



# TOWN OF BREWSTER SEA CAMPS Comprehensive Planning Executive Summary

April 2024



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# INTRODUCTION: PURSUING THE TOWN'S VISION

## ABOUT THE TOWN OF BREWSTER

Located in Barnstable County Massachusetts, Brewster comprises 23 square miles of land, including 325 acres of beachfront and marshlands, and 24 large ponds. One-third of Brewster's total area is held in conservation, providing the public with numerous and diverse open spaces, yielding an expansive, rural character to the town. The population of Brewster is aging, and the profile of its population is shifting: during summer months, the year-round population of 10,000 triples to over 30,000 with the addition of summer rentals, tourists, and seasonal workers. Almost 50% of Brewster residents are second-home owners.

The form of government practiced in Brewster is Town Meeting with a Town Manager and a five-member Select Board. Seeking to shape its future more proactively, in 2023 the Brewster Vision Planning Committee developed a Local Comprehensive Plan consistent with the community goals and values identified in the 2018 Vision Plan, which was adopted at Town Meeting in Fall 2023. The planning and design of the former Sea Camps figures prominently in the realization and implementation of the vision.

## ACQUISITION OF THE SEA CAMPS

In 2020, The Cape Cod Sea Camps ceased operations after a century in business, and the two properties owned by the Delahanty family — the 55-acre Bay Property and the 66-acre Long Property — were listed for sale. The Town made the successful bid, and then received the overwhelming endorsement of voters at Town Meeting in September and at the ballot in October 2021. The purchase was strategic, affording the Town a large, highly visible opportunity to apply the principles of the 2018 Vision Plan and other relevant town strategic plans, and to meaningfully expand public amenities.

In the 2021 Warrant Article approved at Town Meeting, potential uses for both properties included habitat protection, watershed protection, open space, conservation and passive recreation, active recreation, community housing, and/or general municipal purposes. Potential uses for the Bay Property also included a community center.

# PLANNING PROCESS: INFORMED BY RESIDENT INPUT

The Town of Brewster partnered with Reed Hilderbrand in 2022 to guide a comprehensive, community-led planning effort to help envision and prioritize future uses for both properties. The 14-month planning process included monthly meetings with the Bay and Pond Planning Committees as stakeholders and representatives of the community, 4 community forums, 2 online surveys, and weekly design review with relevant Town Staff. Through this process, community feedback was distilled into the following set of guiding principles:

- Expand opportunities for community use with a focus on wellness, recreation, arts and education
- Foster awareness of the sensitive ecologies and demonstrate sustainability
- Protect and conserve important natural habitat
- Contribute to the Town’s affordable housing goals
- Build upon Brewster’s historic, small-town, and socially inclusive character
- Build partnerships for activities and stewardship
- Re-use buildings and amenities where feasible
- Plan for long-term needs of the Town
- Balance cost with revenue generation

Community engagement was central to developing the final comprehensive plans for the properties. The team used in-person and virtual community forums to educate the community on existing site conditions, gain insight into community interests and concerns, share in-progress plans, and workshop different planning scenarios. In-person forums included interactive stations where over 450 attendees shared their input. Virtual forums included breakout groups and question and answer sessions where attendees shared feedback. Two online surveys also elicited community feedback.





# COMPREHENSIVE PLANS



The final comprehensive plans respond to the unique qualities of each property, aligning proposed improvements with each location’s unique natural qualities, past uses, and character. Together, the Bay and Pond Property comprehensive plans balance the interests of the Town’s long-term goals by meaningfully expanding multi-generational community benefits and planning for long-term social, economic, and ecological resilience.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: BAY PROPERTY

## COMMUNITY AMENITIES

The Bay Property comprehensive plan includes a variety of activities serving people of all ages, abilities and interests, positioning the property to become a community and cultural hub for the Town of Brewster.

Community amenities would include:

- 2.4 miles of walking trails
- 0.6 miles of biking trails and increased access from the rail trail to the Bay Property
- Mass Audubon Nature Center and nature-based programs
- Continued beach and outdoor pool access
- Fitness station loop
- Tennis courts
- Playground
- Community garden plots
- Picnic and events space at the existing outdoor pavilion
- Flexible outdoor space for athletic fields, large gatherings and events
- Flexible community-uses cabins (potential for arts studios or residencies, pop-up events, smaller gathering spaces, or other possibilities)
- Event and concessions space at the existing boathouse
- Educational and events space at the existing Arts Center
- Interim recreational uses or temporary office, classroom, or meeting space at the existing Administration building
- Potential new community center
- Re-use of up to 7 buildings for seasonal and year round workforce housing
- 8-acre area for future municipal uses



