



community development partnership

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

How Affordable Housing Paves the Way to Small Business Success

“There’s so much to think about in starting a business...But one of the most important things was that I didn’t have to worry about our housing situation.”

Nate Lewis, Nate’s Landscaping



Nate Lewis is doing what he loves—working outdoors, tending plants and setting stone pathways and walls. He’s also raising a family in Eastham. It’s the life he envisioned, though getting started wasn’t easy. No matter, he says. Hard work suits him.

Two years ago, Nate launched his own small business, Nate’s Landscaping. But he would not have found the path to success, Nate says, without the stability that came from having an affordable apartment.

Nate’s story shows just how closely linked small business development and affordable housing are here on the Lower Cape.

A family business gave Nate his introduction to plantsmanship. Nate is from Centerville, but his grandfather owned a landscaping business in Chatham. Nate grew up working for him.

Two and a half years ago Nate’s grandfather died. While Nate would have been happy to take up his legacy, the family opted to sell off the business’s assets rather than keep it going. The decision was a setback for Nate, but it didn’t take him long to decide how to move forward.

“I woke up one morning not long after things were settled and knew what I had to do,” Nate says.

“I had worked for my grandfather for 13 years, and while he wasn’t the easiest boss, I had learned a lot during that time.”

Nate took stock of his own assets. He had the know-how. And he enjoyed good relationships with customers whose landscapes he had tended over the years.

Another plus: he and his wife and two children were living in Harwich in an affordable rental managed by the CDP.

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“There’s so much to think about in starting a business,” says Nate. “But one of the most important things was that I didn’t have to worry about our housing situation—we knew our landlord wasn’t going to sell the place or increase our rent suddenly.”

What he didn’t have was equipment. He took the leap and bought a truck and the basics to get his own version of the family business up and running again. In a matter of weeks, he was back outdoors, planting, mowing.

From the moment he got underway, Nate began saving, with gradual growth in mind. He is wary of growing too fast because he doesn’t want to disappoint long time customers.

“I try to take my time with things,” he says. “If I can’t do a good job, I don’t take it on.”

But he is finding the balance it takes to thrive. Over his first year, he added gear judiciously and brought on one employee to help him take on more of the projects coming his way.

Along the way, Nate and his wife had another child. With space a little tight, the search was on for another affordable unit.

“We’re really grateful to Alice Demoracski,” Nate says, talking about the CDP’s Director of Property Management. She understood they needed a change, he says, but also knew it needed to be one that would not shake the foundation of Nate’s fledgling business.

They are now happily living in a more appropriately-sized affordable unit in Eastham.

“It’s great,” says Nate. “We really like our place. And it has turned out to be a real help to have school, work, and a bus stop all so nearby.”

Nate’s community orientation goes beyond his own backyard, so to speak. He is especially drawn to making parks and public spaces more beautiful. For example, he cares for trees planted by Friends of Trees, the Chatham nonprofit in Chatham.

Nate and the CDP have forged one more link between small business development and affordable housing here: Nate’s affordable apartment helped him re-launch his career, and in the process, we noticed Nate’s skill and dedication and inquired about his services. Nate’s Landscaping now cares for the grounds at six of the affordable housing units we manage.