



## community development partnership

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

### Supporter Spotlight: Peter Freeman

***"The CDP works so closely with the local people and you have built a track record of credibility that carries over into your housing work and educational outreach."***

Peter L. Freeman, Attorney at Law  
Yarmouth Port, MA



When it comes to understanding the complexities of affordable housing and land-use laws, few are better versed or experienced than Attorney Peter Freeman. As he describes it, the services he provides are “soup to nuts” as he works with developers, municipalities, non-profits, and individual homeowners.

In addition to his law practice, Peter is an adjunct professor at Boston University School of Law, where he has been on the faculty for 40 years and teaches Historic Preservation Law and Affordable Housing Law and Community Development. He has been a guest lecturer at the CDP’s Lower Cape Community

Housing Institute, is a monthly supporter, and takes advantage of the Community Investment Tax Credit program through the CDP.

A resident of Cummaquid, Peter grew up in Newton and summered with his family on Lake Wequaquet in Centerville in the small seasonal community that his grandfather helped establish in the 1950s.

During high school and college, Peter worked as a reporter for the Dennis-Yarmouth Register covering, among other things, numerous planning board meetings, an experience he credits with sparking his initial interest in development and zoning.

After completing his law degree at Boston University, he worked for Boston law firms and a developer where he became well-versed in land-use laws with a specialty in historic preservation. Recalling

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3 Main Street Mercantile, Unit 7   Eastham, MA 02642  
P 508.240.7873   F 508.240.5085   E [contact@capecdp.org](mailto:contact@capecdp.org)

[www.capecdp.org](http://www.capecdp.org)



those magical summers spent on the Cape, Peter left Boston and moved to Barnstable in 1984, establishing his own practice and developing a niche for himself in affordable housing.

Over the next decade he worked on numerous 40B housing projects across the Cape “which were very controversial at the time,” Peter recalls. Because of the reputation that he was building for himself in the affordable housing field, he was approached by the Wellfleet Housing Authority in the mid-1990s to assist them with several projects. During this time, he came into contact and worked with the CDP on building affordable housing developments at Fred Bell Way and Harry Kemp’s Way.

While times have changed in that most towns are “now cognizant of the significance of the housing problem, there are practical challenges to affordable housing,” says Peter. “Perhaps the greatest of those being the prohibitive cost of construction.” He points out that the problem started with zoning practices that were instituted out of fear of density – a fear that also kept towns from moving forward on their wastewater infrastructure as well. “If you look at it historically, we came here because of the beautiful landscape and the surrounding waters, and the natural instinct was to be anti-development,” Peter says. Current zoning still overwhelmingly favors single family homes which makes it difficult for developers to build cost-effective housing.

Peter is optimistic even though “There is still a bit of anti-development sentiment out there and there are still perception issues regarding “Affordable” housing.” He goes on to say that things are much better than they were. “Today towns are much more open to working with developers and nonprofits and a lot of them are stepping up to the plate, allocating community preservation funds, setting up affordable housing trusts, etc. These are clear demonstrable indicators of change.”

He notes the importance of the work the CDP does, referencing the CDP’s most recent media campaign focused on who needs affordable housing. “Progress on housing has to start at the grassroots,” Peter says. “In the past housing development has often been adversarial. We need grassroots education to build consensus, and we need to emphasize that theme of who needs it and what it means for our community.”

Peter is an advocate for legal reform around housing, pointing out that the appeals process is unfair and that “we need to change our court system as it relates to land-use development so that we don’t delay projects for years on end which adds significant cost and time to a project.” “In this situation,” Peter says, “justice delayed is truly justice denied.”

Peter’s support of the CDP is rooted in its complementary causes of housing and economic development. “The CDP works so closely with the local people and you have built a track record of credibility that carries over into your housing work and educational outreach,” says Peter. “The CDP is literally a community development rooted organization and you connect with locals on a day-to-day basis, which is not something that happens when you are purely focused on housing development.”

In addition to his support of the CDP, Peter is Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Housing Assistance Corporation and serves on the Board of Directors for Homeless not Hopeless, Inc. and the Island Housing Trust on Martha’s Vineyard.