



HOUSING

1. **BACKGROUND:** The following provides a brief overview of housing data and trends in our community, especially those related to affordability. Links to websites and programs for more in-depth information are embedded throughout the text.

Data/Trends: Anyone looking to buy a home or rent a year round place feels the pain of the Cape wide housing crunch with limited inventory and high costs. A wide range of factors have played a role in our current housing situation with certain housing trends becoming apparent:

- Yarmouth’s median home prices (\$345,000 in 2019 and \$365,000 through August 2020), and year round rental rates are rising, while median incomes can’t keep pace. Although it is recommended that housing costs should not exceed 30% of a household’s gross monthly income, 33% of Yarmouth households are exceeding this threshold making them housing burdened.
- Limited inventory for homes for sale less than \$400,000.
- Very limited availability for year round rentals along with high market demand. Only 13% of year round housing in Yarmouth is rental housing.
- Off-cape market influences increase costs as housing for seasonal and short term rentals (Airbnb) are more financially attractive than year round rentals.
- Increased seasonal use takes existing housing away from year round workers. Over 30% of Yarmouth housing units are vacant due to seasonal use.
- Other expenses are reducing income available for housing such as student loan debt, health care costs and homeowners and/or flood insurance premiums.
- Low wages from our seasonal tourism/hospitality economy, and fewer year round benefited jobs that would support the current housing prices. Older households retire with a fixed-income and can age out into poverty. 19% of all Yarmouth households are considered low-income earning no more than 80% of the Area Median Income.
- Young professionals and families are leaving the Cape rather than struggle with housing.
- Older residents are staying in their homes due to lack of other options, resulting in 1-2 people in a home that could house a family. They also struggle with home maintenance and isolation. Over 35% of Yarmouth residents live alone. Yarmouth’s population continues to age with a median age of 53 years, compared to the state’s median age of 39 years.
- Household sizes are decreasing, resulting in the need for more housing even if the population remains constant. The average household size is 2.1 persons.
- Commuting from more affordable Off-Cape communities is increasing traffic congestion.
- Costs of creating new affordable housing is often financially unviable without significant subsidies and/or community partnerships.

Studies and Reports: More detailed information, demographics, housing characteristics and implementation strategies for Yarmouth can be found in the April 15, 2016 [Housing Production Plan](#) and the [Affordable Housing Chapter 13 of the Local Comprehensive Plan \(LCP\)](#).



2. EXISTING PROGRAMS/PROJECTS/INITIATIVES: Yarmouth has many different programs and initiatives related to housing in our community.

Existing Affordable Housing Programs: Yarmouth has worked hard to develop a robust Affordable Housing Program to promote economic redevelopment and workforce housing. The Program creates homeownership and rental housing that are affordable to those with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income (\$73,200 for a family of 4) while paying no more than 30% of their income for housing. Our Affordable Housing Program is striving to reach the 10% goal for affordable housing set forth in Mass General Law Chapter 40B, while maintaining the quality of life for all residents. Under Ch. 40B, a community has less than 10% of its year-round housing set-aside and deed restricted for low and moderate income residents, a developer can override local zoning to create housing through a Comprehensive Permit issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Yarmouth currently has 596 units, or 4.95%, of our year round housing stock on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), leaving an addition 608 units needed to meet the 10% goal.

Yarmouth has accomplished much of its hard won affordable housing through a strong Community Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust, along with a full time staff position assigned to this program. These programs are funded through investment from the Community Preservation Act, the Affordable Housing Trust Funds and the Community Development Block Grant Program. The cost of creating new affordable units varies widely depending on the type of development, with higher density developments creating the most units at the least cost.

