

# Aquinnah Housing Production Plan FY2018-2022

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION  
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### **Prepared by**

JM Goldson community preservation + planning  
with RKG Associates, Inc.

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## Housing Production Plan Purpose

This Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a state-recognized planning tool that, under certain circumstances, permits the town to influence the location, type, and pace of affordable housing development. However, in Aquinnah, since the town has exceeded the state's goal that 10 percent of year-round housing units are affordable to low/moderate income households, the Housing Production Plan does not have a regulatory purpose. Instead, the town has undertaken this planning effort to establish a strategic plan for production and preservation of affordable housing that is based upon a comprehensive housing needs assessment and to be part of an Island-wide effort to complete Housing Production Plans for all six towns on Martha's Vineyard.

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## Housing Needs Assessment

Chapter 4, which provides a demographic profile of the community, and Chapter 5, which describes local housing conditions, together provide analysis to determine Aquinnah's priority housing needs. This understanding current and future housing needs lays the groundwork for the community's housing vision, goals, and strategies.

Aquinnah's primary housing needs are more affordable homeownership units, especially affordable to households between 50 and 80 percent AMI and up to 150 percent AMI; more diverse housing options that provide alternatives to conventional single-family houses, and more market rate and affordable rental units. Rental units affordable to a range of incomes is indicated to address local need including households with income at or below 30 percent AMI, 50 percent AMI, and 80 percent AMI.

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## Development Constraints Analysis

Based on a review of environmental constraints, infrastructure capacity, and regulatory barriers, as detailed in Chapter 6, the primary development constraints in Aquinnah consist of the following:

- The highly variable nature of Aquinnah's soils, which include clay and sandy soils, requires a site by site analysis to identify proper uses of the land.
- Aquinnah's aquifers generally range from very poor to variable. In those areas where groundwater is found, there is considerable uncertainty as to its quantity and quality.
- Of Aquinnah's approximate 3,500 acres, 380 acres are permanent wetlands and an additional 170 are seasonal wetlands.
- No parcels within Aquinnah are served by town water. The variability of Aquinnah's soils can make locating wells challenging.
- Virtually every soil type present in Aquinnah has one or more severe limitations to on-site disposal systems. The greatest of these is the general wetness of the area: 20% of the town has a very high seasonal water table.
- Wastewater treatment primarily relies on on-site disposal systems with the exception of the wastewater facility on Wampanoag Tribal lands, which is currently operating at 25% capacity.
- Although Aquinnah's zoning bylaws provide strong development limitations to protect the community's natural resources and scenic beauty, the bylaws include provisions for compact siting and various mechanisms to promote creation of affordable housing.

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## Community Engagement Process

The Selectmen, Planning Boards and Housing Committees of all six towns held three community workshops, facilitated by the consultant team, to create housing visions, identify five-year goals, and prioritize implementation strategies. In Aquinnah, these workshops were held in the Town Hall on September 19, November 14, and December 12, 2016. In addition, the All-Island Planning Board issued an online survey about housing needs and strategies that had over 600 respondents.

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## Aquinnah's Housing Vision

**Aquinnah residents envision that in 2027 the town will remain a safe, quiet, close-knit community with a growing town center and an ample supply of year-round housing to stabilize its multicultural population. Residents old and new continue to value the town's traditional scenic beauty, peacefulness, and feeling of privacy, while appreciating the modest new residential options near town center – and elsewhere - that help to foster and sustain Aquinnah's small-town feel and strong sense of neighborly connection. The Town, the Tribe, seasonal and year-round residents, and local non-profits will all be engaged to provide resources that support the community's continued housing needs.**

The town will allow smaller lot sizes in certain areas and increase affordable housing to serve the needs of small families, single people, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Tribal and town governments will explore collaborative housing ventures and sharing resources.

New developments of cluster housing with well-designed cottage-style homes and duplexes disguised as single-family homes will preserve open space and scenic views, and a sense of community among residents. Some homeowners will create year-round affordable accessory apartments and some owner-occupied duplexes will include an affordable unit. Zoning changes and new types of housing may also be considered and built on Tribal lands.

Over the upcoming decade, the community will make great strides in creating a walkable town center area along State Road with a mix of uses including town offices, residences, recreation areas, and home businesses. These new residences are envisioned to consist of smaller houses on smaller lots, providing housing options for people of all ages, encouraging vibrant and walkable neighborhoods, and serving households with a range of incomes.

Beyond Town borders, Aquinnah will continue to play an active role - along with the other five Island towns- to increase our Island-wide stock of Affordable Rental Housing opportunities.

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## Aquinnah's Housing Goals

### **Goal 1: Housing Options**

Expand year-round housing options to provide more housing choice, both affordable and market rate units, such as houses on smaller lot sizes, cottage-style homes, accessory apartments, duplexes disguised as single-family houses, including units affordable to low/moderate and middle-income households.

