



Main Street Historic District Study Committee  
19 School Street, Orleans, MA 02653

9/3/23

## PRESS RELEASE

The Orleans Select Board recently appointed an East Orleans Main Street Historic District Study Committee (Study Committee) to explore the possibility of establishing a local historic district along Main Street in East Orleans, approximately from Route 28 to the Barley Neck Inn.

The primary goal of the Study Committee's efforts is to prevent the demolition of historic properties and to ensure that new construction does not diminish the historic streetscape of Main Street. The Study Committee is proposing a district which would not regulate modifications a property owner may wish to make such as paint colors, siding or new windows.

Main Street in East Orleans is the most historically and architecturally significant streetscape in Orleans. This part of Orleans was the institutional, ecclesiastical, and civic center of the town and it retains multiple high-style and large-scale buildings of these use types. The area contains a well-preserved, cohesive collection of historic residences from the early-19th century to the mid-20th century, reflecting the period of prosperity from the fishing and agricultural industries up to the emergence of the seasonal tourist economy. There are forty-six historic homes and buildings along the 1.2 mile stretch of Main Street along with several historic cemeteries and monuments.

Well over half of all cities and towns in Massachusetts have local historic districts, including Eastham, Wellfleet, Provincetown, Harwich and Chatham, along with the large regional Old Kings Highway District. A local historic district would help retain Main Street's sense of place, which is directly tied to its history. People are drawn to the area to live, play and shop due to its special character. A local historic district can help protect that sense of character.

There is currently little to prevent the area's loss of historic character through demolitions and alterations. While there is a Demolition Delay Bylaw that can pause the demolition of historic properties in the hopes that an alternative can be found, many of these buildings go on to be demolished. The Study Committee has been charged with exploring the possibility of establishing a local historic district. A local historic district could help to guide future changes, making sure that the historic character of East Orleans' Main Street remains intact as buildings continue to evolve.

The Study Committee will reach out to property owners within the potential district with a questionnaire to assess the level of interest and views. Additional steps will include public meetings and education about historic districts and the potential district's unique history and architecture.

If there is sufficient support for a district, the Study Committee will prepare a proposed bylaw to be reviewed by the Select Board and Planning Commission and ultimately be put before Town Meeting for a vote, where it would need 2/3 vote of approval by town residents.

The participation of Orleans residents in this process is critical. For more information about the Study Committee and its work, contact them at [HDStudyComm@town.orleans.ma.us](mailto:HDStudyComm@town.orleans.ma.us) or visit the webpage at the Orleans' town website under Historic District Study Committee. The webpage will be updated as the Study Committee performs its work.