

Print**Community Preservation Act Committee Proposal Request Form FY2022 - Submission #15986**

Date Submitted: 10/11/2020**Instruction**

Submit proposals by Monday, October 12, 2020 at 4:30pm. CPAC will ask relevant boards, committees and commissions for their input on proposals and encourages applicants to consult with them before submission. Presentations of projects will be scheduled for CPAC meetings in October and November. Recipients of funds shall report back in writing annually about the progress of the project. Projects must be completed within three years of award and unspent funds returned to the CPA Fund.

Criteria

1. Feasibility of the Project; 2. Documentation for Estimated Costs; 3. Funding available: a. multiple sources of funding, b. need for additional funding in future years, c. demonstrates lack of other funding sources if applicable; 4. Urgency of the Project; 5. Estimated timeline from receipt of funding, to start and to completion; 6. Acquisition and/or preservation of threatened resources; 7. Population(s) to be served by the Project; 8. A Plan for how the project will be maintained over time; 9. Priority ranking of your Project set by relevant Town boards, committees or commissions.

Project Title*

Funding to Support AMAHT Affordable Housing Development Projects

Funding Category*

Check all that apply.

- Community Housing
 Historic Preservation
 Open Space
 Recreation

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$ 800,000

Submitting Entity*

Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

Contact Person*

John Hornik

E-mail Address*

jhornik123@gmail.com

Project Team

AMAHT members: Paul Bockelman, Robert Crowner, Sidonio Ferreira, Francis Goyes Flor, John Hornik (Chair), Thomas Kegelman, Carol Lewis, Erica Piedade, William Van Heuvelen; and Key Staff: Nathaniel Malloy, Senior Planner, and Rita Farrell, consultant. email addresses: Sid Ferreira <sdf@acad.umass.edu>, nancy schroeder <amirody@yahoo.com>, Tom Kegelman <tkegelman8144@gmail.com>, Erica Piedade <Erica.piedade@gmail.com>, Carol Lewis <curiouscarol@gmail.com>, Will Van Heuvelen <vanheuvelen.will@gmail.com>, Rob Crowner <robcrowner@gmail.com>, Paul Bockelman <bockelmanp@amherstma.gov>, Francis Goyes Flor <francis.goyes@gmail.com>, rita farrell <ritaannfarrell@gmail.com>, Nathaniel Malloy <malloyn@amherstma.gov>

Names and e-mail addresses for other members of your project team.

If your proposal has an associated website, you may include a link.

<https://www.amherstma.gov/2199/Amherst-Affordable-Housing-Trust-Fund>

Proposal Overview*

In April 2017, the Housing Trust adopted its strategic plan (copy attached). This plan outlined work priorities for the next few years. At the top of the list is supporting projects that will expand affordable housing in Amherst. While the Trust itself is not a developer, we will continue to encourage and support developers who offer to bring appropriate housing to Amherst." The strategic plan can also be found on the Trust's webpage: <https://www.amherstma.gov/2199/Amherst-Affordable-Housing-Trust-Fund>

The Housing Trust continues to be focused on the East Street School Multi-Unit Affordable Housing Development. After evaluating the site, the Trust drafted an RFP to allow development. In April, 2019, Town Council authorized the Town Manager to use this property for development of affordable housing. In September, 2019, the RFP drafted by the Housing Trust was released for bidding. One offer was received.

The bidder asked the Town questions about wetlands issues on the property and hazardous materials in the old school building. The Town was unable to respond to these questions, and, as a consequence, the bidder submitted an incomplete application, which was not accepted. The Housing Trust is now awaiting new analyses of the issues. If the land still appears to be developable, then the Trust will move forward with a revised RFP.

If this is successful, it is likely that the developer will request funding from the Trust both to support its work and to demonstrate to other funders, particularly the State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), that it has local support in order to secure additional funding.

Because no agreement has been reached with a developer, we cannot specify the amount of funding that will be needed. In the event that the application requires less funding than we are requesting, the remaining funds will continue to be held by the Trust to support future development. The Trust is currently looking at new possibilities to support additional development of affordable housing on town-owned land. In addition, it will remain open to new requests for funding to support multi-unit, affordable housing projects proposed by competent developers. AMAHT had detailed guidelines for developers seeking support from the Trust for affordable housing projects. (Copy Attached.)

