

# Amherst Past, Present & Future



League of Women Voters

Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

November 2018

# Status of Affordable Housing in Amherst



Town Amherst

David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager

# The Town has accomplished a lot...

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- ❑ Maintained and increased number of affordable units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)
- ❑ Engaged the community in support of affordable housing
- ❑ Dedicated resources—funding, staff, and leadership—to expand housing opportunities
- ❑ Continues to explore ways to increase affordable housing

# Funding

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- Community Preservation Act (CPA)
  - Over \$1 Million since 2015
  - New construction & modernization
  - Preservation of affordable units
  - First time homebuyer program
- Community Development Block Grant Funds
  - \$300,000 since 2015 for capital improvements
  - \$50,000 for site feasibility
  - Over \$400,000 in social service funding
- Local Tax Incentive
  - Over \$2 Million in tax relief



Renovated unit at  
Watson Farms



# Grants

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- ❑ Housing Choice Initiative—Designation as a Housing Choice Community = more competitive application
- ❑ Housing Choice Capital Grant—Funds for a new sidewalk on East Pleasant between Village Park and Olympia Drive
- ❑ MassHousing Planning for Housing Production—Technical assistance to research 40R overlay district and sites for affordable housing
- ❑ CHAPA's Community Engagement Initiative—Trust will receive technical support to learn strategies for outreach

# Projects

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- ❑ North Square: mixed-use, mixed income rental development with 130 total units, 26 affordable units and commercial space
- ❑ Habitat for Humanity: homeownership units throughout town-5 recent homes
- ❑ Valley CDC: first time homebuyer program for 4 households
- ❑ Rolling Green: preservation of 42 affordable units



Habitat for Humanity-2 Units on East Pleasant Street



Rolling Green Apartments

# Policy & Regulations

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- ❑ Updated Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw (2018)
- ❑ Changed Apartment definition to allow all units of the same type (i.e. all 1-bedrooms) if all units are affordable
- ❑ Municipal property disposition policy (2018)
- ❑ Updated AMAHT bylaw (2017)
- ❑ Local tax Incentive (2016)



4 affordable units on University Drive



6 affordable units at Presidential Apartments II

# Setting Goals to Meet the Need



Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust  
John Hornik, Chair



# Problems Faced by Amherst in Affordable Housing

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- ❑ Older residents have aged out of child-raising, but they remain a significant part of the Town's population
- ❑ University enrollment growth has outpaced on-campus residential growth since 2000
- ❑ Lack of housing production since 2000, until the past 2-3 years

# What are the Consequences of these Changes?

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- ❑ Housing is less affordable—rents have outpaced income
- ❑ Homeownership is more costly—initial purchase and taxes
- ❑ Increasingly, people who work in Amherst can no longer afford to live in Amherst
- ❑ New economic development is inhibited by the lack of housing for people employed by companies
- ❑ 700 fewer families with school-aged children since 2000
- ❑ Over 1,000 fewer school-aged children since 2000

# Doesn't Amherst Already have a Housing Plan?

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- ❑ Master Plan set some very lofty goals with respect to housing, but there was nothing specific with respect to housing growth.

# Master Plan: Housing Summary

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- *Goal: A mix of housing that meets the physical needs of and is affordable to the broadest possible spectrum of our community, and that minimizes the impact on the environment.*
  
- **Master Plan Objectives—Part 1**
  - Encourage a greater mix of housing types, sizes, & prices. [F\*]
  - Preserve and expand the number of affordable and moderately priced rental units and housing stock. [F]
  - Increase the opportunity for infill development and the location of housing developments near services. [C-]
  - Encourage the production of housing in an environmentally sound manner. [C-]

\*NOTE: John Hornik's "grades" on each objective.

# Master Plan: Housing Summary

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## □ Master Plan Objectives—Part 2

- Encourage housing to meet the needs of special populations. [C]
  - Improve housing and services for people in the area who are homeless. [C]
  - Support the creation of taxable student housing that will lessen the pressures on residential neighborhoods. [B-]
  - Build and sustain the Town's capacity for regulatory oversight for Amherst's housing stock. [B]
- NOTE: Similar goals and objectives in the 2013 Housing Production Plan, 2015 Housing Market Study, and 2017 CPA Plan.

