

The Hon. CHARLES O'CONNOR, of New York, America's most eminent jurist, says, "In my opinion, between has no equal in the world as a *cool and healthy summer resort*; and I shall probably make it my

HISTORICAL MAP OF NANTUCKET

Surveyed and Drawn by
THOMAS H. C. SPENCER, D.D.

1860

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

1619 The Island discovered by Bartholomew Gosnell, Captain of the ship Adventure, and named by him "New Netherland." It was first settled by the Dutch in 1619, and was called "Nantucket." It was first named "Nantucket" by the Dutch, and was first called "Nantucket" by the English.

1620 The first settlement was made by the Pilgrims, who landed on the island in 1620, and were called the "Pilgrims." They were the first to settle on the island, and they were the first to call it "Nantucket."

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EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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THE OLD COLONY LINE

IS THE

SHORTEST, QUICKEST, BEST,

AND

ONLY DIRECT ROUTE

BETWEEN

BOSTON or NEW YORK,

AND

NANTUCKET & MARTHA'S VINEYARD.

As a Sanitarium, this Island has probably no equal in this country. Many forms of Dyspepsia, Neuralgia, are speedily and permanently cured in its wonderful climate.



Chapter 7: A Healthy Community



Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association

As Nantucket has grown, so too have its health-care needs. The rising year-round population has brought with it many of the problems associated with mainland communities everywhere, reminding us that in many ways we are not so different from the nation at large. Alcohol and other substance abuses, especially the ravages of heroin, have grown to a point where ignoring it, even if that were desirable, is no longer possible. Similarly, AIDS and cancer have afflicted our residents and, as our population grows older, its health needs will only become greater.

The rapid development of our economy has had other health impacts. Rural construction has thrust people into more frequent contact with deer—indeed, the ornamental shrubbery planted around many homes actually attracts the animals to them. Development has also greatly restricted deer hunting, provided shelter from predators of the white-footed mouse, and offered ticks the shade they need to survive. All this has created ideal conditions for the explosion of tick-borne disease (Lyme disease, Babesiosis, and Ehrlichiosis) with which Nantucket now contends.

In seeking to address the human needs of Nantucket, we must do so on two levels: first, with the goal of eliminating disease and providing for our physical health; and second, with the goal of making where we live a healthy community where the conditions that create disease and distress have been minimized.

According to this 1869 advertisement, “Nantucket has no equal in the world as a cool and healthy summer resort.” Today the island is subject to ills that plague the rest of the world.



A Healthy Community

Rob Benchley

The Island Today

The Town of Nantucket currently addresses the health needs of its residents through the work of the Council for Human Services. Formed in 1987 by an act of Town Meeting, the nine-member council works in conjunction with a number of concerned citizens, private health providers, and government agencies to assess and meet the health and human-services needs of our community. In recent years, this challenge has become more complex.

Many of Nantucket's most prominent health problems can be traced to overriding trends

Family members enjoying one another's company, a clean environment, and good crabbing are all marks of a healthy community.

on the island. The shortage of affordable housing, along with the extremely high cost of living, forces many residents to lead lives that lack economic security or the stability that comes with a year-round home. The seasonal nature of many jobs can leave Nantucketers drifting aimlessly in the quiet season and compounds that insecurity. The results can be stress, anxiety, and depression—and at worst can be manifested as alcoholism and drug addiction. The fact that few jobs offer medical insurance benefits only complicates matters.



Families struggling to afford housing, utilities, and food are hard pressed to pay for quality medical care as well.

In addition to those pressures, Nantucket, like other small communities in the United States, must also contend with the incidence of cancer and HIV/AIDS—the latter having had an impact on Nantucket disproportionate to the island's small size.

Our Goals

- ◆ To create a “Healthy Nantucket Community.”
- ◆ To provide for the basic physical, social, educational, health-care, and economic needs of the community.



Rob Benchley

On September 12, 1999, the Nantucket community came together to celebrate Ted Anderson Day named for the retiring minister of the Unitarian Church, who had devoted himself to the spiritual and emotional health of Nantucketers for twenty-eight years.



Strategies for the Future

As our goals suggest, the idea of a healthy Nantucket takes two forms. The first is the traditional idea of health: a situation where disease is absent and where services and facilities exist, accessible to everyone, that maintain a disease-free environment. The second, broader, idea of health is one that encompasses more than simply the medical standing of a community. This is the definition of health that includes a stable base of housing affordable to all; a strong system of schools; a clean environment; and a respectful, supportive community. As recently defined by the World Health Organization, it recognizes these prerequisites for health: peace, shelter, safety, food, income, a stable ecosystem, environmental stability, social justice, and equity.

