

TOWN OF CRANBERRY ISLES – COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

May 2010

We are pleased to report that the Town of Cranberry Isles has a new Comprehensive Plan ready for public hearing and vote. This is a significant accomplishment and long overdue, as our last plan was adopted in 1982!

The PUBLIC HEARING will be held on Friday, June 18 (2010) at 5:30 PM at the Islesford Dock Restaurant (LCI). Arrangements are being made for transportation to and from Great Cranberry. We encourage all community members to attend. The VOTE on the plan will be held at a special town meeting, most likely in early September 2010.

Throughout the process of developing the plan, draft documents and other information have been made publicly available. The steering committee has held several workshops, posted their contact information, and provided email communication from this town website to elicit public response and input.

A comprehensive plan will benefit the town in many ways. We will have a resource with a big-picture, long-term view to help us prioritize resources (time and money) and track progress on our most urgent issues. We will have the groundwork in place should we choose to make changes to town ordinances or policies. Our grant applications will be viewed more favorably. In addition, the plan affirms and supports our community values and vision for our future. But above all those benefits lies the plan's ultimate purpose: to help us preserve what we cherish most about our community and strengthen our commitment to positive change.

(Vision Statement: page 5, item 2.)

We remind you that the plan is an advisory document. A vote to approve the plan at the special town meeting will not change any regulations, ordinances, policies or procedures currently in place. Changing any of these requires a separate vote of adoption at a town meeting after the comprehensive plan itself has been approved by the voters. On another note, due to the scope of this project, the state and municipal requirements involved, and the realities of volunteer resources, it was not possible to continually update the data in the earlier sections and ever get a complete plan to the voters. The analysis and recommendations, however, are current and relevant. We recognize that any plan should be assessed and re-aligned on a regular basis to reflect changes in both achievements and challenges over time.

Following is a SUMMARY of the plan. A copy of the COMPLETE proposed plan is available for public inspection at the town office. Copies are also available for viewing and circulation at the two libraries (GCI and LCI).

The complete document (no maps) is also posted on the town website: www.cranberryisles-me.gov. The same, as well as the maps, are available at: <http://www.hpcme.org/cranberryisles/index.htm>.

TCI-Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

TOWN OF CRANBERRY ISLES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Cranberry Isles comprehensive plan is an advisory document. It reflects the desired future of the town based on what residents have expressed at public meetings, informal research/outreach, and through a public opinion survey. Overall, it identifies current issues and opportunities that the town faces and discusses what is expected to happen within the next five to ten years.

The plan consists of two major parts. The *Inventory and Analysis* discusses recent trends in the town and projects what may happen in the future. While it discusses some options for the town to consider, **these are not recommendations**. Rather, this section is a reference document that reflects conditions in the town **as of May 2008**. Since all towns change rapidly, some of the information in this section may be out of date by the time the plan is adopted. This is especially the case for the public opinion survey results and data obtained from state and federal sources.

The second part is the *Goals, Policies, Implementation Strategies* (which opens with the *Vision Statement*) and the *Future Land Use Plan*. This section sets specific recommendations for the future of the town. These recommendations are followed by detailed implementation strategies that indicate who will do what and when. The *Future Land Use Plan* presents a vision of how the town should grow.

SUMMARY: INVENTORY & ANALYSIS *(Completed May 2008)*

1. Priority Issues

The community of Cranberry Isles that has been known by generations of year-round and seasonal residents is changing. Perhaps the most pressing issue is that the town risks losing its identity as a year-round community. It is difficult for younger families to move to or remain on the islands. They face challenges due to the high cost of housing, a ferry schedule that makes commuting to jobs on the mainland difficult and, for those who are unable to undertake intense physical labor, few well-paying job opportunities. Limited enrollment poses ongoing challenges to maintaining island schools.

2. Key Findings and Issues

A. Population

Cranberry Isles is one of the few towns in Hancock County to lose year-round population between 1990 and 2000. It has the fifth highest median age in the county, and the relatively small number of residents in the 18-44 age range is an ongoing concern. The town's population increases about nine-fold in the summer. Only Islesford and Great Cranberry normally have a year-round population. Preservation of the year-round community is perhaps the major population issue facing the town. A related issue is ensuring that the town has the capacity to absorb its increasing seasonal population.

B. Economy

In 2000, Cranberry Isles had a self-employment rate of 53 percent compared to a 16 percent rate for Hancock County. While the county labor force increased by 19 percent between 1990 and 2000, the labor force for Cranberry Isles decreased by 22 percent (from 79 persons to 62). Approximately 25 people commute from the mainland to the islands year-round. There is also some commuting in the other direction. The ferry service schedule makes commuting difficult.