Alternative Housing Trust Uses of CPA Funding. During the past year Amherst, indeed the world, has experienced an emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to the health consequences, there have also been serious economic consequences. Many people have become unemployed here, as elsewhere, and while some were protected by unemployment insurance, that program has not been renewed. As a result, more and more households are unable to pay their rent. Although temporarily protected by the State and Federal Eviction moratoria, they will also run out. And even if households cannot be evicted, they will still be responsible to pay back rent.

Anticipating this crisis, the Housing Trust began planning for a COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program, along with other cities and towns in the Commonwealth. Although we obviously did not anticipate this when we submitted our CPA application one year ago, we consulted with Nate Budington, then CPAC Chair, about allocating existing Trust CPA funds for this purpose. (He was unable to convene a CPAC meeting to consult with the full committee.) We initiated Round 1 of the program in mid-June and received over 100 applications. Round 2 has just begun (as of September 22) and will continue into mid-November. (A copy of the current program announcement is appended.) By December we should have a solid estimate of Trust funds expended and further whether we should be considering extending/expanding the program.

The fact that the Housing Trust had control over these funds was critical to our quickly developing a new program to respond to the housing crisis that has been experienced by individuals and families during the pandemic. While our expectation has been and continues to be that Trust funds will be used to support the development of affordable housing, we must acknowledge that there may be circumstances in which an emergency diversion to another program supporting community housing may be necessary.

The Housing Trust must also look for opportunities to purchase property on the open market that will be suitable for affordable housing. There is not an abundance of suitable, available land in Amherst. Valley Community Development spent one-two years searching for a site for the project at 132 Northampton Road, which is now under review for a comprehensive permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals. When a property becomes available, the Housing Trust must be in a position to move very quickly before another buyer swoops in to bid. We believe that we now have such an opportunity, which we hope to be able to disclose when we appear before the CPAC to discuss this proposal.

Include specific details of your project, including deliverables, items to be repaired, specific purchases, etc. Once your proposal is approved by Town Council, no changes will be allowed.

Description of Funding Needed*

We are requesting an \$800,000 investment. As stated below, we do not have an estimate of the specific allocation of these funds. For affordable housing projects funded by the Housing Trust, the clear expectation is that a developer will use these to demonstrate local commitment to leverage much larger amounts from other funders, particularly the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development. It is also possible that there could be other local contributions, including Town surplus property, Tax Incentive Financing, and a small allocation for affordable housing through the local short term rental fees received by the Town. Funding is not limited to the current year. In order to meet the Trust's goal of 250 new affordable housing units, we can expect that similar requests will be made next year and for the foreseeable future. We hope to build up sufficient funds in the Housing Trust to be in a position to support future affordable housing development.

Include cost estimates and other sources of funding.

Budget*

Project Budget- Housing Development Funding.docx

Attach your project budget.

Estimated Timeline*

The AMAHT will spend the funds judiciously on projects that have been first reviewed and prioritized in accordance with the Trust bylaw, CPA regulations, housing studies, and its Strategic Plan. The funds could be spent on a number of projects for predevelopment costs, as well as specific development projects. Funds are likely to be spent in the next one to three years.

Describe the project timeline from receipt of CPA funds to project completion. Include in the timeline when funds will be spent.

What is the urgency of the project, if any?

The lack of affordable housing in Amherst has been clearly documented in the Housing Production Plan (HPP), the Comprehensive Housing Market Study, and most recently in the draft proposal for a new Town Affordable Housing Policy (copy attached). Many individuals and families who are low income are priced out of Amherst. Available data indicates that 57% percent of current renters in Amherst spend more than 30% of their income on housing and for many it is more than 50%. Since 2010 there has been a dramatic decline in the number of young families living in town, as well as a significant drop in the number of school-aged children.

The HPP recommended that the Town develop 225 housing units for low and extremely low income households in the following five years, including 40 units for homeownership, 50 units for seniors and, 25 units for those with disabilities. Few of those units have been developed. We need to act as quickly as possible to provide the housing that is needed in the Amherst community.

