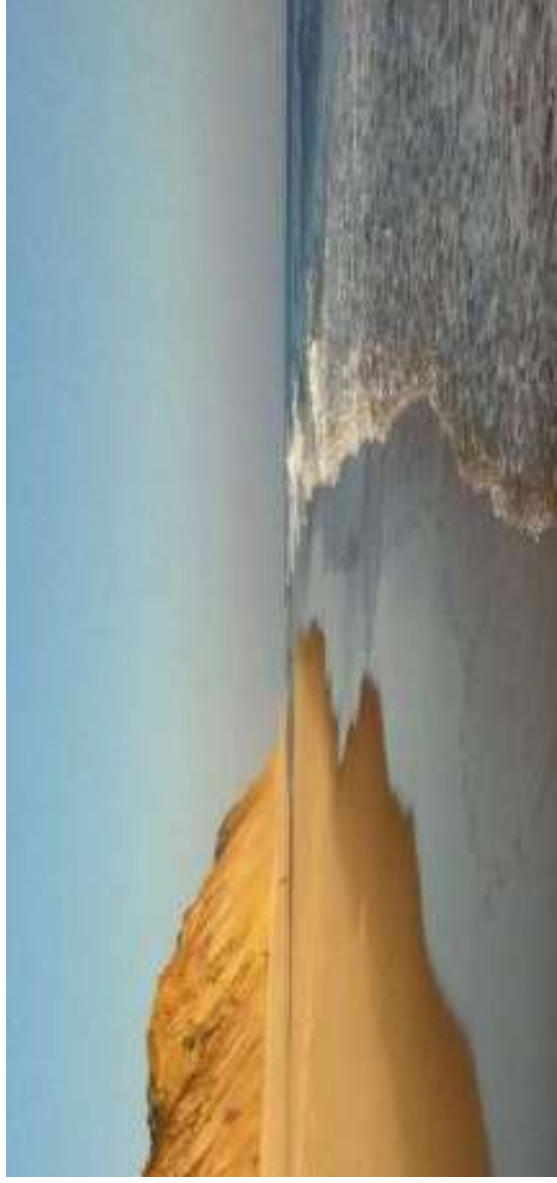


# Town of Truro Economic Development Vision & Strategy



Prepared by  
Truro Economic Development Committee



## I. Introduction

The Town of Truro has prepared this community Economic Development Vision and Strategy to foster sustainable economic activity and help local businesses thrive. The strategy is being developed in tandem with the Truro Local Comprehensive Plan, to ensure that the Economic Development Strategy re-enforces the community's broader long-term goals.

The Truro Economic Development Committee (EDC) led the preparation of the Economic Development Strategy, with assistance from Ridley & Associates, Inc. The members of the EDC include:

- Robert Panessiti, Chair – Sr. Vice President, UBS Financial Services, Inc. (works remotely)
- Nancy Medoff, Vice Chair – Author, Keynote Speaker, Business Coach (works remotely)
- Kristen Roberts, Clerk – Owner, Truro Vineyards and South Hollow Spirits
- Chris LaMarco, Member – Owner, Crossfit Nauset
- Daniel Silva, Member – Owner, Silva Construction

## II. Process

In the first quarter of 2022, the EDC conducted background research to understand and describe Truro's current economic condition, emerging trends, and the issues of greatest concern to local business owners and operators. This information is compiled in *Truro's Economic Overview* found in Appendix A. Information from the Overview is summarized below.

### Data Collection

Statistical information from the US Census, Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance and other sources was used to describe Truro's local economy and relevant community issues that have a bearing on economic performance. It should be noted that only limited 2020 US Census data was available at the time the Overview was prepared, and the Overview uses the best available information. The Overview may be updated as additional 2020 US Census data become available. Highlights of this information include:

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

- Demographics
  - Truro's year-round population has increased by nearly a quarter over the past decade (3<sup>rd</sup> highest on Cape), according to the 2020 US Census
  - Truro's population is relatively older, and well-educated compared to that of the County or State
  - Truro median income lower than for the County or State
  - Trending information from Cape Cod Commission surveys and local municipal service usage suggests that seasonal residents may be choosing to stay in Truro more of each year
- Housing
  - According to Town Assessor's data, an estimated 2/3 of housing units are second homeowner units
  - Median housing price increase 12.5% 2021-22 to \$711,250, *adding to a growing affordability gap*
- Industry mix
  - Truro's industry mix has not changed much in the last decade
  - Outer Cape businesses more seasonally influenced compared to other Cape regions
    - Annual average unemployment rate is 10%, (18.8% in January to 3.3% in August)
- Land Use
  - Of Truro's 21 square miles, approximately 67% is federally owned; 30% is residences and 2% is commercial property
  - 71% of town revenues come from local property taxes, which are predominantly for residential properties

### Focus Groups

The EDC sponsored a series of five focus groups for Truro business owners to provide input and recommendations related to current issues, industry trends and potential solutions to help ensure a diverse and thriving local economy. The focus groups were widely advertised to the public and were designed to convene complementary types of businesses:

- Farming, Marine, Fishing
- Restaurant, Retail, Gallery & Arts
- Overnight Hospitality, Real Estate and Vacation Rental
- Non-profit, Business and Services (including home based businesses)
- Construction and Trade

Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and included two to four representatives of the scheduled industries and non-profit organizations, as well as two members of the EDC. The meetings were facilitated by Ridley & Associates.

Figure 1 provides a high-level summary of the highlights of the focus group conversations. A more thorough description of these focus groups is found in the Truro Economic Overview in Appendix A.



Figure 1. Key Insights from Focus Group Conversations



## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

### Summit

In June 2022 the EDC hosted a community Economic Development Summit outdoors at the Truro Library to review the issues and insights that emerged from the data review and focus groups. Summit participants were asked to share their observations and ideas of what is important to consider in developing a community economic development vision and strategy. Input from the Summit and focus groups, in combination with data on conditions and trends, served as a basis for this proposed economic development vision statement and strategies.

### Next Steps

A draft of the vision and strategy document was made available for public comment, and the EDC held a public meeting to discuss the draft with interested stakeholders. This revised vision and strategy document incorporates public comment. The EDC will submit this plan to the Select Board for approval. It is important to note that this is a living document and will be reviewed and updated as needed to reflect new information and changing conditions.

## III. Vision Statement

The Town of Truro is seeking to foster economic activity that will:

- Advance the quality of life for Truro residents, workforce, and visitors;
- Leverage Truro's unique natural beauty, vibrant arts offerings, and rich local history;
- Sustain Truro's small-town character;
- Promote environmental quality and resilience; and
- Meet community needs for services and goods.

## IV. Strategies & Actions

Proposed economic development strategies are organized in four core areas:

1. Expand Housing Opportunities for Truro's Workforce
2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention
3. Provide Critical Infrastructure
4. Implement, Assess, Adapt

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

For each core area, strategies and implementation actions are proposed, with the level of priority, timeline, desired outcomes, and lead responsible entity indicated.

