

Community Preservation Act Funding to Prepare a Southwick Housing Plan

As part of a Master Planning process, the Southwick Planning Board is authorized to expend up to \$25,000 from the Community Housing reserve account to hire a consultant under a contract and budget to prepare a Housing Plan that will serve as the Housing Element of this Master Plan.

The Housing Element of a Master Plan identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This element identifies policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens.

Also, understanding a community's housing needs is essential to a community's ability to direct Community Preservation Act funds strategically and effectively. It is also a statutory requirement that a Community Preservation Committee study the "needs, possibilities, and resources" for community preservation, including housing needs, possibilities, and resources. Such a Housing Plan helps a community anticipate and assess housing options to respond to changes in the region and community. It seeks to answer questions such as: Does the community have homes that are available to people in different life stages? Do land use regulations create barriers to the development of needed housing types, such as multi-family homes? Does the community need more housing options for older adults to downsize? Is there an adequate supply of family-sized homes to meet the current and future demand.

A Housing Plan may support conventional local wisdom about the type and scale of housing needs, or it may point the community in new directions. While anecdotal information can be helpful, objective research is needed when it comes to developing specific actions and projects.

Preparation of the Housing Plan will include a public planning process, analysis of local housing data, recommendations to meet current and future housing needs, the preparation of a draft document to be reviewed by the Housing Authority and the Planning Board and a final plan that meets State standards.