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Town of Yarmouth Historic Housing Inventory and Housing Preference Survey



Funding for this project is provided by the Department of Housing and
Community Development's District Local Technical Assistance program
through the Cape Cod Commission.



Background

In 2018 the Town of Yarmouth initiated two projects intended to inform their planning for community economic resiliency by supporting the preservation and reuse of historic properties, and launched an outreach program including public meetings and a Housing Preference Survey to help the Town measure how well the community values and understands programs to support affordable housing, and to seek community feedback on the types of housing and housing support programs the community should develop in the future.

An inventory of historic structures and outbuildings creates an opportunity to plan for investment in these important structures to create a revenue stream to support ongoing maintenance of important historic properties vital to the character, heritage and economy of our region. As we plan for reuse and investment in historic properties the creation of smaller scale affordable housing units are consistent with historic uses and regional demand for housing alternatives.

This Cape Cod Commission project analyzed how historic building ells, barns, carriage houses, and other outbuildings may be converted to accessory dwelling units, often multi-family, that will be embraced by their neighborhoods and the community. This project updates the historic inventory forms for 41 properties, including outbuildings, within the South Yarmouth Bass River National Register Historic District. The project also informs a housing preference survey developed by the Commission, in part with the design team of the consulting firm Union Studies, as part of a Housing Resiliency by Design grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (“EOEEA”).

Town of Yarmouth Historic Building Inventory for Accessory Housing Units

The following three images show the location of inventoried buildings and outbuildings (shown with red dots) within the South Yarmouth Historic District (blue outline shows boundary of district and yellow dots indicate historic properties). The inventory focused on properties that have historic outbuildings that were not previously recognized in earlier historic inventory forms.



Northern portion of historic district



Southern portion of historic district



Central portion of historic district

The South Yarmouth inventory work highlights a range of historic outbuildings -- primarily barns and carriage houses -- in a variety of sizes and forms. The majority of these structures date from the mid to late 1800s and were constructed to support the homes of ship captains and other families that worked in associated maritime industries along the Bass River in South Yarmouth. Many of these outbuildings have significant architectural detailing and a unique history that adds to the character and importance of South Yarmouth's historic district.

Assessors data shows that most of the outbuildings inventoried are used by the owners of the primary residence -- sometimes as a garage or storage, sometimes as an art studio, and sometimes as additional finished living

space. Some of the inventoried outbuildings, however, function as separate residential units, giving the property a multi-family residential designation. One carriage house that served as a separate residential unit has even been separated onto its own lot, creating a modest residential home within the historic district without any change in the area's character. Several other inventoried outbuildings provide space for one or two bedroom units within an Inn operated in the primary residence.

These examples demonstrate the viability of using historic outbuildings as residential units, and may point to the ability for many more to be used the same way. Historic outbuildings can provide a variety of options for housing -- as varied as the outbuildings themselves -- with the added benefits of seamlessly integrating smaller units into an existing area of larger homes, and creating an economically viable use for these outbuildings that could encourage owners to better maintain and preserve them for future generations.

The use of these outbuildings as individual residential units supports the idea that historic outbuildings do play a role in providing housing diversity. In addition, the income received from renting these outbuilding units can support the cost of maintaining the original historic structure on the property – a benefit to both.

Examples:

(Note: Form B Historic Inventory Forms for all inventoried properties are available upon request.)

15 River Street – The barn for this property has been separated onto a separate lot (#11 River St) and used as a residence



Photo 3. 15 River Street, looking west.

229 Old Main St – outbuilding is separate residential unit, designated as multi-family



Photo 3. Carriage house for 229 Old Main Street, looking southeast.

33 Pleasant St – outbuilding part of an Inn/B&B



Photo 4. 33 Pleasant Street barn, looking northwest.

28 Pleasant St – carriage house (#26 Pleasant St) on a separate lot and used as a residence; previously used for three apartments



Photo 2. 28 Pleasant Street and formerly associated carriage house (26 Pleasant Street), looking southeast.

275 Old Main St – barn is used as a residence



Photo 3. Barn at 275 Old Main Street, looking southwest.

167 Old Main St – outbuilding part of an Inn/B&B



Photo 3. Barn for 167 Old Main Street, looking southeast.

Town of Yarmouth Housing Preference Survey

The Yarmouth Housing Survey was created to gather feedback from local residents about Yarmouth's existing programs, new approaches, and possible locations for housing. The Town actively administers over ten (10) Affordable Housing Programs and Services, and may prioritize continued support for existing programs and add new programs based upon public comment and input. Local residents were asked to invest 20 minutes of their time to answer to complete the seventy-eight (78) question survey. The survey gave Yarmouth residents the opportunity to learn about Yarmouth's housing program, rank their importance, and propose new ideas.

Survey questions ranged from soliciting feedback about programs and services as well as housing form preferences. Survey questions touched on housing form (single family, single family with accessory apartment, duplex, triplex or larger, multi-family structures), reuse opportunities (municipal buildings, motel properties), accessory apartments, inclusionary zoning, buy-down assistance, ready renters assistance, emergency rental assistance, shared housing, preservation programs, and housing needs. (See attached housing survey questions, analysis and results summary.)

The survey was made available on-line by means of the Survey Monkey application and was also distributed in paper format at Town Hall, the Senior Center, the Yarmouth Area Chamber of Commerce, and at all Town libraries. The Town launched the survey on November 29, 2018 at the Community Housing Committee's Listening Session on Housing, which fifteen (15) residents and interested parties attended. The survey was publicized at Town Hall, the Senior Center, all Town libraries, on the Town's Website, Face Book page, and Twitter account, and distributed to all Town Board and Committee members. By the end-date of December 31, 2018, one-hundred seventy-five (175) surveys were completed, six (6) of which were completed on paper.

The Yarmouth Housing Survey results are currently being analyzed along with the public comments received at the Listening Session. This valued public comment will lead to recommendations for zoning, prioritization of Town resources, and the introduction of new initiatives and programs. In true civic-spirit, several residents also responded by offering to help with the Town's Housing Program.

This DLTA project also bolsters housing preference work enabled by a Cape Cod Commission grant from the EOEEA. The Cape Cod Commission has teamed up

with the design team from Union Studio to facilitate a Community Resiliency by Design (“CRBD”) program to explore regional housing form preferences, and to develop community prototype plans and a form based code framework to support compact housing development in defined areas of each participating community. A final report on the CRBD program is anticipated this Spring. The CRBD program was initiated in the Towns of Barnstable, Falmouth, Orleans and Eastham. In the Town of Barnstable, the CRBD program is focused on the East Hyannis Planning Area. The East Hyannis area has recently attracted important community investment in year round rental housing. However, in some cases, the redevelopment and investment will result in the loss of historic assets determined to be fully deteriorated and beyond economic rehabilitation. As a result, the CRBD project explores the potential for the implementation of more traditional development patterns and the potential for the reuse of historic structures, especially outbuildings for accessory dwellings.

The Town of Yarmouth, while not a direct participant in the CRBD program, will benefit from the neighborhood plans and form based code framework developed through the CRBD program.