1. Expand Housing Opportunities for Truro's Workforce		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
<b>1.1 Promote land use /regulatory decisions to facilitate the development of housing at a range of affordability levels and types, including housing suitable for Truro's seasonal and year-round workforce.</b>	<p>1.1.1 Encourage the Town to create centralized and accessible repository of information about housing opportunities and resources, and efforts to expand the supply of housing for Truro's workforce, including use of the Town website and, potentially, creation of a Housing Coordinator position.</p> <p>1.1.2 Encourage the maximum use of the Walsh property for creation of housing that is accessible for the year-round and seasonal workforce.</p> <p>1.1.3 Evaluate the Truro Zoning Bylaw to identify ways to encourage mixed-use development of apartments in existing commercial districts where feasible.</p> <p>1.1.4 Evaluate options for providing housing for seasonal workers, including whether temporary placement of mobile home units on commercial properties can be used for seasonal housing of employees.</p> <p>1.1.5 Consider a home rule petition that would allow the Town to collect a transfer fee on home sales for affordable housing (HB 2895)</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b></p> <p><b>1.1.1</b> Propose Housing Coordinator position for 2023 ATM</p> <p><b>1.1.2</b> According to timeline for Walsh Property Master Plan</p> <p><b>1.1.3-5</b> Complete in time for consideration at 2024 ATM</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <p><b>1.1.1</b> Walsh Property Community Planning Committee master plan maximizing use of the property for housing.</p> <p><b>1.1.2</b> Recommended zoning changes to encourage mixed use development</p>
		<p><b>Lead:</b></p> <p><b>1.1.1</b> Walsh Property Community Planning Committee and Select Board</p> <p><b>1.1.2-5</b> Housing Ad Hoc Committee to work with Planning Board and Town Planner/Land Use Counsel</p>
<b>1.2 Evaluate the use and/or expansion of policies and programs to limit use of housing for seasonal rentals and increase availability of housing for year-round residents.</b>	<p>1.2.1 Evaluate success of Truro's real estate tax incentive to second homeowners who rent their property year-round, and identify ways to increase effectiveness.</p> <p>1.2.2 Evaluate options for controlling growth in the proportion of Truro's housing stock used as seasonal rentals, particularly as corporate holdings.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b></p> <p><b>1.2.1</b> End of 2024</p> <p><b>1.2.2 &amp; 1.2.3</b> Propose for 2024 ATM</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b></p> <p><b>1.2.1</b> Report on effectiveness of tax credit and recommendations for expansion.</p> <p><b>1.2.2 &amp; 1.2.3</b> Recommended bylaws or policies to be submitted to Select Board and Town Meeting</p>

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

1. Expand Housing Opportunities for Truro's Workforce		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
	1.2.3 Evaluate the potential effectiveness of a policy, such as the Vail, CO InDeed program, to purchase deed restrictions on homes dedicated for occupancy by year-round residents in perpetuity.	<b>Lead:</b> <b>1.2.1</b> Town Manager <b>1.2.2 &amp; 1.2.3</b> Designated Town staff and Housing Ad Hoc Committee
1.3 Encourage expansion of public access to education, technical assistance and financial resources for creation of ADUs.	<p>1.3.1 The number of ADUs in Truro should continue to be tracked and an evaluation of current ADU policies should be undertaken to identify ways to increase ADU creation.</p> <p>1.3.2 Encourage awareness of and participation in emerging programs and resources, including the Community Development Partnership's new ADU Resource Center, that are intended to provide access to technical and financial resources for creation of ADUs.</p> <p>1.3.3 Information about ADU loan programs offered by local banks including Seamen's Bank, Cape Cod Five and Cape Cod Cooperative Bank, should be promoted to property owners.</p>	<b>Priority:</b> High <b>Timeframe:</b> 2024 <b>Outcome:</b> <b>1.3.1</b> Recommendations to modify town policies increase use of ADUs. <b>1.3.2</b> Establish and community committee liaison to CDP to facilitate communication of programs to residents and businesses. <b>1.3.3</b> Establish a community committee liaison to local banks to facilitate communication of programs to residents and businesses
		<b>Lead:</b> <b>1.3.1</b> Designated Town staff to work with Planning Board and Town Planner/Land Use Counsel <b>1.3.2 &amp; 1.3.3</b> Designated Town staff and Town Manager
		<b>Priority:</b> Low <b>Timeframe:</b> On-going
		<b>Outcome:</b> <b>1.4.1</b> Compiled written comments from businesses and/or a position statement adopted by the Chamber of Commerce <b>Lead:</b> Designated Town staff in consultation with Chamber of Commerce
1.4 Continue to communicate the link between an adequate supply of affordable housing and Truro's economic well-being and quality of life.	1.4.1 Encourage local business owners and the Chamber of Commerce to articulate their experience of how the housing shortage has affected local businesses. Compile written testimony of this information to share with local committees and local media.	

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
<b>2.1 Promote policies that contribute to a sustainable business environment in Truro</b>	<p>2.1.1 Improve the efficiency of municipal permitting for restaurants, food purveyors, overnight accommodations and temporary/seasonal event sponsors through enhanced online permitting.</p> <p>2.1.2 Work with Town officials to design and publish a user- friendly permitting guidebook to assist existing and new businesses and organizations with meeting permitting requirements.</p> <p>2.1.3 Prior to adopting new policies or regulations, Town officials should proactively reach out to potentially affected businesses to participate in a roundtable discussion to ensure that the full effects of the policy are evaluated.</p> <p>2.1.4 Formalize and expand a Truro business-to-business referral program.</p> <p>2.1.5 Promote measures to help businesses become more energy efficient and climate resilient, through encouraging participation in programs provided by MassSave and Cape Light Compact, as well as local banks that provide lending for solar installation or septic system upgrades.</p> <p>2.1.6 Review the Truro zoning bylaw to identify and address outdated or unnecessary encumbrances to business activity, such as restrictions on wholesale trade, consistent with the Town-approved Local Comprehensive Plan and Economic Development Strategy.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b>  <b>2.1.1</b> 2023  <b>2.1.2</b> 2024  <b>2.1.3</b> 2023  <b>2.1.4-2.1.6</b> 2025</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b>  <b>2.1.1</b> Design and implement a survey of businesses; develop recommendations based on survey results  <b>2.1.2</b> Draft and final permit guidebook issued by the Town  <b>2.1.3</b> Annual business roundtable event with Town officials, Chamber and local businesses  <b>2.1.4</b> Inventory and database of businesses for referral.  <b>2.1.5</b> Higher rate of participation in these programs and services by Truro residents and businesses  <b>2.1.6</b> Recommended zoning amendments</p> <p><b>Lead:</b>  <b>2.1.1</b> Designated Town staff in consultation with Chamber of Commerce  <b>2.1.2</b> Town Manager and designated Town Staff  <b>2.1.3</b> Town Manager, Select Board  <b>2.1.4</b> Designated Town staff in consultation with Chamber of Commerce  <b>2.1.5</b> Designated Town staff in consultation with Chamber of Commerce  <b>2.1.6</b> Town Manager, Planning Board and designated Town Staff</p>
	<p>2.2.1 Recommend that Outer Cape Chambers establish a working group to explore opportunities to increase the impact and cost effectiveness of marketing dollars through coordinated marketing efforts.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> Initiate in 2023</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b>  <b>2.2.1 and 2.2.2</b> Potential joint print, video, digital marketing initiatives  <b>2.2.3</b> Promotion strategy and budget</p>
<b>2.2 Develop a brand and marketing campaign that leverages Truro's strengths: natural beauty, small town character, history and cultural arts</b>		

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
	<p>2.2.2 Explore opportunities to leverage sales and marketing activities undertaken by the Cape Cod and Boston Chambers of Commerce, to increase visibility of the Outer Cape.</p> <p>2.2.3 Work with Truro's Marketing Director to identify ways to promote tourism, including a town budget request to support those efforts.</p>	<p><b>Lead:</b>  <b>2.2.1 and 2.2.2</b> Chamber of Commerce  <b>2.2.3</b> Town Marketing Director in consultation with Chamber of Commerce,</p>
<b>2.3 Support business sectors that are well established in Truro and that create jobs that provide living wage</b>	<p>2.3.1 Hospitality and Overnight Accommodations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify strategies to expand visitor activity into a longer and more robust spring and fall shoulder season, and explore opportunities for non-peak season (i.e., winter) tourism opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote Truro as a special event venue (destination weddings, bachelor/bachelorette party destinations, family reunions, corporate retreats)</li> <li>Identify strategies to amplify and leverage Truro's natural beauty and assets, including proximity to the Cape Cod National Seashore, through ecotourism marketing</li> <li>Establish Truro as a destination for performing and visual arts</li> <li>Curate a "things to do in Truro" list with hyperlinks that could be posted to Town, Chamber and business websites to promote "pre-arrival" planning. This list should include historical tours, arts events, beach and recreation options, hiking trails, fishing charters, faith celebrations, and other special programs and events.</li> <li>Create or endorse and community Facebook page, working with the Chamber and Truro Marketing Director</li> </ul> </li> <li>Create a regional database/network of businesses modeled on the national <i>Seasonal Connect</i> network, that would provide cleaning, appliance repair, plumbing and carpentry services to meet demand during the busy season.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Timeframe:</b> Initiate in 2023</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b>  <b>2.3.1</b> Strategies to support Hospitality and Overnight Accommodations businesses  <b>Lead:</b>  <b>2.3.1</b> Chamber of Commerce, hospitality and overnight accommodation businesses</p>

