



community development partnership

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

Supporter Spotlight: Paul Ruchinkas

“I think it is vitally important that the priorities and policies of these locally-based organizations are set by the residents and stakeholders in that locale.”

Paul Ruchinkas
CDP Board Member

Paul Ruchinkas, a long time CDP supporter and Board Member, has been a staunch advocate for affordable housing for much of his career.

Originally a school teacher, Paul began his second career working for the Falmouth Housing Trust after studying community development at Yale. He returned to the Cape in 2001 to serve as the affordable housing specialist for the Cape Cod Commission having worked for community development organizations in New Haven and Worcester.



Paul and his wife Loretta met as Vista volunteers at an anti-poverty agency in Ohio. When Loretta’s parents died, she and Paul bought a piece of land in Brewster and held onto it with the intention that one day they would build a house and settle there. The Cape was their preferred summer destination. “I remember driving over the bridge and that calming me down,” reflects Paul.

Paul’s interest in affordable housing development ignited during the housing boom of the 1980s. “I heard about community development corporations (CDCs) and the work they were doing on affordable housing and started looking into them,” says Paul, who landed his first internship working for regional social justice organizing organization. “All of my affordable housing non-profit housing work prior to joining the Cape Cod Commission, was with community-based organizations like CDCs, which is one of the reasons I support the CDP,” says Paul. On the importance of community-based organizations like the CDP, “I think it is vitally important that the priorities and policies of these locally-based organizations are set by the residents and stakeholders in that locale. It is critical for those organizations to be responsive to the needs that are expressed by the community they are supposed to serve.”

3 Main Street Mercantile, Unit 7 Eastham, MA 02642
P 508.240.7873 F 508.240.5085 E contact@capecdp.org

www.capecdp.org



Beginning in 1988 Paul served on the Falmouth Housing Trust and recalls attending meetings during which the formation of a CDC on the Lower and Outer Cape was discussed. In 1992 the Community Development Partnership (CDP) was founded to improve the lives of low to moderate income residents of the Lower Cape through economic development and the creation of affordable housing. It was an important step, according to Paul who points out that “This end of the Cape is different,” citing the micro- businesses that characterize the economic landscape, the seasonal economy that is driven by a 10-week tourism window, low wages and the high number of seasonal homes.

In 2001 Paul began a 13-year career at the Cape Cod Commission, serving as their Affordable Housing Specialist. The Commission funded a couple of development projects with the CDP including Harry Kemp Way, 836 Route 28 in Harwich, and Thankful Chase’s Pathway. “I’ve always been impressed with the work of the CDP, not only in housing, but also their small business development which is so vitally important to the health of this region.” In all Paul reviewed and supported 64 projects and 1,391 units and in 2016 the Massachusetts Housing Partnership honored Paul with a Housing Hero Award for his longtime support of affordable housing.

Once again, the Cape is experiencing a housing boom, this time a result of the pandemic. Paul is concerned saying that “With the boom, year-round local people who are making local wages will struggle even more as they are increasingly priced out of the market. It is going to exacerbate the widening inequality gap on the Lower Cape.”

In addition to his work on the Board, Paul supports the CDP through the Community Investment Tax Program making quarterly gifts to reach the \$1,000 annual giving threshold. And Paul was a regular participant in what was the Housing with Love Walk.

As a member of the CDP Board Paul is energized by several initiatives that the CDP is working on for the next couple of years. As the CDP looks to enhance our current property management portfolio, Paul believes the CDP will be able to do even more by getting involved in housing. Following the death of George Floyd and the ensuing demand for racial equity and social justice, Paul says that “I’m pleased to see that we are taking a good look at racial inequality within the CDP and what steps we can take internally to address this through policy change.” One policy that he would like to see changed is the use of local preference by municipalities to gain support for affordable housing projects. Paul would “like to see this removed from the application criteria as it has the effect of maintaining the lack of racial diversity in our communities.”

The CDP’s Housing Rehab program, which provides forgivable loans for critical repairs to low to middle income families “is incredibly important” to Paul. The CDP’s Housing Institute however, is where Paul lavishes his greatest praise. “The work of the Housing Institute has played a tremendous role in changing attitudes and creating more affordable housing projects on the Lower Cape,” says Paul. “When the idea was first proposed I was skeptical. I saw it as purely educational and thought that the money would be better spent hiring someone to actively help develop affordable housing.” Paul adds “I was wrong. I have never seen this amount of local support for affordable housing in the 19 years I have lived and worked here. I think the message is sinking in and we need to do more and go big. It is all about maintaining the character and diversity of life on Cape Cod.”