

# Introduction



*Capt. Cass Seafood, Rock Harbor*

# 1. Introduction

The Local Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a document to help guide decisions about studies and actions that will ensure that Orleans will continue as a desirable town in which to live and to visit in the future. This Plan is intended to act as the Official Town Plan and should itself be revisited and revised periodically. The Orleans Home Rule Charter, 9-2-1 states “within the limits of available resources, the Planning Board shall be responsible for the development and periodic updating of an official town plan or portions thereof.” Further it should be noted that (9-2-4) “...the Official Town Plan(s) shall be considered when revisiting the Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Board shall also utilize the Plan(s) in making its recommendations to the Town. It shall also be used by other multi-member bodies in discharging their responsibilities.”(9-2-5) “The Board shall annually review the official town plan and recommend any necessary amendments thereto to the Town Meeting.”

The recommendations contained in this plan are to be used in the development of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). By reference, the CIP is incorporated into this Plan.

Orleans, and in fact, all of Cape Cod has undergone remarkable changes over the past several decades. Since the 1970's, Orleans population has more than doubled. Growth and development continue to create new challenges for the town. Traffic woes in the summer have become a major concern of citizens, the nitrogen pollution of our marine waters needs to be addressed, and affordable housing and maintaining community character continue to be a top priority and a struggle. During this period of change the Town has maintained a steady tax rate developed and added to many key local and regional services, and continues to provide strong educational opportunities through very good schools.

As Orleans navigates the twenty-first century it is faced with the reality that the quality of life has been and will continue to be impacted by the population growth. Planning for buildout is ongoing and the town will continue to mitigate the impacts of growth through zoning changes, wastewater and traffic solutions and other means necessary. Thus, the directions of the Plan are based on several realities: that the environment has already been impacted, that Orleans will grow over the next several decades, and that the Town will require expanded municipal services.

The Plan discusses many issues but does not define or address every decision that the Town may wish to make. This Plan was developed based upon the voiced opinions and views of the townspeople. The decisions to implement parts of the Plan will be made at future Town Meetings, and will likely be determined by sentiment and available resources.

The Plan consists of nine chapters:

1. Land Use and Growth Management
2. Natural Resources

3. Economic Development
4. Community Facilities and Service
5. Health and Human Services
6. Transportation
7. Affordable Housing
8. Open Space and Recreation
9. Historic Preservation and Community Character

The findings of several recent and current reports and studies were used to help identify problems and issues that affect the long-term prospects of the community. They include, but are not limited to the following:

- *U.S.G.S. Groundwater Modeling Report – 2005*
- *Enhancing Wastewater Management on Cape Cod – Wright Pierce - July 2004*
- *Orleans Wastewater Management District Study – Horsley and Whitten - 2005*
- *The Village Center Traffic Study – Judith Nitsch – May 2004*
- *Water Supply Master Plan. Prepared by Comprehensive Environmental Inc. (CEI), 1998.*
- *Conservation, Recreation and Open Space Plan (CROS Plan) Prepared by Orleans Planning Department, September 1999/2006*
- *Annual Cape Cod Commission Traffic Count Report*
- *Monomoy Capacity Study. Prepared by the Cape Cod Commission and Whiteman & Taintor, 1996.*
- *Cape Trends. Cape Cod Commission. 1998.*
- *Pleasant Bay Management Plan. April 1998.*

## **1.1 The Planning Process**

### **1.1.1 The Local Comprehensive Planning Committee**

The process for development and approval of an Official Town Plan is set forth in Chapter 9, Section 2 of the Orleans Home Rule Charter.

In 1988, a Long Range Planning Advisory Committee was appointed to oversee the preparation of an Official Town Plan, as required by the Charter. The committee sponsored a survey of Orleans residents that was used in the development of the new Plan, which was adopted in 1991 as the Official Town Plan.

The process of drafting the 1999 Orleans Comprehensive Plan took place in two distinct phases.

In 1993, the Board of Selectmen appointed a Local Comprehensive Planning Committee (LCPC). The original committee had ten members, many of whom represented other boards. This committee worked for four years developing a preliminary draft of all the chapters. With the help of the Planning Board, a plan was completed which included a summary of the main issues and priorities.