CAPE COD BAY

SPRUCE HILL

**RESTORE  
COASTAL  
DUNE**

**NATURE  
BASED  
PROGRAMS**

**PARTIAL  
REWILD +  
SEASONAL  
COMMUNITY USE**

**NEW  
TRAILS &  
ACCESSIBLE  
PATHS**

**COMMUNITY  
COMMONS**

**COMMUNITY  
GARDENS**

**POOL  
&  
PICNIC**

AREA FOR NEW  
COMMUNITY  
CENTER  
(INCLUDES COA,  
REC DEPT)

**FUTURE  
MUNICIPAL  
USES**

**TENNIS**

**FLEXIBLE  
SPACE**

**POLLINATOR  
MEADOW**

ROUTE 6A

MILLSTONE ROAD



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: BAY PROPERTY

## PARTNERSHIPS

Mass Audubon would partner with the Town at the Bay Property, contributing \$2 million and resources toward ecological restoration, conservation, wayfinding and trails, and educational programming. Mass Audubon's partnership would include the funding of a new nature center and Mass Audubon office space on the northeast corner of the site, as well as a 10+ acre conservation restriction area around the existing pond.

## ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

The Bay Property plan includes habitat restoration along the Cape Cod Bay dunes, introduction of a pollinator meadow within the existing expansive turf lawn, expansion of the existing woodland, and a 10-acre conservation restriction in partnership with Mass Audubon in the northeast corner of the site to protect the existing pond and wetlands.

## SEASONAL AND YEAR-ROUND WORKFORCE HOUSING

The final comprehensive plan designated seven existing buildings for housing including:

- Three cabins for Mass Audubon seasonal employee housing to support the future Nature Center
- Two cabins for staff housing
- Two buildings whose housing type is to be determined, including the Spruce Hill House and the Westcott House



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: BAY PROPERTY

## COMMUNITY CENTER

Both the 2018 Town Vision Plan and the 2023 Local Comprehensive Plan identify a new, multi-generational community center as a priority goal for the Town. Similarly, throughout the Sea Camps community-led planning process, the community expressed widespread interest in social, recreational and educational activities that would be supported by a new community center. Given this feedback, the Bay Property comprehensive plan designates an area for a future multi-generational community center. Prior to pursuing a community center, the Town would undertake a feasibility study to confirm the programs and facilities desired by the community, the Council on Aging and Recreation Department.

The reserved zone is adjacent to the existing pool parking area and its proximity to the outdoor pool, arts center, tennis courts, and athletic fields, would provide a central location for all recreational and educational programs on the Bay Property.

## FUTURE MUNICIPAL USES

The comprehensive plan builds flexibility into the plan by reserving an approximately 8-acre zone in the southeast corner of the site for Future Municipal Uses, which would be determined at a later date.

Since community and Town needs are constantly changing, this allows the Town to revisit the best use for this zone in the future. The community will have input on these uses through a separate future community planning process and Town Meeting vote for approval.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: POND PROPERTY

