

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT FUNDING APPLICATION FY 2023

PROJECT NAME:	Community Housing
SPONSOR ORGANIZATION:	Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust
CPA CATEGORY:	Community Housing
TOTAL PROJECT COST:	\$100,000
CPA FUNDS REQUESTED:	\$100,000

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Since its creation in 2012, the Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust has established a track record of using its CPA funds to respond nimbly and timely to opportunities and needs that have arisen. Those responses have included:

- Supporting the development of Highland Woods and its 40 units of affordable rental housing, some of which became the homes of former residents of The Spruces.
- Purchasing three building lots and contracting with Northern Berkshire Habitat to build permanently affordable houses on them. The first is now occupied and the second is underway.
- Creating the Richard DeMayo Mortgage Assistance Program which has enabled 20 families to obtain their first homes.
- Helping fund the Ryan Report which studied housing needs in Williamstown.
- Developing programs of rental assistance and mortgage assistance for income-qualified households which have been adversely affected by COVID-19.

In recent years the Community Preservation Committee has recommended unrestricted funding for the Trust which maximizes our flexibility to address emergent needs and embrace unexpected opportunities. We are asking the CPC to continue that pattern of support.

One definite use of the unrestricted FY 2023 funds would be to provide \$40,000 to Northern Habitat for Humanity to support either construction of the second home on Maple Street (which has begun) or development of the third lot, located on Summer Street.

The remainder of our request would be applied to some, or all, of the following:

- Continued support of the Williamstown Emergency Rental Assistance Program (WERAP) and the Williamstown Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (WEMAP). Both programs are administered by Berkshire Housing Development Corporation. WERAP was developed in mid-2020 and has provided tens of thousands of dollars to aid income-qualified families hurt financially by the pandemic. WEMAP was created in 2021 to provide similar help to homeowners and is beginning to receive applications. It is not yet clear what the extent of need will be for these programs in 2022-23 nor the extent to which our grants may be offset by federal and state sources. We believe the need for emergency assistance will accelerate when special federal and state benefits programs and a moratorium on evictions and forbearance on mortgage arrearages end. Beyond the pandemic, the Trust contends there will always be a need for emergency aid to renters and homeowners who fall upon hard times in Williamstown.
- Additional DeMayo Mortgage Assistance Program grants to prospective first-time homeowners. The primary impediment to applications is the paucity of housing stock in Williamstown that is within reach of families at or below the Area Median Income.

- Acquisition of property - developed or undeveloped - that would lend itself to affordable housing, likely in collaboration with a developer. This was done on a small scale by the Trust when we acquired building lots and partnered with Habitat. The Town has done it on a larger scale in collaboration with both private and not-for-profit entities (Cable Mills, Church Corners, Highland Woods and 330 Cole). The Trust has begun by consulting with David Carver (CT Management Group) and Eileen Peltier, the new CEO of Berkshire Housing and Development Corporation, who provided very useful counsel. The Trust plans to begin a review of specific properties this month. This process might lead to the Trust banking funds for at least a few years to enable a suitable purchase. The Trust might also contract with a specialist to evaluate options for securing and developing property
- Update and possible expansion of the 2013 Ryan Report on housing needs in Williamstown. Although the Town's Master Plan will undoubtedly focus on affordable housing, the Trust would benefit in planning new initiatives (such as the acquisition of property and/or embarking on a partnership as described above) by having current data on needs sooner than 2023 or whenever the new plan is completed.
- Responding to the unexpected. The Trust has long since realized that unexpected housing-related needs will arise. We hope to be in a position to help meet those needs in a timely way.

The Trust has reduced its request from \$140,000 to \$100,000 in light of the prospective financial requirements of the proposed next phase of Cable Mills. Their commitment to adding 27 new affordable rental units is a compelling plan that will represent a major step forward in growing affordable housing in town at a minimal cost to the community.

2. PROJECT READINESS/FEASIBILITY

The Trust has more than nine years of experience developing, supporting and implementing a variety of affordable housing initiatives that have added both housing that is affordable in the legal sense and housing that is financially accessible to working families. The Trust also has effective working relationships with a number of not-for-profit and private entities that greatly enhance our reach and effectiveness. We are ready and able to proceed on any and all of the initiatives noted above.

3. PROJECT TASKS / IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Throughout FY23, from receipt of funds through June 30, 2023

4. PROJECT TEAM

The current members of the Trust are Liz Costley, Daniel Gura, Ruth Harrison, Andy Hogeland (representing the Board of Selectmen), Stan Parese, Patrick Quinn and Tom Sheldon (chair).

5. SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS

SOURCES	\$	USES	\$
CPA Funds	100,000	Habitat for Humanity construction	40,000
		Some or all of the other initiatives noted above	60,000
Total Sources	100,000	Total Uses	100,000

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

Tom Sheldon, 31 Berkshire Drive, Williamstown, MA 01267
413-458-4639
tom.e.sheldon@gmail.com