



Easton Affordable Housing Trust
ACTION PLAN FY2023-2027
FINAL DRAFT



Prepared by Old Colony Planning Council for the Town of Easton, November 2022

The purpose of the Easton Affordable Housing Trust Fund is to provide for the creation and preservation of affordable housing in Easton for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households

-- Town of Easton Affordable Housing Trust Bylaw

The mission of the Affordable Housing Trust Board is multiple:

- To develop, preserve, and advocate for housing opportunities for a broad range of income levels
- To promote housing choice in Easton
- To eliminate discrimination in housing and increase awareness of Fair Housing laws
- To exercise a leadership position in affordable housing development and planning for fair and affordable housing

-- Town of Easton Affordable Housing Trust Board Charge

Further information is available on the Town's website at

https://www.easton.ma.us/boards_and_committees/affordable_housing_trust/index.php

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Introduction

Housing Production Plan

This Action Plan accompanies the 2022 Easton Housing Production Plan (HPP) and Extended Appendix adopted by the Select Board and approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development in June 2022. Easton’s 2022 HPP identified a variety of housing needs – there is a significant need to affordably house the increase in the senior population as well as create affordable housing to attract and retain the family-aged population.

Community goals set out in the HPP are as follow:

1. Locate new residential multi-family and mixed-use development in and near existing business centers, transportation hubs, and village districts to enhance economic vitality, promote walkable, vibrant neighborhoods and ensure environmentally just and sustainable land use practices.
2. The variety of housing units is maintained and expanded to exceed the 10 percent state standard for affordable housing.
3. New housing in Easton is strategically distributed in a manner that is harmonious with the community vision to ensure new housing options are compatible in scale, siting, and design.
4. New affordable housing construction and rehabilitation are encouraged through adaptive reuse of buildings and town-owned properties that incorporate sustainability standards.
5. A more equitable community is promoted through housing options that provide for people of diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds while meeting the needs of both young families and an aging population.

Affordable Housing Trust Action Plan

In line with HPP goals, the purpose of this Action Plan is specifically to guide initiatives funded by the Easton Affordable Housing Trust (Trust) from Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 through FY2027 to best meet Easton’s housing needs and community priorities. Through an inclusive process and understanding of Easton’s housing needs, this Action Plan establishes the Trust’s goals, priority initiatives, and estimated five-year budget. The overall intention of this Plan is to establish a deliberate focus on the work of the Board of Trustees and the use of Trust resources.

Affordable Housing Trust

The Town of Easton created the Easton Affordable Housing Trust, per MA General Laws Chapter 44 Section 55C (MGL c.44 s.55C), in May 2008 with a unanimous vote of the Town Meeting. The purpose of the Trust, as stated in Warrant Article 23, is to “provide for the creation of affordable housing in Easton for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households.” It is important to note that the Town’s intention for the Trust, as established through the Warrant Article, is to serve low-income households.

The Trust’s Board of Trustees (Board) is a group of volunteer residents who work to assure that housing options are available to community members at any income level. The Board undertakes programs and pursues policies that aim to address the community's affordable and fair housing needs and oversee the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for its programs. The Department of Planning and Economic Development assists the Board, and the Trust receives most of its financial support from the Town's Community Preservation Fund.

The Board is composed of six (6) members appointed by the Select Board and an additional member from the Select Board. It is the Board’s fiduciary responsibility, bestowed by Town Meeting, to ensure that the Trust funds are used in a responsible manner.

The Board of Trustees:

		<i>Term expires</i>
Nikki Dostoomian	Chair	2023
Stephanie Alves	Member	2024
Samantha Hill	Member	2024
Amy Rodrigues	Member	2024
Krisanne Sheedy	Member	2023
Jennifer Stacy	Member (Select Board Rep.)	2022
Ernso Stiven	Member	2023
Wayne Beitler	Town Staff (Community Planner)	N/A

Trust revenues consist mainly of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds; additional funds have been generated through Town legal settlements and interest earned. Trust revenue in FY2022 was approximately \$178,698.

In FY2022, Trust expenditures totaled about \$60,000, supporting a variety of initiatives including professional planning services, town planning staff support, and small project expenses.

The Trust’s balance as of the end of FY2022 was about \$674,752.

Year	Revenue				Expenditures	Balance
	CPA	Other	Interest	Total		
FY18	\$145,000		\$6,242	\$151,242	\$56,347	\$1,125,136
FY19	\$100,000	\$40,000	\$12,413	\$152,413	\$504,949	\$898,600
FY20	\$200,000	\$157,380	\$10,626	\$368,006	\$941,012	\$325,594
FY21	\$500,000		\$1,193	\$501,193	\$270,270	\$556,517
FY22	\$177,500		\$1,198	\$178,698	\$60,463	\$674,752
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$1,122,500</i>	<i>\$197,380</i>	<i>\$31,672</i>	<i>\$1,351,552</i>	<i>\$1,833,041</i>	<i>\$674,752</i>

Accomplishments through the Trust

Following adoption of the 2014 Easton Housing Trust Action Plan, several accomplishments were achieved:

