

HOUSING CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

Why Housing Matters

In the last ten years, Barnstable has seen a 3 percent decrease in the total number of households, but an overall increase of 8 percent in its total population. Barnstable’s full-time population has fluctuated since 1980. Most Barnstable residents are over the age of 35, and the population is predicted to grow increasingly older with the aging of these residents. The town is also becoming more diverse, with Black, Indigenous, and other people of color accounting for over one-fifth of the population. Hyannis’s BIPOC proportion is even higher, accounting for nearly half of the village’s overall population. Both Barnstable Town and Hyannis have significantly higher-than-average resident diversity compared with Barnstable County, which is 92 percent white¹.

The average household size in Barnstable is 2.5 persons and 27 percent of total households are individuals living alone.²

Most resident occupations are in education, health care, and social assistance professions, and this may account for the lower median household income as compared to the Area Median Income (AMI) set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Non-family and renter-occupied households earn roughly \$40,000 less than the AMI, which means increased difficulty for these households to afford housing costs. In Barnstable, 37 percent of households are spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs – and for low- and moderate-income earners, this number jumps to 72 percent. One in three Barnstable homeowners is cost-burdened while one in two renters is cost-burdened.

Roughly 85 percent of Barnstable’s housing stock is single-family housing, and 81 percent of that is single-family detached units. Hyannis, on the other hand, has a much more even split, with 59 percent of units being single-family and 41 percent being multi-family. Hyannis is one of Barnstable’s seven villages but holds about one-fifth of Barnstable’s housing units. The number of multi-family units in Hyannis is higher than the overall Town’s multi-family housing stock, with the remaining six villages having significantly fewer multi-unit housing options. Of Barnstable’s overall housing stock, approximately 3.4% of total units are registered for short-term rental; this number fluctuates seasonally and not all registered rentals are actively being advertised.³ About one quarter of homes in town are second homes, which may or may not be seasonally rented.⁴ Vacancy rates in Barnstable indicate that the town has a 1.8

¹ Quick Facts Barnstable County, Massachusetts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/barnstablecountymassachusetts>

² Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2022 (5-Year Estimates) - ACS2022_5yr

³ Local Town data on short-term rentals from the month of August 2022 (to get a snapshot of a peak tourist time). Counted only short-term rentals across all available short-term rental platforms (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) that actively rented in the past year (these short-term rentals may or may not be registered with the state).

⁴ Cape Code Commission housing market analysis, 2017 – projected for 2022. 6,319 second homes and 21,348 year-round homes reported for the mid-Cape in 2022. This totals 27,667 homes, of which 23 percent are second homes.

percent vacancy of ownership units; there were 52 single-family home sales in Barnstable in 2023 compared with 114 in 2020.⁵ The rental vacancy rate in 2023 was estimated to be around 1.7%.⁶

The town saw a four (4) percent increase in renter-occupied housing between 2010 and 2020, but available rentals remain scarce; the rental vacancy rate remains around 1.7%. Barnstable has comparatively more rental housing than most surrounding towns at 74 percent owner-occupied and 26 percent renter occupied. Hyannis shows much closer tenure parity with 56.6 percent renter-occupied units.

Barnstable experiences a mismatch between the number of people living in a home and the number of bedrooms in that home. While most Barnstable households are one or two people, most of its homes have three bedrooms, suggesting a need for more studio, one-, and two-bedroom housing options. Housing prices are on the rise. Between 2021-2022 the median sales price for a home in Barnstable rose by 62 percent⁷. The median sales price for a single-family home in 2023 was \$799,000.⁸ Rental costs have also increased and are anticipated to continue to rise. In 2023, market data indicated rental units averaged \$1,924 per month, although observed rents for available units advertised online and reported by the community trended much higher.⁹

DATA SHEET

[Insert Data Sheet Graphics]

GOALS & STRATEGIES

The Town is currently finalizing an updated Housing Production Plan (HPP) with further data and narrative identifying housing needs, and proposed strategies to meet community housing goals including:

- Achieve and maintain the state’s goal under Chapter 40B that 10 percent of Barnstable’s year-round housing units are countable on its Subsidized Housing Inventory, while also addressing documented local and regional needs. This includes, but is not limited to, affordable year-round senior and intergenerational housing opportunities, affordable year-round rental and ownership housing, and housing for residents with special needs.
- Support the growing need for seasonal and year-round housing options for employees, and for more diverse housing options accessible to moderate-income individuals and families.
- Ensure new development promotes a high quality of life for its residents and is consistent with Town-wide smart growth policies and protects natural resources by reusing vacant or underutilized properties, and by locating near public transportation, infrastructure.