Major sources of employment on the islands are lobster fishing and boat building. The lobster sector has been vulnerable historically, and a marked decrease in harvests and/or increase in operating costs would have a major impact on the town's economy. There is also employment in building construction, maintenance and property caretaking. Employment opportunities increase in the summer when seasonal businesses are operating. The introduction of high-speed Internet service has facilitated telecommuting. This sector is likely to increase in the next few years.

C. Housing

The number of year-round homes in town decreased between 1990 and 2000, while the number of seasonal homes increased. As of 2000, about 80 percent of the homes in town were seasonal homes. Housing values are almost double the county median while incomes are only 9 percent above county levels. This means that affordable housing is a serious need in town. The town has taken some initial steps to address affordable housing but further efforts are needed. The town is projected to have 396 dwelling units (year-round and seasonal) by 2020 compared to 344 in 2000.

D. Transportation

The town roadway system consists of about six and a half miles of paved and gravel roads on Great Cranberry and Islesford. There is relatively little traffic and speed limits are low. However, heavy loads and equipment have caused road deterioration and damage. Both islands have experienced an increasing number of vehicles, causing congestion issues and safety concerns in the parking areas and on the roadways. Parking facilities (both on-island and off-island) are at or near capacity. Expansion options and/or new policies relating to parking should be considered to meet future needs based on the projected increase in demand during the summer months.

Ferry service is a critical component of the Cranberry Isles' transportation systems. The reduced schedule during the off-season and winter months does not accommodate daily commuting for residents to either jobs or schools on the mainland. This is a major transportation issue that has a significant impact on the town's population and economy. A Transportation Committee was formed in 2008 to make recommendations regarding the expansion of year-round ferry service.

E. Public Facilities and Services

Unlike many other small towns that can centralize operations, Cranberry Isles is a town of five islands, and often there is a need for duplicate facilities and services on individual islands, adding considerably to the per capita cost. Cranberry Isles has made many recent improvements in public facilities and services, but some challenges remain. Town staff has increased, while the administrative offices operate in a leased building that has limited potential for expansion. The

net amount of solid waste being barged from the town's two transfer stations is increasing. Meanwhile more attention is being paid to improving sorting and to increasing recycling capacity. Fire protection and emergency response on the islands faces special challenges. This has become a larger issue in recent years due to reduced availability and the rising cost of fire insurance. The supervision and maintenance of the town's marine infrastructure, public roadways and parking facilities has become more demanding and expensive.

A major challenge facing the Cranberry Isles school system is sustaining the K-8 schools. The Islesford School had 13 students during the 2007-2008 school year. The Longfellow School on Great Cranberry has not had students since 2000. Student enrollment has ranged from 9 to 16 over the past ten years. Attracting and retaining young families as year-round residents, as well as expanding year-round ferry service, are key in achieving sustainable enrollment figures.

F. Recreation

The schools, town fields, and community organizations offer an assortment of outdoor and indoor recreation facilities. There are a variety of social events and programs for all ages year-round. About 19 percent of the total land area of 2,045 acres of the five major islands is in some form of protected open space. Perhaps the major recreation issue facing the town is maintaining public access to the shore. Protecting open areas is also an ongoing concern.

G. Marine Resources

The Town's marine resources are central to the prosperity, values, and quality of life in this island community. The harbors and harbor facilities serve as critical public gateways between the islands within the town and between the islands and the mainland. The two most predominant industries in town, lobster fishing and boat building, are marine dependent.

With summer visitation on the rise, the town is likely to face increased demands on its marine facilities and resources. It is important to ensure that not only the high quality of the surrounding marine waters remains protected from contamination, but also that harbor facilities are maintained at a high level and that the water dependent use zoning standards are adequate and enforced.

H. Water Resources

The primary water resource issue facing Cranberry Isles is the adequacy of groundwater supplies. Continued home building and increased per capita use could threaten the water table and supplies to private homes. There is also the threat of contamination from failing septic systems, abandoned motor vehicles, marine-related activities, and other sources. There is a great deal of uncertainty about the sources, quantity, and quality of the groundwater available on the islands; additional research is needed to provide a basis for possible additional regulation.

I. Natural Resources

The town hosts bald eagle habitats on both Great Cranberry and Islesford. There are also several areas of waterfowl and shorebird habitat. The mudflats, aquatic beds and eelgrass are also important habitat areas. The town also has countless scenic views. Natural resource issues include control of the deer and mosquito populations and more general threats to the islands' fragile environment.

