

FAQS: **ONE LOVE LANE** **PROJECT**



January 11, 2023

Q: How does the Love Lane acquisition fit into the mission of the organization?

A: Housing Assistance is a nonprofit that has helped provide housing throughout Cape Cod and the Islands for 50 years. Our programs and services help bridge the wide gap between homelessness and homeownership. We operate shelters, rental assistance, and stabilization programs; we provide housing education and weatherization; and we build safe, high-quality homes that strengthen the diverse communities that surround them.

Our focus has always been on addressing housing insecurity for residents across the region through a variety of educational programs and housing developments. The acquisition of One Love Lane is a natural fit with our multi-year strategic plan and is intended to be utilized as a long-term asset to help fulfill our mission.

Q: Why did Housing Assistance purchase the One Love Lane property?

A: Since completing our strategic plan in 2020, Housing Assistance has made its top goal to add year-round housing and enhance its program offerings. The staff assessed its owned inventory for the highest and best use as well as researching the acquisition of properties that could augment this two-part goal. The Love Lane property met all those requirements. We envision the property as a way to combine and streamline our family shelter services in a single location while at the same time converting our existing shelter locations into new permanent, year-round housing opportunities for individuals and families who have been affected by the region's housing crisis.

Q: Did Housing Assistance initiate the Love Lane sale?

A: Housing Assistance was approached by the Broker representing the owners of the building in January of 2023. The nursing home operator doing business there – South Dennis Health Care (formerly Eagle Pond Rehabilitation) – was challenged by the workforce shortage and the nursing home operator was struggling to make its payments to the owner. The owner and Housing Assistance began confidential negotiations in January resulting in an acquisition in October of 2023.

Q: Why didn't Housing Assistance speak about what was happening at Love Lane or state their intentions publicly?

A: Housing Assistance was under a confidentiality provision mandated by the seller that prohibited us from speaking on the details of the transaction, intended use, or timing until the now-former owner and operator had completed their closure process. There were legal contracts between the former owner and operator that had to be honored as well as consideration for their residents and staff. As of January 1, 2024, the nursing home is officially closed, and the operator has moved out. With that, Housing Assistance officially has site control and now may speak publicly about the plan of use.

Q: How is Housing Assistance funded?

A: We receive funds through private donations, grants, and contracts. To help with large acquisitions, we also take out mortgages which was done for this property.

Q: Did this closure harm seniors?

A: No, the struggling nursing home that was operating on this site closed under the oversight and approval of the MA Department of Public Health. Every resident was moved to a new residence. Nursing home beds across the state are falling as more people get care in the community – smaller group homes or residents move back in with family. The lack of a health care workforce on the Cape – in large part due to the lack of attainable housing and low wages – precludes the viability of nursing homes or the opening of new nursing homes.

Q: What program will be provided at One Love Lane?

A: In addition to providing stable and supportive housing for families, we plan to partner with other skilled providers to establish expanded educational services, with a focus on working parents living in the shelter.

The agency is also exploring transportation, financial literacy, and job training as additional elements of comprehensive assistance at One Love Lane to help accelerate a successful transition for these families into permanent year-round housing.

Q: When will this project open?

A: Housing Assistance has filed plans with the Dennis Planning Board for special review under the town's zoning bylaws for its use of the property, which is allowed by right under the state's Dover Amendment. The historic law exempts educational and other uses from certain zoning restrictions. We have had a strong, collaborative relationship for many years with the town, and look forward to working with them in the coming months with the intent to open in mid-2024.

Q: Who will be living at the new shelter?

A: The families currently being served at our shelter locations in Barnstable, Bourne and Falmouth will relocate to the new location in Dennis, following renovations to the interior and the implementation of staff and services.

Q: What will happen to the Housing Assistance shelter locations that currently house the homeless families in Housing Assistance's portfolio?

A: Housing Assistance will relocate the families currently living in its shelter facilities to Love Lane. The current shelters will be converted to create an Upper Cape client services office for our outreach team and intake staff; nine 2-bedroom apartments and 18 studios to rent year-round; plus, two buildings that will be repurposed to use for an existing youth housing program and a MA Department of Mental Health program.

Q: Will this become housing for migrants?

A: There has been much discussion across the Cape and the Commonwealth about the immigration crisis and the need for housing for migrant families. We, too, are frustrated by the immigration crisis, as we are with the decades-long Cape housing crisis.

The plan that we have for One Love Lane is part of Housing Assistance's long term strategic planning that predates the immigration crisis. Once it is open, this new family shelter will serve as a stable, supportive home for families, many with deep roots on Cape Cod, who need our help on the path to permanent housing. There is already the possibility of migrant families staying in our shelter if they qualify based on current state housing laws and admission standards, which we are required to follow.

Q: Does crime usually occur at family shelters?

A: No, based on our 30+ years of operating shelters, we have seen very little police activity. There will be 24-hour security onsite at the shelter and we expect the area around the shelter to be as quiet and safe as every other part of the town.

Q: Will children living in this shelter go to local schools?

A: School-age children are allowed to remain in the school district from where they became homeless so to minimize the negative impact that homelessness has on children. The children currently in our shelters are enrolled at other school districts so will have the option to remain at their "home" school or transfer. To help with some of the costs that may be incurred by a student transferring, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is providing additional funding to the municipalities that host shelters to offset educational and other costs. Generally, a shelter does not place a financial burden on a school system or town.

Q: What is required for a family to qualify for family shelter?

A: Families in Massachusetts apply for shelter through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) with a central application. Families without a safe place to stay may be deemed eligible for family shelter if they meet the following criteria:

- Are a resident of Massachusetts, or are living in the U.S. with the knowledge and consent of the Department of Homeland Security
- Meet the gross income standards and asset test for Emergency Assistance (the household must have gross monthly income equal to or less than 115% of the Federal Poverty Level adjusted for household size. The household's total countable assets must also not exceed \$5,000.
- Have children under the age of 21 or be pregnant.

The reason for homelessness must be one of the following:

- No-fault fire, flood, natural disaster, condemnation, or foreclosure
- Fleeing domestic violence (current or within past 12 months)
- No-fault eviction
- Children are exposed to a substantial health and safety risk.

Q: My family may become homeless. How do I enter the shelter?

A: For more information on eligibility and applying for family shelter, please see <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-ea-emergency-family-shelter>. Once you are determined eligible, you will be placed in a shelter unit. The Commonwealth has a long-standing mandate of placing families within 20 miles of where they became homeless. If you are placed outside of our region due to lack of availability, talk with the shelter staff where you are placed to get entered onto the "20 Mile list" for a transfer.

If you have questions regarding what other services may be available to help prevent you becoming homeless, please contact Housing Assistance at 508-771-5400.