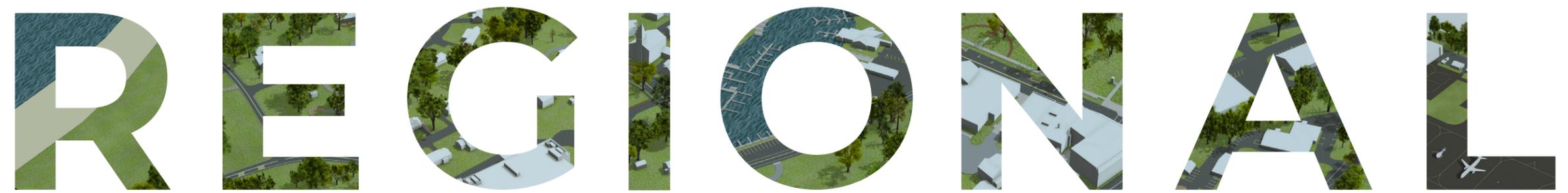


C A P E C O D



P O L I C Y P L A N

F R A M I N G T H E F U T U R E

CAPE COD COMMISSION | 2018





# Executive Summary

Cape Cod's intrinsic wealth stems from its natural beauty, historic community character, and healthy coastal and freshwater environments. The features that make Cape Cod attractive are also the cause of the forces that threaten to overwhelm the environment and erode its character. The challenge Cape Cod continues to face is balancing the protection of the environment while supporting the residents, workers, and visitors with the necessary services and infrastructure to thrive over the long term. The 2018 Regional Policy Plan helps provide a framework for guiding how and where the region will grow while protecting those unique Cape assets that cannot be replaced.

As described in Section 1, the Cape Cod Commission is Barnstable County's regional planning and regulatory agency. Through the Cape Cod Commission Act, the Commission is responsible for balancing the protection of the region's resources with appropriate development and economic

progress, and one of the ways the Commission does this is preparing and overseeing the implementation of a regional land use policy plan for the region.

The 2018 Regional Policy Plan is the fifth Regional Policy Plan prepared by the Cape Cod Commission. The first was adopted on September 6, 1991, with updated plans in 1996, 2002, and 2009. The 2018 Regional Policy Plan is an evolution of these previous plans, building on the goals and policies set forth and integrating stakeholder input to better define and characterize current challenges and solutions, as described in Section 2. Stakeholder engagement and two surveys helped identify key areas of concern, such as climate change, affordable housing, preserving the area's natural resources, and protecting regional character, and has helped to shape the regional vision, growth policy, and goals.

## A GROWTH POLICY FOR CAPE COD

The Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan provides a growth policy (Section 3) that supports the vision for the future of Cape Cod as a place of vibrant, sustainable, and healthy communities and a protected natural environment.

Growth should be focused in centers of activity and areas supported by adequate infrastructure and guided away from areas that must be protected for ecological, historical or other reasons. Development should be responsive to context allowing for the restoration, preservation and protection of the Cape's unique resources while promoting economic and community resilience.



## CAPE COD SYSTEMS

This plan is focused around a suite of interrelated systems that comprise Cape Cod: natural, built, and community (Section 4). High quality natural systems, including groundwater, marine water, freshwater, wetlands, open space, and habitat areas, are part of Cape Cod's attraction for residents and visitors. The quality of the environment is intimately linked with the quality of life on Cape Cod, the vibrancy of the regional economy, and the health of the Cape's community systems.

Protecting and enhancing the built environment, including providing infrastructure that supports the region and vibrant activity centers and protects the natural environment, is vital to supporting the Cape's population. The needs of the built environment must be balanced with maintaining the integrity of the region's natural environment.

Cape Cod's community systems, which include the culture, people, and economic activity of the area, are critical for fostering and maintaining vibrant communities and social networks that serve and support the people who live, work, and play in the region.