2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efforts to control growth in the proportion of the housing stock used as seasonal rentals would be beneficial to overnight hospitality businesses. (see 1.2.2)</li> <li>• Address unreliable wifi and cellular service in the region, which is a vital amenity for overnight hospitality businesses to offer.</li> </ul> <p>2.3.2 Construction Trades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure maintenance of the home-occupation as a permitted use in all residential districts.</li> <li>• Participate in regional initiatives identified in the Cape Cod CEDS: The Trades Workforce and Business Development Program</li> <li>• Coordinate and work to expand trades-related workforce and business training programs at technical high schools, colleges, and universities; Cape-First Construction and Procurement Program to encourage private developers and municipal governments to use local businesses for construction and other service.</li> <li>• Evaluate potential to expand tradesman's park at new locations.</li> </ul> <p>2.3.3 Blue Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include local charters and marine businesses in a discussion of any potential changes in policy or regulations at Pamet Harbor</li> <li>• Create a Blue Economy work group consisting of local charter and fishing vessels operators and research organizations to identify opportunities for joint activities, such as using vessels offseason to support research.</li> </ul> <p>2.3.4 Retail and Wholesale Trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the potential for creating or re-enforcing identifiable shopping areas potentially as part of mixed-use re-zoning.</li> <li>• Evaluate the success of Truro Treasures in bringing visitors and spending to Truro and, based on assessment, evaluate ways to expand Truro Treasures as a seasonal weekend of events and attractions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>2.3.2</b> Strategies to support Construction Trades  <b>Lead</b>  <b>2.3.2</b> Chamber of Commerce, construction trades businesses</p> <p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>2.3.3</b> Exploration of weekend attraction events, and shared retail space for local artisans/makers.  <b>Lead</b>  <b>2.3.3</b> Chamber of Commerce, fishing charters and local coastal research organizations</p> <p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>2.3.4</b> Blue economy working group established  <b>Lead</b>  <b>2.3.4</b> Chamber of Commerce, wholesale and retail trade businesses</p>



2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the potential to attract pop-up retail businesses during the peak season</li> <li>• Explore the potential for shared work/maker space and retail space for producers of compatible goods, such as art/pottery, local food products, woodworking, and other local crafts.</li> <li>• See 2.1.4</li> <li>• Work with Truro's successful wholesale businesses to identify infrastructure and/or business support services (broadband/internet/transportation/financing) that would enable them to continue to achieve long-term business goals.</li> </ul> <p>2.3.5 Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify town and stakeholder roles in supporting events such as Truro Agricultural Fair and Truro Treasures, which attract large numbers of visitors., and look for ways to build additional programming around these events.</li> <li>• Ensure continued access to USDA grant programs</li> <li>• Address parking, safety and other concerns to ensure sustainability of an annual Farmers Market</li> <li>• Evaluate the Town's regulation of farm stands to allow local growers to operate farm stands</li> <li>• Participate in regional initiatives identified in the Cape Cod Community Economic Development Strategy: Buy Fresh, Buy Local</li> <li>• Local Cape Cod - Expand Cape Cod's Buy Fresh, Buy Local program to raise awareness of and access to locally-sourced products, including facilitating business-to-business opportunities for producers, restaurants, and wholesale establishments</li> <li>• Identify whether there is any way to provide notification related to mosquito spraying in areas where spraying could affect local bees.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>2.3.5</b> Local agricultural events; expanded opportunities for sale of agricultural goods.</p> <p><b>Lead</b>  <b>2.3.5</b> Chamber of Commerce and agricultural businesses and operators</p>

2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
	<p>2.3.6 Cultural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the economic development potential of establishing a Truro Cultural District to build cultural tourism in Truro</li> <li>Explore the potential for shared work/maker space and retail space for producers of compatible goods, such as art/pottery, local food products, woodworking, and other local crafts.</li> <li>Re-start conversations with Cape Cod National Seashore regarding future use of the Highlands Center</li> <li>Amplify <i>Truro Connections</i>, an initiative that seeks to focus on issues of sustainable living in Truro and create linkages between civic, business and non-profit organizations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome</b> 2.3.6 Application for Truro Cultural District</p> <p><b>Lead</b> 2.3.6 Town Manager, Town Planner/Land Use Counsel, Truro Council for the Arts</p>
2.4 Promote policies that help businesses attract and retain employees, and thereby transition to the next generation of ownership and operation.	<p>2.4.1 Increase the supply of housing that is accessible to Truro's workforce. (See 1.0 above)</p> <p>2.4.2 Evaluate the use of the Truro Childcare voucher program, and whether the vouchers could also be provided for non-resident employees of Truro businesses.</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> High</p>
		<p><b>Timeframe:</b> 2.4.1 See 1 above 2.4.2 2023-2024</p>
		<p><b>Outcome:</b> 2.4.1 See 1 above 2.4.2 Assessment and possible expansion of voucher program</p>
		<p><b>Lead:</b> 2.4.1 See 1 above 2.4.2 Town Manager and designated Town staff</p>
2.5 Support remote and home-based businesses that have the potential to create local jobs and spending with a limited footprint.	<p>2.5.1 For business start-ups, promote awareness of economic development, technical assistance and micro loan programs available through CDP, Coastal Community Capital, Cape Cod Chamber, local lenders, and the <a href="#">Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network Southeast Regional Office</a>.</p> <p>2.5.2 Survey remote and remote and home-based businesses to see if there is a need for any shared facilities or co-working spaces, and assess other services such as broadband, cellular service or transportation infrastructure, that would enable their operations to thrive</p>	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p>
		<p><b>Timeframe:</b> 2.5.1 Ongoing 2.5.2 2024</p>
		<p><b>Outcome:</b> Higher rate of participation in these programs and services by Truro residents and businesses</p>
		<p><b>Lead:</b> 2.5.1 Designated Town staff in consultation with Truro Chamber 2.5.2 Designated Town staff in consultation with Truro Chamber</p>

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

2. Foster Businesses Development and Local Job Creation and Retention		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
<b>2.6 Create strategic alliances to address regional/national issues of concern to Truro businesses</b>	2.6.1 Working with Chamber of Commerce, develop a list of priority regional and national policy issues, including any specific actions that would be beneficial for Truro, Outer Cape, and Cape Cod (e.g., foreign worker visa program, health care cost/availability, education; infrastructure, etc.)	<b>Priority:</b> Low
		<b>Timeframe:</b> 2024-2025
	2.6.2 Work with regional business organizations and federal elected officials to pursue the agenda articulated in 2.5.1 above	<b>Outcome:</b> <b>2.6.1</b> Develop list or policy priorities and identify potential allied organizations and stakeholders <b>2.6.2</b> Action plan supported by allied organizations and stakeholders for implementation
		<b>Lead:</b> Chamber of Commerce

