

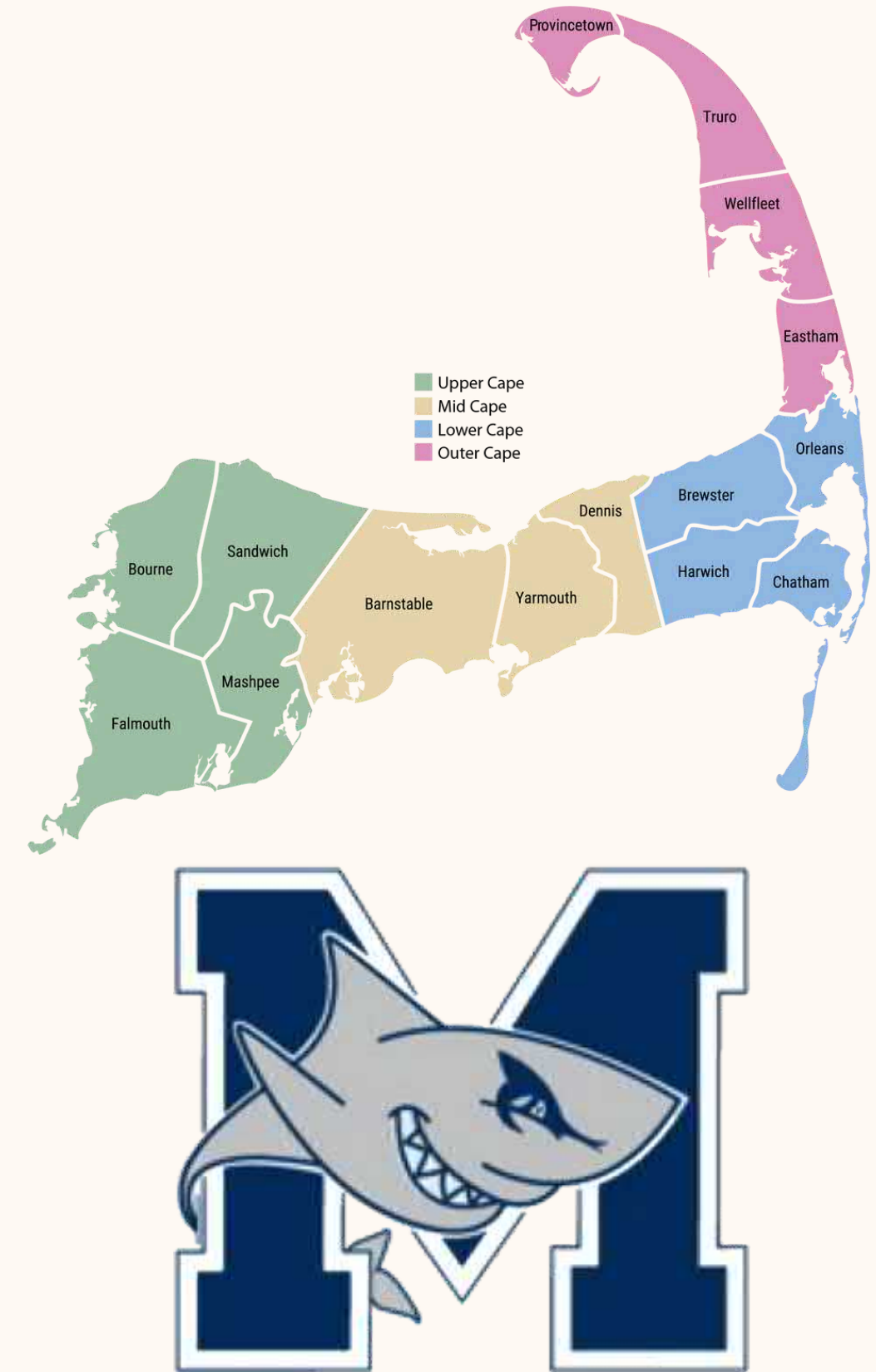
Civics Project 2025: Cape Cod Housing Crisis



Stage 1: Examining Self and Community

We first brainstormed all of the different communities we were apart of, which included Harwich/Chatham, Monomoy High School, the state of Massachusetts, and more. We then thought of issues within our community on Cape Cod. We came up with a list of around 20 issues, and we were able to narrow it down to the 4 most important through voting. Those issues included:

- housing
- pollution
- school fights
- drugs and alcohol



Stage 2

Violence in school

Reports of bullying are highest in middle schools (28%) followed by high schools (16%), combined schools (12%), and primary schools (9%).

Reports of cyberbullying are highest in middle schools (33%) followed by high schools (30%), combined schools (20%), and primary schools (5%).

Housing Crisis

About 70% of the adults who filled out the survey said that they have more than 1 source of income.

93.3% of adults said that they purchased their home before the pandemic.

32.4% of students taking the survey said that their family's living situation felt unstable and 7.4% said they preferred to not say.

11.6% of students said that they had to help pay for house bills and 5.8% said they preferred to not say.

A starter home on Cape Cod has a starting listing price of 550K. "Affordable rent" on Cape Cod is around \$2,300, and can be as much as \$3,000 (per month).



