

Town of Orleans  
**Governor Prence Inn Technical Memo & Site  
Report**

Submitted to:  
George Meservey  
Director of Planning & Development  
Town of Orleans

By:



Judi Barrett, Principal  
Elizabeth Haney, Community Planner

Union Studio Architecture & Community Design  
Jeremy Lake, Senior Associate

## Introduction

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This report is the first task in creating a redevelopment plan for the Governor Prence Inn property for the Town of Orleans. The site consists of two parcels that hold a former motel and commercial building. In May 2021, Orleans Town Meeting appropriated \$2,450,000 to purchase the site for “general municipal purposes, including but not limited to affordable housing.”<sup>1</sup> The site includes the motel with fifty-seven guest rooms and a small commercial building on an adjoining lot. Together, the parcels contain a combined total of approximately 5.5 acres and 450 feet of frontage on Route 6A. In addition to its Downtown Orleans location, the Governor Prence Inn abuts the Cape Cod Rail Trail (Map 1). As a result, it offers ready access to amenities, goods, and services.

The Town officially acquired the parcels in August 2021, following voter approval of a Proposition 2 ½ override in May. Thereafter, the Town sought consultants to work with the community on a Governor Prence Site Redevelopment Plan, consistent with Town Meeting’s vote and grounded in a feasibility analysis in terms of both design and economics. Toward that end, the Town engaged a team led by Barrett Planning Group in collaboration with Union Studio Architecture and Kirk and Company in December 2021.

### Scope of Work

Submitting this report to the Town is the culmination of Task 1 in the larger scope of work for the Governor Prence Redevelopment Plan. Later phases of the project will include additional community engagement activities, visioning informed by a housing market and need analysis, refinement of site development options, and development of an implementation strategy. For the site analysis presented in this report, the consultant team completed the following work:

- **Site Visit.** Members of the consulting team conducted a site visit with Town staff on February 28, 2022.
- **Meetings.** The consultants participated in four meetings with the Governor Prence Committee and Town staff to clarify the study’s goals and understand community expectations on January 10, January 24, February 14, and February 28.
- **Review of Past Plans.** Members of the consulting team reviewed the *Orleans Comprehensive Plan* (2006), *Orleans Community Housing Study* (2017), *Orleans Community Preservation Plan* (2020), and draft documents from the Town’s forthcoming economic development plan.
- **GIS Research** Geospatial data from both from the Town of Orleans and MassGIS informed the analysis. This work included mapping utilities and infrastructure and confirming capacity and constraints with the Town Staff.

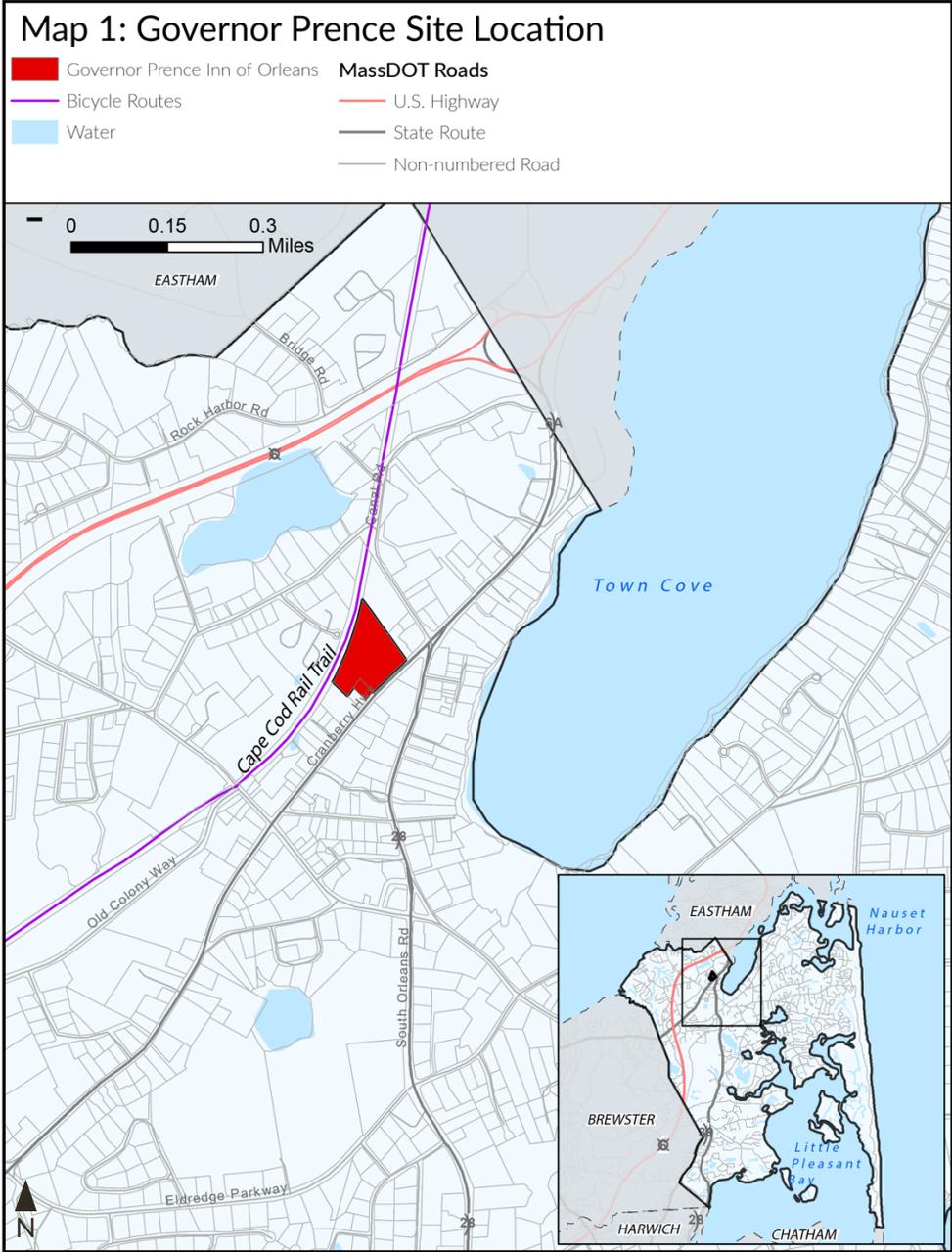
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<sup>1</sup> Town of Orleans Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Article 23.



