

Memo

TO: Hatfield Housing Committee
FROM: David Elvin, PVPC
DATE: March 19, 2015
RE: Examples of Housing Plan Recommendations

Following are summary examples of recommendations in housing production plans of other communities in the Pioneer Valley. These are offered to illustrate the kinds of recommendations that the Committee may wish to eventually consider. Examples were selected for relevance to Hatfield. General recommendations are **in bold**, with specific supporting actions bulleted.

Create more affordable and market-rate housing

- Assess potential to classify suitable existing low-cost homes as SHI-eligible housing.
- Identify municipally owned land that could be donated or sold at low cost to an appropriate affordable housing development entity.
- Create an inventory of undeveloped properties that are suitable for affordably priced multi-family and single-family homes.
- Use CPA funds to acquire existing residential properties or vacant land from owners who might be willing to sell or donate it for affordable housing.
- Create a municipal housing trust fund to provide financial resources for the development of affordable housing. CPA is a possible source of funds.
- Study the effects that existing lot size, frontage and setback requirements are having on the affordability of homes; assess the potential for increasing the number of smaller, more affordable homes that could be built if these zoning requirements were reduced.
- Allow owner-occupied duplexes and three-family homes.
- Study parking capacity needs in [defined area] to understand demand for full build-out of existing buildings and development of in-fill parcels.
- Work with a nonprofit developer specializing in affordable homes on appropriate sites for seniors or SHI-eligible population consistent with Ch. 40B (i.e. “friendly 40B”).

Preserve and maintain existing affordable homes

- Maintain an inventory of existing income-restricted housing developments and status of affordability restriction expiration dates (Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation “CEDAC” and DHCD both maintain lists); ensure that the owner, DHCD, and other relevant state agencies work to preserve affordable status.
- Encourage long-term use restrictions in perpetuity for affordable housing units as recommended by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

- Study tax relief incentives for seniors who wish to remain in their homes.
- Apply for HUD Community Block Grant Development (CDBG) funds through PVPC for eligible housing-related activities (typically rehabilitation).
- Investigate state and federal historic preservation tax credits available for housing rehabilitation.
- A first-time affordable home buy-down program, in which CPA funds are used to purchase a suitable home and then re-sell it at below market value to an income-eligible household.
- Identify “starter” homes for sale (including properties taken for failure to pay taxes) in community and facilitate purchase by local housing authority for lease or purchase by income-eligible households.
- Identify areas

Improve community understanding of local housing market, needs of residents, housing laws and related civil rights issues

- Establish a municipal Housing Committee, with liaison to Select Board, Planning Board and other town bodies as relevant.
- Encourage Housing Committee members, municipal staff, elected officials and key local stakeholders to attend Mass Fair Housing Center and HAP-Housing trainings and conference sessions on relevant topics, including renter and homebuyer rights; landlord rights and responsibilities; and fair housing violations.
- Offer information and trainings to municipal staff, board and committee members, and elected officials about various strategies for creating and maintaining affordable homes in their community, including: zoning techniques; public policies and programs; and financial resources.
- Initiate a general public awareness program about affordable housing, including information for the town website, presentations to town boards and committees, community meeting, trainings for Housing Committee members and other town officials, (PATH funds available for this activity from DHCD).
- Work with local Council on Aging to help make seniors aware of affordable housing resources and living options.
- Improve tenant education through various efforts, such as community education, high school class session, or fact sheet on “How to be a Good Tenant,” including rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords.

Facilitate and maintain access to affordable homes

- Advocate for residents to receive local preference standing (within compliance with Mass. and U.S. fair housing policies) for housing choice vouchers (Section 8 and or Mass. Rental Vouchers) with surrounding housing authorities that administer vouchers.
- Use CPA and/or grant funds to provide down payment assistance to first time homebuyers with income up to 80% of AMI.
- Identify ways to supplement existing rental support programs that offer help to people with first and last months rent and security deposits.
- Promote lead paint abatement education and financing; advocate updating of restrictive lead paint laws and regulations.
- Promote foreclosure prevention programs administered by Valley Community Development Corp. and HAP-Housing.

Take regulatory actions to encourage more housing choices

- Study, draft and adopt an inclusionary zoning bylaw.
- Modify accessory apartment and dwelling regulations to allow them by right in more areas of town (with site plan approval).

Improve municipal capacity for housing-related administrative work and activities

- Study feasibility of having a part-time municipal staff person devoted to housing work, or sharing a housing services position with one or more another communities.
- Housing Committee members meet with counterparts in neighboring communities in Pioneer Valley to discuss common housing concerns and solutions.