



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
OFFICE OF SENATOR JULIAN CYR
STATE HOUSE, ROOM 309, BOSTON, MA 02133

July 29, 2020

Truro Zoning Board of Appeals
24 Town Hall Road
P.O. Box 2030
Truro, MA 02666

Dear Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the Cloverleaf residential development project. Enclosed, please find an op-ed piece published by *The Provincetown Independent* on July 23, 2020. Please consider this submission as a letter of support and an addition to the official record

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of this letter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julian Cyr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end.

TRURO — In early June, many Outer Cape Codders joined in our shared reckoning over the crisis of white supremacy and racial inequity in this country. After the protests, many of us put away our signs and returned to our summer lives on Land's End. But this moment in history demands more — and that includes advancing the Black Lives Matter movement and addressing racial inequity right in our own back yard.

A tangible step we can take to follow through on our collective public commitment to reverse decades of racial injustice here on Cape Cod is to commit to build more housing — especially affordable rental housing like the proposed Cloverleaf project in North Truro Center.

Housing is American society's most familiar form of wealth, and housing policy at every level of government that shifted resources and created generational wealth was either overtly or covertly crafted to keep black, indigenous, and people of color away from the benefits. Overt examples include Reconstruction, the New Deal, the G.I. Bill, and redlining. Covert examples persist today. In the midst of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, just 12 percent of black-owned businesses reported receiving loans matching their full requested amount from the Paycheck Protection Program.

Housing is the primary vehicle through which white families like mine have built equity over generations and passed it along to their children. The high cost of entry into the real estate market keeps white families — who benefited from generations of inclusionary policies designed to build household wealth — separate from black families in practice, if not by decree.

This systemic exclusion has a real cost, despite decades of denial. We see it here on Cape Cod, where working families — often people of color — live in substandard housing or are disproportionately displaced and must do the “Cape Cod Shuffle,” while most of the homes that dot our coastline sit vacant 10 months of the year.

Are we willing to follow through on our commitment to racial justice in our own community? Will we put aside the exaggerated arguments that mask a persistent NIMBYism, understanding that those tactics serve racist ends?

Truro has little to be proud of when it comes to affordable housing. Since 2000, we've built only 19 units; Provincetown, in contrast, built over 200 affordable and middle-income restricted units in the same period. According to a 2017 analysis by the Cape Cod Commission, Truro needs 723 housing units — including 154 rental units — to meet the demand for home ownership across all income levels. Truro clearly has a lot of work to do.

The Cloverleaf project is an opportunity to make long overdue progress. The select board's approval of the application has been transparent, inclusive, and closely watched. The town received this property from the state for little more than closing costs. Later, Truro received a \$1.2 million MassWorks grant to extend public water to the site. The Cloverleaf parcel and the Walsh property are once-in-a-generation opportunities for Truro, given how little buildable land we have left and how desperately we need housing for working people.

The arguments for halting the project are troubling. If they had any basis, I'd consider their merits. But they don't, so I'll call them what they are: procedural tactics designed to perpetuate racial and class inequities under a thinly veiled guise of moderation and caution. It's a tired playbook that's worked too well for too long.

While the Cloverleaf has been plodding through the review process, too many people in Truro have turned a blind eye to where many working families live, in cramped motel rooms, cottages, and other places that we conveniently don't see. We don't acknowledge that much of our essential workforce is people of color, most of them immigrants. We're already grappling with the situation at Truro Motor Inn and the displacement that is causing.

If we believe Black Lives Matter, we need to start with the hard work right at home. For Truro, dismantling structural racism starts by building affordable housing and calling delay tactics what they are. The Cloverleaf project has my full commitment and it deserves yours, too.