

## Say NO To Article 37 – the North Truro “Highland” Overlay

Dear Editor,

May 10, 2026

In February, I submitted a letter called ‘What the ZTF?’ expressing my strong opposition and concern about the roster of proposed zoning changes that in my view should be soundly rejected by Truro voters. This update focuses on just one of those proposals—to create the Highland Overlay District (“HOD”) in North Truro.

As I said in February: I’m pushing 90, and at this age you don’t waste time when something needs attention. And you pick your battles. Preserving and protecting North Truro from becoming a bedroom community of Provincetown is a battle worth waging.

Cutting to the chase: We could lose North Truro as we know it because of Article 37.

I began to understand this when an official on the ZTF session described his vision for Highland Avenue and Pond Road in the Highland/Shore Overlay—the heart of North Truro—is for it to look like **“Main Street in Orleans.”**

That was when I realized the crafters of Article 37 truly don’t understand Truro at all—or don’t care that we live in Truro **as it is** by choice, not by accident. It’s not that we lack what Orleans has—it’s that **we don’t want to be Orleans**. We are not, and have never wanted to be, **Orleans-by-the-Sea**.

Truroites are different, and we like it that way. That kind of vision for this part of Town (or any part of Town) tells me the ambitious zoning plans and recommendations are coming from a template for a different town, and not from living in and knowing the real Truro.

Next came the talk about **creating a brand-new town center** in North Truro —while we can’t keep the little stores in Truro Center open through February, including mine. When asked why, Town Land Use Counsel blamed “noise regulations.” That’s news to me—and it’s nonsense. We close off-season because we’re a small, seasonal town.

**North Truro is a community, not a commodity.**

Meanwhile, tucked inside the North Truro Overlay District plan are changes that would shrink front setbacks from **25 feet to 5 feet**, allow multiple structures **on very small lots**, and raise building heights **to 45 feet**, right in one of the most historic parts of Truro traversed by a scenic roadway, Shore Road. There are a lot more changes proposed, but this gives you the idea. That’s not revitalization—it’s reinvention.

And on top of that, Article 37 creates an open invitation to speculators and outside investors who don’t know us, don’t live here, and don’t intend to. This will drive up assessed values for everyone else, making Truro *less affordable*, not more affordable. Who needs speculation condos?

**Here's the part that truly made me sit up straight.**

When asked about **water and traffic**, the committee that drafted Article 37 said those things were “**not in our purview.**” Either this is really bad planning, or it is evasion—or both. Either way, this is a serious problem for us. North Truro is already nitrogen-sensitive. The increased density, expanded housing, traffic, and mixed-use residential-commercial pressures on North Truro, will create an unsustainable demand for more water supply and an unquestionably greater water discharge problem—not to mention increased traffic-based toxins and stormwater runoff. These will irreversibly harm North Truro's people and environment.

How do you plan any large-scale zoning changes in Truro without looking at water and traffic? Safety and the environment? Costs of every type on every level? How do you carve up a town like this without knowing what's really involved? And without being open with Town residents about it?

The answer is simple: you can't. If you don't plan for these related things, you're not planning—you're guessing.

So now we're guessing about major changes no one asked for in an historic part of Truro—all without a comprehensive plan for water, traffic, transportation, our wallets and without any understanding of what this means for the people who actually live there.

And let's not forget **these are the same people who brought us the Walsh Overlay District.** We're only now uncovering WOD's problems because complicated zoning was pushed without honesty about real—and known—consequences. The water issues alone—driven by the really large-scale commercial and residential units allowed—have and will cost us time, money, and stress that could have been avoided if, for starters, these had not been avoided in developing the WOD Article last year because they were not in ZTF's “purview.”

What happens when a small town lets big ideas outrun facts? WOD is a good teacher on that. We should reject the proposed North Truro Overlay.

We need to take care of Truro's own—with modest housing, tax relief, more services, well-maintained town facilities, and comprehensive planning. We need to scale for Truro. We need better planning. What we do *not* need are new overlay districts. For those who might want to say this is anti-housing, please get over that: **it is anti-nonsense.**

Meanwhile, I ask neighbors to join me in **voting AGAINST Article 37** (“HOD”) and **voting FOR Article 38** (Growth Management Bylaw) to create a comprehensive plan for responsible growth in Truro, grounded in Truro's real needs, real water, real environmental protections, real traffic realities, real costs and taxes, and a real understanding of the Truro we are—and intend to remain.

Thank you for listening.

Roberta Lema,  
Truro