J. Agricultural and Forest Resources

There is virtually no large-scale commercial agricultural activity on the islands and very limited forestry. No land is held as either the farm or tree growth areas for purposes of taxation. The major forestry issue in town is the threat of forest fires, which can spread rapidly in an island environment. Another issue is the poor condition of many forested areas due to even-aged stands, limited management and deer browsing.

K. Historical and Archaeological Resources

The town has twelve known prehistoric archaeological sites, which are all Native American shell middens. Only three buildings are presently on the National Register of Historic Places. Given the islands rich history and many buildings of interest, it is likely that other sites would be eligible for Register listing.

L. Existing Land Use

With five primary islands, Cranberry Isles faces a unique set of land development challenges. Due to generally poor soils and its dependence on individual septic systems for waste disposal, the town has a very limited capacity to absorb new development. Also, significant acreage is constrained from future development through deed restrictions and conservation easements. At the same time, it has become a popular place for second homes, which now outnumber year-round homes by nearly a three to one margin.

M. Fiscal Capacity

Over the ten-year period 1998 to 2007, the Cranberry Isles' property tax commitment increased by 162 percent while the state equalized valuation increased 159 percent. This means valuations have nearly kept pace with revenue raised through local real and personal property tax. There has been relatively moderate property development over this period, so the increase in valuation is largely attributable to the real estate market. Therefore, even though the tax rate over this same ten-year period has been relatively stable, most property owners experienced significantly higher property tax bills. About 86 percent of local revenue in 2007 came from the property tax. State support for the schools amounted to about 1.7 percent of the total school budget.

While all categories of expenditures increased from 2000 to 2007, the most significant change was in debt service. The town faces several potential capital projects that involve assuming more indebtedness and/or securing grant funds.

3. Regional Issues

As an island community, Cranberry Isles is affected by what happens on nearby mainland communities. Traffic congestion is a major issue since it makes it harder for islanders to reach various parts of the region and travel delays increase the risk of missing ferry connections. Island families are also dependent on the mainland for high school education. Sustaining the area economy and protecting marine resources both require a regional approach.

SUMMARY: GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Completed November 2009

1. Purpose

The *Goals and Objectives* section includes general statements for the town's future, presented by categories that correlate to the Inventory and Analysis chapters. Planning is an ongoing process and periodic updating of these goals will be required to keep them relevant.

2. Vision Statement

Cranberry Isles aims to grow and prosper while fostering its values and unique character as an island community. The town is committed to sustaining a balance between a viable year-round and seasonal community and to supporting the traditional island way of life. This will involve ensuring adequate and diverse year-round job opportunities and housing options as well as developing and/or improving the public services, facilities and transportation system necessary to support a viable year-round community. It will also require protecting the town's natural resources, open space, and remote areas to ensure the quality of island life is preserved, the supply of fresh water is sufficient, and the fishing community and other marine-dependent sectors remain strong. The town is committed to realizing this vision with an ethic of social responsibility and in a manner that contributes to the environmental sustainability of the islands.

3. Category-Specific Goals

A. Population

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles is committed to supporting a strong year-round population, maintaining a population composed of all age groups, and sustaining its seasonal population.

Goals:

1. Stabilize and grow the number of year-round residents in the Cranberry Isles, while achieving a healthy balance with the seasonal population.
2. Increase the number/percentage of year-round residents in the 18-44 age group (those of prime child-bearing age).
3. Address the needs of the elderly so that they are more likely to remain in residency on the islands.
4. Seek out information, ideas, and resources from other island communities and non-profit groups that support sustaining the year-round population.

B. Economy

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to grow its economy, support the growth of year-round jobs, and make it possible for residents to access employment off-island. It also seeks to preserve its seasonal sources of employment and to encourage home-based businesses, micro-businesses and local entrepreneurial activities.

Goals:

1. Increase the number of year-round and seasonal jobs on the Cranberry Isles.
2. Increase the balance and diversification of employment sectors represented in the Cranberry Isles.

C. Housing

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to have a diversity of safe, energy-efficient and sustainable housing stock that provides the opportunity for people of all income levels and ages to live in the town year-round. The goal is to have 10 percent of new housing affordable to households earning 120 percent or less of the county-median income and for new housing to be built utilizing modern technologies for energy efficiency.

Goals:

1. Maintain adequate housing stock to support the year-round community.
2. Increase opportunities for affordable housing, particularly for young adults and families wanting to live year-round in the Cranberry Isles.
3. Ensure that new housing and other new development will not threaten the long-term viability of water quality and supply on the islands.