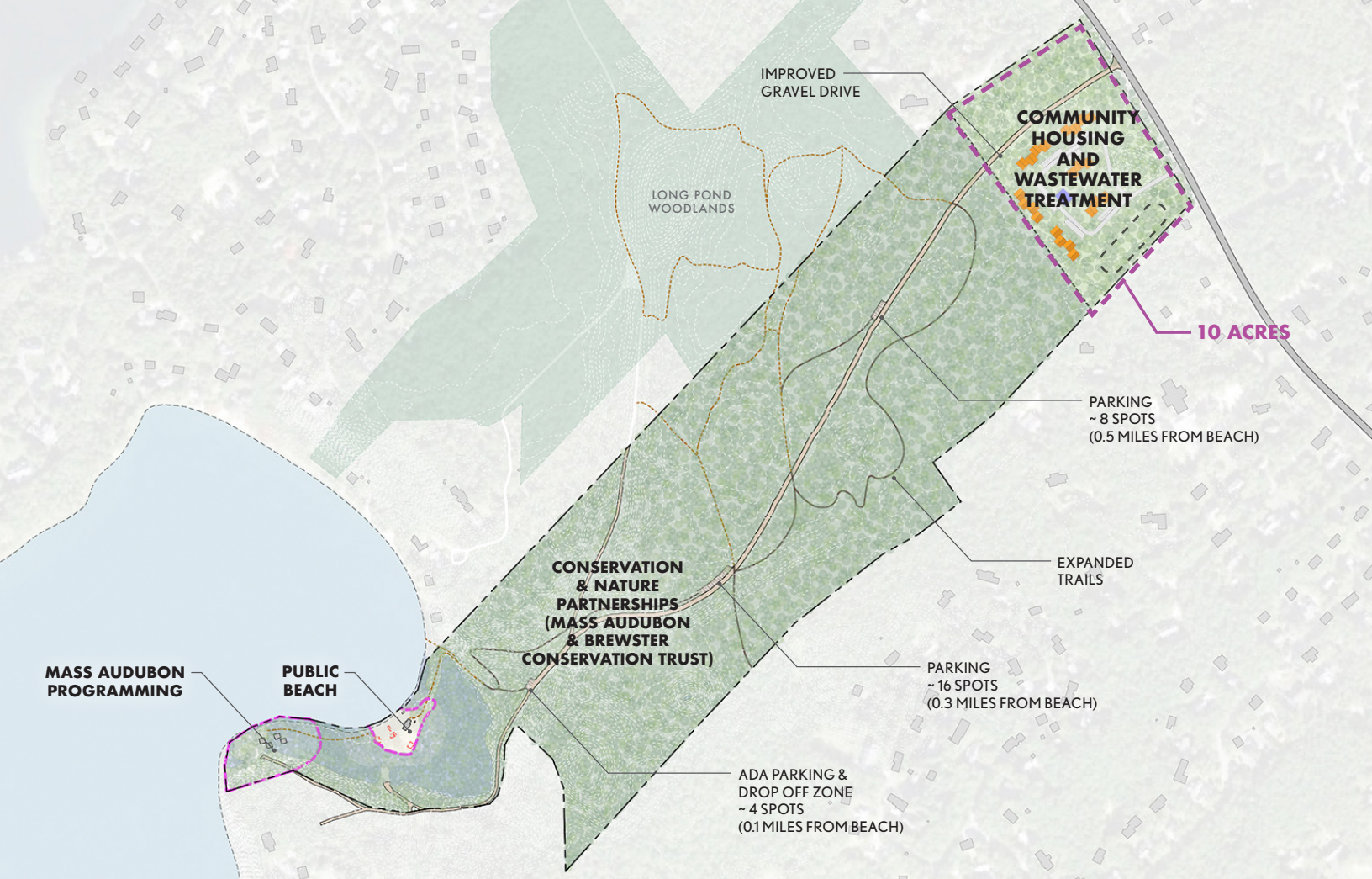
## ABOUT THE PLAN

Today, the Pond Property includes a winding access drive and trail network through sixty-six acres of woodland and a former cranberry bog to reach a sheltered beach at the Cape's largest freshwater pond. The property features upland deciduous forest, pitch pine oak forest, and freshwater wetlands, all supporting a diversity of ecological communities. The comprehensive plan for the Pond Property respects the secluded nature and ecological value of the property by carefully balancing areas for conservation and areas for future development. Access to the property is improved by widening the existing gravel drive and by providing a few parking pull-off areas for trail and beach access. This includes a small ADA parking area with an ADA-accessible pathway to the beach.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The Town's partners on this property include Mass Audubon and the Brewster Conservation Trust, who would contribute resources toward ecological restoration, conservation, wayfinding and trails, and educational programming. Mass Audubon would contribute \$1.5 million and the Brewster Conservation Trust would contribute at least \$1 million towards the cost of acquiring the property. Their partnerships would include a conservation restriction on 56 acres (85% of the site), recognizing that the remaining 10 acres are designated for community housing and wastewater treatment. The proposed conservation restricted area on the Pond Property is adjacent to the Long Pond Woodland, a 41-acre Town owned conservation restricted area held by the Brewster Conservation Trust. Through their partnership on the Pond Property, the Brewster Conservation Trust would increase trail connectivity to the Long Pond Woodlands. On the southwestern edge of the Pond Property, Mass Audubon would provide nature-based educational programming including small seasonal day camp, adult nature study workshops, field trips for their Wellfleet Bay camp, afterschool programs, guided walks, kayak trips, and children's and adult programming in partnership with the Brewster Recreation Department.





## HOUSING AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Throughout the community-led planning process, affordable housing came forward as a community priority. Providing affordable housing is also supported by the Town Vision Plan, the Local Comprehensive Plan, the Housing Production Plan, and the Select Board Strategic Plan. The Pond Property comprehensive plan carefully balances areas for conservation and areas for future development by reserving a 10-acre zone adjacent to Route 137 for affordable housing. The creation of new housing on municipal owned land is in line with the goals of the Town’s Housing Production plan to diversify housing options in Brewster by expanding access for a range of income levels, preventing displacement of current residents and facilitating housing mobility.

Housing would be accompanied by a wastewater treatment plant to serve new housing development on the Pond Property, and eventually connect to other residences in the surrounding neighborhoods to replace traditional septic systems. Wastewater infrastructure would fully offset any impacts of new housing units and may help the Town meet nitrogen mitigation requirements of Pleasant Bay and/or Herring River watershed permits.



