

CAPE COD TIMES

Twin Brooks apartment proposal decision a pivotal moment

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A Truro resident shared this thought: *“I think the time has passed when we old-timers can hope that Cape Cod will stay the way it is.”* We have absolute proof it is going to change, and then the issue is, should it be done by bulldozers ... by money-mad people ... by banks wanting to lend ... by builders wanting quick jobs ... by loan sharks?’ This was offered in 1959. There is nothing new under the sun.

We started this discussion 60 years ago. How do we maintain a balance between the interests of capital and the interests of the natural infrastructure of the Cape? This isn’t a contest between practicality and idealism. It’s more complex than that. We have over 220,000 folks living out here year-round. Property owners have a practical concern for our property values that’s braided into matching concerns for traffic, congestion, and the natural charm that brought us here in the first place.

You don’t need to be a tree-hugger to care about all these things — and to resist the impulses of heavily capitalized entities to monetize the view. If, generation after generation, we split the difference between the needs of the many and the ambitions of the few, we will inexorably see Cape Cod become unlivable for more and more of us. We see it now.

Another of these pivotal moments has quietly arrived at our doorstep. An off-

312-unit apartment complex with 468 paved parking spaces. At best, only 31 of these will be designated as affordable housing. What could go wrong?

First of all, there actually are two brooks flanking the property, Joshua's Brook and Stewart's Creek. Nitrates and other pollutants have already fouled their estuaries whose stink often wafts into the yards of homeowners and Harbor Village ... all these people who thought they'd found their piece of paradise.

Slab over the property with concrete and the ability of the land to naturally absorb run-off is ruined. Where does the run-off end up? Keys Beach. We have to hold the line.

468 cars will flood in and out onto Scudder Avenue right behind the busy West-End rotary where the Melody Tent and high school traffic already discharges, near properties three other developers have their eyes on. No wonder the neighbors are up in arms.

They've setup SaveTwinBrooks.org in self-defense. Visit their site and check it out.

We share another concern. The Twin Brooks property may be the biggest open space left on the Mid-Cape. If it gets a legal OK, other golf courses, open spaces, ballfields are all sitting ducks. Properties are being bought up by huge corporate concerns all over the country. Any open space can be monetized — and if we let it happen, the great majority of us already living here will be the poorer for it. The Twin Brooks struggle is all our struggle because the rest of us are next.

There is no incentive for huge capital groups to erect affordable housing. Call it 'workforce housing' and you'll see what's at stake. The alternative to massive housing developments is to encourage existing homeowners to offer granny apartments for rent. That way, not only does workforce housing

appear for those who need it, the profits fall into the pockets of ordinary residents rather than distant entities.

There will be public hearings for the Twin Brooks project. A purchase and sale agreement, thank God, isn't enough to make it happen. Here's your chance to participate in local government. SaveTwinBrooks.org will post the hearing dates. So will the Barnstable Land Trust (info@blt.org).

The BLT hired Boston-based architecture and planning firm Utile to design the organization's alternative proposal for future use of the Twin Brooks Golf Course. We have a choice on what happens next — if we mobilize and speak up now. There will be meetings held by the town. Get on their lists of speakers.

How shall we define the sacred? The sacred cannot be monetized because it is already beyond price. It is set apart from the buying and selling that characterizes the rest of life.

We learn about the sacred in our faith groups, but the concept extends beyond them. There is a level where the protection of our natural world is a sacred trust. But if you need something more practical, consider this. We still can choose an economy designed to support the vast majority of people living in it — or see it stolen away by capital interests too distant and indifferent to take our personal needs to heart. Which way shall we go?

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