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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.