Major Affordable Housing initiatives, along with examples, include:

- **Reuse of Municipal Buildings:**
 - John Simpkins High School - 65 rental apartments serving older adults (58 Affordable).
- **Motel Redevelopment into Housing with New Construction:**
 - Yarmouth Commons at the old Cavalier Motel (69 Affordable rental apartments).
 - Yarmouth Gardens ready for construction (40 Affordable rental apartments).
- **Affordable Acquisition and Construction Program:** The Town partners with other non-profit entities to build new single-family Affordable homes.
 - Six Affordable homes on Virginia Street with Habitat for Humanity of Cape Cod.
- **Buy Down Program:** Existing homes throughout Town are purchased and converted to Affordable Homeownership units (16 Affordable homes).
- **Town Wide Rental Homes:** Existing homes and duplexes throughout Town are purchased and converted to Affordable Rental units (9 Affordable homes or duplex units).
- **Town Owned Land:** Repurposing vacant unrestricted Town land for housing.
 - Two Affordable homes were developed with Town Land on West Yarmouth Rd, and one on Cedar Lane.

There are also programs available for emergency rental assistance, shared housing, preservation programs to provide for emergency repairs to eligible homeowners, and a regional wait list of local Ready Renter affordable rental apartments.

Zoning: Yarmouth’s existing zoning creates many opportunities for the creation of higher density housing with community design standards and affordability requirements. Major initiatives include:

- **Motel Bylaw:** Allows for the redevelopment of Route 28 motel properties into mixed use or multi-family housing. Projects that have used this bylaw include Captain Gladcliff (36 units), Appleby Court Apartments (8), Yarmouth Commons (69), and Yarmouth Gardens (40).
- **Village Centers Overlay District (VCOD):** Allows for commercial, residential or mixed use developments with higher residential densities within the four Route 28 villages centers.



Three projects have gone through VCOD Site Plan Review process, two mixed use projects and one Assisted Living project.

- **Inclusionary Zoning:** Requires 1 in 5 lots or dwelling units to be designated Affordable. Affordability requirement can be met with construction of a unit on-site, off-site or through payment in lieu of construction which goes to the Affordable Housing Trust.
- **Growth Incentive Zone (GIZ):** The GIZ facilitates the redevelopment of motel properties along Route 28 by eliminating the need for Cape Cod Commission (CCC) review in most cases. The removal of this additional regulatory requirement reduces costs and encourages multi-family and mixed use developments.

Other zoning opportunities include affordable and family related accessory apartments and allowing affordable housing on otherwise unbuildable lots.

Although the Town has high density zoning in place, we are still vulnerable to Chapter 40B projects which do not require regulatory review by the Cape Cod Commission and can bypass zoning restrictions such as density and height. This vulnerability has been significantly reduced by offering local zoning, pre-approved by the state via the Local Initiative Program (LIP).

3. WHAT'S IN THE WORKS:

- **Affordable Housing Program:** Many years of effort have gone into the creation of over 200 new affordable units through the Motel Redevelopment, Reuse of Municipal Buildings, Use of Town-Owned Land, Buy Downs, Town-Wide Rental Purchases, and Acquisition and Construction Programs. The Affordable Housing Program is now looking towards other initiatives, including housing services, repairs and modifications, and Veteran housing. These will develop new community partnerships, some local and some regional. To gather feedback on housing programs, approaches and locations the Town conducted a Housing Preference Survey in the fall of 2018. The Community Housing Committee is now working on an education outreach program to familiarize the public with the affordable housing options. They are also looking for input from the Board of Selectmen on prioritization of initiatives related to: Aging in Place, Senior Housing, Affordable Assisted Living, Seasonal Worker Housing and Energy Improvements/Emergency Repairs.
- **Reuse Committee:** The Town is also forming a reuse committee to identify potential uses for the Mattacheese Middle School property on Higgins Crowell with some type of housing being an option for consideration at this site.

4. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT: Now that you have had an opportunity to learn a little bit about Housing in Yarmouth, bring your thoughts and ideas to the Workshops or include them in your Survey responses. Some things to think about include:

- What strengths do we have regarding housing?
- What housing initiatives are we doing successfully?
- What challenges do you see related to housing?
- Where is the best place for affordable housing in Yarmouth:
- What populations are not having their housing needs met?
- Are there issues and influences holding us back?
- What opportunities could we tap into to address these challenges?
- Is the Town spending its time and resources on the right projects or programs?
- If not, where should we be spending our time and resources?
- How does Housing impact your vision for Yarmouth's future?