In 1998, the LCPC hired the planning consulting firm of Whiteman & Taintor to assist them in the task. The LCPC worked diligently to build upon the previous group's efforts and to tailor the Plan to meet the needs of the community. During this time, the Town hired a new Director of Planning and Community Development and an Assistant Town Planner, who were thoroughly involved in revising the draft Plan.

Throughout the process, the LCPC held open sessions and worked to ensure that the Plan accurately represented the views and opinions of the residents. Several forums and workshops were held to gather public input before the committee discussed final recommendations. The draft Plan was presented to the public in the form of a series of public workshops in the spring of 1999. Relevant chapters were sent to individual boards and committees for their input. The Board of Selectmen discussed each chapter in depth at its regular meetings. Working meetings were held on each chapter over the summer months of 1999 in order to incorporate opinions expressed by residents and members of other Town committees prior to assembling the Plan in its entirety. This second draft Plan was developed based on the input received and was presented at another series of public meetings to ensure that the Plan truly reflected the opinions of residents before the final version was published.

The Plan was adopted by the Town Meeting in December 1999. Upon review by the Cape Cod Commission, several amendments were requested in order for the Plan to be certified as consistent with the Regional Policy Plan. The amended Plan was returned to the Town Meeting and approved in May 2001.

In 2005 and 2006 the Planning Board began an effort to update data and action items throughout the plan. Over the period of 16 months at regularly scheduled public meetings the Planning Board and Planning Department reviewed each chapter independently. This 5-year update was intended to incorporate current data to ensure that the Plan remains a viable reference and guidance document for the appropriate and orderly development of the town. Minor changes to the Action items were made, and completed Actions have been moved to an appendix.

### 1.1.2 Public Participation

A three-pronged approach was employed to solicit public input to be used as the basis of the Plan.

#### Outreach Meetings

The LCPC members listened to all known civic, public and private organizations in town. The LCPC requested time on agendas to meet and explain the Plan and to ask for input. The

completed first draft was made widely available in town. Input was sought from diverse organizations such as the Orleans Citizens Forum, Orleans Taxpayers Association, and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as Town boards and committees to review relevant information. A wide range of comments was received, which the LCPC considered as the Plan was drafted. Well-attended meetings were then conducted to ensure that the Plan represented the views of citizens.

## Public Opinion Survey

LCPC members prepared a public opinion survey (henceforth called the Town Survey) that contained 28 questions, 3 questions on each of the elements of the draft Plan. A professional research analyst was consulted during each step of the survey process. This brought professionalism to the survey process and increased the reliability of the results. In June 1994, 5,719 surveys were mailed to every resident and taxpayer. The survey received a 40% response rate with 2,299 surveys returned. A full copy of the results is included in the Appendices. The survey results were used by the LCPC to provide direction for the Plan and to develop appropriate recommendations.

In 2005, a similar survey was sent again to all residents and taxpayers. The response rate was 24%, with a total of 1,237 surveys returned.

## Open Workshops

The third approach used to obtain public input was a series of Open House/Workshops held on each chapter of the Plan. The workshops varied in technique but each provided an opportunity to present information and receive feedback from participants. Consensus-building techniques, such as role playing, discussion groups and even a quiz show, were used to create a relaxed, friendly environment for people to freely express their hopes, fears and aspirations for the future of Orleans. Attendance at the workshops varied from 12 to nearly 200 participants. Considerable effort was made to announce the workshops in advance in order to increase attendance. A month before each workshop, flyers and press releases in the local newspaper, radio stations and Cable TV, were distributed to announce the events. Memos were sent to all boards, committees and departments to invite all local officials and employees of the Town to join in the planning process.

A final workshop on the Village Center was held in December 1998. It was felt that the Village Center was a focal point for many of the issues of concern in the town. Nearly 200 residents and business owners attended the workshop. Topics of discussion included traffic, managed growth, community activities, and protection of the environmental resources. Strong support for a vibrant, attractive shopping area was also expressed. Many of the opinions were incorporated into the Plan.

The LCPC relied upon the comments from the workshop series, the survey results and outreach comments to guide them as the Plan began to take shape. Minutes that summarize all public meetings of the LCPC are on record with the Town Clerk.