# Setting Specific Priorities

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- “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” With respect to housing, that is the road we are on today.
- We need to:
  - Focus on key elements of the Master Plan, and
  - Set some specific housing production goals.

# Funding Priorities for the Trust

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- ❑ Rental housing for families, particularly those earning below 50% of Area Median Income (AMI) and households that have single parents with children.
- ❑ Rental housing for individuals who require smaller affordable housing units (e.g., studio apartments), including housing for at risk and special needs populations.
- ❑ Preservation of existing affordable rental housing.
- ❑ Affordable homeownership for low and moderate income families and individuals.
- ❑ Creating and preserving housing with permanent affordability restrictions.

# Production Goals by Affordability Levels

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- Percentage of Area Median Income (AMI) that individuals/families earn and projected number of units targeted:
  - Less than 30% AMI - 50 units
  - 30-50% AMI - 100 units
  - 50-80% AMI - 100 units
  - 80-120% AMI - 100 units
  - Over 120% AMI - No specific goals, but a general recommendation for development to meet the needs of families with children, individual adults, and seniors who can afford market-rate housing.



# On the Same Page

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## □ Amherst needs...

- A renewed focus on development of affordable housing;
- A community conversation about Master Plan goals and the barriers to meeting them;
- Goals shared by Town Council, Planning Board, CPAC, and Housing Trust;
- Broad community support;
- Greater support from the Commonwealth, and
- To keep in mind that we do this as part of the larger struggle for social justice.

# Lessons From Other Communities



Town of Amherst Housing Forum  
November 2018

Rita Farrell  
AMAHT Consultant

# Increasing Housing Production

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- ❑ Designation of more than 10% of CPA funds for community housing
- ❑ Collaboration between municipal housing trust and community preservation committee
- ❑ Building coalitions, community education and engagement
- ❑ Adoption of a 40R district

# Town of Eastham

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- Recently adopted 5 year Community Preservation Plan commits to 40% of CPA funds for community housing
- CPA funds used in past for
  - Rental assistance
  - New production affordable rental housing
  - Acquisition of land for development
  - Acquisition of existing rental housing

## 1 Eastham housing project



Campbell-Purcell Property

# City of Somerville

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- ❑ Housing trust has advocated that CPC designate trust as its “housing arm”
- ❑ Focus is on preservation & creation of new affordable housing
- ❑ Rental and homeownership
- ❑ Trust capitalized by CPC, linkage ordinance & inclusionary zoning payments



# Adopt 40R

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- ❑ Zoning overlay to encourage denser housing development in smart growth areas
- ❑ Amherst has grant to explore 40R potential sites
- ❑ Communities are paid for zoning and permitting smart growth development
- ❑ 37 communities have created 42 districts
- ❑ Half of units produced so far are affordable

The Use of Chapter  
40R in Massachusetts  
2018 UPDATE



PREPARED BY  
CITIZENS' HOUSING AND PLANNING  
ASSOCIATION, INC.  
MAY 2018



# Building A Coalition

- CHAPA Municipal Engagement award to Amherst Trust
- Town of Acton Housing Coalition formed
- Community Education
- Community Engagement

## Housing in Acton Group

CHAPA MUNICIPAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Everyone in Acton deserves an affordable place to call home, yet many seniors and people who work here cannot afford to live here. More than one in four Acton households spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

To address the housing crisis in their community, town committee members and staff; religious, business and other local organizations; and residents have begun to come together to determine goals and strategies for increasing affordable housing production. These efforts by the Housing in Acton Group are being supported by CHAPA's new Municipal Engagement Initiative. Professional staff will work with the Housing in Acton Group to conduct public education efforts and to develop and mobilize around strategies that work within the context of Acton's unique needs and priorities, which may include zoning proposals, specific development sites, policies, or programs that will increase affordable housing production. The goals of this work include supporting the efforts in Acton to build a culture that welcomes housing, including affordable housing; bolstering efforts to expand housing opportunities in Acton; and growing the number of people supporting housing production in Acton.



**27%** OF ACTON  
HOUSEHOLDS ARE  
COST-BURDENED BY  
HOUSING



Sources: HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) 2010-2014.

# Questions?



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Rita Farrell  
AMAHT Consultant