- **Housing Needs and Regional Market Analytics.** In addition to data from the Orleans Community Housing Study, the development team obtained and used data from the market study for the redevelopment at the former Cape Cod Five, from the MLS supplied by the Cape Cod Association of Realtors as well as data from Reonomy and Rentometer's databases.





## Existing Buildings & Infrastructure

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The Governor Prence Inn consists of one main building in the center of the property with four smaller structures staggered on the slope that descends from behind the main building towards the bike trail. There was an outdoor swimming pool immediately behind and below the main building, but for safety reasons, the Town of Orleans filled the pool immediately following the purchase. Adjacent to the decommissioned pool is open green space with a gazebo. The existing buildings are in a state of relative disrepair, with noticeable moisture, rot on rooves, foundation weaknesses, and access by animals and other pests. The architecture does not appear to have any unusual historic or aesthetic qualities beyond that of a typical mid-century motel. The site has two vehicular access points along Route 6A and a paved loop road that runs along almost the entire perimeter, allowing the entire property to be accessed by car. It is also served by existing gas and water connections. The site will be served by the public sewer service that will be operational by the end of 2022.<sup>2</sup>



*Image 1: Main inn building.*

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<sup>2</sup> George Meservey (Director of Planning, Town of Orleans), email to Elizabeth Haney, February 22, 2022.





Image 2: Commercial building at 76 6A.

### Topography

The site slopes upward from the frontage on Route 6A to a large, mostly flat front yard leading to the main motel building, which crowns the property's highest point. There is a gradual grade change of almost fifteen feet from the frontage along Route 6A to the motel building. Behind the motel, the property slopes downward until it meets the Cape Cod Rail Trail at the rear lot line. The grade change from the crown of the hill to the lowest point on the site is roughly forty-five feet. Each of the buildings on the site were designed to accommodate the slope, i.e., situated on flatter areas. The shape of the property resembles three flat terraces separated by steeper slopes. The highest has the main building, the middle has the pool and open space, and the lowest is at the level of the Rail Trail. As a result, the front part of the site functions as a visual and auditory barrier from Route 6A for the back part.

### Natural Features

The site contains a variety of species of trees, some mature and some stands of scrubby pine that are near the end of their life. Additional tree species observed on site include pine, cedar, birch, and oak. During several of the storms in 2021-22, Town staff reported that trees on the site have lost limbs, including some within days of the site visit. Some areas of the site are more forested than others, and some of these areas of trees are inundated with vines that may be invasive species. The northeastern tip of the site remains undeveloped and appears as though it may play a role in drainage.





Image 3: Trees covered with vines at northeastern corner of site.



Image 4: Downed tree limb on southeastern building.



The site also includes several glacial erratics, or large rocks that were naturally deposited during the last glacial period. They clearly differ from other rocks in the area because they were carried over long distances, often hundreds of miles, and ended up in seemingly odd locations.



*Image 5: Downed tree limbs behind glacial erratics.*

## Site Context

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### Adjacent Sites

The Governor Prence site is immediately bordered on west, east, and southern sides by a mix of commercial properties and religious properties. A townhouse condominium development abuts the site to the south and is separated from it by the Cape Cod Rail Trail.



*Image 6, Image 7, Image 8 and Image 9: From top left, clockwise: Commercial abutters to the East and west, Lost Dog Pub southeast from the site across Route 6A, Christmas Tree Shop to the south across 6A.*





Image 10: Northern slope of the site to bike trail and residential townhome abutters.

### Subsurface Conditions

The Town of Orleans conducted a Phase I Environmental assessment in August 2020. The assessment revealed three Recognized Environmental Conditions (REC) that will need to be accounted for in the development of the property.<sup>3</sup> The Town is in the process of developing a demolition plan that will include work to remediate any hazard risks, both from the existing motel building and from any environmental conditions in the soil. As a result, any development will occur on a “clean” site.