### 1.1.3 Plan Organization

The Plan is organized into nine primary chapters. In addition, there is a Background section at the beginning of the Plan which provides an overview of Orleans' development and population trends. The next section provides a Vision Statement to reflect what the Local Comprehensive Plan is intended to achieve. The goals and policies of the Town are presented for each chapter to be used to guide decision making. For the purposes of this Plan and its use in coming years, the terms "goals", "policies", and "implementation" should be used as follows:

- *Goal:* A statement that defines the broad direction the Town of Orleans wishes to pursue.
- *Policy:* A statement defining the Town's position and parameters for decision making.
- *Implementation:* A specific action to be taken to achieve a stated goal.

Each major topic chapter contains an Overview, Inventory, Analysis and Implementation program section. The overview section introduces the topic. Inventory section describes the current situation and recent history, while the Analysis section identifies known and projected issues relating to the chapter's major topic and proposes possible solutions. Any statement within the Inventory or Analysis sections that directly relates to a recommended action in the Implementation Program is followed by a two-letter prefix and number in parentheses.

The Implementation Program section identifies actions recommended to address specific issues, together with estimated time and required resources, and assigns lead agencies for implementation of the action. Action recommendations are provided at the end of each chapter as well as in the Implementation Program at the end of the document.

The Plan describes many of the activities that will need to be undertaken by the Town over the next 20 years. While it would be desirable to be able to complete all of the actions of this plan, it must be recognized that completing the actions will in many cases require approval by Town Meeting voters and/or require substantial costs to be funded. Adoption of this plan does not in of itself create any new bylaws or obligate spending. Public decisions will still be needed to set priorities, especially on costly items that are recommended for action in a similar time frame. Budgeting for capital improvements and other high cost items should be in an amount that is consistent with the current overall fiscal situation and requirements of the Town, and with other goals of this plan.

Completion times included in the plan have been projected and have been described as near-term, mid-term, and far-term. Upon approval of this plan, it will be the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen to work with the Town Administrator to develop a more concise schedule for implementation. Such a schedule should be based on the goals and priorities of the Town, needs in Town departments, and fiscal responsibility

In order to place the implementation actions of the Plan in a workable context for comparative analysis, a two-element measure has been devised. Each implementation action is assigned a completion time and a required resources value, defined as follows:

- **Completion Time** - The time by which the recommended action should be taken. Times are expressed as near-term (within 3 fiscal years), mid-term (4-7 fiscal years) and long term (8 fiscal years or more).
- **Required Resource** - a value representing a composite of relevant resource factors estimated to be required to complete the implementation action. Relevant Required Resource factors include:
  - Work time;
  - Complexity;
  - Estimated cost.
  - A blend of resource factors or types appropriate to each implementation action that allows meaningful comparability between them. Note that under this definition of resources needed to complete an implementation action, dollar cost is not the sole determinant; in some cases where significant resources are required there may be minimal or no dollar costs involved. Relative values for Required Resources are:
    - High (H)
    - Medium (M)
    - Low (L)

The source of all factual material is given throughout the Plan. The most contemporary source materials available were used wherever appropriate. However, when complete data sets were not available for comparison purposes, the Plan relied on 2000 US Census data. This was especially true in the Affordable Housing chapter where housing data is related to incomes.

## 1.2 Consistency with the Regional Policy Plan

In 1990, following the creation of the Cape Cod Commission, the Commission developed the County's Regional Policy Plan (RPP). The RPP outlines a strategy for protecting the Cape's natural resources, balancing economic growth and providing adequate capital facilities. The RPP is both a planning and a regulatory document. The primary purpose of the RPP is to outline a coherent set of planning policies and objectives to guide development on the Cape and protect its resources.

The development of the Local Comprehensive Plan is voluntary. The Plan will be submitted to the Commission for review and certification as being consistent with the Regional Policy Plan.

It is the intent of the Plan to set forth policies and recommendations that are substantially consistent with those of the Regional Policy Plan. However, there are instances where the policies of the RPP may not be appropriate to Orleans and were therefore omitted. In cases of Developments of Regional Impact (DRI), the Commission requires a lengthy and thorough review before approving a project. Orleans will continue to rely on the expertise of Commission staff in these matters. Minimum Performance Standards (MPS) that relate to DRIs are included in this Plan by Reference.