3. Provide Critical Infrastructure		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
<b>3.1 Provide water and wastewater infrastructure that support community needs and protect vital water resources</b>	3.1.1 Support municipal policies and infrastructure investments to ensure adequate water and wastewater capacity to implement the community-approved Economic Development Strategy and Local Comprehensive Plan, including future use of the Walsh Property	<b>Priority:</b> High
		<b>Timeframe:</b> Ongoing
		<b>Outcome:</b> Wastewater and water supply plan to meet future community needs
		<b>Lead:</b> Town Manager and Select Board
<b>3.2 Support the provision of comprehensive and reliable cellular and broadband Internet service</b>	3.2.1 Encourage the Cable & Internet Advisory Committee to update the 2010 survey of un-served and underserved areas in town. 3.2.2 Support regional efforts for the last mile build out of the Open Cape broadband network.	<b>Priority:</b> High
		<b>Timeframe:</b> 2023
		<b>Outcome:</b> Updated quality of service assessment and response plan
		<b>Lead:</b> Select Board and Cable & Internet Advisory Committee
<b>3.3 Create opportunities for commercial and mixed-use development where feasible</b>	3.3.1 Explore the potential for expanding commercially zoned areas, to create more commercial space available to businesses. 3.3.2 Work with Cape Cod National Seashore to determine measures to sustain existing commercial uses in the Seashore district.	<b>Priority:</b> Medium
		<b>Timeframe:</b> Ongoing
		<b>Outcome:</b> Identify areas where addition or expansion of commercial or mixed-use space is feasible and propose zoning change
<b>3.4 Expand transportation options that relieve pressure on</b>	3.4.1 Identify resources to ensure that Truro has an adequate number of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to meet projected demand by residents and visitors.	<b>Lead:</b> Town Planner/Land Use Counsel; Planning Board
		<b>Priority:</b> Low
		<b>Timeframe:</b> 2025

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

3. Provide Critical Infrastructure		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
local roads and support workforce needs	3.4.2 Support expansion of trails and bikeways to increase the connectivity of Truro and reduce stress on local roads.	<b>Outcome:</b> <b>3.4.1</b> EV charging stations added <b>3.4.2</b> Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority services increased
	3.4.3 Survey Truro businesses and workers to determine if changes in Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority public transit service would benefit local businesses or the local workforce; and explore collaboration with the Regional Transit Authority and Cape Cod Commission to enhance transportation options.	<b>Lead:</b> Town Manager and Select Board

4. Implement, Assess, Adapt		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
4.1 Continue to build a data-based understanding of conditions related to the health of Truro's economy and quality of life.	4.1.1 Identify research tasks that could include but not be limited to: Assessing trends with second home owners transitioning full time to Truro and implications for town services; and assessing demand for commercial space in Truro.	<b>Priority:</b> Medium
		<b>Timeframe:</b> 2024
		<b>Outcome:</b> Identify research needs and secure funding
		<b>Lead:</b> Town Manager, designated Town staff
4.2 Support adaptive implementation of the Economic Development Strategy	4.2.1 Create an administrative structure with ongoing capacity to implement, adapt and track recommendations and respond to new opportunities over time. Maintain the EDC as an ad hoc committee that reconvenes every five years.  4.2.2 Designate Town staff person to coordinate Economic Development Strategy implementation and identify resource needs; prepare a budget.  4.2.3 Identify funding to address resource needs through grants or town appropriations, to support implementation of the Economic Development Strategy.  4.3.1 Identify assessment methods, using the outcomes identified in the Strategy as a starting point.	<b>Priority:</b> High
		<b>Timeframe:</b> 2023 and ongoing
		<b>Outcome:</b> <b>4.2.1</b> Administrative structure, revised EDC charge, <b>4.2.2</b> Annual EDC implementation budget <b>4.2.3</b> Grant proposals
		<b>Lead:</b> Town Manager, designated Town staff
4.3 Track progress in the implementation of the		<b>Priority:</b> Medium
		<b>Timeframe:</b> 2023 and ongoing

## Truro Economic Development Vision and Strategy

4. Implement, Assess, Adapt		
Strategy	Actions	Implementation
<b>Economic Development Strategy, and adapt to changing conditions and new opportunities</b>	4.3.2 Review status based on assessment tools and identify annual goals and implementation priorities from the Economic Development Strategy. 4.3.3 Update Economic Development Strategy every five years, as needed.	<b>Outcome:</b> <b>4.3.1 &amp; 4.3.2</b> Annual implementation goals; Annual report to Select Board by designated Town staff <b>4.3.3</b> Updated Economic Development Strategy <b>Lead:</b> Town Manager and designated Town staff; EDC when convened
<b>4.4 Continue to engage a cross section of stakeholders in the implementation and adaptation of the Economic Development Strategy</b>	4.4.1 Develop a public engagement plan incorporating tools such as surveys, focus groups, and online engagement	<b>Priority:</b> High <b>Timeframe:</b> 2023 and ongoing
	4.4.2 Use tools such as Survey research, focus groups, and online engagement formats.	<b>Outcome:</b> <b>4.4.1</b> Engagement Plan <b>4.4.2 &amp; 4.4.3</b> Survey and focus group results regarding community and business owner perceptions.
	4.4.3 Build networks with municipal, regional and civic organizations in Truro and on the Lower/Outer Cape	<b>Lead:</b> Town Manager and designated Town staff

## V. Acknowledgments and Supporting Information

The EDC wishes to thank the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to this effort (alphabetically):

Susan Areson, Select Board  
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 Kristin Reed, Select Board  
 Sharon Rooney, Tighe & Bond  
 Elizabeth Sturdy, Planning Department Administrator  
 Darrin Tangeman, Town Manager  
 Truro Chamber of Commerce  
 Truro Public Library

Sources used in compiling this report are contained in Appendix A.

# Truro Economic Overview



Truro Economic Development Committee



June 2022



## **Truro's Economic Overview**

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## **Introduction**

The Town of Truro is preparing a community Economic Development Strategy to help foster sustainable economic activity and help local businesses thrive. The strategy is being developed in tandem with the Truro Local Comprehensive Plan, to ensure that the Economic Development Strategy re-enforces the community's broader long-term goals.

The preparation of the Economic Development Strategy is being led by the Truro Economic Development Committee (EDC), with assistance from Ridley & Associates, Inc. In the first quarter of 2022, the EDC conducted background research to understand and describe Truro's current economic condition, emerging trends, and the issues of greatest concern to local business owners and operators.

*Truro's Economic Overview* summarizes the background information compiled in this first step. Part I of this overview provides statistical information from the US Census, Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance and other sources to describe Truro's local economy and relevant community issues that have a bearing on economic performance. It should be noted that only limited 2020 US Census data have been publicly released, and this Overview uses the best available information. The Overview may be updated as additional 2020 US Census data become available. Part II summarizes insights gleaned from a series of five focus groups hosted by the EDC. Part III identifies issues and topics to be explored through a Truro Economic Development Summit.

In Spring 2022 the EDC will host a community Economic Development Summit to review the topics raised in this Overview. The summit will be designed to formulate the community's economic development vision and goals, and identify strategies to accomplish the goals. An Economic Development Strategy will be compiled based on the summit, and circulated for public comment and review by the Select Board and other stakeholders, and will then be finalized.

## **Part I. Truro by the Numbers: Demographic and Industry Profile**

### **Population**

Truro's year-round population has increase by nearly a quarter over the past decade. (Table 1) This was the third highest rate of population increase among Cape towns in the last decade, with Wellfleet and Provincetown slightly higher.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, compiled by Cape Cod Commission

The Town estimates that the local population increases seven-fold in the summer, to between 15,000 – 20,000 people.<sup>2</sup>

Truro’s population is getting older. Median age has risen steadily over the past thirty years, from 42.7 in 1990, to 45.7 in 2000 to 60.3 in 2020. Over this same period, the share of population under 24 has dropped 15% while the share of population over 65 has increased by 10%. The proportion of working age population of 25-64 year olds has ranged between 57% and 61% within the past 30 years.

