



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

Alison Alessi and Jason Stoots: Affordable housing that is attractive and environmentally sustainable

“With the CDP, we know that our donation is being used on Cape Cod with tangible programs that support important economic sectors as well as affordable housing.”

Alison Alessi

Architect and founder, A3 Architects and CDP Supporter

When architect Alison Alessi and construction manager Jason Stoots met in Steamboat, Colorado to work on a development project, little did they know it would be just the first of many collaborations.

Jason and Alison moved to the Cape in 2000 and married in 2004. Today they are raising two kids in their net zero farmhouse in West Barnstable where Jason also serves as a volunteer firefighter.

For the past twelve years this husband and wife team has designed numerous net-energy zero residences, commercial and municipal projects in towns across the Cape. Jason, who first worked as a scuba instructor and waterfront coordinator for a marine resource center in the Caribbean, moved on to energy efficient construction and construction management before founding SunPower by E2 Solar in 2008. Alison is a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) accredited professional and founded the architectural firm A3 Architects, Inc. in 2012. “I have always wanted to be an architect, even as a kid,” says Alison. “I love the combination of math and science, art and design...and we both have a passion for environmental issues. Focusing both our companies on energy efficiency and net zero design seems like a good fit for Cape Cod.”



Alison first came into contact with the CDP in 2007 when we embarked on building our second affordable development. It was a 12-unit housing complex located in Harwich called Thankful Chases Pathway and the CDP needed an architect. Alison and Jason were trying to establish themselves on the Cape and were thrilled that the CDP was willing to take a chance on them.

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Alison was seven months pregnant with her daughter Amelia at the initial construction meeting. The goal was to create a LEED certified affordable complex. Jason installed the solar panels which ultimately helped reduce residents' monthly utility bills. "We were two young entrepreneurs and we were excited for the opportunity to design an affordable housing development," says Alison.

Halfway through the process the CDP acquired funding for a handicap accessible unit, "which changed the design but it was a welcome addition," says Alison. "The site was long and skinny and very challenging but we really wanted all the buildings to have both a front and back yard." Aside from the architectural complexities, there was a real purpose that informed their vision. "We created with families in mind. We were helping people stay local and it was our first LEED certified project," says Alison. "It was so rewarding for us, especially when we saw the first folks move in in 2010. It was a thrill." Alison and Jason's involvement with Thankful Chases Pathway, as well as other housing projects in the region, prove that multi-unit affordable housing that is both attractive and environmentally responsive is possible and good for residents. As one former resident stated, "We love living here. It doesn't look like affordable housing and it has allowed us to save money for a house."

Alison and Jason have supported the CDP ever since that first project in 2007. "Through the lengthy process of designing, funding and constructing the project – we really got to know the CDP!" says Alison. In addition to attending annual meetings and events they have also been contributors to the CDP utilizing the Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) program which provides a 50% tax credit to individuals who give a gift of \$1000 or more. "We love the mission - your support of small businesses and fisherman," says Alison. "And the CITC is a great way to double your gift while supporting an organization that is working on those issues that we care about." Commitment to addressing local issues is important to the couple when selecting organizations to support. "With the CDP, we know that our donation is being used on Cape Cod with tangible programs that support important economic sectors as well as affordable housing."

Alison recently submitted architectural designs for renovations to the interior of Canal House, the CDP's sober living facility in Orleans, which last saw interior upgrades over twenty years ago. The renovations are being funded through Charlesbank Homes, who also funded the installation of solar panels on five of the CDP's other affordable housing units which has generated over \$244,191.13 in energy savings for the CDP in the last five years.

When asked what she envisions the future of the Alison responds, "We hope that the proliferation of solar energy on the Cape will continue with increased storage capacity and a smarter grid. We would love to see a more diverse population with affordable housing opportunities for all and our demographics would shift towards a more balanced mixed of retirees and younger professionals. In addition to a thriving local economy made up of small businesses the region would focus on environmental resiliency – whereby net zero construction and deep energy retrofits allow homeowners to 'weather' the climate change storm coming."

We embrace that vision as well. With firms like A3 Architects and E2 Solar, we look forward to the creation of more affordable housing on the Lower Cape that is appealing, environmentally responsible and as a result, helps lower the costs to the residents.