



community development partnership

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

Supporter highlight: John Murphy, Jr. Observations from behind the bar

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John Murphy, Jr.
CDP Advisory Council Member and Owner, Land Ho!



In early February the CDP hosted a gathering of supporters and their friends at the Land Ho!, a popular year-round pub and restaurant in downtown Orleans. The topic of conversation for the night was the work we do at the CDP to ensure a vibrant year-round community through housing and supporting small businesses. CDP Advisory Council member John Murphy, Jr. manages his family's restaurant, and offered to host the event to help raise awareness about our work addressing economic development and the housing crisis on the Lower Cape. It is just one of the many ways he supports the CDP.

It is a big year for the Land Ho!. Fifty years ago, John's father founded the restaurant which has since become an iconic Orleans landmark. After leaving the Cape for college, John went to work for a Boston tech consulting firm, returning to his birthplace in 2003. Since then, he has managed the family business and observed the changes to the Cape's economy and housing supply.

“When I returned to the Cape, I came back with fresh eyes,” John recalls. “My friends were having difficulties finding work and a place that they could afford to live. It got increasingly worse over the next 10 years.” John became active in town politics - “I hung with it for a few years, but there are challenges to owning a neighborhood pub and being in town politics,” he says wryly.

Despite the popularity of the LandHo!, it shares the struggles of most businesses on the Lower Cape. “Businesses have the challenge of the seasonal shifts, as well as the loss of a year-round workforce,” remarks John. “We are heavily reliant on visa workers to fill our local workforce needs as there are no longer enough locals,” notes John.

This challenge is coupled with a lack of stable year-round housing, which has been a fact of life on the Lower Cape for as long as John remembers. “I distinctly remember renting a house and having to move out during the summer months,” says John. “I moved in with my in-laws while the house was rented out to summer

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folks.” To accommodate the needs of some of his workers John rents out rooms in a house his family owns and rents well below market rate. “I am fortunate that I have the ability to do this for some of my staff.” Unfortunately, John does not have the ability to rent rooms to all his employees. “I know many people who rent out basements in the summer from local folks and I have employees that are looking for places to live in Yarmouth and Harwich,” John responds.

The idea of employers providing housing to their employees is not a new one, and in fact dates back to the 19th century. While it is not for every business, it is a model that is resurfacing more as the housing crisis intensifies. “I know a number of businesses who have bought accommodations for their employees,” says John. “I find it to be really positive. It builds a sense of community amongst you and your workers. We are like family. “

Local government can really make a difference on housing and economic development, but John is concerned as he has noticed a decrease in native representation on local government and committees. “I find there is a real disconnect between the locals and the non-residents as to what it is like to live on the Cape,” he says. This is where he finds the CDP carries out one of its most important efforts, noting that “the CDP does a great job with educating the public, building awareness, and coming up with creative solutions. “

John also has high praises for the CDP’s First Time Home Buyer program. “It is so important to be educated about the process and to know how much you can afford. It adds another arrow to your quiver.” One of the challenges that John points out is bridging the gap between subsidized housing and fair market rents. “How do we help that group of people in the middle who make too much for subsidized housing but not enough to comfortably afford a rental?”

He also points out a change that he has seen amongst senior home owners. “A lot of my friends are legacy owners of their homes – becoming owners of their parents’ homes when they passed. I’m noticing now that a lot of seniors are now selling their homes in order to take advantage of the real financial benefit.”

Looking at the future of the Lower Cape, John observes that the demographic changes will continue to change and challenge the Cape. “I was recruiting for the police department and we have these young kids coming in for interviews and they are looking for a vibrant community. There is not a lot for them here.” He stresses the need to show that we support our young people through community centers and providing meaningful activities and ways for young people to connect.

In addition to running a local business, John and his wife have three children between the ages of eight and twelve. They hope there will be opportunities for them and their friends to live and work on the Lower Cape. “We have to support organizations like the CDP that advocate for solutions in our communities,” says John. “Awareness is critically important.”