### Hazard Risks

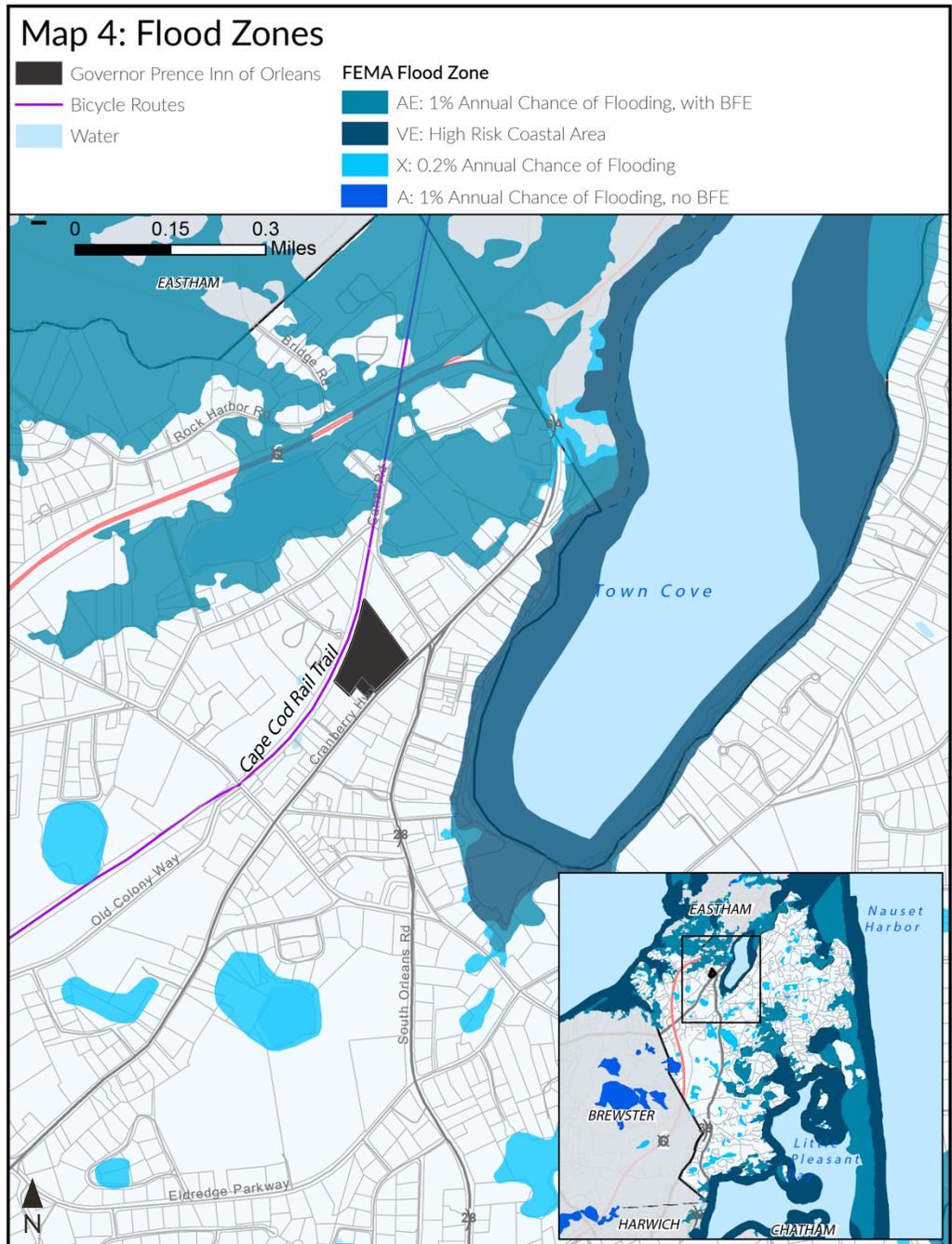
Though the areas around nearby Cedar Pond and Town Cove are in a Flood Zone as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Governor Prence site’s elevation means that it is outside these areas of flooding risk.<sup>4</sup> Orleans has experienced a series of highly disruptive and damaging weather events, including three successive nor’easters in March 2018, as well as significant rainfall events, such as the >4 inches of rain that fell within a few hours in August 2018.<sup>5</sup> The site is outside of the most vulnerable areas in Orleans, and not near the barrier beaches that separate Pleasant Bay from the Atlantic Ocean and other low lying coastal areas.

<sup>3</sup> Bennett Environmental Associates, LLC, *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of 66 & 76 Route 6A*, August 10, 2020, page 3.

<sup>4</sup> MassGIS, “FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer,” March 1, 2022, prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-fema-national-flood-hazard-layer>.

<sup>5</sup> Town of Orleans, *Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings- May 2019 DRAFT*, May 2019.





### Neighborhood Character

Beyond the immediate abutters, the site is in a neighborhood with several small, local entities. A major commercial plaza with a Stop & Shop and TJ Maxx is a ten-minute walk away to the north on Route 6A. To the south, Downtown Orleans is an even shorter walk away, hosting numerous local businesses. The site is well within the town center and the



“commercial hub of the Outer Cape,” identified by stakeholders in the Town’s economic development plan process, and surrounded by a number of key assets.<sup>6</sup>

## Transit & Connectivity

The Governor Prence site is uniquely well connected, with easy access for walking, biking, and driving. The property has frontage on State Route 6A to the south and east, which connects to U.S. Route 6 at the nearby Eastham Rotary. To the west and northwest, the property borders the Cape Cod Rail Trail, a popular bike path, allowing convenient access to the rear of the property for cyclists and pedestrians. The front of the property is also easy to reach by foot, with sidewalks running along either side of Route 6A. This sidewalk system creates connections between the Governor Prence Inn and downtown Orleans, as well as various retail, restaurant, and grocery establishments.

TABLE 1: TRAVEL DISTANCE FROM SITE TO AMENITIES

Amenity	Walking	Biking	Driving	Transit
Village Center	6 minutes	2 minutes	1 minute	N/A
Snows Library	11 minutes	3 minutes	2 minutes	N/A
Stop and Shop Plaza	9 minutes	3 minutes	2 minutes	N/A
Nauset Middle School	13 minutes	4 minutes	2 minutes	N/A
Skaket Corners Shopping Plaza	24 minutes	7 minutes	4 minutes	11 minutes
Nauset Beach	1 hour and 10 minutes	18 minutes	9 minutes	N/A
Skaket Beach	39 minutes	9 minutes	6 minutes	N/A
Hyannis	N/A	2 hours	30 minutes	1.5 hours
Chatham	N/A	49 minutes	20 minutes	40 minutes
Provincetown	N/A	2.5 hours	40 minutes	1.5 hours

Source: Google Maps, Barrett Planning Group

## Constraints and Challenges

The Governor Prence site has physical constraints to future development, as well as challenges to be addressed in any future development.

