



# THREE VISIONS, ONE SITE



## The battle for the future of Twin Brooks

**TOP: Janet Milkman, executive director of the Barnstable Land Trust, stands beside the entrance to the Twin Brooks Golf Course in Hyannis on July 29. LMC plans to build 312 apartments on the 40-acre property but the land trust is working on a plan that could include land conservation and housing.**

**INSET: An aerial view looking southeast across Twin Brooks Golf Course toward Hyannis Harbor in the background.**

PHOTOS BY STEVE HEASLIP/  
CAPE COD TIMES

**Jeannette Hinkle** Cape Cod Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

At 40 acres, the Twin Brooks Golf Course is one of the largest remaining parcels of undeveloped land in Hyannis.

The property, behind the Cape Cod Resort and Conference Center in Hyannis' west end, has now attracted three different plans for future use, each of which represents a different path forward as the region attempts to balance a severe housing shortage with worsening environmental threats ranging from water pollution to climate change.

The first vision for Twin Brooks, presented by developer Lennar Multifamily Communities, or LMC, would transform the grassy parcel into a 312-unit rental apartment complex with 13 residential buildings, a clubhouse featuring a pool and fitness center and 468 parking spaces.

The second, presented by neighbors of the golf course and adjacent wetlands and estuary who are forming a nonprofit called Save Twin Brooks, would preserve the land for conservation and community access.

The third vision for the property, presented by Barnstable Land Trust, falls somewhere in the middle. That plan proposes building some new housing, while preserving most of the land for conservation use by the public.

"We're saying, 'Let's take a step back if we can, and do a little better planning to protect our quality of life and try and meet our housing needs,'" said Barnstable Land Trust Executive Director Janet Milkman. "It is possible to do both, but the window is really closing."

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# Twin Brooks

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## Where do the Twin Brooks development plans stand?

LMC's plan to build an apartment complex is perhaps furthest along.

The company has an agreement with the property's owner, and is on the verge of submitting an application for a development agreement to the Cape Cod Commission, which would kickstart the approval process.

Save Twin Brooks members, who met weekly by Zoom until last month, when they switched to biweekly meetings for the summer, essentially plan to play defense during that process.

The group has broken into subcommittees focused on each area of concern residents have about the development proposal, ranging from traffic to environmental impacts.

Those subcommittees, which have been carefully monitoring LMC's submissions to the Cape Cod Commission, will prepare written reports they hope will lead commissioners, and eventually the town of Barnstable, to the conclusion they see as obvious: a large housing complex should not be built on one of the few pieces of open land in a congested part of town that borders an ecologically fragile coastal area already in need of restoration.

"We're absolutely not opposed to housing on Cape Cod or in Barnstable or in Hyannis," said Karen Maguire, who, along with her husband, Brian Hughes, has led the resistance. "We just believe it would be better suited at another town location to help preserve the fragile Stewart's Creek estuary."

Save Twin Brooks members have put together a plan they would pursue in partnership with conservation groups if the agreement LMC has with the property owner were to fall through.

The plan, detailed on the group's website, includes a nature center, walking trails and educational installations. But most of the site would be restored to a natural habitat that residents say would serve as an important buffer in the coastal neighborhood against the effects of climate change while preserving the area's character and increasing home values.

## Conservation group envisions plan for open space - and housing

The Save Twin Brooks group, which has around 100 members, has drawn significant support not only from neighbors but from residents across Barnstable and beyond. A Change.org petition that demands the Twin Brooks site "remain natural to protect the health and peace" of the community has drawn more than 1,000 signatures.

Though Save Twin Brooks and Barnstable Land Trust are working together and share the overall goal of conservation over development, Barnstable Land Trust is taking a different tack in its plan for the property.

For the first time, the organization is advocating for creating some housing on a property that it also wants to preserve.

"It's a new direction for us," Milkman said. "We haven't really had an opportunity like this one before. It is a really great chance to demonstrate our support for and our recognition of the need for housing balanced with our serious water quality problems and the incredible urgency of protecting our quality of life, which is coming under so much pressure from so many different directions."

## Barnstable Land Trust seeks collaboration with community on plan

In addition to reaching out to the property owner to express its interest in purchasing the Twin Brooks parcel, Barnstable Land Trust issued a request for proposals



Stewart's Creek neighbors Brian Hughes, left, Karen Maguire, Liz Day, Jane McHugh and Cate Guilliver stand beside a section of the creek off Greenwood Avenue in Hyannis. The neighbors are concerned a new development planned for Twin Brooks Golf Course could damage the surrounding wetlands.

STEVE HEASLIP/CAPE COD TIMES



LMC submitted this conceptual site plan for a 312-unit, 13-building apartment complex to the Cape Cod Commission. The development would be built on the 40-acre Twin Brooks Golf Course property in Hyannis. PROVIDED BY LMC

als to planning and design firms that could develop a plan for the property in collaboration with members of the public.

Proposals came in two weeks ago and staff are now reviewing them, Milkman said. Barnstable Land Trust hopes to complete a plan by year's end.

If Barnstable Land Trust isn't able to purchase the property, Milkman said the organization will use the site-specific design plans to lobby town officials to amend LMC's proposal during the approval process to bring it closer in line with concept that has broader community support than a 312-unit apartment complex.

"The opportunity here and the reason that we thought it was worth investing in this alternative vision was that this is a developer's agreement process where the town can negotiate," Milkman said.

She has met with Town Manager Mark Ells and Planning Director Elizabeth Jenkins about the land trust's plan.

Jenkins told the Times that town officials look forward to reviewing Barnstable Land Trust's ultimate proposal for Twin Brooks.

"We're very interested to see the results of the exercise and definitely take in the public input that's provided in that process," she said.

Barnstable Land Trust's work on this property opens the door to future collaboration on development projects, she said.

"I think the land trust is really using this as an opportunity to help contribute to this community conversation about balancing growth and preservation," she said. "Both of those are important, and we have to work collaboratively — the town and developers and preservationists — to be able to respond to our housing needs, which are very acute right now, but also make sure we're doing so in a way that preserves our environmental and community character here."

While both the Cape Cod Commission and the town of Barnstable do have the ability to negotiate with LMC

under their own regulatory processes, Milkman said she has no illusions that the land trust's proposal will result in major changes to the development.

"(LMC) may stick to their guns," Milkman said. "They may get everything. But that's the risk we have to take. It's just really important to make visible what is happening here and elsewhere. This is an important project, it's an important community, and it is important symbolically for the town and the rest of the Cape."

The debate over the future of the Twin Brooks property has inspired Barnstable Land Trust to explore the regulatory environment governing the development of parcels that most people would call open space — golf courses, ball fields and camps, for example — but are classified as developed land rather than open space for permitting purposes.

"There is this gray area between pristine open space and a housing development or a shopping center, which needs a little bit more refinement in terms of regulation," Milkman said. "We want to make sure the Cape Cod Commission when they have a regulatory role to play in the development of one of these kinds of recreational spaces, that they are considering them as open space and requiring some mitigation."

## Next steps for LMC's development plan

Cape Cod Commission Deputy Director Erin Perry said LMC's application for the development agreement has not yet been deemed complete by Cape Cod Commission staff.

"There are no timelines associated with that, but once the application is deemed complete, within 10 days we would appoint a subcommittee to begin that more formal (review) process," Perry said.

Residents across Barnstable such as Maguire and Hughes will be waiting for the first public hearing of the project to be scheduled. It will likely be well-attended.

Contact Jeannette Hinkle at [capecodonline.com](mailto:capecodonline.com).

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