⁵ Banker & Tradesman Median Sale Prices and Housing Sales

⁶ CoStar Annual Market Report; Barnstable Multi-Family

⁷ Banker & Tradesman Median Sale Prices

⁸ Banker & Tradesman Median Sale Prices and Housing Sales

⁹ CoStar Annual Market Report; Barnstable Multi-Family

- Assist in stabilizing housing and provide housing assistance programs and services for Barnstable’s most vulnerable residents – especially those living in inadequate housing conditions, homeless, or at risk of homelessness.
- Enhance local capacity to implement housing initiatives and strengthen working partnerships with local and regional organizations focused on addressing housing needs in Barnstable and the region.
- Partner to promote greater public awareness and understanding of Barnstable’s housing crisis through continued research, outreach, and public education of our housing needs.

Planning, Policy, and Zoning Strategies

- Strategy: Pursue the extension of Barnstable’s residential property tax exemption to Barnstable property owners that provide year-round rentals to income-eligible tenants with incentives for local preference. Coordinate partnerships with local and regional organizations to incentivize year-round rentals. Explore opportunities to address rising utility costs through installation of solar panels and by improving energy efficiency of existing structures through weatherization.
 - Consider opportunities to use the residential property tax exemption incentive to strengthen the Accessory Affordable Apartment Program.
- Strategy: Develop strategies that will address the seasonal housing challenges unique to the region, including pursuing the ability to place year-round deed-restrictions on residential units, ensuring that the seasonal units are tailored for J-1 and H-2B programs.
 - Consider opportunities for community workforce housing development through which businesses could secure units for their staff.
 - Explore increasing taxes for seasonal properties to support housing efforts.
- Strategy: Support contextual, village-scaled mixed-use and multi-unit development and redevelopment, enabling better use of existing development by implementing community-supported planning initiatives and zoning amendments, and studying what design, scale, and type of housing may be appropriate in commercial corridors and pedestrian-oriented village centers. Coordinate efforts for each unique village and ensure future development within the regional commercial center enables a walkable and connected network with access to community open space.
- Strategy: Explore opportunities to incentivize amenities including open space, active family-oriented recreation, and opportunities for farmers markets in addition to flexible neighborhood-scale and community-based retail and services considering future changes to the market.

- Strategy: Identify zoning amendments and other strategies to support missing middle and "living little" forms of housing, such as allowing single-family home conversions enabling multiple units, duplexes, cottage clusters, townhouses, tiny homes, cohousing, and infill designs.
 - Explore options to implement M.G.L Chapter 40Y, "Starter Home Zoning Districts" and other opportunities that promote attainable and affordable equity and wealth building long-term homeownership opportunities.

- Strategy: Amend zoning to incentivize development and redevelopment of affordable assisted or independent living units for low-income residents of all ages and abilities including, but not limited to, seniors, the town's workforce population, young adults, and residents with disabilities, such as expedited permitting, zoning relief, and density bonuses.
 - Explore opportunities to build upon existing feasibility studies at the Cape Cod Community College to develop a community node with housing and public transportation.

- Strategy: Strengthen the inclusionary affordable housing ordinance by requiring a higher percentage of affordable units at a variety of income levels, and making the required percentage proportionate to the size of the development.
 - Look for opportunities to provide expedited permitting, zoning relief, density bonuses, and financial subsidy for developments that provide affordable housing beyond what is required.
 - Establish an in-lieu of fee that is comparable to the housing market and can be utilized to support local housing initiatives.
 - Enhance public value with new development through incorporation of amenities and by requiring additional affordable units at lower Area Median Income (AMI) in addition to workforce housing at median income levels.

- Strategy: Consider regulations and other policies focused on short-term rentals to the extent they impact year-round affordable housing.

- Strategy: Pursue the creation of affordable year-round housing on vacant and/or underutilized land or properties as consistent with the Local Comprehensive Plan.

- Strategy: Consider a zoning amendment to define "underutilized properties" in locations consistent with the Local Comprehensive Plan to allow redevelopment and re-use for multi-unit housing through expedited permitting, zoning relief, and density bonuses.

- Strategy: Explore opportunities to incorporate year-round housing ensuring walkable communities with access to public transportation and open space at the Cape Cod Community College, within Independence Park (Regional Economic Center), and underutilized properties along Route 132 and within Downtown Hyannis such as on North Street.

- Strategy: Plan and partner with entities to produce permanent supportive housing for unhoused people, temporary housing for seasonal workforce, and affordable housing for members of the community who are housing stressed but do not need services.

Local Initiative & Programmatic Strategies

- Strategy: Pursue community-supported opportunities to add housing on Town properties, especially the Marstons Mills School (730 Osterville West Barnstable Road, land around the Barnstable Adult Community Center, and other opportunities as may be identified as appropriate.
- Strategy: Closely coordinate implementation of the Town’s Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan and housing planning to address both natural resource protection and housing needs and continue to support upgrades to wastewater infrastructure in the Downtown Hyannis Growth Incentive Zone.
 - Coordinate a build-out analysis, for the entire town, overlaying future sewer services areas, and current and anticipated land dedicated to water supply and protection, with the town’s zoning to comprehensively consider opportunities for future housing and open space.