### Topography

When considering new uses for the Governor Prence Inn site, one major feature that will need to be addressed is the site’s topography. While the upper access drive, main entry to the inn, and the upper parking area give a first impression of a relatively flat site, in reality there is a grade change of almost fifteen feet across the front of the site, such that the lower access drive is almost a story and a half lower than the upper one. The grade

<sup>6</sup> Town of Orleans, *Economic Development Plan Diagnostic prepared by Streetsense, January 25, 2022.*



difference is even more significant behind the main building. Relative to the flat area in front of the main building, the northwest corner is also roughly fifteen lower than the flat area in front but occurs over a much shorter distance than across the front of the site. The largest difference is from the flat area in front of the main building to the northeast corner. That corner is roughly forty-five feet lower in elevation. The current site layout accommodates this grade change utilizing a series of stepped terraces, with the main building and ancillary structures typically including a walk-out level on their lower side that is one full floor below their access on the high side.

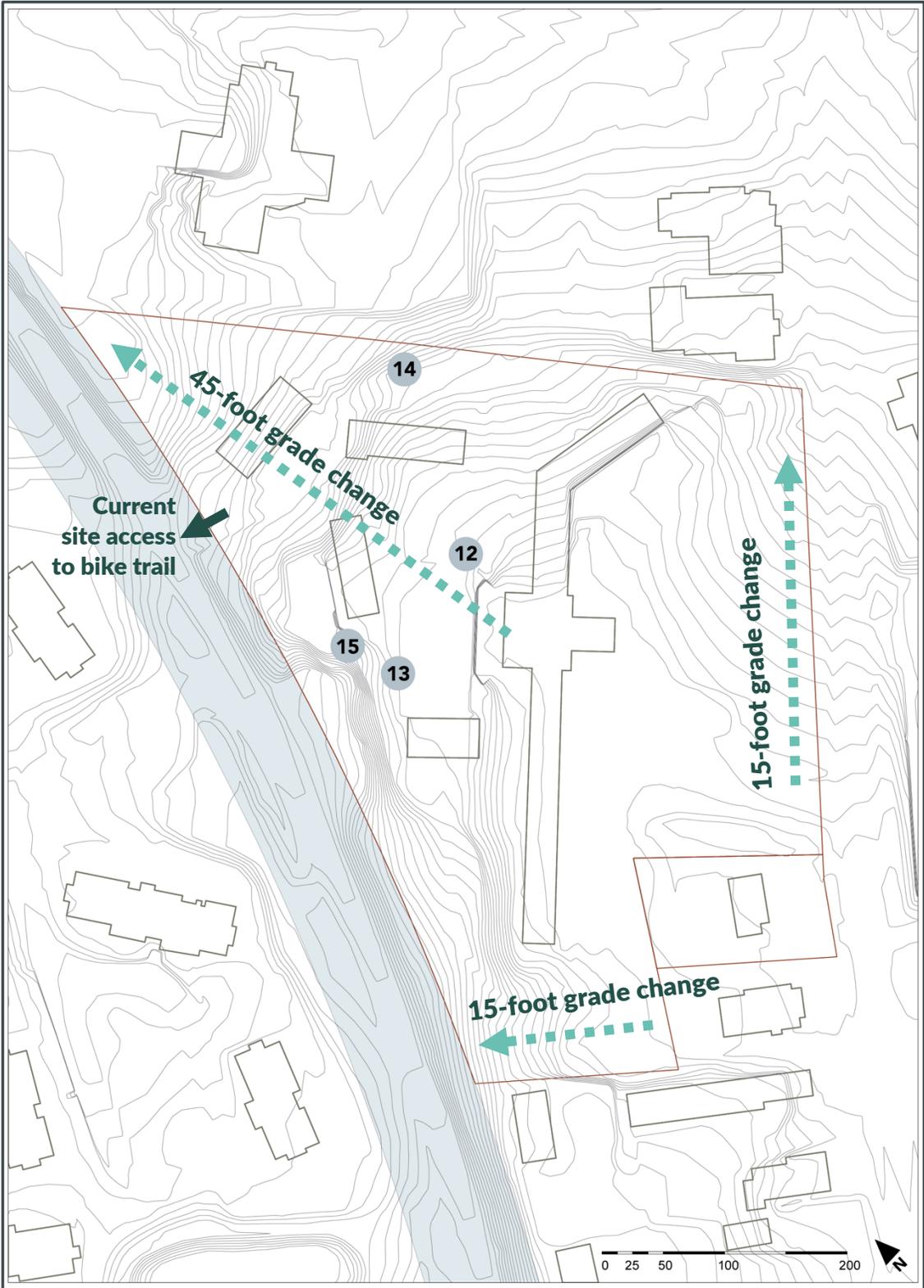
In considering new options for the site, existing topography raises several challenges. First, unless a new proposal essentially places new buildings in the same locations as the existing buildings, a substantial amount of earthwork will be required. The degree to which the earthwork can be "balanced" (minimizing how much earth needs to be removed or brought to the site) is to be determined, but it does suggest significant earthwork would require the removal of existing site vegetation. Barrett Planning Group did not identify specimen trees on the sloped areas. It is also likely that retaining walls may be required to help support a new layout.

Second, the existing topography will create challenges relative to circulation, emergency access, and accessibility. However, new options will likely need to find alternate approaches to create better access to the site to address current requirements for accessibility and emergency access. Any options that include detached residential structures will likely also want to include a more comprehensive network of vehicular and pedestrian circulation, including the potential for distributed / proximate parking. New options will also want to make a connection to the adjacent bike path. This is easiest at a point toward the lower portion of the site in the northeast corner where the site grades and bike path grades match up. Much of the site sits several feet above the bike path, such that direct connections (notwithstanding the use of stairs) would be difficult.

Third, the existing topography will likely drive what sort of building types can be considered and will suggest many of those types will include some form of walkout basements or lower levels. This will also likely require more complex building foundations. One common solution for this sort of arrangement is to include parking in a lower level, but such an option is more commonly found in market-rate housing where the added costs can more readily be recouped.