D. Transportation

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to have a transportation system that promotes the cost-effective, energy-efficient, safe and efficient movement of goods, people and services between the islands and to/from the mainland. The town also seeks to regulate the quantity and condition of motor vehicles operating on the islands.

Goals:

1. Improve ferry service between the islands and from the islands to the mainland to enable off-island employment and inter-island movement year round.
2. Work to reduce the number and use of motorized vehicles on the islands and beyond. Promote safe and environmentally sound alternatives.
3. Ensure that vehicles operating on town roads meet noise, safety and emission regulations and have minimal impact on the environment.
4. Continue to undertake measures to ensure adequate and environmentally sound parking, both on the islands and at mainland docking facilities.
5. Promote safe and efficient operation of bicycles.

E. Public Facilities and Services

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to maintain and improve town facilities and services in a cost-efficient and sustainable manner that anticipates the growth and development of the town while also being fiscally responsible and mindful of the impact on property taxes.

Goals:

1. Maintain town infrastructure, including piers, floats, ramps, and roads at a safe and effective level
2. Town government and administration: Cranberry Isles aims to maintain and, if necessary, expand measures that support a responsible, efficient and effective town government.
3. Solid waste and recycling: The plan recommends that it be town policy to maintain and expand its comprehensive recycling and solid waste management program with emphasis on environmental sustainability.

4. Fire protection and ambulance service: It is town policy to provide residents with an adequate level of fire protection, ambulance and other emergency-related services. Progress toward this goal shall be measured in part by achieving a favorable Insurance Services Office fire insurance rating.
5. Police Protection: The plan recommends that current police protection arrangements continue and that the select board work with the County Sheriff's Department and the Maine State Police to improve response time to emergencies.
6. Education: The plan views the island schools as the most essential institution of island life. The plan supports sustaining a strong elementary school education program on both primary islands and maintaining close links with complementary education and extra-curricular activities on nearby mainland towns.
7. Public Works: The plan supports continuation of current public works arrangements and the regular replacement of capital equipment needed for the safe and efficient operation of maintenance and related functions.
8. Postal Service: The plan supports retention of post offices on both primary islands.

F. Recreation

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles wishes to provide a range of recreation programs and facilities that recognize the limitations of the municipal budget. It also aims to ensure that there is adequate, protected open space in town for the enjoyment of all residents.

Goals:

1. Open Space: Protect open spaces and scenic beauty of the area for continued recreational use and enjoyment.
2. Public Access: The plan supports retaining current public access points to the shore and assessing if new points are needed.
3. Town Recreational Facilities: The plan supports measures to ensure the protection and development of town recreational facilities for the use and enjoyment of all.

G. Marine Resources

Summary of Goals: As an island community, protection and enhancement of Cranberry Isles marine resources is essential to maintaining the community's way of life. This includes practicing responsible environmental stewardship in all town affairs, particularly with regard to marine resources. The town wishes to manage its marine resources in a manner that ensures that they can be used and enjoyed by all residents and taxpayers while also protected from any threats to their long-term viability. Preservation of the marine environment and fishing community are among the town's top priorities.

Goals:

1. Minimize any threats to marine water quality and upgrade current conditions in the town's harbors.
2. Actively preserve the working waterfront.

H. Water Resources

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to maintain and, where needed, restore the quality of its ground and surface water resources in a manner that respects the fragile nature of its water supply.

Goals:

1. Protect the quality and quantity of fresh water on the islands to ensure long-term support of residential and commercial uses.
2. Ensure that public policy and infrastructure improvements respect and protect the quality of wetland and marsh areas on the islands.
3. Ensure that road construction/repair and culvert installation/replacement does not interfere with natural drainage patterns of marsh and wetland areas on the islands.
4. Ensure that future development protects the integrity and health of marsh areas on the islands; review current Resource Protection zoning and ensure that it is consistent with DEP guidelines.
5. Require that all subdivision and site plan review applicants demonstrate that their developments will not have an adverse off-site impact on groundwater quality and quantity. The planning board will be given the authority to require a groundwater impact study from the applicant and the authority to require that this study be reviewed by a second consultant of the board's choosing at the applicant's expense.
6. Promote water conservation measures as needed through public education and design of town facilities.

I. Natural Resources

Summary of Goals: Recognizing their integral and pivotal role in the overall quality of island life and economic base, the plan strongly supports the protection and enhancement of the town's natural and scenic resources. The plan also recognizes many threats to the future of the islands' natural resources, including the loss of open space due to unplanned growth, local sources of contamination, regional air and water pollution, and the effects of global climate change.