### **Goal 2: Household Types**

Increase year-round housing units, especially rental units, affordable to low/moderate income households including small families, single people, people with disabilities, and the elderly to support Aquinnah's multi-cultural population.

### **Goal 3: Community Character and Smart Growth**

Ensure new housing development is sensitively located, scaled, and designed to protect Aquinnah's wild scenic beauty, rural nature, natural features, and peaceful, small-town feel. Foster new modest residential development that includes affordable units, with small houses on smaller lots near the town center area along State Road to help create a mixed-use, walkable area for people of all ages. Encourage new residential development on larger properties to be designed as cluster housing to maximize preservation of open space and scenic views. Explore Town-Tribe collaborative housing ventures that can utilize existing infrastructure.

### **Goal 4: Resources & Capacity**

Engage seasonal and year-round residents and the Tribe to provide resources, such as funding, property, or infrastructure that support the community's continued housing needs.

### **Goal 5: Numerical Production**

Based on documented local housing needs that go beyond 40B goals, which Aquinnah has already met, support the creation of five or more rental housing units affordable to low/moderate-income (LMI) households over five years (an average of at least one unit per year). In addition, support the creation of five or more ownership units affordable to households between 80-100% of the area median income over the next five years (an average of at least one unit per year).

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## Aquinnah's Housing Strategies

To achieve the community's ten-year housing vision and five-year goals will require the town's focused effort to implement a variety of local initiative strategies and local regulatory strategies as well as support and participation in Island-wide strategies. The community's housing vision and goals are ambitious and can't be achieved overnight or by a sole, isolated action. The strategies are presented as a package of strategies rather than a menu of choices because they are designed to work together to be most effective. They are like pieces of a puzzle that, when assembled and embraced together, can help the community accomplish its goals. Chapter three of the Housing Production Plan includes detailed descriptions of local initiative strategies, Island-wide strategies, local regulatory strategies, and an action plan.

### **Local initiative strategies (#1-3)**

These strategies refer to initiatives that the town can undertake to foster the creation of more housing options, especially affordable housing. These initiatives are not regulatory in nature - they deal with allocation of town resources including staff time, funding, and property.

### **Island-wide strategies (#4-8)**

Island-wide strategies are initiatives that each town would contribute to for the benefit of the whole Island community. For these strategies to have maximum effect and success, it will be critical for each town on the Island to contribute with active support and coordinated efforts. Most of the Island-wide strategies would

require special legislation, which will require a great deal of local political support to promote state adoption.

### Local regulatory strategies (#9-11)

Regulatory strategies deal with amendments to the local zoning bylaws. However, it is important to note that for Aquinnah and all of the towns on Martha's Vineyard, the imbalance between housing supply and housing demand means that regulatory reform alone will not solve all of the island's affordable housing problems.

- Often, Chapter 40B is the best way to create affordable housing because of the design flexibility that comes with a comprehensive permit. Even though Aquinnah exceeds the 10 percent statutory minimum under Chapter 40B, the Board of Appeals can still grant comprehensive permits and the Town should be open to doing so. However, zoning techniques to increase supply can, when paired with other actions, provide new opportunities for growing the affordable housing inventory.

The following matrix summarizes the strategies incorporated in the Housing Production Plan and demonstrates which goals each strategy could help achieve.

	Goal 1: Housing Options	Goal 2: Household Types	Goal 3: Community Character and Smart Growth	Goal 4: Resources and Capacity	Goal 5: Numerical Production
Strategy 1: Offer municipal property at little or no cost for development of affordable and/or mixed-income housing	*	*	*	*	*
Strategy 2: Work closely with the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank to facilitate private donations of property for development of affordable and/or mixed-income housing	*	*	*	*	*
Strategy 3: Increase allocations of local Community Preservation Act funds to create affordable housing	*	*	*	*	*
Strategy 4: Advocate for adoption of special legislation to increase the existing real estate transfer fee by 0.5 percent to promote creation of affordable housing				*	
Strategy 5: Advocate for adoption of special legislation to create a seasonal rentals excise				*	
Strategy 6: Advocate for adoption of property tax incentives to encourage affordable year-round rental of units to households with up to 80 percent AMI*	*		*		*
Strategy 7: Support creation of an Island Seasonal Housing Task Force and its initiatives	*	*		*	
Strategy 8: Explore creation of an Island-wide or sub-regional housing trust				*	
Strategy 9: Allow accessory apartments as a permitted use	*	*	*		
Strategy 10: Provide for Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ) by right	*	*	*		*
Strategy 11: Create a town center district	*	*	*	*	*

\*These units would not count on the SHI.