

# **DUKES COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY**

## **ANNUAL REPORT, 2020**

As of this writing in January 2021, the full effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Island housing of all types are only partially understood while they are sure to be felt for many years to come. In 2020, the decades long steady, incremental loss of year-round rentals and ownership opportunities within reach of working Island households was replaced with a surge to new levels of unattainability. A record setting number of property purchases coupled with year-round use of summer homes by their owners has removed rentals of all types from the market and helped force remaining prices up past the ability of most wage earners on the Island. These new factors underscore the importance of efforts by the towns and their partners to develop and secure rentals at all levels of financial need and ability for the members of our community and service economy.

Back when the six towns of Martha's Vineyard established the Dukes County Regional Housing Authority through State public charter in 1986, it was in response to the Island's much slower but growing need for stable year-round affordable & community housing. The Island-wide Housing Forum of 2000 resulted in several significant housing efforts including the six-town agreement to proportionately share the administrative costs of the Housing Authority. Fully funded by the towns since 2005, the staff of the Housing Authority works daily with households in search of affordable rentals and home ownership while collaborating with town, state, and island-wide efforts to provide year-round rentals, rental assistance and homelessness prevention; homebuyer training, lottery support and affordability monitoring; and advocacy and planning for future housing program development, management and support.

2020 saw the Housing Authority managing 101 Affordable rentals on 17 properties in 5 island towns. Each apartment requires initial and annual income and tenant certification and apartment inspection, attention to service requests throughout the year, work on household and apartment turnovers, and compliance with multiple funding source requirements including program and household income audits and Fair Housing policy strictures. During this past year, the Housing Authority has supported needed development of new rentals by completing rent-up of 7 new units at the Perlman House including a year-long vetting of Housing Authority policies and materials by Mass Housing, and initial review of materials related to the rent-up of Kuehn's Way being developed by the Island Housing Trust in Tisbury; Meshacket Road by the Town of Edgartown; the Town of Chilmark's planned housing development at Peaked Hill; the Town of West Tisbury's effort on 2 new rentals at Old Courthouse Road as well as on a new parcel currently up for vote at Town Meeting; the Town of Oak Bluff's planned addition of new rental units at the Noyes Building and important new affordable rentals on their Tisbury Edgartown Rd parcel; and the Town of Aquinnah's comprehensive plan for the Town Center inclusive of the first Affordable Rental units in the Town. Daily, the Housing Authority housing answers the questions and assists in the searches for housing by many Islanders households of all types while maintaining a rental waitlist currently numbering over 260 households.

The Housing Authority is appreciative of town voters who support the efforts of their Community Preservation Committees to dedicate annual funding to the Rental Assistance program which helps stabilize an annual average of 65 working island households. Since 2002, the Housing Authority has administered these funds to work with over 325 tenant households and 270 landlords who have utilized Rental Assistance for an average of 3.5 years. Each Rental Assistance situation requires initial and annual income certifications and apartment inspections, support contracts, and lease addendums. Beginning each fall, the Housing Authority provides town Affordable Housing and Community Preservation committees the figures of usage, need, cost and landlord availability necessary for thorough deliberation before Annual Town Meeting funding votes.

Housing Authority work on homeownership in 2020 included the marketing and lottery of one resale of an Edgartown resident homesite & home, the opening of a second resale process and the completion of two transfers related to expiration of thirty-year affordability restrictions; completion of lottery processes for a total of nine homes developed by the Island Housing Trust on Greenwood Ave and Daggett Ave in Tisbury as well assistance with one refinance and preliminary discussions towards two additional resales; assistance to the West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee on one resale and two extended resale efforts; service to towns and owners as affordability monitor for properties in 6 towns; 38 referrals through Edgartown's Demolition Delay by-law; and maintenance of the Homebuyer Clearinghouse used to publicize homebuyer opportunities and currently numbering over 400 island households.

Island-wide, the Housing Authority provides income certifications and administrative assistance for town programs such as accessory apartments, homesite subdivisions and multi-family density allowances. The Housing Authority actively partners with Harbor Homes, the Housing Assistance Corporation, The Resource Inc, the County Manager's office, the Tower Foundation and other organizations that assist with rent, utilities, emergency support and apartment rehabilitation for island tenants and their landlords.

During the pandemic, the staff of the Housing Authority continues its work on individual and community housing needs and opportunities at its office at 21 Mechanic St. off State Road in Vineyard Haven and through remote efforts via email and phone. For more information please call (508) 693-4419 or check our website at <https://housingauthoritymarthasvineyard.org/> where staff emails are also available.

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