Goals:

1. Continue all town policies that protect the natural environment of the town including recycling, reductions in energy use, use of sustainable energy sources, incentives for sustainable building practices, etc
2. Establish local ordinances and policies regarding the management and protection of all natural resources in town.
3. Periodically update the inventory of local wildlife, including flora and fauna, and note any threatened or endangered species; ensure that they enjoy adequate protection by relevant state, federal, and local laws.
4. Include concentrations of rare natural features in areas designated as rural in the future land use plan.
5. The plan recommends that the town expand its mosquito control measures in a manner that protects the natural environment and ecosystems.

6. Continue to allow hunting on the islands in order to keep the deer population under control.
7. Amend the subdivision and site plan review standards to require applications to include a natural resource assessment depicting all resources present on the development plans.

J. Agricultural and Forest Resources

Summary of Goals: In recognition of their importance as open space and a core feature of the town's rural character, the plan supports the preservation and enhancement of Cranberry Isles' limited forest resources. The plan also supports the development of farmers markets, farms, kitchen gardens and other resources that provide locally grown food. The plan recommends the following measures to preserve and protect the town's forested areas:

Goals:

1. Encourage management practices that promote the health of island forests and reduce fire danger, such as removing dead growth and periodic thinning.
2. Encourage the use of fire breaks for fire management and view potential.
3. Work with state forestry officials to develop environmentally sound measures to control pests and disease that threaten trees.
4. Ensure that timber harvesting occurs in a manner that minimizes erosion and sedimentation.
5. Ensure that some large (at least 10 acres) parcels of forested land are designated as rural areas in the future land use plan.
6. Ensure stability of shore areas and banks through consistent enforcement of regulations pertaining to the removal of trees.

K. Historic and Archaeological Resources

Summary of Goals: In recognition of their importance to the town's historic character, Cranberry Isles seeks to protect and enhance its historic and archaeological resources. The plan recommends that this be accomplished through support of the following measures:

Goals:

1. Protect the shell middens on Fish Point, Great Cranberry Island and at other locations.
2. Protect the historical town cemeteries.
3. Encourage the historical societies to work with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to conduct a comprehensive survey of historic resources in town to identify potential structures and sites that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and work with interested property owners to have their properties voluntarily placed on the Register.
4. After completion of the survey, prepare a map showing key historic and pre-historic sites. This map shall serve as reference material for the planning board as it reviews development proposals to assure it is aware of all potential historical sites.

L. Land Use

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to preserve its current land use pattern while allowing opportunity for future growth in a manner that respects the environmental carrying capacity of the islands that comprise the town. The plan seeks to direct future growth and development with consideration of recent state and other scientific forecasts about environmental changes that could significantly impact land characteristics. The plan further recommends that the town enact town-wide land use standards and revise its site plan review and subdivision standards accordingly.

Goals:

1. Designate Village (Growth) Areas: In order to ensure adequate opportunities for families to build homes in the town, the plan recommends that a portion of the town be designated as an area in which relatively high densities would be allowed.
2. Designate Rural Areas: The plan recommends that the remaining inland portions (i.e. not subject to shoreland zoning) of the town be designated as rural areas, primarily for lower density rural type uses as described in the future land use plan.
3. Enact Town-Wide Land Use Standards: The plan recommends that the town enact inland land use standards based on the proposal contained in the future land use plan.
4. Revise Shoreland Zoning Standards: The plan recommends that the town update its shoreland zoning standards to reflect the latest DEP guidelines, retain a mixture of land uses in the shoreland zone, ensure that water-dependent uses are protected from conversion to other uses, and reflect new proposed inland zoning provisions.
5. Revise site plan review and subdivision ordinance provisions to reflect new inland land use standards.

M. Fiscal Capacity

Summary of Goals: Cranberry Isles seeks to promote fiscally sound development and policies that encourage long-term fiscal planning and the sharing of services with adjoining mainland towns whenever proven practical. Specific fiscal policies are divided into two categories: alternative funding sources and fiscal planning.

1. Alternative Funding Sources: In the interests of minimizing demands on the property tax base, the plan recommends that the town undertake or continue to undertake measures to develop and/or expand other funding sources.
2. Fiscal Planning: The plan recommends measures to promote long term fiscal planning in the hopes of mitigating the rate of future property tax increases.

N. CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

The capital investment plan (CInP) summarizes major capital expenditures that the town anticipates undertaking and is the first step in a capital improvement plan. Like the rest of the comprehensive plan, the CInP is advisory in nature. The *Summary of Anticipated Capital Expenditures, 2009-2014* (Table II.1) can be found on page 130 of the complete plan document.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

BACKGROUND:

The future land use (FLU) plan must meet the following state goal if the entire comprehensive plan is to be deemed consistent with state review standards: “To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state’s rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.”

In developing this FLU, the steering committee weighed various options within the context of the town’s goals and vision for the future. They recognized the linkage between the prospect of a thriving year-round community and the cost of housing (land). At the same time, they recognized the desire to preserve the islands’ rural character and protect its natural resources for future generations. To strike a balance and achieve both of these potentially competing tracks, the FLU proposes dividing the inland area into two distinct zones, the village area and the rural area.

The growth area includes the village zone and three shoreland zones: Business, Mixed Residential, and Water Dependent/Commercial Use. These shoreland zones are included in the growth area for purposes of capital investment. The town intends to direct a minimum of 75% of its capital investment in the growth area. By including these shoreland zones in the growth area, the town’s capital investment in those zones can be applied to the goal.

The specific standards proposed in the FLU represent a compromise that evolved from debate within the committee and community input. For some, they are too strong – for others, not strong enough. The local tradition of liberal property owner rights was acknowledged as an underlying value to protect. The committee settled on a position that supports public safety (fire, vehicular accidents), good neighbor relations, and environmentally sound practices while minimizing the impact on property owners.

SUMMARY:

1. Purpose

The purpose of the future land use plan is to support the town’s goals and to advance the vision of what Cranberry Isles residents want their town to be in the future. It aims to achieve a balance between the wishes of residents to preserve the rural character and very fragile nature of the islands while also supporting opportunities for future growth and development. While this section makes many recommendations on changes to land use development policies, *any change to town land use regulations requires a separate vote of adoption at a town meeting* after the plan itself has been approved by voters.

2. Land Needed for Future Development

It is important to base the future land use plan on an estimate of how much land will be needed for various uses. While there is no way to project precisely the acreage that will be developed, some general estimates can be made. These are based both on a review of development trends and observations by committee members and residents. The plan anticipates modest growth of the year-round population to continue. Further seasonal home development is also likely. To allow for some unanticipated growth, a total of 60 new homes or three a year will be used for

planning purposes here. This projection represents the highest growth scenario; a much slower rate is presently expected.

The above projection represents a low level of development when compared to most adjoining mainland towns. But in context of Cranberry Isles' total acreage available and suitable for development, it represents a significant change in land use. This plan seeks to support growth while preserving the town's overall rural character, maintaining a cost-effective municipal infrastructure, and minimizing adverse impacts of future development on the town's fragile environment. The water table, soil conditions, wetlands, and fire and safety issues are all factors that must be considered in planning for growth and development.

3. Criteria for Growth and Rural Areas

Under Maine's *Growth Management Act*, towns must normally designate growth and rural areas. In the case of a town such as the Cranberry Isles that has a very low growth rate and a limited ability to absorb further development, the more appropriate distinction might be between village and rural. Growth would be encouraged to occur primarily in the village areas and certain shoreland zones as specified below. There are a number of factors that should be considered in determining growth and rural areas. The most relevant factors are presented below.

a. Soils

Most soils in Cranberry Isles are poor. About 80 percent of the soils are rated as having a very low potential for low density development based on their potential to support a septic system. There are minor concentrations of good soils on both Great Cranberry and Islesford.

b. Roads and infrastructure

Cranberry Isles has a limited road system and there is no public sewer or publicly owned water system. Fire and rescue vehicles can have trouble in the winter and spring accessing homes on the narrow and winding roads. Scheduled boat service is another important part of the infrastructure.

c. Existing developed areas

There are concentrations of homes along the main roads on both major islands. In several cases these areas coincide with the areas of better soils. There are also concentrations of homes along the shore. Due to access and soil conditions the latter areas are less suitable for growth. However, demand for shorefront property is likely to remain high.

a. Areas held in protective status

A significant portion of land is bound by deed restrictions or conservation easements. All of Baker and Bear is subject to National Park Service restrictions. Approximately 75 percent of Sutton's and 20 percent of Great Cranberry's acreage is held in conservation easements. Although not permanently binding, about 20 percent of the total acreage on Islesford is enrolled in the state's open space program.

b. Areas of natural resource importance and environmental fragility

The entire town constitutes a fragile environmental system. Bear, Sutton and Baker Islands due to their small size and soils are particularly vulnerable. There are also substantial portions of the two primary islands that have limited suitability for development, including the Heath on Great Cranberry and the Marsh on Islesford as well as other wetlands. There

are also high-value habitats that have been identified by the Beginning with Habitat Program and the Maine Natural Areas Program.

c. Groundwater supply

The islands' carrying capacity in terms of groundwater supply is unclear. Until conclusive results from further study are available, the plan recommends that the total amount of impervious surface area be limited to 25 percent of an island's total land area to ensure no reduction in the groundwater recharge. Specific impervious surface ratios are recommended for the village and rural areas.