And fourth, the existing topography will also create challenges as it relates to site drainage and erosion control. Generally speaking, the site drains to the north and to the east, with the northeast corner being the lowest point of the site. Since there are limited flat areas in these locations, the site design will likely need to incorporate a distributed, integrated stormwater approach in lieu of larger, more cost-effective facilities at these locations. Areas with steep grades may also be prone to erosion concerns that will need to be addressed.





Map 2: Site Topography of 1 foot contour lines. Town of Orleans; MasGIS, Barrett Planning Group.





Image 11: 10 foot grade change between main inn building and former swimming pool.



Image 12: Image of grade change when looking south from corner of filled swimming pool.





Image 13: The site's secondary inn buildings are scattered across a downward slope towards the bike path.



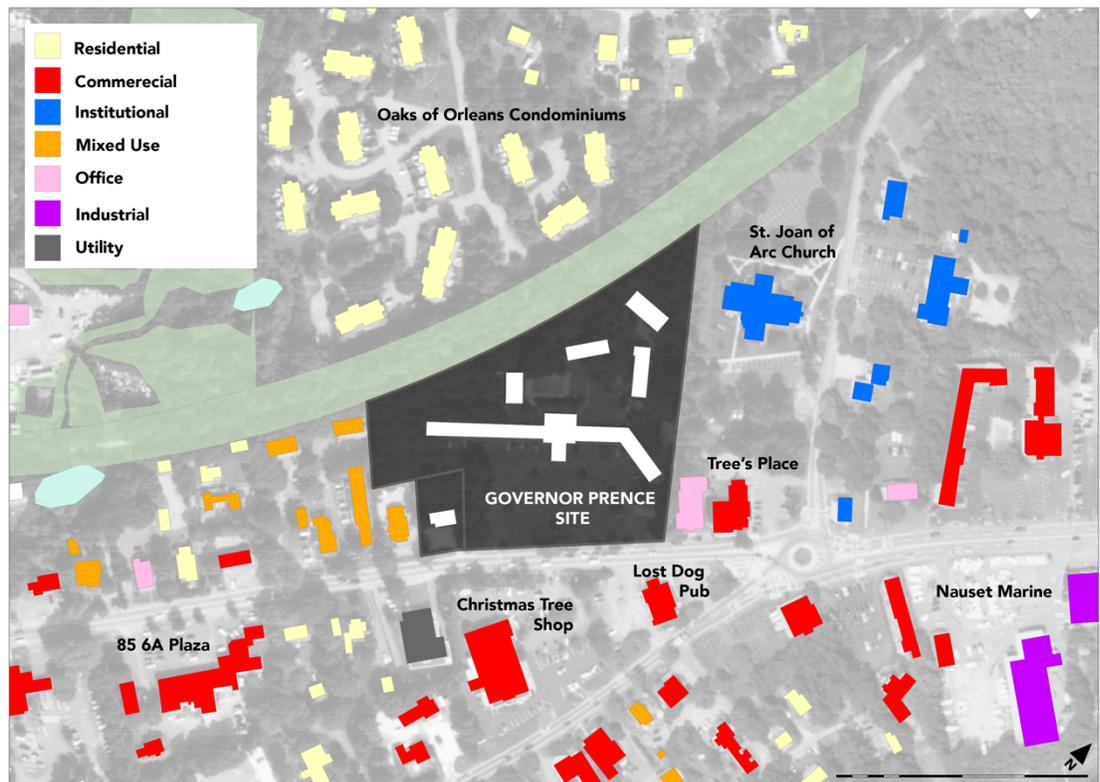
Image 14: The rear-central inn building has a steep slope behind it and a 10 foot drop behind the wooden fence.



## Compatibility

The Governor Prence Inn is a transition zone between the Main Street/Village Center cluster of economic activity and the Town Cove/Waterfront cluster of larger-scale commercial development closer to the rotary. In addition to commercial neighbors, it is across the bike trail from a residential townhome development and immediately neighbors St. Joan of Arc Catholic church. The built environment immediately surrounding the site on Route 6A consists of 1-2.5 story buildings, which have much smaller setbacks to Route 6A than the existing motel. The site could offer a chance to extend the village center character from the intersection of Route 6A and Main Street further toward Town Cove. The site might offer a chance to further enhance the built character of the downtown, with an active façade that is not set back for parking.

In addition, housing developed on the site might offer additional customers for downtown retail.



Map 3: Land Uses Surrounding Site; Town of Orleans, MassGIS, Barrett Planning Group.

## Current Zoning

The Governor Prence Inn site sits within the Village Center (VC) zoning district. The Town's zoning regulations offer guidance about varying details that will affect the site's layout, but some of the major elements are summarized here.



In reviewing the zoning for how an apartment development would meet requirements, there is no minimum lot area, and a residential density of 10 dwelling units per acre is allowed. In addition, projects with components that support community goals are allowed additional dwelling units as follows: for each 1-bedroom dwelling unit, an additional 1-bedroom dwelling unit is allowed, and for each affordable dwelling unit, an additional dwelling unit is allowed. This additional density is allowed up to 14 dwelling units per acre, which for the site's area of 5.5 acres would be a maximum of 77 units. If a commercial component is included, one half of the total lot acre covered by the commercial building plus its required parking shall be subtracted from the area used for the density calculation. The Town also requires a minimum of one affordable unit for every 10 units for any project of more than 10 units.

The front yard must be a minimum of 15 feet or the average front setback of the adjacent lots, with a maximum of 25 feet. Side and rear yards must be a minimum of 10 feet, although party walls with no setback are allowed with a special permit and approval from the Fire Chief and Board of Health. Baseline building height is constrained to a maximum of 30 feet, measured from the average undisturbed existing natural grade at the foundation on the street side of the building to the top of the ridge, although as an apartment development, a third floor is allowed with a maximum height of 35 feet measured to mean height between the bottom of the eave and the highest point of each ridge.

