

# Town of Long Island: Year-Round Housing Committee Update

The Town of Long Island faces a serious need for available housing. We also face unique challenges in addressing the problem as we look to sustain our year-round community and the town services and amenities that are supported by it. As emphasized in the 2022 [Comprehensive Plan](#), "For a remote island community to thrive, Long Island must ensure that people can live and work here full time."

## Project Need

- The Island has not been able to retain young families and individuals due to a lack of housing.
- There are zero children projected to enter the school system going forward.
- We are short staffed on Fire and Rescue personnel.
- Almost 90% of the positions required to run the town are filled by volunteers with a growing number of vacancies.
- At least 50 houses in the past 30 years have gone from year-round use to seasonal use, and most year-round houses built over that period are also used seasonally.
- The proposed project for workforce housing is designed to keep and/ or bring working families to Long Island with the hope that these residents will become contributors to the many needs of our aging community.

## Where are we now?

The Town has already acted on several items related to meeting this need for workforce year-round housing, including:

- Maintaining a Year-Round housing Corporation and its 501 (c)(3)
- Establishing the Year-Round Housing Committee
- Adding the responsibility of Housing Administrator to the role of Town Administrator
- Reserving a portion of funds from the sale of town land for seed money to help address housing challenges

The Year-Round Housing Committee (YRHC) has met throughout the last year to learn from and build upon successful models from other islands who are facing similar issues. With these successful models in mind, the committee is moving forward with a proposed project to construct four rental units to address the pressing need for workforce year-round housing.

### **What is the proposed project?**

This proposed project is to construct two duplexes on townland, each with two, three-bedroom rental units. The YRHC has secured professional services to survey the site, develop a site plan, design houses, conduct test digs for soil conditions, identify wetlands and put together materials for a Maine Housing grant.

### **Where is the project located?**

The project would be located south of the transfer station on a 7-acre parcel owned by The Town off Beach Ave, near the intersection with Fern Ave. The site area is mostly cleared and flat and appears to initially be mostly gravel. As part of The Town's cluster development concept, half of the 7-acre parcel would be reserved for open space, recreation, and conservation.

### **How is the project financed?**

The construction costs for the units would be covered in part by a Maine State Housing Authority Grant Program for Unbridged Islands (MNSA) in the amount of \$840,000. The balance of the costs would be borne by a loan which would be financed using rental income, not tax funds. The YRHC requires town approval to secure a loan to finance these units. The rent would be determined by borrowing, management, and maintenance costs. The YRHC goal is to make rent as affordable as possible as determined by the borrowing, management, and maintenance costs.

### **Who will be eligible for these units?**

The units are intended to meet the needs of the community as identified in The Town of Long Island 2022 Comprehensive Plan 2035, namely for available places for year-round families to call home. The site plans for these units are for *three bedrooms* for families and potential workspace. The selection process for who will live in the units is grounded in three key priorities and informed by the lessons from other unbridged island communities:

1. Candidates must be income eligible with very generous maximum thresholds determined and required by MSHA and their grant agreement. Eligibility can be up to 120% of median Cumberland County income by households, which was approximately \$98,217 for a two-person household in 2022. Larger families can be eligible for higher income thresholds.
2. Candidates must have a strong proven rental, credit, and work history.
3. Candidates must show potential to meet the broad goals of this Workforce Housing Program. Candidates who show promise of adding to the future well-being of Long Island will have an edge in the selection process, which includes but is not limited to:

- a. Adding needed skills and positive contributions to help sustain the well-being and future of the community.
- b. One or more of the applicants work or will work on the Island.
- c. A willingness to contribute to the economic and civic health of the island, as shown by involvement in civic endeavors either here or in the current community.

### **How will the candidates be selected?**

This is a challenging issue for all our sister island towns with housing programs. Generally, there are far more applicants than available housing. A committee will be formed from the YRHC to make selection recommendations following an open application time frame to be determined once a reasonable construction timetable is established. If more candidates are qualified than housing available, a lottery might be used.

### **What's next?**

While we hoped the details of the project would be ready for May 2024 Town Meeting, that is not the case. We have decided to delay bringing our request for loan assistance forward until the grant money is fully secured and more details about the project are finalized. These details include planning board approval, potential contractors, deadlines, and final costs. What is needed eventually, possibly at a special town meeting, is voter approval for the project and to borrow sufficient funds to proceed. We regret any delay as the issues this project will hopefully begin to address have little chance of getting better without bold and creative housing solutions.

### **More Information**

Please explore the Committee resources and contact [elburnett@gmail.com](mailto:elburnett@gmail.com) or any committee member for any additional questions or concerns.