4. General Land Use Standards [Refer to following chart for overview/comparison]

The following section proposes how the town can grow and prosper while also preserving its rural island character and minimizing restrictions on property rights. These are *recommended* standards that require a town meeting vote separate from the vote of adoption for the comprehensive plan in order to be enacted. *They apply to new or expanded uses only. All existing uses and lots would be grandfathered.* All uses would be subject to performance standards to ensure that neighboring properties are not adversely affected by uses.

The intended purpose of the following recommended standards is to advance community goals relating to natural resources and public safety. For instance, minimum lot sizes and maximum impervious surface areas are recommended to preserve an overall rural character, to protect natural resources, and to ensure a healthy water table. Setbacks and height restrictions are recommended to ensure public safety, support fire and rescue efforts, and promote cooperative neighbor relations. To ensure access by fire-fighting equipment, the habitable portion of structures in all zones would have a height restriction of 35 feet. This height restriction does not apply to non-habitable structures, such as steeples and communication and wind generator towers.

a. The Villages (Growth Area)

The plan recommends that land use standards allow the current mixed uses to continue in the village areas on Great Cranberry and Islesford not subject to shoreland zoning. Allowed uses would include single family, two-family, and multi-family residential and small-scale commercial. Contingent upon the provision of adequate water supply and waste water disposal arrangements, there would be a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet per unit for any new single family or commercial development. Duplexes (two residential units in one building) would also be subject to the 20,000 square feet minimum lot size. A larger lot size would be required when necessary to meet state waste water disposal requirements. Multifamily uses would be allowed up to four apartment units per building. A minimum lot size of one acre would be required for multifamily buildings. The plan recommends that approval for multifamily developments be contingent upon deed restrictions requiring at least one of the units be rented or sold to persons demonstrated to have a need for affordable housing. These provisions would need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that they were consistent with the town's goals and objectives for affordable housing and are enforceable.

A good portion of the growth areas are adjacent to vulnerable natural resources such as coastal wetlands and shorebird, tidal wading bird, and waterfowl habitats. Given the small size of the islands and their many natural features, this adjacency is practically unavoidable. Therefore, in order to minimize environmental impacts, it is crucial that all

the minimum setback, buffer, stormwater runoff and erosion control standards required under state mandated minimum shoreland zoning and/or recommended in this plan be strictly enforced. The plan recommends that all applications for subdivision and site plan review require the identification of all such natural resource features and that mitigation measures such as those outlined under the Natural Resource goals be deployed

b. The Working Waterfront

The plan recommends that the current Water Dependent Commercial/Residential District be continued and strengthened to ensure that it meets its intended purpose. Under this zoning, priority is given to water dependent uses. While single family uses are allowed subject to planning board permit, duplexes and multi-family uses are allowed only as part of a mixed use structure where the principal use is marine commercial in nature.

d. Other Shorefront Areas

The plan recommends that the other shoreland zones continue largely as they are today. These zones include the Resource Protection, Mixed Residential, Business, and Low Density Residential districts. The current provisions offer adequate protection of shoreland areas. It is important to assure that the shoreland standards remain consistent with the latest DEP minimal guidelines.

e. Rural Areas

The rest of the town would be designated rural. The minimum lot size for this area would be one acre. Allowed uses would be single family homes and accessory apartments. Agricultural and home-based occupations would also be allowed as would storage facilities such as barns and sheds. Other commercial uses would not be permitted unless they were natural resource-based such as, but not limited to, wood product operations, on-island grown food processing and state licensed composting operations. Vegetative buffers would be required for such operations to protect adjoining uses. The same natural resource mitigation measures discussed in growth areas would also apply here.

The maps may be viewed at the town office or online at Hancock Country Planning Commission website in their land use section: <http://www.hpcme.org/cranberryisles/index.htm>

Future Land Use Plan FAQ's:

If we vote to adopt this plan, is it law?