A maximum of 20 units is allowed per structure, and no dwelling unit shall have its lowest floor below grade at any point within its entire perimeter (something to be mindful of with the likely stepping of this site).

As it relates to parking, for the residential portion of the site, dwelling units or multifamily units of two or more bedrooms require two spaces per unit, with one bedroom units requiring one space per unit for dwelling units and one-and-a-half spaces per multifamily unit. Multifamily units also require one visitor space per three units. Any commercial or public uses on site will also require some amount of parking. These requirements vary widely per use but are listed in the Zoning Bylaw's off-street parking regulations.

## **Opportunities**

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### **Accessible Location**

One of the most unique and attractive features of the Governor Prence site is its central location in Orleans' village center. The site's five acres of developable area provide a great opportunity for the development of much-needed housing, including the ability to potentially include some ancillary commercial or community uses along Route 6A.

Residents who live within a half-mile radius of the site have access to a range of restaurants, shops, grocery stores, pharmacies, and other services. These amenities can serve daily needs and provide potential employment opportunities within walking



distance. The site is also served by bus service from the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority and has direct access to the Cape Cod Rail Trail, both of which provide alternative means of getting around the Cape without a car. By car, the site is also conveniently accessed from both Route 6 and Route 28. These same reasons make the site a good option for some ancillary commercial or community uses. The Route 6A frontage provides high visibility, and the site is readily accessible by foot, bike, bus, and/or car as described above.

In addition to the site's accessibility, its scale and location also suggest it is a good option for a new residential community of moderate density. Planning for a community in the range of ten to fourteen units to an acre should provide for the critical mass needed to create a feasible project, and to make a real impact on the supply of affordable housing and "right sized" units for a variety of household types. This kind of density is also more appropriate in this core area than it would be further out in the predominantly single-family neighborhoods that surround the village center. That said, it will be important to incorporate density in building types and forms that are still of a scale and character appropriate for the site's context.

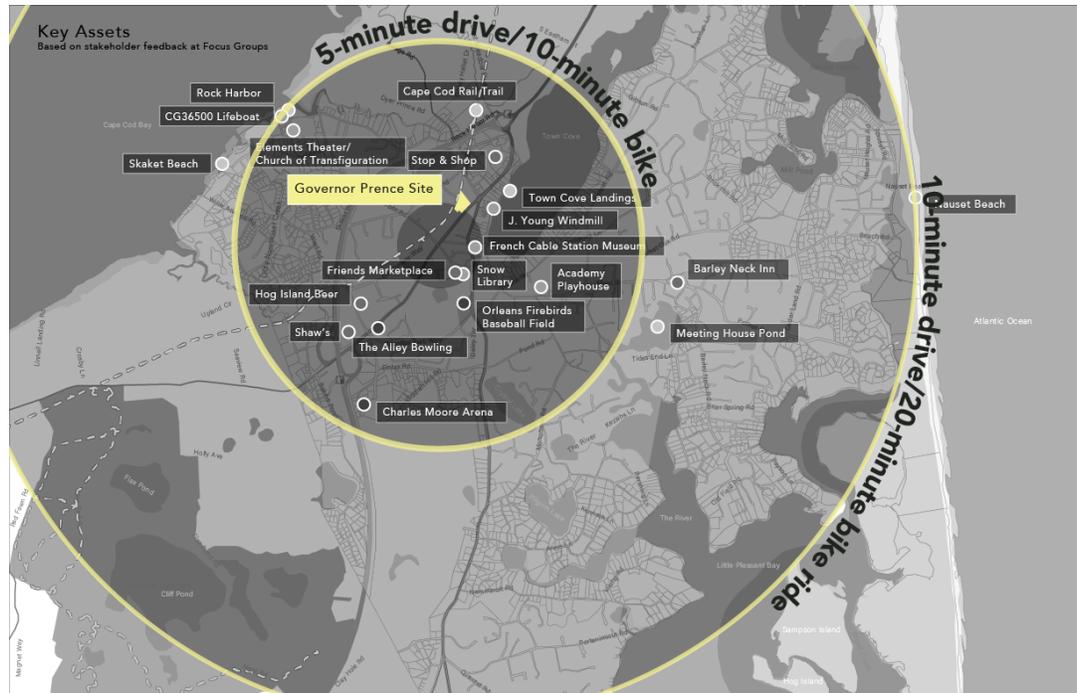
### **Opportunity to Address Housing Needs**

The pervasive and severe shortage of housing in Barnstable County and Orleans means that any available land deserves a careful evaluation for how it might be used to address Orleans' housing crisis. Large parcels of available land are scarce, especially large parcels of land that are not exposed to coastal storm damage or flood risks.<sup>7</sup> Even fewer parcels are available that are walkable to the community assets in downtown Orleans, to the bus stops that connect Orleans to communities from Provincetown to Hyannis. The site's location is within a five-minute drive of many of the assets identified in Orleans' 2021 Economic Development Planning (Map 4: Annotated map of key assets identified by economic development plan stakeholders, with Governor Prence site labelled.).

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<sup>7</sup> *Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings- May 2019 DRAFT*, page 5; Town of Orleans, *Orleans Comprehensive Plan*, 2006.





Map 4: Annotated map of key assets identified by economic development plan stakeholders, with Governor Prence site labelled.

Several housing plans at both the local and regional level have identified the ongoing (and growing) need for affordable housing in Orleans. Past planning studies have also advocated for the Town to evaluate every potentially available parcel for use in expanding the supply of affordable housing. As early as 2006, the Orleans Comprehensive Plan identified an insufficient supply of affordable housing as a long-term problem so severe that “no opportunity, public or private, should be overlooked to move forward.”<sup>8</sup> The same plan found that though Orleans shares the Barnstable County-wide housing problems, the issue is exacerbated in Orleans by high housing and land costs and few and expensive year-round housing opportunities.