The first conventional idea of health is the one that most of the actions outlined in this chapter seek to address. Expanded programs for treating and preventing substance abuse and tick-borne diseases, the

better provision of health insurance, and supporting the Nantucket Cottage Hospital are all included within our proposed actions.

The broader definition of a healthy community, by contrast, is not detailed specifically in this chapter's *Making It Happen* segment, for the simple reason that it has been outlined in the six chapters that precede it. The goal of a healthy Nantucket—a community whose environment, economy, and society function as an integrated system—is what the Community Plan is itself all about. The seven chapters of the Community Plan, taken separately, address seven specific areas of Nantucket's future. But these chapters are not meant to be taken separately. They are meant to be taken as a whole, as a sum greater than all of its parts. Cumulatively, the document before you is an effort to build a healthy community, one where the beauty, opportunity, and prosperity that we enjoy today is shared by all islanders and preserved for our children in generations to come.

“The World Health Organization recognizes these prerequisites for health: peace, shelter, safety, food, income, a stable ecosystem, environmental stability, social justice, and equity.”

“The goal of a healthy Nantucket—a community whose environment, economy, and society function as an integrated system—is what the Community Plan itself is all about.”



Rob Benchley

Fresh air and exercise are good for the health, as in this Fourth of July bike parade.



Making It Happen: A Healthy Community

The objectives and recommendations listed below are not intended as mandates to the Town of Nantucket, or to any other person, agency, organization, or public or quasi-public entity.

Objective 7.1

To provide a safe and secure environment for all Nantucketers.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Assess existing public-safety services to determine their adequacy to serve the growing needs of the year-round and seasonal populations, in consideration of the island's isolation and peak seasonal demands.
2. SHORT TERM: Implement measures to increase personnel, capital facilities, and programs in accordance with the recommendations of that assessment.

Objective 7.2

To provide adequate sustenance for all Nantucketers.

Recommendation:

1. SHORT TERM: Strongly encourage the Meals on Wheels program, the Emergency Food Pantry, Elder Services in-home food programs, and other related programs that provide sustenance to those Nantucketers in need of financial and/or mobility assistance.

Rob Benchley



A healthy community should be seriously concerned with adequate sustenance for all its citizens, as does Nantucket through Meals on Wheels and other related programs.

IMMEDIATE (will occur within the timeframe of Town Meeting),

SHORT-TERM (will begin within five years of plan adoption), LONG-TERM (will begin more than five years after plan adoption)



Making It Happen: A Healthy Community

(continued)

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Objective 7.4

To promote the economic well-being of Nantucketers.

Recommendation:

1. SHORT TERM: Implement the strategies outlined in chapter 2, "Housing Needs" and chapter 3, "Making a Living" (pages 55-56 and 76-79), particularly those strategies aimed at mitigating the high cost of living (including the cost of housing) on Nantucket.

Objective 7.5

To bolster the existing social service support network.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Support the Cottage Hospital's program of in-home care and encourage the formation of for-profit or nonprofit entities to complement that program and provide such care as an alternative to institutional care.
2. SHORT TERM: Encourage programs for the physically, mentally, and emotionally handicapped, including expanded in-home care.
3. SHORT TERM: Urge the strengthening of on-island foster care (including added funding), respite care for foster parents, and better identification of children in need.
4. SHORT TERM: Encourage human services providers to better serve seasonal workers, especially to meet health-care needs of workers from other cultures.

5. SHORT TERM: Enhance pre-school and after-school programs, such as the Family Center program, especially for children of working families.
6. SHORT TERM: Seek and support the creation of intergenerational programs, such as those at Our Island Home.
7. SHORT TERM: Encourage the development of an Assisted Living Facility to provide a continuum of care for senior citizens, the disabled, and people with dementia, as stated in chapter 2, "Housing Needs" (page 67).
8. SHORT TERM: Provide sufficient home and licensed day-care facilities for Nantucket families.
9. SHORT TERM: Seek to remove legal and practical obstacles to the receipt of federal, state, and local funding for human-services needs by pursuing legislative and policy changes.

Objective 7.6

To establish and expand programs that promote the health of the island community.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Support Nantucket's participation in the Massachusetts Healthy Communities Program, through Calling All Nantucketers—Citizen Action Network (CAN-CAN)—and otherwise.
2. SHORT TERM: Develop community indicators as a means of diagnosing the health and well-being of the island community. Prepare a report on the outcome of the establishment of those

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indicators, and use the data to develop specific strategies to address negative trends.