No. This plan is an advisory document that makes recommendations on changes to land use policies. Any change to town land use regulations requires the adoption of a new land use ordinance by the voters at a town meeting. When the state reviews a proposed land use ordinance, it will determine if the ordinance is consistent with the recommendations in the FLU. If deemed inconsistent, the ordinance may be subject to legal challenge but is not automatically deemed invalid until overturned by a court.

This plan is proposing that the inland area (area not within the shoreland zone) be divided into two zones (village and rural). Why?

The committee sought to strike a balance in meeting numerous community goals that relate to land use. On the one hand, affordable real estate needed to be available to sustain a diverse year-

round population and subdivision of larger lots could provide future potential. On the other, there was a desire to preserve the islands' rural character, retain adequate open space and scenic views, and be responsible stewards of our natural resources. Also, municipal efficiencies and cost savings relating to capital investment and maintenance of infrastructure can be realized when growth is concentrated in a designated area.

Why does the growth area include the village area and three of the five shoreland zones?

By including these three shoreland zones (Business, Mixed Residential, and Water Dependent/Commercial), we can expand the growth area for purposes of calculating capital investment. This is important because, as an island community, a lot of our municipal expenses relate to marine infrastructure (piers, floats, ramps) within the shoreland zone, and we want to achieve a minimum of 75% of capital investment in the growth area. These three shoreland zones are still subject to the regulations specified under the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance (i.e. their regulations are unaffected by their inclusion in the growth area).

This plan is proposing higher land use standards for the inland areas than the state requires. Why?

The state sets very low minimum standards with the belief that communities should shape their own policies at the local level. The proposed standards, although new, are in many cases what a property owner would choose to do anyway. Those regarding lot sizes are to distinguish between the two areas (village vs. rural) and use. The standards proposed for setbacks, road frontage and structure height limits are primarily to promote public safety, but were also considered basic common sense. The impervious surface area ratios are primarily to ensure adequate re-charge of our water supply. In considering these standards, the committee considered examples in the community and posed the question "What would I want my neighbor to do?"

If I have a lot in the rural area that is less than the one acre minimum, does this mean I won't be able to build on it?

No, you will still be able to build. This lot will be grandfathered and will be considered a non-conforming lot. New construction will be subject to the other land use standards such as setbacks, height restrictions and impervious surface area coverage. If the lot does not have the minimum road frontage called for, again it will be grandfathered for that standard requirement.

Will there be any change in the planning board or appeals process?

No.

Does this plan change the state requirements for water or septic systems? For electric or plumbing code?

No.

Overview of recommended standards, and comparison with existing standards:

Recommended Lot Standards for Inland Areas (subject to separate town meeting vote)						
Village	Min Lot Size	Min Road Frontage	Front Yard Setback	Side & Rear Setback	Max Impervious Surface Ratio	Max Bldg Height
Single Family Residential	20,000 sq ft	75 ft	25 ft	15 ft	35%	35 ft
Two Family Residential	20,000 sq ft	75 ft	25 ft	15 ft	35%	35 ft
Commercial	20,000 sq ft	75 ft	25 ft	15 ft	50%	35 ft
Multi Family Residential (up to 4 units)	1 acre	100 ft	25 ft	15 ft	50%	35 ft
Rural						
Residential	1 acre	100 ft	50 ft	25 ft	25 %	35 ft
Commercial	1 acre	150 ft	50 ft	35 ft	25%	35 ft

Existing standards for inland areas (for lots not subject to subdivision review): 20,000 sq ft minimum lot size*; no frontage, setback, impervious surface area ratio or height restrictions apply.

* This is the state minimum lot size standard for lots not subject to subdivision review. A larger size may apply if needed for state-approved septic system design.

Existing Shoreland Standards ¹	Min Lot Size	Shore Frontage	Shore Setback	Road & Property Line Setback	Max Impervious Surface Ratio	Max Bldg Height
Business	40,000 sq ft	200 ft	75 ft	20/10 ft	70%	40 ft
Low Density Residential	2 acres	250 ft	75 ft	25/25 ft	20%	35 ft
Mixed Residential	1 acre	200 ft	75 ft	25/25 ft	20%	35 ft
Resource Protection	2 acres	200 ft	100 ft	25 ft	15%	35 ft
Water Dependent/ Commercial Use	varies	varies	varies	varies	70% for water dependent & mixed uses; 20% for residential uses	40 ft

1 acre = 43,560 square feet

¹ NOTE: This is a summary of the shoreland zoning restrictions and does not include various exceptions to these general standards. For details, please refer to the most recent version of the shoreland zoning ordinance available at the town office.