Truro has a relatively well educated population, with nearly half (48.5%) of the population having a bachelors degree or higher, compared to the County (43.4) or State (43.7)<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1. Population and Race**

	2020	%	2010	%	%Change 2010-2020
Total	2454		2003		23
African American or Black	74	3	39	2	90
American Indian & Alaska Native	5	0	4	0	25
Asian	16	1	10	1	60
White	2222	95	1911	97	16
Other	26	1	9	0	189

Source: 2020 Census

**Table 2. Population Age Distribution in Truro**

	2020	2000	1990
0-24	10%	21%	25%
25-64	60%	61%	57%
65+	30%	17%	20%
Median Age	60.3	45.7	42.7

Source: 2005 Local Comprehensive Plan, 2020 ACS

## Households

Truro has 601 households with an average household size 1.86, which is smaller than for the County (2.2) or state (2.5). Truro’s household median income of \$68,367 is 8% lower than the median income in the County (\$74,336) and 16% lower than median income in state (\$81,215).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Town of Truro website

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019, compiled by Cape Cod Commission

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019, compiled by Cape Cod Commission

## Housing

Truro has a total of 3,001 housing units, a reduction of 76 units (-2.5%) from 2010–20.<sup>5</sup> More than half, 58.35%, of Truro’s housing units are vacant. This is a 342-unit drop in vacant units (-16.34%).<sup>6</sup> Since second homes are counted in the category of vacant housing units, it is possible that the decrease in vacant units over the past decade may be due to more second homeowners choosing to live in the Truro home year-round.<sup>7</sup> Town Administration estimates that 60%-80% of housing units in Truro are second homes and of those, approximately 600 are used for short-term rentals.<sup>8</sup>

Two new surveys sponsored by the Cape Cod Commission provide some insight into new homeowner and second homeowner trends and indicate that new and second homeowners plan to spend more time on Cape Cod.

A survey of new homeowners found that 90% of respondents use or plan to use their new home as their primary residence. Of Outer Cape respondents to the survey, 41% said they were year round residents now, and 52% describe them selves as part time residents. Slightly more than one-third of Outer Cape respondents said their home purchase was influenced by the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

A survey of second homeowners found that “personal use of second homes appears to have increased both in terms of days of occupancy and self-reported use of second homes.”(p1) “Compared to prior years, second homeowners were more likely to report plans to use the home as their primary residence or convert it to their primary residence. However use of the second home as a rental property remained consistent with prior years.”(p.2) The pandemic has influenced the use of second homes. Forty-three percent of Outer Cape respondents said they spent more time on Cape than previous years and 11% said they allowed friends and acquaintances to use their Cape Cod house for extended periods of time.<sup>10</sup>

Like other parts of the Cape, Truro is experiencing tightening of the housing market. The median home sales price in Truro rose 12.5% 2020-21, from \$632,500 to \$711,250. This increase compares with much larger price increase in surrounding towns (32.9% in Wellfleet and 20.4% in Provincetown).<sup>11</sup> The number of houses for sale in Truro has declined. New listings in Truro

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<sup>5</sup> 2020 Census compiled by Cape Cod Commission

<sup>6</sup> 2020 Census compiled by Cape Cod Commission

<sup>7</sup> Schaefer, Chloe, Cape Cod Commission, personal communication, April 14, 2022

<sup>8</sup> Based on Assessor’s computation of percentage of second home personal property bills versus habitable parcels, 2021

<sup>9</sup> Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts, Cape Cod New Homeowners Survey-2021, December 2021 (Updated February 2022)

<sup>10</sup> Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts, Cape Cod Second Homeowners Survey-2021, December 2021 (Updated February 2022)

<sup>11</sup> Cape Cod & Islands Association of Realtors, Annual Report on the Cape Cod Housing Market, 2021

dropped 27.1% 2020-21, from 140 to 102. Closings dropped 3.3% from 120 to 116. Homes for sale went from 31 in 2020 to 5 in 2021, a drop of close to 84%. <sup>12</sup>

### **Housing Affordability**

- 2015 housing data generated by the Cape Cod Commission showed that Truro households earning between 50% and 120% of median income faced a significant housing affordability gap (Table 3). <sup>13</sup> This housing affordability gap would likely have widened with recent increases in median home price.

**Table 3. Affordable Housing Prices for Households Earning 50-120% of Median Income**

%Median Household Income	MHI	Affordable House Price (% of median home value)
50	29,879	102,835 (21%)
80	47,086	176,683 (37%)
100	59,758	226,449 (47%)
120	71,709	276,644 (58%)

Source: Cape Cod Regional Housing Market Analysis, 2017

- Only 2.29% of Truro's year-round housing units are deed restricted affordable and counted in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for the purposes of the MGL Chapter 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law. <sup>14</sup> Communities with an SHI above 10% are afforded greater control over potential MGL Ch 40B housing development proposals, which are allowed to supersede local zoning.

### **Residential Tax Rates**

Truro's average single-family residential tax bill of \$6,401 is ranked 137 among the 351 towns in Massachusetts. Table 4 shows Truro's average single-family tax bill among towns with comparable FY2022 operating budgets (\$20 million to \$25 million). Truro's average residential tax bill represents 12.88% of per capital income as reported by Massachusetts Department of Revenue. As shown in Table 4, this rate compares with a high of 18.8% (Merrimac) and a low of 8.51% (Newbury) among towns with comparably sized operating budgets.

<sup>12</sup> Cape Cod & Islands Association of Realtors, Annual Report on the Cape Cod Housing Market, 2021

<sup>13</sup> Economic Policy Resources and Crane Associates, Inc., Cape Cod Regional Housing Market Analysis, 2017, <https://www.capecodcommission.org/our-work/housing-market-analysis/>

<sup>14</sup> MA Department of Housing and Community Development Ch40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, Biennial Update

**Table 4. Comparison of Tax Rates and Average Tax Bills**

DOR Code	Municipality	Year	Single Family Values	Single Family Parcels	Average Single Family Value	Single Family Tax Bill*	Single Family Tax Bill as % of Value*	DOR Income Per Capita	Average Tax Bill as a % of Income	Rank**
011	Ashburnham	2022	716,992,274	2,449	292,769	5,527	1.89	36,488	15.15	185
037	Bloxborough	2022	793,227,500	1,210	655,560	11,420	1.74	61,952	18.43	28
074	Deerfield	2022	486,175,260	1,428	340,459	5,165	1.52	43,189	11.96	206
080	Dudley	2022	985,266,200	3,195	308,378	3,608	1.17	29,142	12.38	324
092	Essex	2022	661,016,100	994	665,006	10,441	1.57	70,424	14.83	37
111	Granby	2022	606,702,825	2,063	294,088	5,605	1.91	34,242	16.37	181
116	Groveland	2022	982,158,900	1,925	510,212	7,383	1.45	42,413	17.41	93
117	Hadley	2022	615,159,400	1,677	366,821	4,468	1.22	36,661	12.19	259
179	Mendon	2022	990,653,800	1,962	504,920	7,781	1.54	57,369	13.56	79
180	Merrimac	2022	758,357,800	1,656	457,946	7,483	1.63	39,810	18.80	87
205	Newbury	2022	1,531,585,400	2,397	638,959	6,217	0.97	73,077	8.51	148
250	Rochester	2022	854,019,453	1,813	471,053	6,001	1.27	44,102	13.61	160
276	Southampton	2022	780,666,300	2,160	361,420	5,447	1.51	41,806	13.03	190
294	Templeton	2022	660,268,700	2,484	265,809	4,051	1.52	27,597	14.68	297
300	Truro	2022	1,758,097,274	2,123	828,119	6,401	0.77	49,681	12.88	137
324	West Newbury	2022	935,286,800	1,390	672,868	8,754	1.30	70,872	12.35	59
327	West Tisbury	2022	1,810,145,523	1,469	1,232,230	7,172	0.58	41,970	17.09	100

