

IMPLEMENTATION OF EAST HARWICH VISION STATEMENTS

Board of Selectmen
East Harwich Subcommittee
July 25, 2013

In March 2013, the East Harwich Subcommittee submitted a document containing eight vision statements for review by the full Board of Selectmen. The current document combines those vision statements into three groups (2,3,4,8 followed by 5,6 and then 7). Each group is accompanied by specific implementation measures intended to provide guidance for the next round of East Harwich zoning proposals.

VISION STATEMENTS

2. Appropriate commercial development is a priority and should take place in a pedestrian-friendly and interconnected pattern.
3. A strong residential component should be included.
4. The town should provide active direction in pursuit of its vision.
8. The East Harwich vision should be integrated with Harwich wastewater planning.

IMPLEMENTATION

The goal for future development of East Harwich is one of mixed commercial and residential use. Build-out studies¹ suggest potential for 250 residential units within the boundaries of the existing CH-2 District. The same build-out studies suggest potential for 500,000 square feet of additional commercial development, a significant increase above the 300,000 square feet that currently exists in East Harwich. Even though additional commercial development is a priority, there is considerable room for residential growth within the existing CH-2 boundaries and no immediate need to expand boundaries for additional moderate or high-density residential growth.

The Town should use all available municipal tools – zoning, infrastructure, funding for land acquisition, etc. – to accomplish its vision for East Harwich. One of the most important tools is wastewater infrastructure. The planned construction of sewers in East Harwich in an early phase of the CWMP will do much to mitigate water quality

¹ See Powerpoint entitled “Buildout Presentation – 2-2012” prepared by the Harwich Town Planner.

issues in the Pleasant Bay watershed. However, construction of sewers also has the potential to facilitate growth.

70% lot coverage is listed for the underlying CH-2 District, but two zoning overlays significantly reduce permitted lot coverage. The drinking water protection overlay limits lot coverage to 40% in three of the four quadrants of the CH-2 District. The fourth quadrant (Northwest) is limited to 15% and 30% by the Six Ponds Overlay District.

With the expectation that municipal sewer will be available soon, it is reasonable to adjust or remove overlay restrictions on lot coverage. However, a return to pre-overlay 70% lot coverage should not be automatic. Higher lot coverage should be permitted only in conjunction with development that is compatible with the vision for East Harwich.

With the zoning tool of lot coverage serving as a primary incentive, proposed development should be required to accomplish the following goals to be granted higher lot coverage:

- Accomplish more cohesive development by consolidation of parcels into larger planning units.
- Build one or more village streets with a connection to Route 137 or 39 and with extensions to abutting properties. Orient all development to village streets.
- Include substantial residential development including affordable housing. Further analysis is needed to determine how much residential development is needed on any individual or combined parcels and whether greater residential percentages will be recommended in certain East Harwich quadrants or portions of quadrants.
- Provide pocket parks and greenery.

Existing lot coverage (15 to 40%) will not change unless proposed development achieves one or more of the above goals. If all goals are achieved, lot coverage of 80% may be permitted. Partial increases in lot coverage should be allowed for partial achievement of goals.

An additional requirement is that all development in the district must connect to municipal sewer when available.

The above comments provide a zoning framework to encourage pedestrian-friendly mixed residential and commercial development and to enable reasonable lot coverage in the existing CH-2 district. East Harwich zoning should now return to the Planning Board for further detail within this overall framework.

A further comment under vision statement #2 is, "Not all commercial uses are appropriate for East Harwich. Notably, establishment of big box auto dependent retail

should be strongly discouraged as out of scale and character for this location.” To achieve this goal, the Planning Board should consider the following standards:

- Maximum size of individual stores
- Street-scale façades that provide multiple building entries and encourage continuity of pedestrian activity
- Block design that provides pedestrian access through the interior of blocks - from streets to rear parking lots and to other streets - without having to travel long distances around blocks
- Parking lot design with landscaping features minimizing overall size of any individual parking area.

VISION STATEMENTS

5. Growth levels should be reasonable, and growth patterns should be managed.
6. The town's vision should include an element of "offset" zoning for outlying districts in the East Harwich area.



IMPLEMENTATION

Initial build-out studies² suggest approximately 10,000 existing dwelling units in Harwich with build-out potential for 2,000 additional dwelling units town-wide, of which approximately 500 dwelling units are located in the Pleasant Bay watershed. The addition of 250 to 300 dwelling units in the existing CH-2 zoning district should be considered in this context.

Offset zoning should consider a variety of topics:

- Environmental impacts
- Desired development patterns
- Fiscal impacts to the Town of Harwich, and
- Fairness to individual property owners.

Offset zoning is one of several tools that may be used in controlling the extent of growth in outlying districts:

- NRP-style zoning
- Greater emphasis on clustering
- Continued public acquisition of open space land, and
- Removal of development potential via use of private Conservation Restrictions and similar techniques.

The Board of Selectmen recommends that the initial focus should be on a zoning proposal for reasonable levels of pedestrian-friendly mixed-use development in the existing CH-2 zoning district. Once that zoning has been prepared, it will be easier to understand the amount of potential development and any appropriate offsets. It is premature to judge the extent and form of offsets at this time. However, it will be important to discuss whether offsets are needed, both in East Harwich and town-wide, before bringing a zoning proposal for East Harwich to Town Meeting. The Board of Selectmen later may offer more specific guidance on goals and tools to be used for addressing offsets.

² Prepared by the Harwich Town Planner in May 2013 based on review of the Town Assessor's database, MEP buildout studies, and the Draft Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan for Harwich dated February 2013.

VISION STATEMENT

7. East Harwich zoning should be considered in the context of other principal villages in Harwich.

IMPLEMENTATION

Many zoning and open space concepts being developed for East Harwich may also relate to other areas in Harwich. Once new plans and by-laws have been prepared for East Harwich, the town should consider similar measures for Harwich Port, Harwich Center and other Harwich villages. Concepts should also be explored for watersheds, e.g., Herring River, to utilize land management options to minimize sewerage needs and protect open space while ensuring fairness to property owners.

Offset discussions (see previous page) also should take place within the context of zoning and open space discussions for villages and watersheds throughout Harwich.