Stage 2

Drugs and alcohol

In 2023 the data shows that about 25% of adults in Massachusetts reported binge drinking at least once in the past month. Throughout 2023 alcohol-related injuries, accidents and long-term health issues has increases drastically

3% of Cape Cod residents or addicted or dependent on heroin or prescription opioids

Pollution

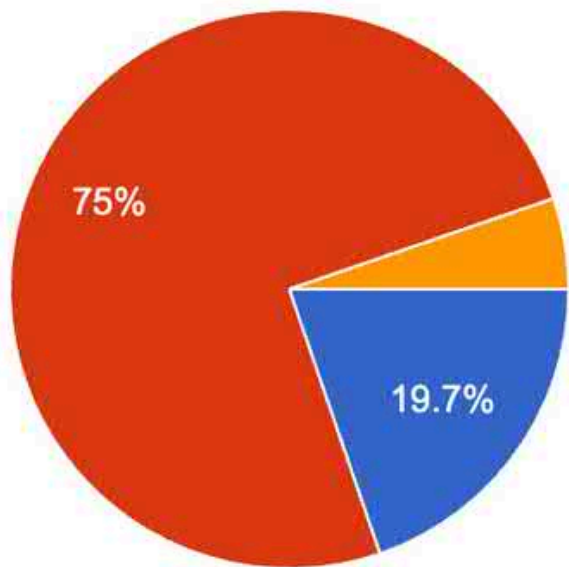
- More than 85% of Cape homes are served by septic systems.
- A combination of nutrient pollution, habitat loss, disease, and damage from boating has reduced Cape Cod's eelgrass beds by 90 percent in the last 100 years.
- Over the past five years, the number of saltwater bays with "unacceptable" water quality increased from 68% to 90%.
- Massachusetts reported at least 70 beach closures in 2023



Stage 3

We divided this project into 4 groups...

Survey Group



Community Experts



Research Group

What other towns have done

Starting Sunday, accessory dwelling units, commonly known as in-law apartments, will be allowed by right in single-family zoning districts across most of Massachusetts, under a law Gov. Maura Healey signed in August.

The law stipulated that the policy would go into effect 180 days after it was signed, which was on Aug. 6, to allow the small, independent living spaces to be built on the same property as a primary residence by right regardless of local single-family zoning ordinances. The Healey administration estimates the law could lead to between 8,000 and 10,000 ADUs over five years.

Control over short-term rental policies was especially important for towns on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, an official from Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities said during a background briefing Thursday. The tourism economy in the region has already turned a lot of the Cape and islands' housing into seasonal rentals, and pushed full-time residents out.

Legislators Group



Stage 3

- We reached out to Massachusetts State Senate, Julian Cyr, but were able to have an in -person class visit with Don Howell (Harwich Select Board) and a virtual visit with Katie McManus (Select Board Candidate) (*Legislature Group*)
- An important community expert we spoke with was Christina Wiseman of the Housing Assistance Corporation (*Community Experts*)
- For research, we studied more on the issue, took student and teacher surveys, and listened to experts speak on the issue (*Survey Group*)
- There are several root causes that play a role in the housing crisis. However, zoning regulations and airbnbs were the two main factors that we considered (*Research Group*)

Stage 3

- About 70% of the adults who filled out the survey said that they have more than 1 source of income.
- 32.4% of students taking the survey said that their family's living situation felt unstable and 7.4% said they preferred to not say.
- Median home price on Cape Cod: \$795,000, Income needed to purchase: \$210,000
- 11.6% of students said that they had to help pay for house bills and 5.8% said they preferred to not say.
- "Affordable rent" on Cape Cod is around \$2,300, and can be as much as \$3,000 (per month).
- After our research, we decided to focus on the issue of Airbnbs and seasonal housing.



Step 4 - Creating a Plan of Action

- We decided that the best course of action would be to support legislation at a local level
- We discussed what the next best step would be to address our problem
- We gathered information pertaining to our local town meeting and educated ourselves on how the democracy process worked at a town level
- We analyzed town warrant options that had pertained to the housing crisis on Cape Cod (Articles 25, 26, 44, & 49)
- We thought about potential outcomes and benefits that could come from each one
- Finally, we chose to support the articles that we felt included a plan to address the root causes of our problem, and most effectively puts that plan into action in a way that helps our community

Stage 5- How we took action

We took action by speaking at a local town meeting in Harwich in support of legislation. Two students got to speak, expressing their concerns about the housing crisis on Cape Cod. During the meeting, Jude and Charlotte talked about supporting article 49, which addressed unsustainable housing practices due to short-term rentals like airbnb. We decided to support article 49 because it targets short-term rental owners and allows housing supply for year-round residents to increase. It incentivises homeowners to convert their short-term rentals to affordable long-term rental units using tax exemptions. Although this applies to only thirty units and does not make up for all potential profits Air BNBs can get, we feel that passing this article will add affordable housing supply as some owners choose to take advantage of it.

- Speaking at town meetings
- Spoke with Don Howell and Katie McManus
- Teamed up with Housing Assistance Corporation



Stage 6 : Reflection

Our class thought this Civics project was very beneficial for our own learning and for the community. We learned more about town meetings and how the town legislation works. At first, we doubted the impact that we could make on the housing crisis on Cape Cod, but by the end, we realized that we could make a difference in our community. With hard work and a lot of research, we were able to make a change.
