



community development partnership

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

Supporter highlight: Howard Burchman On the front lines of fighting homelessness

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Howard Burchman
CDP Advisory Board Member



CDP Advisory Board member Howard Burchman is a long-time Provincetown resident and owner of the Tucker Inn. He loves to hike, garden and dote on his dogs. His relaxed demeanor, however, belies the intense dedication to his work, which has since the 1980s, been focused on developing solutions to end homelessness.

After finishing college in the early 1970s, Howard returned to his hometown of New York City and lived aboard a houseboat on the Hudson River. He launched his career as a research analyst for HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) but soon became

Director of Program Development for Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, a non-profit that empowers low- to moderate-income residents to take control of their housing and enhance communities by creating strong tenant associations and lasting affordable co-ops.

During the 1980s and 1990s Howard helped develop low income cooperatives and consulted with Community Development Corporations in New York at the same time the Reagan administration was decimating HUD. "Homelessness" was not yet a field, but the devastating housing policies of the 1980s would result in hundreds of thousands of people becoming homeless. Howard facilitated for the NYC Continuum of Care and as a consultant for Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) a program created under HUD in 1992.

Living in New York during the height of the AIDS epidemic and seeing friends and colleagues succumb to the disease took its toll and Howard decided it was time to leave the city. His love for the water and the strong sense of community brought him to Provincetown, where he had visited numerous

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times over the years. He arrived in 2001 “with a plan to write the next great American novel,” Howard chuckles. “It didn’t occur to me at the time that I could take my work with me.”

Thus, in response to increasing requests for his input and involvement in various programs and initiatives, Howard launched Housing Innovations, a national consulting firm specializing in preventing and ending homelessness, working with the Department of Veterans Affairs in the states of Nebraska, Indiana, and Rhode Island as well as the cities of New York, Houston, San Antonio, Cleveland, Lincoln, Miami, and Denver.

Howard’s initial connection to the CDP was through its former Executive Director, Elizabeth Bridgewater whom he met in the mid-2000s. It was through her that he developed an awareness and appreciation of the efforts of the CDP.

“Working in a community-based housing field,” says Howard, “I think I realized it’s important to put blinders on and focus on what you can do. The CDP is doing the essential work to maintain community.” He believes that the Cape Housing Institute, the cornerstone of the CDP’s Lower Cape Community Housing Partnership, reflects a good vision. “The CDP is stepping in to help towns and provide them with the expertise they don’t have,” he says. “As our housing crisis continues to get worse, it is imperative that we break down the barriers between housing, social services and healthcare.”

“Housing is the key,” says Howard. Reflecting on the challenges surrounding the creation of low-income housing and increased density on the Lower and Outer Cape, Howard says “My major concern is that so much happens by emotion. It’s the vulnerability of the town meeting process. It short circuits circumspect deliberation.”

While the long-term economic impacts of the Coronavirus health crisis are still yet unknown, we are certain that the ability to access affordable year-round housing will be even more critical than it was. We share a mutual dedication with Howard to help those who are struggling to locate and maintain housing and will continue those efforts with the continued support of people like Howard.