



Affordable Housing Trusts: Advocacy and Action

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Advocacy and Action for Affordable Housing

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1. East Gables and AMAHT
2. AMAHT: Amherst Affordability Challenges
 - Mission and Goals
 - Powers and Authority
 - Resources and Partners
3. Pipeline Initiatives

The End of the Story

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East Gables 28-unit Studio Apartments

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East Gables

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- 28 Studio Apartments
- Plus community room and offices for on-site manager and visiting services for residents
- Shared outdoor property, including limited parking for residents, visitors, and staff
- Outdoor patio
- Developed by Valley Community Development

And Back to the Beginning

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Who Comes to Public Meetings?

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- Study of New Community Housing Proposals by Karen Levine Einstein (Boston University)
- 97 Cities and towns
- Most participants were more likely to be older, white, homeowners, compared to other residents of these communities.
- Overwhelmingly opposed to the new housing developments. Only 14% of *thousands* of participants spoke in favor.

What Happened in Amherst?

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- Organized, neighborhood opposition became very loud and visible.
- Amherst residents turned out in force to support the project
- Both the written comments received by Town Council and the people who spoke at the Council's public hearing, that ratio was not 7-1 against, but 3-1 in favor.

Encouraging the Development of Affordable Housing

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- Lessons Learned
- There must be a champion for Affordable Housing generally as well as for individual developments
- Make it attractive for a developer to come to town - Demonstrated community support
- Local funds available (e.g., CDBG, CPA)

Finding Allies in the Community

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- League of Women Voters of Amherst
- Many other supporters/collaborators

Looking for Property

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- New development for 70-74 units on two nearby sites
- Town Property (for example, old school)
- Property that comes up for sale identified by Housing Trust members or Town planning staff
- Property purchased by the Town
- Housing Trust on collaboration with Town Hall develops RFP
- Transferred to the developer after RFP process with Land Use Agreement

Challenges of Affordable Housing in Amherst

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- Low income families are priced out of the Amherst housing market
- Around 57% of current renters in Amherst spend more than 30% of their income on housing and many spend over 50% on housing
- Since 2010 there has been a dramatic decline in the number of young families living in Amherst as well as a significant drop in school aged children
- The Housing Production Plan (2016) recommended the development of 225 housing units for low and extremely low income households in the following 5 years, including 40 units of homeownership, 50 units for seniors, and 25 for individuals with disabilities - few of those units have been developed
- COVID19 exacerbated existing disparities, which caused many, especially low income workers, to lose their income resulting in increased housing instability if not eviction; eviction moratorium has ended

AMAHT Mission

The Trust's mission, as an instrument of town government, is to promote the town's affordable housing priorities as determined through the most recent town housing plan, particularly to create safe, decent, and affordable housing for our most vulnerable populations.

AMAHT Goals:

1. Actively foster development of affordable housing (rental & homeownership)
2. Support homelessness prevention initiatives
3. Seek opportunities to promote conservation-based development
4. Enhance local and regional collaboration
5. Expand availability of direct housing assistance
6. Promote outreach and education

Powers and Authority

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The powers and authority of the Trust are set forth in accordance to MGL c.44 s.55C with the exception that the following three powers are subject to limitations per local by laws:

1. Any purchase, sale, lease, exchange, transfer or conveyance of interest in real property must be approved by 60% of the voting members;
2. The Trustees may incur debt, borrow money, grant mortgages and pledge Trust assets only in amount not to exceed 80% of the Trust's total assets;
3. Any debt incurred by the Trust shall not constitute a pledge of the faith and credit of the Town of Amherst and all documents related to any debt shall contain a statement that the holder of any such debt shall have no recourse against the Town of Amherst.

Board of Trustees

1. There are 9 Trustees with a 2 year appointment which can be renewed 3 times; Town Manager is a de facto member
2. Applicants are interviewed by the Town Manager and Trust chair(s)
3. Recommendations are provided to the Town Council who approves the appointment; the Town Council has a liaison that attends the meetings as a community attendee

Funding

1. Primary source of funding Community Preservation Act
 - Apply annually
 - Funds come with restrictions - MGL c.44B - creation and preservation of affordable housing for the benefit of low and middle income household
2. Town surplus property
3. Small monetary donations
4. Proposed Real Estate Transfer Fee Legislation

Collaborative Partners

1. Town Staff, Town Council, and relevant Town Committees (Human Rights Commission, CSSJ, Board of Health, etc.)
2. Affordable Housing Developers: Pioneer Valley CDC, Way Finders, etc.
3. Housing Advocates & Supporters: Amherst Community Land Trust, Craig's Doors, Amherst Community Connections, Western Mass Housing First, League of Women Voters, Senior Center, and others
4. Residents, including students and those working in Amherst and who want to live in Amherst

Initiatives in the Pipeline: 1) Ball Lane - 30 Affordable Condo Ownership - VCDC

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Valley Community Development proposes to build affordable homes for first time homebuyers on an 8.33-acre property in North Amherst. The development includes 30 condominium homes in 15 duplex structures, with shared parking connected by pedestrian pathways. Duplexes will combine 1-story, 1.5-story, and 2-story homes and range in size from 995 to 1,237 square feet. All homes will be designed to be “visitable” by people with mobility impairments and seniors.

2) South East St./Belchertown Rd. - >70 Affordable Rental Units - Way Finders

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South East Street

29 units

- 9 One bedroom
- 15 Two bedrooms
- 5 Three bedrooms



- Elevator access and universal design features in all units
- Pursue Passive House and Enterprise Green Communities certifications; solar PV included
- Management office and on-site supportive services at both sites

Belchertown Road

41 units

- 9 One bedroom
- 22 Two bedrooms
- 10 Three Bedrooms



Affordable Housing Is A Social Determinant of Health of Communities & Its Resident!

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Thank you!