Does this project preserve or acquire any threatened resources?*

The demographic data indicates that Amherst is becoming a community that is largely comprised of students and seniors, losing important social and economic vitality in the decades ahead. The threatened resource is the diversity of the Amherst community itself.

What population(s) will be served by this project?*

The populations to be served are low income individuals and families. Priorities include persons who are homeless and persons who are disabled.

How will the CPA investment in your project be maintained over time?*

The Trust is seeking funding primarily for affordable housing projects. The maintenance of each project would be the responsibility of the developer, as the Trust (nor the Town) does not anticipate being an owner, operator or manager of affordable housing units. The Trust would put rules and conditions in place for the projects to ensure their maintenance over time and would require restrictions to keep units affordable in perpetuity. These requirements would be consistent with the requirements of DHCD, which is also likely to be the largest funder, as well as a supervisor/monitor of these projects.

What relevant Town committees or commissions are you working with?

Since its formation in 2015, the Housing Trust has been working with the Town Planning Department. Within the past year, the Town Manager has joined the Trust as a full member. The Trust meets when appropriate with the Assistant Town Manager, as well, to discuss Town properties and initiatives of mutual interest.

The Trust had also been working with the Town Council and the Planning Board on the development of a Town Affordable Housing Policy. The Community Resources Committee of Town Council has now taken over that process. At the request of the President of Town Council, the Housing Trust has kept the Town Council informed about the Emergency Rental Assistance program, although no formal approval has been needed.

We also work with other local organizations. For example, for the past three years the Trust has co-sponsored a Fall Housing Forum with the League of Women voters in Amherst to inform the larger community about projects and issues related to affordable housing and to seek public input. Last year's forum was quite successful. Almost 60 people attended and there were 20 additional community organizations that participated as co-sponsors. Senator Joanne Comerford and Representative Mindy Domb both spoke, as part of an ongoing effort to track and support State legislative initiatives that fund and promote affordable housing. Because of the pandemic, there will not be an in-person housing forum this fall.

Each month the chair sends out a notice of the likely agenda items one-two weeks prior to the Housing Trust meetings (usually the second Thursday of each month). When the final agenda is prepared for posting, the chair forwards it to the same parties. This includes access to meeting materials. The distributions list includes over 90 individuals, including Town Council, members of other Town boards and committees, Craig's Doors, Amherst Community Connections, Amherst Housing Authority, Interfaith Housing Corporation, Valley Community Development Corporation, Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness, Amherst Survival Center, Amherst League of Women Voters, Amherst NAACP, Amherst Business Improvement District, Amherst Chamber of Commerce, Amherst School Committee, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Citizens Housing and Planning Association, Senator Comerford, Representative Domb, other local service agencies, non-profit agencies, local faith organizations, community members and anyone who has expressed an interest in Trust business.

In addition to supporting the active development of new affordable housing units, the Housing Trust maintains a very active agenda involving advocacy at the local and State level, including relationships of several years standing with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA). Trust members were active in either submitting written public comments or oral comments or both before the Amherst Zoning Board of Appeals during its consideration of a comprehensive permit submitted by Valley Community Development over the past four months. A brief, two-page description of the history, powers, goals and past and current projects is attached with the title "What is the AMAHT".

Please include any other information regarding the project you deem necessary for the CPAC.**ATTACHMENTS**

- What is the AMAHT?
- Announcement of Amherst COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program
- Housing Trust Strategic Plan

You may upload any attachments you deem useful to CPAC here.

What Is AMAHT- Updated September 2020.docx

Suggested attachments include floor or site plans, photographs, drawings, etc.

You may upload any attachments you deem useful to CPAC here.

Emergency Rental Assistance Announcement (Round2).pdf

You may upload any attachments you deem useful to CPAC here.

Amherst Trust Action Plan Final 071017 clean copy.pdf

Affirmations*

I understand that if my project is approved by the Town Council, my organization will have a maximum of three years from July 1, 2021 to expend its grant. After June 30, 2024, the Town may return any unused money to the CPA fund for new appropriation, unless an extension is granted.

I acknowledge the above.