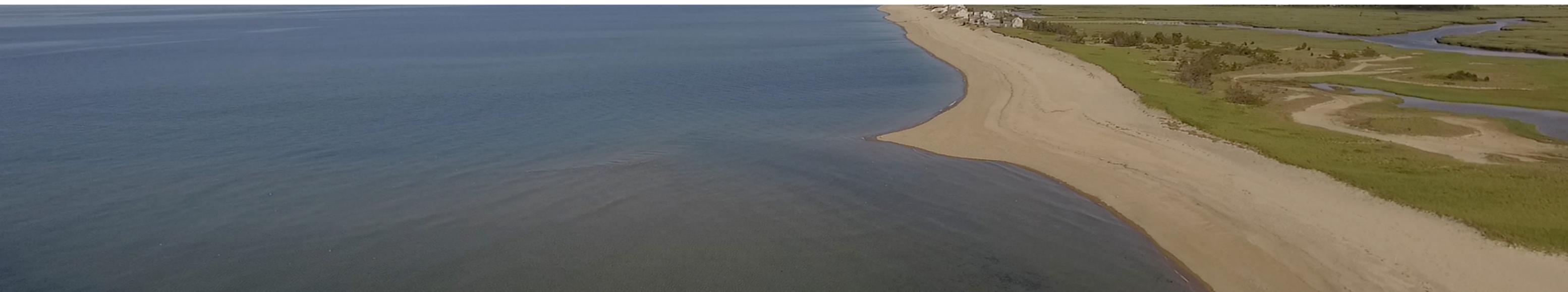
## KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION

In many cases the natural, built, and community systems augment one another and contribute to what makes the Cape a special place, but they also have conflicting needs or functions that must be balanced. The following briefly characterizes the key challenges (Section 5) that help to form the basis for the policies in this Plan:

- Between 2001 and 2011, the Cape lost more than 2,300 acres of forest cover, with 70% of the loss replaced by development (buildings, driveways, parking lots, etc.). This broad loss of forest cover, and related forest fragmentation,

negatively affects regional character, as well as the natural functions of cooling, habitat, and carbon storage that tree cover provides, and results in additional stormwater runoff.

- Surface water quality in Cape Cod ponds has been significantly impacted by surrounding development.
- Nearly all development on Cape Cod continues to utilize on-site septic systems that release nitrogen to groundwater, which eventually travels to coastal embayments and results in degraded water quality.
- Cape Cod faces threats due to climate change. The region's 586 miles of vulnerable, tidal shoreline is already at risk due to flooding and erosion. Sea level rise and climate change will further exacerbate these challenges, as well as impact how Cape Cod's ecosystems function.
- More than 40% of the region's inventoried historic buildings over 100 years old have no protection from demolition or alteration of their character-defining features. Archaeological sites and historically open landscapes are similarly unprotected.



- The Cape Cod housing market does not meet the region's diverse needs. Lower than average wages, higher than average costs, a lack of choice, limited supply, and the demand for seasonal and retiree housing makes housing for the current and future year-round population a high priority. Rental housing is even more limited.
- Existing infrastructure fundamentally limits the region's ability to grow in a way that balances economic and social wellbeing with the protection of natural and cultural resources. The region's rural and suburban development patterns increase the cost of providing infrastructure to these areas and increase the amount of disturbance to the natural environment.

The long-term challenge is to maintain and improve the quality of the environment in the face of ongoing development pressure and environmental and social change to ensure a stable and robust economy into the future.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To meet these challenges, this Regional Policy Plan adopts 14 goals (Section 6) to guide and plan for the future of the region in a manner consistent with the vision and growth policy. The goals and objectives derive from the values and purposes of the Cape Cod Commission Act, preserving and enhancing the region's assets.

Organized around the region's natural, built, and community systems, these goals and objectives form the structure upon which the region's planning work relies, serve as touchstones to guide implementation actions, and set the measures by which the regulatory review process takes place.

## COORDINATED REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING

While the Regional Policy Plan is comprehensive in its vision and growth policy and serves as an overarching policy framework, there are certain resources or issues facing the region that require more focused planning efforts. As discussed in Section 7, these more specialized regional plans and programs work in conjunction with the Regional Policy Plan to accomplish local and regional goals. Examples of existing regional plans include the Cape Cod Section 208 Area Wide Water Quality Management Plan, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy Executive Team Program, the Regional Transportation Plan, and the Cape Cod Ocean Management Plan.

In addition to coordinating issue-specific plans across the region, the Commission works to coordinate local comprehensive plans with the Regional Policy Plan. The 2018



Regional Policy Plan, along with subsequent revisions to the local comprehensive plan regulations, seeks to encourage adoption of local comprehensive plans consistent with the Cape Cod Commission Act, streamline, accelerate and coordinate the planning and approval process, stimulate the production of more diverse housing types, coordinate public infrastructure investment in centers of activity, and ensure local bylaws are consistent with the Regional Policy Plan.

