



## Q&A Follow Up

### “Housing and Homelessness Across Cape Cod”

VIRTUAL FORUM #2, APRIL 15, 2021

#### **PANELISTS:**

Jay Coburn, Chief Executive Officer, Community Development Partnership

Alisa Magnotta, Chief Executive Officer, Housing Assistance Corporation

Heidi Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Duffy Health Center

**Q: It seems local and state government take some small actions versus bolder action. What are one or two things you would want to see people advocate and push harder for to happen to make a difference--from the perspective of increasing affordable housing stock?**

**Jay:** I would encourage Cape residents to advocate to their Select Board's to establish an Affordable Housing Trust if their town does not already have one. And to advocate that the Trust have a steady stream of revenue by contributing at least 50% of the local option rooms tax revenue to the Trust each year. This allows the Trust to invest in housing production and leverage state and federal funding. Lower and Outer Cape residents who are interested in advocating for more affordable housing should contact the Community Development Partnership to receive our monthly newsletter for housing advocates. Please email Andrea Aldana, Director of Housing Advocacy, [Andrea@capecdp.org](mailto:Andrea@capecdp.org)

**Alisa:** There are things that I would say residents can do to help with housing:

1. Advocate for wastewater infrastructure – a vote for sewers is a vote for housing. One of the most expensive costs in building is the septic or wastewater treatment plant. Towns with sewer will advance clean water and better environment as well as be able to build more housing without harming either in areas with sewer.
2. Ask for the Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) bylaw to be updated in your town. ADUs are a short-term strategy to add smaller, more affordable rentals in our market without taxpayer investment or changing the look of a neighborhood. They help both the homeowner and renters. We need year-round rentals, so ensuring the ADUs or the main house is used as a year-round home is an important feature in the by-law. Ask your planning board and Select board to allow ADUs by-right for homes on sewer.
3. Short-term rental tax is a good way to increase the availability of more funding for housing and/or wastewater. The idea here is that we are losing housing for our

workforce due to increase in demand for vacationers and summer rentals, so let's include revenue made from their stay to help fund solutions that ensure the Cape remains a desirable destination.

**Q: How do you influence low-income housing?**

**Alisa:** By ensuring the housing stock that is available matches the wages that the local jobs pay, so having a variety of rentals for different incomes is an important aspect in the housing market. Right now, we have less than a 1% vacancy rate so any rental will be expensive due to supply and demand. Having deed restricted housing for low income is absolutely necessary, but so is having attainable apartments for people who make over \$60k per year. If we care about housing for the lowest income and most fragile, we have to ensure we have enough housing for other income groups so people can move when they want to a bigger/smaller/nicer place. We need options – this will help our low-income neighbors the most. This is another reason we need ADUs!

**Q: I appreciate and agree with Mr. Coburn's comments about outside investors buying up housing at elevated prices to use as short-term rentals for 3-5 months of the year. This has clearly contributed to the depletion of year-round rentals on the Cape and made the purchase of homes by young families and new home buyers increasingly more difficult. I'd be interested to hear the other panelists views on allowing outside investors to continue to buy up our housing stock to be used as short-term rentals and whether they believe limitations on this practice would help alleviate some of the housing problem?**

**Jay:** I'd be reluctant to endorse moratoriums on short term vacation rentals. However, I think there are ways to incentivize year-round use, and using rental tax revenue to create year-round rental housing is a good way to combat this problem. Making it easy for homeowners to create accessory dwelling units as long as they are not used for seasonal/short-term rentals is another strategy.

**Heidi:** I agree with Jay--however personally I do not use AirBNB because of the impact it has had on housing costs and on the hotel industry. I support taxing homestays beyond a certain set limit for private homeowners (e.g. heavily tax stays at properties that rent out more than 3 weeks per year).

**Alisa:** Short-term rentals have been a tradition on Cape Cod for a long-time. I don't think it's in keeping with the culture of the Cape to cut that off or limit access. This will likely drive-up pricing so regular people won't be able to afford to vacation here. That would be sad considering many of the people I know spent the summers of their childhood renting on CC and now live here. I do believe that we as year-round residents should be strategic with how we incentivize the use of the housing that is here. Again, tax the use to the fullest extent and use the new-found revenue to fund important investments. Change the zoning so multi-family buildings are allowed if the property is on sewer. Allow ADUs for year-round residents, offer a differentiated tax rate for homes that are occupied year-round, or be bold and pay owners to rent their home year-round.

**Q: The MacArthur Foundation just awarded \$100M to Community Solutions for their Built for Zero program that has significantly decreased homelessness using a data driven program based on real-time information. How is the Cape Cod community using data and what are the challenges of getting this real-time data?**

**Heidi:** See answer below on data, but the County is just completing a procurement of a new Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) which will allow for more information-sharing.

**Q: What are the demographics of the homeless population on the Cape? I know that Veteran homelessness is often in the news for example.**

**Heidi:** As we discussed at the Forum, the Regional Network on Homelessness has a priority this year to aggregate data from various sources to paint a picture of homelessness in Barnstable County and at the town level where possible. For Duffy Health Center:

- Two-thirds of our patients have incomes below the federal poverty level
- 26% are non-white
- 25% are uninsured when they register for services; we successfully enroll about 80% of those
- Two-thirds have MassHealth as their insurer
- Less than 7% are over age 65, half the rate of the general population due to higher mortality rates for persons experiencing homelessness
- 72% 'doubled-up', 15% streets and shelter

**Q: Could The Cape Cod Foundation or some other regional entity establish a land trust or REIT that could leverage capital investments in land and housing?**

**Jay:** The Community Development Partnership is exploring creating an investment fund and using land trusts as part of our current strategic planning process.

**Alisa:** This is a good investment strategy that is used in other areas and is currently being assessed by several groups.

**Q: When can towns access the maps from APCC and HAC**

**Alisa:** We have draft maps available now. We are starting our ground truthing to ensure the data matches reality and meeting with every town planner. If you are interested in seeing an early version, contact David Quinn at HAC. [dquinn@haconcapecod.org](mailto:dquinn@haconcapecod.org)