

# Northampton, MA

## Laurel Park Cottage Community

### Historic Clustered Cottage Community with trust owned common resources

The Laurel Park cottage community started in the 1870's as a Methodist camp to create an open air "university of ideas" focused on lifelong learning through nature, music, oration and the arts. The 111 tent platforms transformed into summer cottages and over time to year round residences.

#### Cost/Design:

Cottages were based on tent platforms with two stories. 30% of cottages are rebuilt on historic footprints.

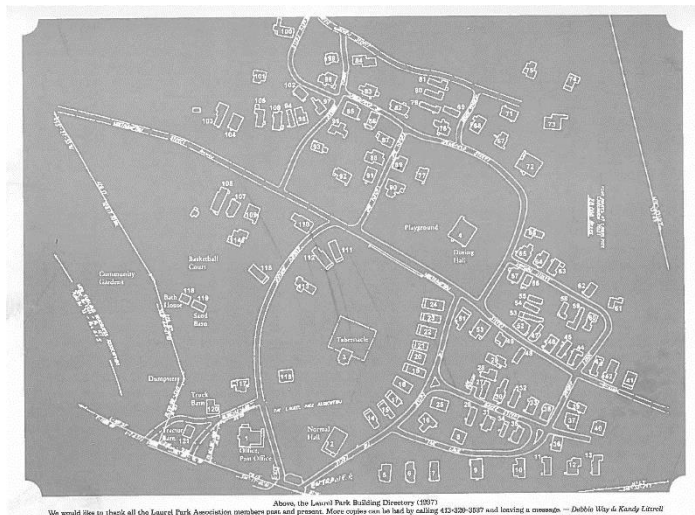
Sizes range from 400 sf -1,200 sf with mostly 900sf residences.

Small square footage has kept cottages relatively affordable for the area even though there are no permanent affordability restrictions.

Community spirit comes from cottage's small size and close proximity to each other. Primary gable facing street with front porch creates a sense of community as well as an intermediary public-private space.

Compact community design - Small private yard areas have postage stamp sized gardens. Narrow circular streets with tiny small public gardens/parks

With no strict design code a diversity of styles have emerged over time when the cottages were upgraded.



**Financing:**

The majority of cottages have been made primary residences and qualify for bank financing.

Land around cottages is owned and stewarded collectively through a trust with community service fees for communal expenses including snowplowing, and maintaining community meeting spaces and facilities.

**Regulatory:**

The cottage community grew organically from a tent camp meeting arrangement to a permanent community prior to current zoning and building code requirements.

Cottages considered a temporary residence/summer cottage unless it has been winterized, connected to water and septic, and in receipt of a certificate of occupancy from the City of Northampton.

By community regulation the footprint of the cottages cannot expand as it would impact the neighboring houses and the community overall because everything was designed in such a compact manner. Expansion going up or out needs community approval.

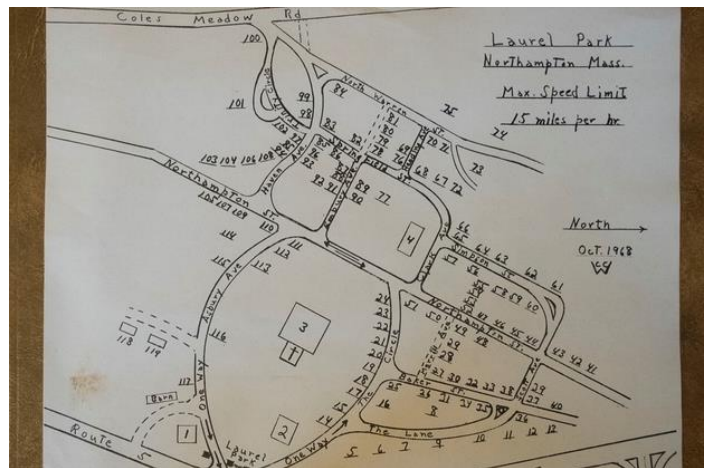
**Lessons Learned:**

Small older homes can be relatively affordable units within the housing market of a higher home value town.

Working within current building and health codes to create a cottage community may look different today than historic religious cottage communities.

Zoning regulations for cottage communities may need to be created for many towns to allow for a similar building and road layout. Safety is a factor that is addressed in current building and zoning regulations.

Cottage communities could be built with current zoning in some towns that have cluster developments, 40B developments, or would allow a cottage design community through special permit.



1968 Laurel Park site plan

*"Two decades earlier, B. W. Gorham's Camp Meeting Manual had advised rigid zoning standards for religious camp grounds. Log cabins, in particular, would give the wrong impression to potential visitors, as they were calculated to "excite a class of low and ludicrous ideas, since they give the spectator rather the idea of a huddle of Irish rail-road shanties than of a worshipping people 'dwelling in the goodly tents of Jacob."  
(Chamberlin, 21)*



**Learn More:**

<http://libguides.smith.edu/c.php?g=652280&p=4586112>

Rieser, Andrew Chamberlin. *The Chautauqua Moment*, edited by Andrew Chamberlin Rieser, Columbia University Press, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central,

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwjWksSrgr3bAhVHwVQKHfexDc4QFggnMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Farchives.gcah.org%2Fbitstream%2Fhandle%2F10516%2F5680%2FMH-1987-April-Balmer.pdf%3Fsequence%3D1%26isAllowed%3Dy&usg=AOvVaw3bY7WgMOevjjBKgrSc4WAF>

Balmer, Randall H. "From Frontier Phenomenon to Victorian Institution: The Methodist Camp Meeting in Ocean Grove, New Jersey." *Methodist History* 25.3 (April 1987): n. pag. Web. 20 Apr. 2017