Later plans have recognized growing needs and begun to identify the downtown area as an ideal location for affordable housing, given infrastructure and zoning. The Orleans Community Housing Study (2017) had a goal to create 100 units of affordable housing in 10 years. The Housing Study recognized that most new affordable housing would likely be built downtown once the sewer system was operational, thereby reducing nitrogen loading to the groundwater and estuaries in outlying parts of town. In addition, the study recognized the larger developments possible in the downtown area could be more competitive for federal and state subsidies and require larger town subsidies.<sup>9</sup>

The Community Preservation Plan includes a goal for the Town to continue to explore new affordable housing opportunities, and to provide fair, decent, safe, affordable

<sup>8</sup> Orleans Comprehensive Plan, 216.

<sup>9</sup> Town of Orleans, *Community Housing Study*, 2017.



housing for rental or purchase that meets the needs of present and future Orleans residents.<sup>10</sup> The Town also sought to raise its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) to 10 percent of all year-round units. The CPP plan seeks to provide equal opportunity in housing, both ownership and rental, and give special considerations to meeting the housing needs of Orleans’ most vulnerable populations, including but not limited to very low income (50 percent Area Median Income, or AMI), low income (51-80 percent AMI) single-parent heads of households, elderly, minorities, the homeless, people with disabilities, and others with special needs.

Income Compared to Area Median Income (AMI)	Household Size					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Moderate Income (120%)	\$ 87,514	\$ 100,016	\$ 112,518	\$ 125,020	\$ 135,022	\$ 145,023
Median Income (100%)	\$ 75,012	\$ 85,728	\$ 96,444	\$ 107,160	\$ 115,733	\$ 134,250
Low Income (80%)	\$ 54,450	\$ 62,200	\$ 70,000	\$ 77,750	\$ 84,000	\$ 90,200
Very Low Income (50%)	\$ 34,050	\$ 38,900	\$ 43,750	\$ 48,600	\$ 52,500	\$ 56,400
Extremely Low Income (30%)	\$ 20,450	\$ 23,350	\$ 26,250	\$ 29,150	\$ 31,500	\$ 35,580

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, FY 2021 Income Limits Summary; Barrett Planning Group.

Several different and unique household types are struggling to find and afford housing in Orleans. Barrett Planning Group’s Future Use Study for the Governor Prence Site identified that the overwhelming majority of Orleans households with severe housing cost burdens have extremely low and very low incomes (82 percent).<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the Cape Cod Commission found that significant action was needed to increase and diversify the housing stock for year-round homebuyers in their 2017 housing needs analysis.<sup>12</sup>

Conditions have changed since both the 2006 and 2017 plans; the need for affordable housing has only grown. The average household size in Orleans was 2.1 according to the

<sup>10</sup> Town of Orleans, *Community Preservation Plan, 2020*.

<sup>11</sup> Barrett Planning Group, *Governor Prence Inn Future Use Study*, prepared for the Town of Orleans, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> *Community Housing Study*.



2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.<sup>13</sup> Combining ACS data with the average household size and household incomes in Orleans, with Barnstable County HUD income limits suggests the following number of Orleans households would qualify under each income limit.<sup>14</sup>

- 18% of Orleans households qualify at 30% AMI level
- 26% of Orleans households qualify at 50% AMI level
- 40% of Orleans households qualify at 80% AMI level
- 57% of Orleans households qualify at 100% AMI level
- 62% of Orleans households qualify at 120% AMI level

Orleans has recently invested in increasing the supply of affordable housing through the redevelopment of a Cape Cod 5 site on West Road, which includes nine units restricted to households at 30% or below AMI. Forty-three will be reserved for households with incomes below 60 percent AMI, and ten will be restricted to below 120 percent AMI. The market study for that property estimated that the development would need to capture 4.88 percent of potentially eligible households at 60 percent AMI and 1.25 percent of income-eligible households at 120 percent AMI in order to lease all units—meaning that huge proportions of the population who might income qualify for affordable housing have unmet needs.<sup>15</sup> This study concluded that there was high pent-up demand for any type of affordable housing in Barnstable County, and predicted a strong lottery response for any affordable housing offered in Orleans.

The trends identified in these plans and studies align with the most recently available data for the housing market. In the last 12 months in Orleans, available data from Rentometer identified only three two-bedroom rentals, with a median monthly rent of \$2,300, and twelve one-bedroom apartments with a median rent of \$1,600.<sup>16</sup>

Home prices have increased while available inventory has shrunk. The median sales price in Orleans for a single family home increased to \$951,000 in 2021, while the median sale price for a condominium was \$383,950.<sup>17</sup>

*Single Family Home Prices*

TABLE 3: SINGLE FAMILY HOME PRICES		
	2020	2021
Closed Sales	203	121

<sup>13</sup> Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2019 (5-Year Estimates), “SE:A10003. Average Household Size.”

<sup>14</sup> Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2019 (5-Year Estimates), “SE:A14001. Household Income (In 2019 Inflation Adjusted Dollars).”; Barrett Planning Group.

<sup>15</sup> LDS Consulting Group, *Rental Housing Supply and Demand Analysis for Orleans Cape Cod Five, 19 West Road, Orleans, Massachusetts*, October 15, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Rentometer, Orleans One Bedroom Apartments, March 16, 2022; Rentometer, Orleans Two Bedroom Apartments, March 16, 2022

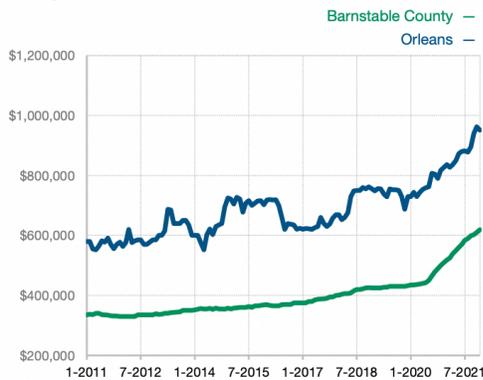
<sup>17</sup> Local Market Update – December 2021 A Research tool provided by the Cape Cod and Islands Association of REALTORS®, Inc.