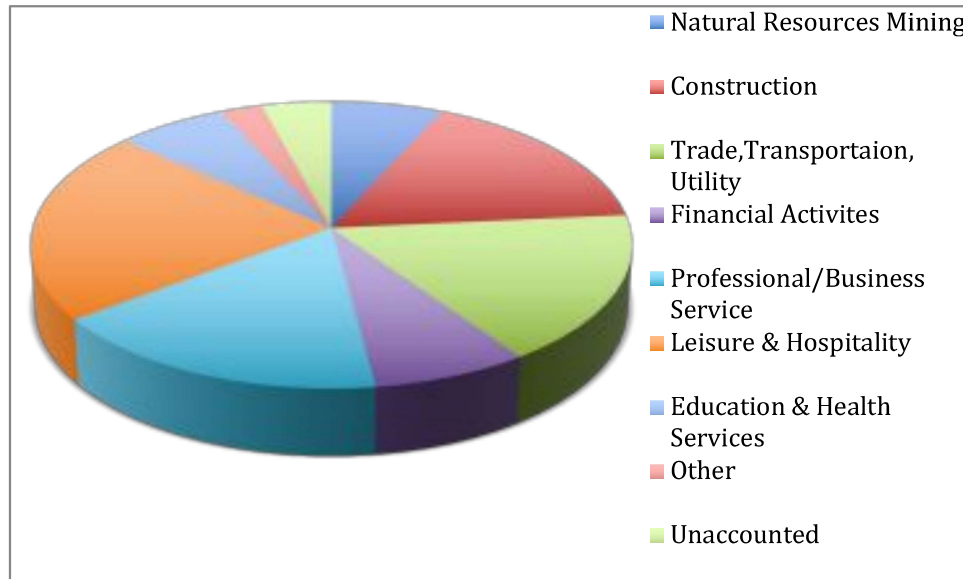
Source: MA Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services

**Industry Mix and Economic Sectors**

Truro had 119 business establishments in 2020, compared to 116 in 2010. The distribution of business establishments across industries has not changed markedly over the past decade. Roughly three quarters of these establishments are service-providing businesses. Leisure and hospitality is the leader in this category (26/22%); followed by transportation and wholesale and retail trade (20/17%); professional and business services (20/17%); banking and real estate (9/8%); and education and health services (8/7%). The other one-quarter of these establishments are considered goods-producing businesses, including fishing (8/7%) and construction trades (20/17%).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2020 Wage Report





**Figure 1. Truro business establishments by industry segment**

Total employment generated by the 119 establishments in Truro averages 562 employees per month on an annual basis, and 660 per month over the months of May through October. However, Truro averages 475 employees per month during the off-season months of November through April.<sup>16</sup>

Average weekly wages of \$1,035 vary by industry. Higher wage industries include Professional and Technical Services (\$2,102) and lower end of the wage scale is Leisure and Hospitality (\$850) and Retail Trade (\$860).<sup>17</sup>

The twelve-month average unemployment rate for Truro Jan 2021 to December 2021 was 10%, and ranged from a high of 18.8% in January to 3.3% in August.<sup>18</sup>

Blue economy: The Blue Economy includes marine-based businesses and enterprises that thrive due to Truro's access to ocean resources. This encompasses fishing, shellfishing, aquaculture, and fishing charters that operate out of Pamet Harbor or Provincetown. It also encompasses marine research enterprises. Truro is home to leading edge organizations involved in oceans research, including the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies Highland Center coastal observation site; and the Cape Cod National Seashore Atlantic Research and Learning Center.

Cultural economy: Truro has a number of regionally significant cultural, entertainment and

<sup>16</sup> Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2020 Wage Report

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2020 Wage Report

<sup>18</sup> Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2020 Wage Report

historical venues that attract patrons from across the Cape. These include Payomet Performing Arts Center, Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill; and the Truro Historical Society Highland House Museum and Cobb Archive. Truro is home to numerous other independent artists. The Select Board's FY2022 goals include working with the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Economic Development Committee and Truro Cultural Council to designate a cultural district in Truro.

"Cultural tourism includes performance, artistic, architecture, historical, recreational, and natural resources...[Arts and culture] is also an important economic driver, attracting visitors and second homeowners to Cape Cod."<sup>19</sup>

Construction Trades: Approximately 29 businesses in Truro are identified as construction trades. Anecdotally, many of these businesses have a single tradesperson or small crew and work primarily on the Outer Cape. Many trades businesses operate in the residential zoning district under the Town's Home Occupation Bylaw. Tradesman Park is a four-building, approximately 40,000-square-foot rental facility that provides work and storage space for small contractors, electricians, plumbers and others. Tradesman Park South consists of two buildings with 25,000 sf of climate-controlled storage and 14 bays for rent.

Agriculture: Truro's agricultural segment includes approximately twenty local growers that supply local markets and restaurants. Sustainable Cape coordinates seasonal Truro Farmers Market which operates one morning a week from June through September, as well as the annual Truro Agricultural Fair. Local growers are also engaged with providing food to local food assistance programs on the Outer Cape.

Wholesale/Retail Trade: Truro has approximately four wholesale trade businesses and ten retail trade businesses. Truro Vineyards, Chequessett Chocolate, and Atlantic Spice Co. are among the businesses that rely on online sales for a large portion of annual sales. Anecdotally, retail sales are seasonally influenced, with higher sales volume occurring during May through October. Robust online sales allow some of the businesses to keep their local retail operation open year round.

Tourism/Overnight Hospitality: Leisure and Hospitality is the largest industry segment in Truro. Including vacation rentals, cottages, inns, restaurants, and other amenities and attractions. These businesses are a main driver of economic activity from May through October, but are nearly all closed during the off-season months.

"About one-third of all employment in the region is directly related to tourism in the Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade industries, compared with about 20% or

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<sup>19</sup> Cape Cod Community Economic Development Strategy, page 34.

less statewide.<sup>20</sup> However, most jobs in these industries pay lower wages, making it difficult for employees to afford to live on the Cape.”<sup>21</sup> This characterization applies to employment in Truro as well.

### **Regional Economy**

Truro is part of the Cape Cod regional economy and, within that economy, the Outer Cape sub-region comprised of Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro and Provincetown. As described in the Cape Cod Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), towns on the Outer Cape have smaller year round populations, a higher percentage of undeveloped land owing to the Cape Cod National Seashore, and a higher ratio of housing units to year round residents compared with towns in other Cape Cod sub-regions. As a result, the economies of the Outer Cape towns experience more of a seasonal influence than the other twelve Cape towns. According to the CEDS, “this sub-region of the Cape experiences the most significant seasonal changes in population, housing, and the economy, and is very heavily focused on the tourism industry.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Land Use**

Truro has a land area of 21 square miles (13,990.5 acres). The Cape Cod National Seashore accounts for 9,462.2 acres or 67% of land area in Truro, and much of this is federally owned.<sup>23</sup>

Truro’s landscape includes frontage on Cape Cod Bay and Atlantic Ocean, and extensive dunes and health lands. Truro’s 26 miles of shoreline include eleven town beaches on Cape Cod Bay and ocean beaches along the Cape Cod National Seashore. The Town also has seven freshwater kettleponds.<sup>24</sup>

Land use in Truro is predominantly residential. The Residential District accounts for 4,224.4 acres or 30% of land area, and much of the Seashore District is also in residential use.<sup>25</sup> Duplex houses and apartments are not an allowed use in residential districts. However, according to Section 40.1 of the zoning bylaw, the Zoning Board of Appeals may issue a Special Permit for duplexes. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed “by right” with a permit from the Building Commissioner. A total of 11 ADUs have been permitted since 2016. An Affordable Rental Housing Overlay District encompasses approximately 10.6 acres at the site of Sally’s Way, the library and community center.

Approximately 2% of land area in Truro is zoned commercial. Truro has a total of 195,791 square feet of commercial space. Of this amount, 165,032 square feet are located in five districts zoned for commercial activity in Town:

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<sup>20</sup> From CEDS reference to Cape Cod Housing Market Analysis. 2017. [www.capecodcommisison.org/housing](http://www.capecodcommisison.org/housing)

<sup>21</sup> Cape Cod Community Economic Development Strategy, page 33.

<sup>22</sup> Cape Cod Economic Development Strategy, page 25.

<sup>23</sup> Jon Nahas, Truro Town Assessor

<sup>24</sup> Truro Open Space Plan, 2015

<sup>25</sup> Jon Nahas, Truro Town Assessor.