3. SHORT TERM: Urge support for Nantucket Cottage Hospital's Strategic Plan and its Blueprint for Living Well.
4. SHORT TERM: Urge the expansion of on-island substance-abuse programs, including prevention programs, recovery-support programs, intervention plans (such as the Police Department's Norwood Plan), and day-treatment programs.
5. SHORT TERM: Continue to promote and expand the island's prevention, diagnosis, and treatment programs for tick-borne diseases.
6. SHORT TERM: Include control of the island's deer population among the strategies for tick-borne-disease control.
7. SHORT TERM: Explore ways to maintain the affordability of mental and physical health care for all island residents through adequate health insurance—perhaps through an island-based health insurance plan (such as a Nantucket HMO) or through community-based subsidies.

Objective 7.7

To promote a healthy natural environment.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Adhere to the multifaceted objectives of the goals of chapter 4, "Protecting the Environment" (page 89), for a healthy, sustainable environment.
2. SHORT TERM: Raise the issue of protecting Nantucket's peace and quiet to a level that transcends that of nuisance, as embodied in an existing Town Bylaw, and consider amendments to the Town Code that approach peace and quiet—and their antithesis, noise—as essential determinants of the health of the community.

Rob Benchley



Rob Benchley

The Community Plan encourages all programs that promote the health of islanders—from preventive to restorative medicine, from counseling to support systems—ultimately providing comprehensive health and human services for islanders in need. Two of the more progressive programs are high school "internships" in the new Nantucket Cottage Hospital emergency room and intergenerational programs at Our Island Home.

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Making It Happen: A Healthy Community (continued)

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Objective 7.8

To increase the mobility of all Nantucketers, especially populations with special needs.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Implement the strategies of chapter 5, "Managing Transportation" (pages 115-117) concerning mobility, especially the strategies for enhancing the NRTA, and the pedestrian and bikepath systems, while working toward the creation of a year-round public transportation system.
2. SHORT TERM: Expand the availability of para-transit options or on-demand transportation services now provided by Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands to seven days a week.

The Community Plan proposes to maintain high educational standards and to expand the role the school system plays in creating a healthy community.

Rob Benchley



Objective 7.9

To promote enhanced opportunities for a quality education.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Continue to improve curriculum and infrastructure changes in order to maintain high educational standards.
2. SHORT TERM: Expand the roles of the public school system to provide family support that includes pre-school and after-school care.
3. SHORT TERM: Foster post-secondary educational opportunities for islanders, similar to the Cambridge College Program.

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4. SHORT TERM: Continue and expand the Community School program in its role of meeting community needs.
5. SHORT TERM: Expand literacy programs.
6. SHORT TERM: Alert the community to the importance of this Community Plan and support an ongoing community dialogue on the island's sustainability.
7. SHORT TERM: Continue the curriculum on government at the schools to keep Nantucket's children well informed on issues and prepared to be involved voting citizens at local, state, and national levels.

Objective 7.10

To enhance recognition of and support for the island's arts and cultural community as important to the island's economic and spiritual well-being.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Encourage expansion of the arts as a part of the island's economic diversification program (see chapter 3, "Making a Living," page 84).
2. SHORT TERM: Explore the feasibility of establishing a Nantucket Arts Commission to broaden the community's support for the arts.
3. SHORT TERM: Encourage the private sector to establish a Nantucket Performing Arts Center to provide a central location for Nantucket's varied arts and cultural organizations which, through economies of scale, provides common theater, practice, display, administrative office, and other ancillary space under a single roof (see chapter 6, "Island Infrastructure," page 147).
4. SHORT TERM: Investigate the legality and feasibility of establishing a local sales tax devoted to supporting the arts community and seek enabling legislation if needed.



Rob Benchley

Diversity of recreational programs such as those offered by the Boys and Girls Club is an important element of a healthy community.

Objective 7.11

To provide a diversity of leisure and recreational opportunities.

Recommendations:

1. SHORT TERM: Diversify the Park and Recreation program to provide further year-round recreational opportunities for residents, visitors, and seasonal employees.
2. SHORT TERM: Expand recreational opportunities for the island's youth through cooperative efforts with the schools and nonprofit entities.
3. SHORT TERM: In general, expand leisure and recreational opportunities outside the peak season.

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