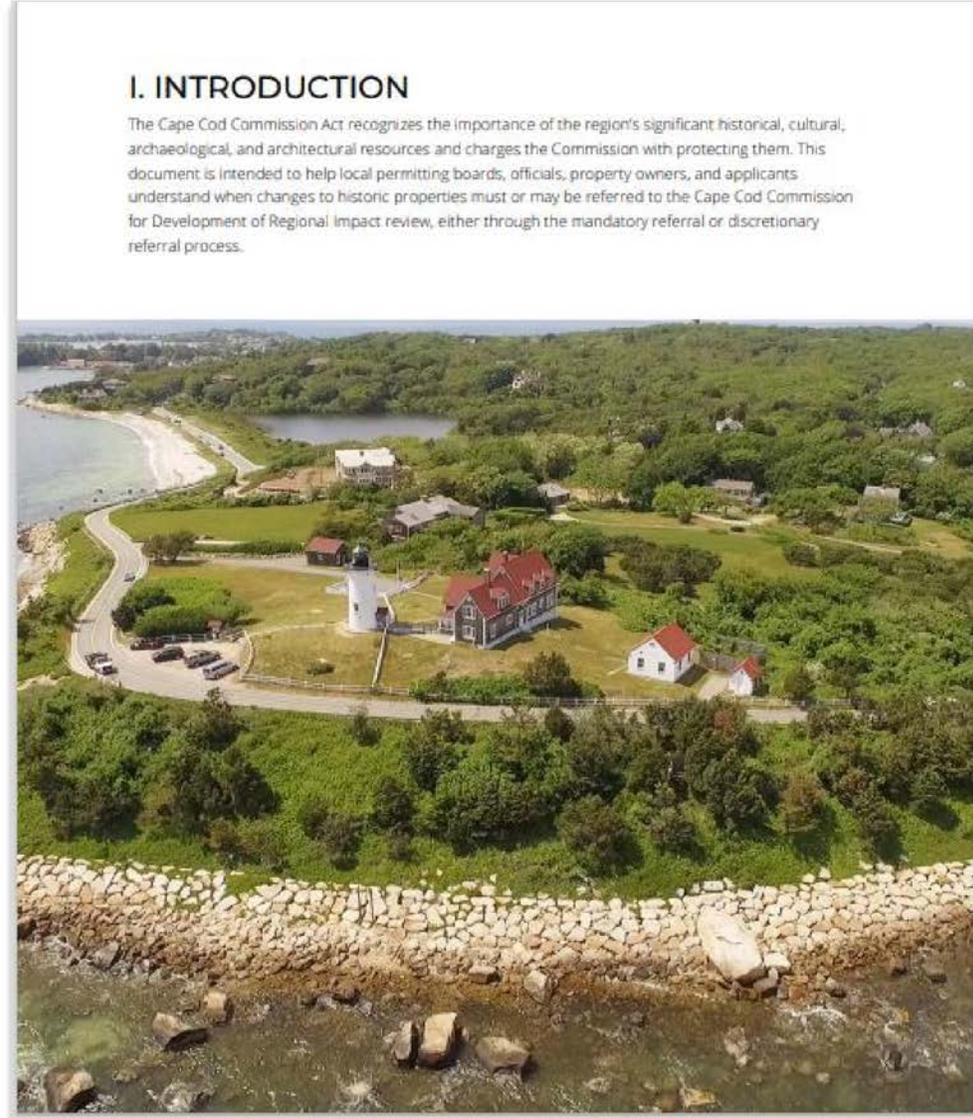
Toolkit

Purposes of Historic Structure DRI review

- Fill the gap in protection for significant properties
- Address major changes to National Register properties where they aren't addressed by local historic districts
- Review demolition and 'substantial alteration' proposals

I. INTRODUCTION

The Cape Cod Commission Act recognizes the importance of the region's significant historical, cultural, archaeological, and architectural resources and charges the Commission with protecting them. This document is intended to help local permitting boards, officials, property owners, and applicants understand when changes to historic properties must or may be referred to the Cape Cod Commission for Development of Regional Impact review, either through the mandatory referral or discretionary referral process.



Questions & Discussion



What development is happening in Seashore now?



How can each town's regulations be enhanced in the Seashore?



What can towns do to guide character in the Seashore?





Thank You!

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