- Route 6A North Truro Limited Business district is intended to provide space for professional offices in an otherwise residential district (6,576 square feet)
  - Truro Center Limited Business district is intended to enable and foster the mix of retail businesses and restaurants together with single-family homes historically characteristic of this village (3,157 square feet).
  - Beach Point Limited Business district is intended to enable, define, and control the traditional vacation cottages and other activities in this area, together with any conversions of cottage or cabin colonies, motor courts, motels or hotels (72,988 square feet).
  - Route 6 General Business district is intended to enable, define, and control the establishment of larger businesses as well as residential housing, in this high-visibility part of Truro (80,811 square feet).
  - North Truro Center General Business district is intended to foster larger businesses as well as hotels and restaurants together with residences, while protecting the small-town flavor of this historic center (1,500 square feet).
- An additional 14,357 square feet of commercial space is located in the Seashore district, and 16,362 square feet in Residential district. This commercial use is considered lawfully nonconforming (grandfathered). Generally speaking, if the non-confirming use is discontinued for more than two years, the lawful status of the nonconforming use would terminate, and the property would revert to the underlying zoning.
  - The Town is undertaking evaluation of development/land use/planning issues that have bearing on economic development opportunities in the community:
    - Local Comprehensive Plan - The Town Select Board has appointed a citizen committee to oversee the process of updating the Truro Local Comprehensive Plan. According to its charge, the Committee will seek to “generate consensus on a host of issues that confront the Town such as affordable and community housing, land use, sustainability and environmental protection....to produce a final plan that ...will be regularly used to inform the direction of Town administration and services.”
    - Walsh Property – In 2019 Town Meeting authorized the purchase of the 70-acre Walsh property for general municipal purposes. The Town Select Board has appointed a committee to “lead a community wide process...to engage a wide range of Truro residents in developing plans for the use of the property to be presented at a future town meeting for approval.”

- Highland Center and Cape Cod National Seashore –According to the National Park Service website, the Highlands Center at Cape Cod National Seashore is a science, arts and educational center occupying the former North Truro Air Force Station. Cape Cod National Seashore (CCNS) acquired the 110-acre property in 1994. Since then, the Seashore has adaptively reused six buildings, has made numerous in infrastructure improvements, and spent over \$1.2 million for building demolition. The website also notes that the Center involves “an interactive community of artists, scientists and educators pursuing their work in a national park setting. These public and private program partners enrich each other's work and the center's mission through their distinctive activities.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/caco/planyourvisit/highlands-center-at-cape-cod-national-seashore.htm>



Figure 2. Commercial Districts and Square Footage of Commercial Space in Truro



## Infrastructure

Internet service in Truro is provided by Xfinity (cable), TMobile (5G), Verizon (DSL), Viasat (satellite) and Hugesnet (satellite). Cellular service is provided by AT&T, Verizon and TMobile.<sup>27</sup>

In 2010 Truro's Cable Advisory Committee conducted a study of properties that have or could have access to broadband service from Comcast (Xfinity). The study concluded that "the number of properties with buildings with or having access to Broadband service today via Comcast is between 93 and 98 percent of 2,800 lots with buildings. Thus, our best estimate is that there are between 65 and 198.5 lots, with a building of some kind, without Broadband service from Comcast." However the study notes that conclusions are preliminary because of difficulty obtaining information.<sup>28</sup> Cellular and Internet service within the Cape Cod National Seashore in Truro is widely viewed to be unreliable. The Select Board's FY2022 goals include preparing a letter to the Cape Cod Commission to provide an accurate report of the inadequacy of Internet services and requesting funding and support to resolve the infrastructure deficiency.<sup>[SEP]</sup>

Two-thirds of Outer Cape Respondents to the Cape Cod Commission's survey of second homeowners find that their Internet service allows them to perform necessary tasks, 22% report that the service causes some problems for the household, and 7% said the service is inadequate for necessary tasks.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.inmyarea.com/internet/massachusetts/truro>

<sup>28</sup> Truro Cable Advisory Committee Broadband Availability Report, Phase 1, 2010. <https://www.truro-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3936/f/file/broadbandreportph1.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts, Cape Cod Second Homeowners Survey-2021, December 2021 (Updated February 2022), Table for Question 43.

## **Part II. Issues and Insights from Local Business Owners**

The Truro Economic Development Committee (EDC) sponsored a series of five focus groups for Truro business owners to provide input and recommendations related to current issues, industry trends and potential solutions to help ensure a diverse and thriving economy.

The focus groups were widely advertised to the public and were designed to convene complementary types of businesses:

- Farming, Marine, Fishing
- Restaurant, Retail, Gallery & Arts
- Overnight Hospitality, Real Estate and Vacation Rental
- Non-profit, Business and Services (including home based businesses)
- Construction and Trade

Each focus group lasted approximately one hour and included two to four representatives of the scheduled industries and non-profit organizations, as well as two members of the EDC. The meetings were facilitated by Ridley & Associates.

A summary of the highlights of the focus group conversations follows.

### **What characteristics of Truro are important to your business?**

People are drawn to Truro because of the sense of tranquility it offers and its spectacular coastal landscapes, beaches, wooded ponds, and walking trails. The attraction of these features leads to spending, so there is a real economic impact attributable to the community's natural assets and quaint charm. Many businesses, particularly hospitality businesses, have a lot of repeat customers who have been coming for many years and have a strong connection to Truro.

Preserving Truro's natural, small-town character and environmental quality is in everyone's interests. Business owners expressed a strong affinity for the area, and felt that major benefits of operating a business in Truro are proximity to beaches and walking trails, space to spread out, and peace and quiet. Being next to a National Park is an asset that is very appealing to visitors and is something that could be amplified and promoted. The proximity of arts and entertainment and the Town's strong local history are also appealing features.

It was noted that the 70 percent of land in Truro that is within the Cape Cod National Seashore will help to protect the Town's natural character, and there should be opportunities in the remaining land area to accommodate thoughtful development to address community needs. "No one wants to change the character of Truro, but there is room to address the housing issue and

maintain the character of the Town. By allowing businesses to flourish this will be a more livable community.”

Truro has a strong sense of community, and businesses and organizations support each other in many ways. May businesses and organizations work in partnership with each other and with the Chamber of Commerce and non-profit organizations. Some businesses noted that they are large customers of other local businesses. For example, charter businesses buy fuel locally, and farmers supply local restaurants. Lastly, businesses and organizations make referrals on each other’s behalf.

There also is an engaged part-time resident community that supports local businesses and provides a pool of volunteers for local non-profit organizations.

However, it was noted that conditions in Town have changed over several years making it difficult for some types of businesses to prosper. “There are still people who earn their livelihoods fishing and farming, but there are fewer of them. We need to make sure that these people can continue to earn a living.”

### **What major challenges does your business face?**

The significant shortage of affordable housing needed to attract and retain employees was cited in all five focus groups as by far the most pressing issue facing businesses.

One long time Truro business owner noted, “there is no sense in talking about economic development if the Town does not tackle the housing issue.” He is not able to hire and retain enough employees due to lack of housing, and does not feel the Town is doing enough to address this issue.

The housing problem is especially acute for young workers. It is not realistic to expect workers to travel from Eastham or Provincetown for a job in Truro. There need to be housing options in the community. All other things being equal, employees of the Town or local businesses that live in the mid-Cape area could be expected to take positions closer to their homes when opportunities arise, when child care and transportation costs are factored in.

The implications of the housing shortage for local businesses are multi-faceted. Businesses can’t grow without employees and numerous businesses described how they are unable to attract or retain employees due to the lack of affordable housing. Commuting from mid or upper Cape is not sustainable for most people taking the jobs. The shortage of employees has caused many businesses to reduce hours of operation, take on less work, reduce services offered, and forgo innovations that would lead to growth, income, jobs and spending in the local economy.

With less help than needed available, business owners are unable to scale-up operations. One participant said he could double his business if he had the employees. In some cases the shortage of employees is causing owners to take on more work themselves, leading to burnout and the tendency to reduce hours.