The Commission is charged under the Cape Cod Commission Act with anticipating, guiding and coordinating the rate and location of development with the capital facilities necessary to support development. To carry out this charge, the Commission proposes to develop a regional framework to characterize, quantify, plan, and advocate for regional infrastructure and facilities. The plan will focus on the planning, forecasting, decision making and financial tools to help communities take advantage of opportunities for local and regional coordination and collaboration on capital infrastructure and facilities.

Typically, a local capital infrastructure plan is a short-range plan (five to seven years) that lists specific capital projects and purchases needed by the town. At the regional scale, a Regional Capital Plan's objective is to have towns include a broader, more policy-oriented capital infrastructure plan within their local comprehensive plan that is consistent with the Regional Policy Plan and the goals of the Regional Capital Plan. Regional capital planning must be consistent with protecting the region's natural and historic resources, and advancing a balanced economy, housing mix, and social diversity.

There are a number of tools and resources available through the Cape Cod Commission Act that can assist in local and regional planning. Districts of Critical Planning Concern, Development Agreements, Chapter H, and Growth Incentive Zones are all powerful planning tools that provide a community or communities with focused opportunities to address specific planning goals.

## CAPE COD PLACETYPES

In addition to different systems, Cape Cod is comprised of many different and unique places. To recognize and support these unique areas, this Regional Policy Plan identifies areas with similar natural and built characteristics as distinct "Placetypes," which serve as a conceptual framework for regional planning and regulation. Eight Placetypes have been identified in Section 8, each with a vision consistent with the region's growth policy, as well as strategies for creating and enhancing their unique characteristics. Following are brief descriptions of the Placetypes.

Natural Areas are generally the region's least developed and most sensitive areas. The vision for these areas is to minimize adverse development impacts to sensitive resource areas, to preserve lands that define Cape Cod's natural landscape and contribute to its scenic character, and to improve the Cape's resilience to severe storms and the effects of climate change.



Rural Development Areas are defined by a high percentage of open lands and sparse building development patterns that contribute to the unique rural and scenic character of the region. The vision for these areas is to ensure that development is located, sited, and scaled appropriately to avoid impacts on scenic and/or cultural resources, and to help maintain the economic diversity that agriculture can provide for the region including opportunities for the continuation of traditional agricultural occupations, and for the availability of locally-grown food.

Suburban Development Areas include residential neighborhoods built primarily between the 1950s and 1990s as well as automobile-oriented commercial and light industrial development established during the same time period. The vision for these areas is to redevelop commercial and industrial Suburban Development Areas consistent with the community's vision to create more concentrated nodes of development,

and to improve their design and function so that they are better integrated into surrounding neighborhoods. The vision for residential Suburban Development Areas is to cluster residential development to reduce the development footprint and provide high-quality open space.

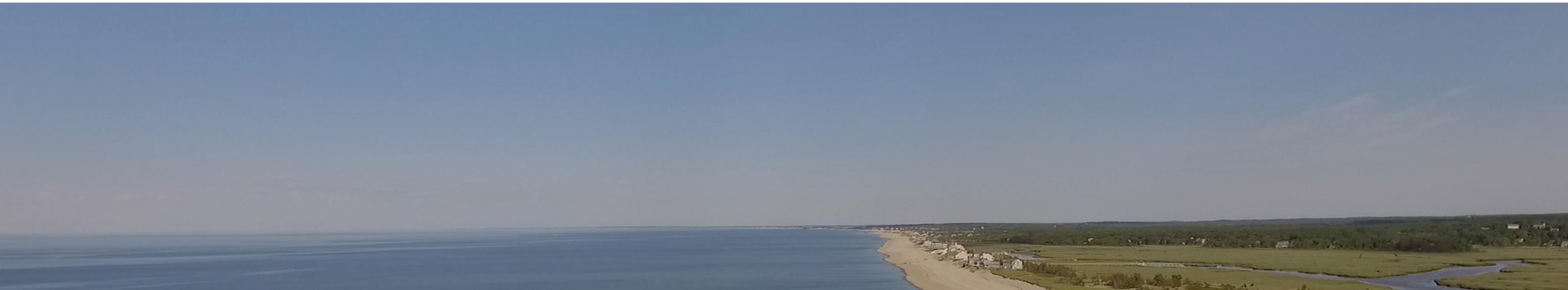
Historic Areas consist of concentrations of historic structures, including local and/or National Register districts located in a small-scale village setting. The vision for these areas is to protect historic resources and to support infill development that respects the form, scale, and character of existing historic areas.