# IMPLEMENTATION: PHASING AND COST

## PHASING

The Bay and Pond Property comprehensive plans would be realized through a phased implementation focused on near-term recreational, arts and educational programming and long-term partnerships toward restoration of natural habitat, contribution to affordable housing goals, and revenue generation. The Pond Property would be implemented over ~5 years and the Bay Property would be implemented over ~10 years.

For the Bay Property, Phase 1 would include a community center feasibility study. Phase 3 would include community center design and Phase 5 would include community center construction, both of which would only be pursued if Brewster voters decide to move forward following the feasibility study.





## BAY PROPERTY COST ESTIMATION

	CONSTRUCTION	ADDITIONAL COSTS (DESIGN AND CONTRACTOR FEES, PERMITTING, CONTINGENCY, ESCALATION)	TOTAL PER PHASE	POTENTIAL OTHER FUNDING	BALANCE TO BE FINANCED
<b>Phase 1</b> 2025-2027 (0% escalation)	\$4,700,000	\$3,600,000	\$8,300,000	\$1,500,000	\$6,800,000
<b>Phase 2</b> 2027-2029 (5% escalation)	\$3,500,000	\$1,900,000	\$5,400,000	\$2,700,000	\$2,700,000
<b>Phase 3</b> 2029-2031 (10% escalation)	\$2,800,000	\$7,600,000	\$10,400,000	\$1,400,000	\$9,000,000
<b>Phase 4</b> 2031-2033 (15% escalation)	\$3,500,000	\$3,100,000	\$6,600,000	\$1,100,000	\$5,500,000
<b>Phase 5</b> 2033-2035 (20% escalation)	\$19,300,000	\$11,700,000	\$31,000,000 (Community Center Construction)		\$31,000,000
<b>Total</b>	\$33,800,000	\$27,900,000	<b>\$61,700,000</b>	\$6,700,000	\$55,000,000

## POND PROPERTY COST ESTIMATION

	CONSTRUCTION	ADDITIONAL COSTS (DESIGN AND CONTRACTOR FEES, PERMITTING, CONTINGENCY, ESCALATION)	TOTAL PER PHASE	POTENTIAL OTHER FUNDING	BALANCE TO BE FINANCED
<b>Phase 1</b> 2025-2027 (0% escalation)	\$1,400,000	\$900,000	\$2,300,000	\$500,000	\$1,800,000
<b>Phase 2</b> 2027-2029 (5% escalation)	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$300,000	\$200,000
<b>Phase 3</b> 2029-2031 (10% escalation)	\$2,100,000	\$2,400,000	\$4,500,000	\$4,500,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>	\$3,600,000	\$3,700,000	<b>\$7,300,000</b>	\$5,300,000	\$2,000,000

<b>Phase 4</b> 2031-2033	*Cost TBD (cost to connect residents to new wastewater treatment plant)
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## FINANCING

If the plans are approved by Town Meeting in May, the Town anticipates asking Brewster voters to approve up to three rounds of excluded debt to help finance the plans over the next decade.

- **Round 1** would include funding for all phases of the pond plan and the first two phases of the bay plan, including the community center feasibility study (\$300,000). It would be brought to Town Meeting and the ballot in Fall 2024.
- **Round 2a** would include phases 3 and 4 of the bay plan, excluding the community center design.
- **Round 2b** would include the community center design. These debt exclusions would likely be brought to Brewster voters in 2028.
- **Round 3** would fund phase 5 of the bay plan, which is construction of the new community center (if applicable). Based on the current timeline, this final funding request would be around 2031.

The phasing and financing plans are based on current information and may change over time based on community feedback and available resources.

	PHASES	YEAR	ANTICIPATED DEBT ISSUANCE	TAX RATE IMPACT*	TAX BILL IMPACT ON MEDIAN HOME**
<b>Round 1</b>	All Pond + Bay 1&2	2024	\$11.4M	+\$0.11/1000	+\$77
<b>Round 2a</b>	Bay 3&4 (no community center design)	2028	\$9.2M	+\$0.09/1000 (\$0.20 total)	+\$63 (\$140 total)
<b>Round 2b</b>	Bay 3&4 (community center design)	2028	\$5.3M	+\$0.05/1000 (\$0.25 total)	+\$34 (\$174 total)
<b>Round 3</b>	Bay 5	2031	\$31M	+\$0.30/1000 (\$0.55 total)	+\$216 (\$390 total)

\* would impact the following fiscal year tax bills - eg. 2024 approval would impact FY26 tax bills (Fall 2025)

\*\* assumes 25 year level debt term and conservative 3.85% interest rate (Brewster has the highest possible bond rating, AAA, which helps secure the lowest possible interest rates)

NOTE: Current median residential home value in Brewster is \$710,000.

The total estimated cost to implement both plans except for community center design and construction is \$20.6M. Total projected tax impacts of this work would be \$.20/1000 or \$140/year for 25 years for the average resident.