As businesses cut back, other businesses lose important support services. One contractor noted that he purchases coffee and lunch for his crew, but at certain times “you can’t even buy a cup of coffee in Town.” Rather than spend more of his day traveling back and forth to other towns for these services, he will be inclined to take work out of town where you can buy coffee and lunch.

Many businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to retain long-term employees to “learn the ropes” and take on more responsibilities and, potentially, take over the business. As a result, many businesses expressed a concern that there would be no one to continue their business once they retire.

Some participants lamented that many people fail to understand that the ultimate effect of these changes will be to diminish the quality of life in Truro. Fewer businesses and restaurants will be open, fewer tradespeople will be available, fewer support services such as medical care will be conveniently located. It was noted that town Fire Department positions are going unfilled due to the inability to attract employees to work in Truro where there are too few affordable housing options.

“If the housing problem is not addressed, soon there may not be restaurants, tradespeople and other services that residents depend on,” said one participant. The implications include fewer young adults and young families in Truro, and a less economically and age diverse community. “There used to be five little league teams just in Truro,” said one participant, “and now there is only one shared with other towns.”

A number of other issues and challenges (listed below) were raised by participants but were viewed as secondary to addressing the affordable housing crisis.

The worker visa program is unpredictable, and too few visas are available.

The foreign worker visa program used to supply a back-up pool of employees for businesses that are busiest during the summer months. Now there are 33,000 visas nationwide, and Cape Cod alone could use that many. Visas are issued via a lottery system and this is very unpredictable for businesses. Also, returning workers count against the visa numbers.

Many businesses do not have timely access to business support services they need

“Businesses are closing or curtailing hours of operation because they don’t have enough help due to the housing shortage. As a result, there are fewer places to get a cup of coffee or sandwich and people are taking more time out of their day to go out of town for these things. This spending is leaving the town.”

“It is more difficult to find employees and trades people to provides support services such as repairs, plumbing, cleaning, etc.” As a result, business owners are taking on more of these tasks to the best of their abilities.

Broadband service needs to be expanded and quality improved.

Better broadband access and cellular service is needed to support remote workers and meet the expectations of renters and visitors who demand good services. Some participants expressed a desire for a greater number of service options and more reliable service.

Truro residents and employees need more access to affordable daycare

Childcare was identified as a major challenge, particularly for employees with very young children. Upon learning about the Town’s new childcare voucher program for residents, one participant suggested that the Town evaluate making this option available to non-residents who work in Truro, as well as residents.

**What is the market outlook for your business?**

Truro’s market outlook is robust.

Across the board, business owners see a strong market going forward. Truro is “the last to be affected by an economic downturn and the first to bounce back,” said a trades business owner. Truro’s hospitality market is also viewed as resilient. According to one real estate professional, “people will want to come back for vacations and there might be only slight changes in pricing depending on what is happening in the national economy.”

The real estate market is over heated. This is good for sellers and not for locals who are priced out of the market. Buyers know they can rent their property seasonally to cover the mortgage, so they are willing to pay top dollar for properties, which is putting upward pressure on prices.

**What would you like to see addressed in an economic development strategy?**

Affordable housing is the number one economic development challenge facing the Town, and failure to act threatens the quality of life in the community. The solution to the housing crisis should be multi-pronged: building affordable housing in appropriate locations, such as the

Cloverleaf, Walsh property, and through mixed-use development; increasing use of the Town's Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw and expanding access to loans for ADUs, such as those available in other parts of the Cape; augmenting incentives to second homeowners to rent their houses year round; using mobile homes at the campgrounds for workforce housing; creating a tax on home sales over \$1M to fund affordable housing development, among others.

Public education on the housing crisis is needed. It seems that residents do not understand the connection between the housing shortage and the shortage of restaurant options and other businesses and services, which is only going to get more severe.

Truro could do more to foster a business-friendly environment

A number of business shared experiences where decisions that affected their business were made without their knowledge or an opportunity to comment or weigh in. "Businesses need to be part of the conversation with the Town," said one business owner, "Sometimes it seems decisions are driven by the opinions of one person. The process of decision-making is sometimes opaque."

Businesses should be supported in their efforts to expand and innovate. In past instances businesses have been kept from these innovations due to health or zoning regulations. More flexibility is warranted.

Licensing and permitting, particularly licensing that is required on an annual basis, should be streamlined and accessible online. Businesses and non-profits in Town would benefit for more consolidated, user-friendly permitting.

A small amount of area in Truro is zoned commercial, and Tradesmen's Park is at full capacity. Though not cited as major impediment to growth, the lack of commercial space may be an issue for some types of businesses. The Town has a flexible home occupancy bylaw that lets many trades and other businesses operate from their residential property, at least until they need more space or draw complaints from neighbors.

Tradesmen's Park and Tradesmen's Park South are locations where businesses too large for home occupancy can rent a bay. This helps smaller trades businesses expand. However, there currently are waiting lists for bays at these facilities.

Other ideas raised include:

- Truro is part of a broader regional economy and the strategy needs to take that into consideration.
- Better broadband and cellular service are needed.
- There needs to be an open dialogue with the Town on issues that could affect business operations.

- Beach stickers to Town and Seashore beaches should be made easier to get for people staying/visiting for more than one day.
- Laws governing the year round use of condos need to be evaluated as a source of housing.
- A database of service people who are willing to provide services to the area (e.g., Seasonal Connect) is needed.
- The visa program needs to be expanded, which is a national issue.
- The Town should look at successful strategies used in other regions with similar problems to see what might be applicable to Truro.

**Table 5. Summary of Economic Development Challenges and Opportunities based on Focus Group Input**

Challenges	Advantages/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High cost of housing and lack of affordable workforce housing, making it difficult to attract/retain employees and restricting business activity in a number of ways.</li> <li>• Unpredictable visa process, too few visas</li> <li>• Difficulty attracting workers for some positions</li> <li>• Lack of affordable childcare</li> <li>• Supply chain difficulties</li> <li>• Lack of repair/cleaning/trades services to support hospitality businesses</li> <li>• Unclear or onerous permitting</li> <li>• Truro could be more business friendly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural environmental features and scenic character is a major draw for tourists who spend money locally.</li> <li>• Natural environment, walking trails</li> <li>• Beaches, water access, fishing</li> <li>• Proximity to National Seashore (4.1M visitors in 2020 per Cape Cod Chamber)<sup>30</sup></li> <li>• Vibrant arts and entertainment</li> <li>• Rich local history</li> <li>• Truro's economy is resilient. Businesses are often the last to experience decline during national economic downturns, and the first to experience improvement when the economy rebounds.</li> <li>• Strong sense of community, businesses and organizations support each other</li> <li>• Loyal tourists and visitors who return year after year</li> <li>• Strong non-profit sector</li> <li>• Active part-time residents</li> </ul>

<sup>30</sup> Visitor expenditures support 6,400 jobs, \$239 million in labor income and \$672 million in economic output in communities surrounding the Seashore. Source Seashore spending report Cape Cod Times



### **Part III. Discussion Topics for Economic Development Summit**

#### **Economic Development Vision**

Using this *Economic Overview* as a starting point, the summit will explore the community's shared aspirations for Truro's economic outlook and articulate a future community economic development vision.

#### **Economic Development Goals and Strategies**

Summit participants will help to identify Truro's economic goals, which encompass component steps to achieve the community's vision. Goals will set forth the broad categories around which strategies and actions will be focused. Goals could encompass:

Opportunities to Expand Existing or Develop New Business Sectors

Land use and regulatory changes that could support economic development goals

Opportunities to increase the supply of affordable workforce housing

Opportunities to support the workforce

Infrastructure enhancements to support local businesses

Place-based economic development opportunities (e.g., Walsh, Highland Center, other)

#### **Truro Economic Development Strategies Report**

Following the summit, the vision, goals and strategies will form the basis of the Truro Economic Development Strategy Report to be compiled by the EDC and submitted to the community as a draft for public comment.

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