Maritime Areas are clusters of commercial and mixed-use development that contribute to Cape Cod's working waterfronts and harbors. The vision for these areas is to support the fin- and shell-fishing industry as well as other

commercial, recreational, educational, and research activities associated with the marine environment, and to protect water dependent trades.

Community Activity Centers are areas with a concentration of business activity, community activity, and a compact built environment. The vision for these areas is to accommodate mixed-use and multifamily residential development in a walkable, vibrant area, preserve historic buildings, and to provide diverse services, shopping, recreation, civic spaces, housing, and job opportunities at a scale of growth and development desired by the community, with adequate infrastructure and pedestrian amenities to support development.

Industrial Activity Centers are lands containing industrial uses that are suitable for future industrial activity as well as emerging industries. Industrial Activity Centers are lands without significant resource constraints, areas with access



to major highway corridors, and areas with adequate size to support industrial uses. The vision for these areas is to support their development as significant employment centers with adequate infrastructure.

Military and Transportation Areas consist of large land areas developed with and devoted to infrastructure such as airports, transfer stations, waste disposal facilities, and Joint Base Cape Cod. The vision for these areas is to support comprehensive master planning with community input, encourage growth of industries appropriate to the diversification of the regional economy, and encourage partnerships for use of shared infrastructure.

## REGIONAL REGULATORY REVIEW

The Cape Cod Commission Act charges the Cape Cod Commission with reviewing certain proposed developments which, because of their size or other characteristics, are

presumed to have development effects beyond their local communities. These proposed developments are called Developments of Regional Impact. As Section 9 details, this Regional Policy Plan focuses on the review of developments in relation to their surroundings and the 14 goals and objectives. The Placetype for a given project is established at the outset of regulatory review and provides the lens through which the Commission will review the project. The applicability of goals and objectives may vary based on how projects are classified by Placetype.

The Commission has developed Technical Guidance that contains Placetype Maps, Resource Maps and Technical Bulletins. There is a Technical Bulletin for each of the goals. These Bulletins set forth the methods by which the goals and objectives may be met. The Cape Cod Commission will use

these Technical Bulletins, Placetype Maps and Resource Maps to determine if a Development of Regional Impact is consistent with the Regional Policy Plan.

## REGIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This Regional Policy Plan identifies nine performance measures in Section 10 to be tracked over time to help illustrate whether the region is moving toward the regional vision articulated in this plan. Though ideally these measures will show positive progress over time, tracking them can also identify areas where additional resources are needed to make progress.

The performance measures that will be tracked include:

- Number of acres of protected BioMap2 Core habitat
- Nitrogen concentration in public drinking water wells
- Parcels connected to the sidewalk network



- Nitrogen concentrations in embayments
- Number of additional or updated historic structure inventory forms
- Activity center evolution
- Share of employment within high-wage industries
- Housing diversity
- Changes in floodplain development

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Section 11 of the Plan includes recommended actions that the Commission commits to undertake over the next five years, including both planning and regulatory efforts to address the region's major challenges. These actions are organized around the natural systems, built systems, and community systems identified in this Plan.

Recommended planning actions for natural systems include identifying and prioritizing land for water supply and supporting local water quality planning. Actions recommended for built systems include development of a regional capital plan, updating the Cape Cod Regional Transportation Plan, and continuing to support and engage communities around coastal hazard mitigation and climate change adaptation planning, including developing an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. Actions recommended for community systems include development of a regional housing plan, updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, updating the Local Comprehensive Plan regulations, improving and updating historic inventories, and continuing to support communities through development of land use decision support tools. The Commission also commits to continuing to coordinate and facilitate information sharing, education and collaboration by hosting the annual One Cape Summit.

Additionally, recommended priority regulatory actions include potential threshold revisions and other amendments to the Commission's Code of Regulations, revisions to regional design guidelines, and updates to Technical Guidance to address climate change.

The 2018 Regional Policy Plan for Cape Cod provides a path forward for sustainable growth and development and streamlined regulation. Implementing this plan will require collaboration and partnerships at various levels of government and with non-governmental organizations, participation by committees and stakeholders, and communication and coordination with private sector industries and businesses. Together, as One Cape, the region can build environmental and economic resilience, strengthen community relationships, and design regional policies and implementation plans to address its greatest challenges.