Median Sales Price	827,500	951,000
Cumulative Days on Market Until Sale	156	94
Source: Local Market Update – December 2021 A Research tool provided by the Cape Cod and Islands Association of REALTORS®, Inc.		

TABLE 4: CONDOMINIUM PRICES		
	2020	2021
Closed Sales	48	42
Median Sales Price	\$337,500	\$353,950
Cumulative Days on Market Until Sale	84	48
Source: Local Market Update – December 2021 A Research tool provided by the Cape Cod and Islands Association of REALTORS®, Inc.		

**Median Sales Price – Single-Family Properties**  
Rolling 12-Month Calculation



**Median Sales Price – Condominium Properties**  
Rolling 12-Month Calculation

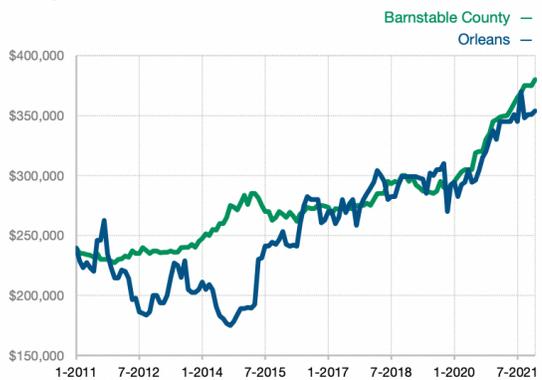


Image 15 Research tool provided by the Cape Cod and Islands Association of REALTORS®, Inc.

### Economic Development

At the time of the writing of this site report, the Town was nearing completion of an economic development plan with the assistance of Streetsense. Early ideas and direction for the economic development plan identified housing affordability as a risk to Orleans’ economic vitality.<sup>18</sup> Draft documents recommended building residential density at Village Center / Town Cove and focusing new housing development on ‘missing middle’ income households and downsizers. Streetsense identified new public sewer as a major opportunity for developing residential density and mixed uses in the town center. In interviews, the Streetsense team encouraged the team working on the Governor Prence site to consider how the site might enhance walkability and connectivity between the Village Center and Town Cover, through the form of the buildings, wayfinding and pedestrian amenities. In addition to middle income and housing for downsizers,

<sup>18</sup> Town of Orleans, *Economic Development Plan Diagnostic*, prepared by Streetsense, January 25, 2022, page 23.



Streetsense suggested the town consider a cultural anchor institution downtown as well as encourage non-retail service and office uses like medical offices or coworking spaces.<sup>19</sup>

### **Climate Resilience**

The Governor Prence site is a notable for its absence of the hazard risks from coastal flooding and storms. The site's elevation ensures that it has access to the Route 6 exit 89 entrance via 6A, as well as the more vulnerable rotary entrance to Route 6, which has been identified as vulnerable to flooding. The site is outside of the FEMA flood zone which includes portions of the nearby Stop and Shop Plaza and rotary. A community center use might consider how space could be flexibly programmed to accommodate a local emergency shelter, given the closest shelter during current emergencies is located in Eastham.<sup>20</sup>

### **Other Planning Efforts**

Some uses that have been suggested for the Governor Prence site, are the subject of ongoing planning efforts. These planning efforts may need to be coordinated with those for the Governor Prence site, in order to accommodate or eliminate their possible location on the Governor Prence site. These efforts include planning for a new fire station, a future library and a community center.

### **Opportunity for Flexibility in Zoning**

Initial studies should seek to create a site layout largely in keeping with the underlying zoning, but it is worth noting there are a few opportunities to get additional flexibility if needed to provide for the best and most feasible outcome.

One option would be to largely stick with the underlying zoning but seek specific waivers around potential challenges like building height (due to the site's topography) or parking requirements (that may be higher than required for an affordable housing community with access to alternate means of transportation). Such waivers are approved by the Town's Zoning Board of Appeals through a variance process.

If through the process it becomes apparent that a large number of waivers is required, it may make more sense to either work with the Town boards to rezone the property, or to utilize the Commonwealth's 40B statute, which allows developers to supersede local requirements when providing affordable housing in areas that qualify. The degree to which this is an issue will become more apparent though the course of the project.

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<sup>19</sup> Nur Atiq Asri (Assistant Director, Streetsense), conversation with Barrett Planning Group and Town Staff, March 7, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> *Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings- May 2019 DRAFT.*



## **Assessment of Compatible Uses**

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Taken together, the Governor Prence site is a remarkable location that would be suitable for a variety of uses, given its proximity to local amenities, public transportation, Route 6 and the bike trail. It sits between two commercial clusters and offer an opportunity to contribute to a streetscape that connects the two. The access to grocery stores, a pharmacy, restaurants, shops, schools and the library also make the location an attractive and sensible location for residential development, a use further justified by the deep and pervasive need for housing of many kinds in Orleans. Municipal uses may also be appropriate, but definitive criteria are needed to better evaluate how the square footage, vehicular access, building types and parking needs of those uses would compare to the realities at the Governor Prence site.

Any large scale uses on the site will need to accommodate the challenges of the site's topography. Efforts to substantially change the grade will incur costs around earthwork and retaining walls, and may require removing vegetation. Given the significant grade changes on the site, a distributed stormwater retention strategy will be crucial in ensuring development does not cause runoff issues for neighboring residences, as well as on Route 6A.



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