- Easton was one of the first suburban towns to launch a **temporary rental assistance program** to aid families struggling to meet their rent obligations as a result of household financial impacts related to the COVID-19 lockdown. With a generous \$250,000 appropriation at the June 2020 Annual Town Meeting, the Trust worked with a non-profit group to support income-qualified rental households experiencing pandemic-related income loss. The program assisted 84 people living in 35 households, including 37 children and 10 households with senior citizens.
- In June 2021, South Shore Habitat for Humanity together with their partner family dedicated an **affordable home on Electric Avenue**. The Trust began the lengthy tax-title process to acquire the parcel in 2015, carried out site engineering work to confirm developability, transferred the small parcel and an adjoining parcel already owned by the Town to Habitat in 2019, and provided a \$30,000 grant to support site work and construction costs.
- Brockton Area Multi-Services Inc. (BAMSI) constructed an 8-bedroom facility on Foundry Street for individuals with acquired brain injuries. With support from the November 2016 Special Town Meeting, the Trust worked for several years to create **affordable housing for intellectually disabled adults** at this formerly Town-owned property, which was transferred to BAMSI in 2020. The much-needed facility is on a limited upland area, with most of the 15-acre site being permanently protected as public conservation land. In addition to preliminary site engineering and surveying, the Trust provided \$350,000 to support the expensive permitting, site work, and construction costs.
- Easton continues to benefit from the support of a part-time professional **community planner position**, funded in part by the Trust as well as through CPA administrative funds. In addition to supporting the work of the Trust, this position works extensively with 40B proposals, monitors already existing affordability restrictions, updates Easton's Subsidized Housing Inventory, and much more.

Five-Year Goals for the Trust

The Trust's five-year goals respond strategically to Easton's housing needs, including community direction provided through the development of Easton's 2022 Housing Production Plan, and build on the Trust's accomplishments to date.

GOAL 1: Increase availability of affordable housing options for older adults and families, and maintain existing affordable housing units

According to 2019 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, 15 percent of Easton's population was aged 65 or older, up from 12 percent in 2010. Like many other communities across the Commonwealth, Easton's population is aging and with this trend comes an increasing need for housing that is affordable for those on fixed incomes and with specific healthcare needs. In addition, Easton is becoming at-risk of losing young families and school children as the cost of housing skyrockets. Young people who grew up in the community are finding they cannot start their own families here due the high cost of housing.

The Trust will continue to work to increase the availability of affordable housing options over the next five years. Trust staff will also continue to monitor and update the Town's Subsidized

Housing Inventory (SHI) to ensure Easton remains in “safe harbor” relative to 40B proposals, with more than 10% of the Town’s permanent housing units being SHI-eligible. Eligible units must be subject to long-term or perpetual restrictions limiting their sale or rental price and be marketed through a fair and equitable process to income-qualified buyers or renters, usually households making 80% or below the Area Median Income (AMI), which in 2022 for a family of four in Easton was \$89,400. To address the State’s general shortage of rental housing, all new rental units (including market-rate) in new developments with 25% of the total units restricted as affordable count towards a town’s SHI. Keeping Easton compliant with Chapter 40B by ensuring that the creation of affordable housing units keeps pace with the creation of market rate units remains a Trust priority.

GOAL 2: Continue to promote diversification of housing choices

Easton has a need for a wider diversity of housing choices that include accessible units for older adults and those with disabilities, housing that is affordable for young families, smaller home options for older adults looking to downsize, and other co-housing, supportive, and aging-in-place options. The Trust will continue to advocate for regulatory amendments and private developments that provide a wider diversity of housing choice in Easton.

GOAL 3: Continue to increase understanding of the need for housing that is affordable, and raise awareness of existing assistance programs

The Trust continues to raise awareness of housing challenges facing Easton and the affordable housing options and programs available to support community members. The Trust also continues to educate the public about the mission, goals, and initiatives of the Trust.

Priority Initiatives

**PRIORITY INITIATIVE 1:
Continue to fund staff support for the Trust**

Much of the work of the Trust would not be possible without staff support. Easton continues to benefit from the support of a part-time professional community planner position, funded in part by the Trust as well as through CPA administrative funds. In addition to supporting the work of the Trust, this position works extensively with 40B proposals, monitors already existing affordability restrictions, updates Easton’s Subsidized Housing Inventory, and much more.

Timeframe: Throughout FYs 23-27

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust, Town Administrator, Department of Planning and Economic Development

Cost estimate: About \$44,000 annually

**PRIORITY INITIATIVE 2:
Ensure more housing that is affordable for seniors and families is among the outcomes of implementation of the Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities**

Earlier this year, the Department of Housing and Community Development released its final Multi-Family Zoning Requirements for MBTA Communities. A new Section 3A of Chapter 40A (the Zoning Act), enacted as part of the 2021 economic development law, requires MBTA communities, of which Easton is one, to have at least one zoning district of reasonable size near a transit station in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right — and meet other criteria set forth in the statute — or risk a loss of eligibility for funding from the state’s MassWorks program, Housing Choice Initiative, or Local Capital Projects Fund.

The Town intends to comply with this new law and has established an MBTA Communities Zoning Implementation Review Team to guide implementation. The Affordable Housing Trust chair, or their representative, will continue to be on the Implementation Review Team. The Trust will continue to work with the Review Team to ensure that more housing that is affordable for seniors and families is among the outcomes of implementation of this law, which is possibly the biggest opportunity Easton may have within the next five years to create meaningful amounts of affordable housing. The Trust will advocate in support both in public and at Town Meeting.

Timeframe: FYs 23-25

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust, Easton Select Board, Easton Planning Board, Town Administrator, Easton Department of Planning and Economic Development, MA Department of Housing and Community Development

Cost estimate: Board and Staff time

PRIORITY INITIATIVE 3:

Take advantage of the housing potential of surplus Town properties

The Town is currently planning for the replacement of the DPW, Police, and Fire facilities, likely to be consolidated into one or two new locations. In addition, the new Blanche Ames K-2 school building will be opening soon, leaving Moreau Hall and the Center School sites as surplus. These and other possible changes to the Town’s building stock create significant opportunity for the development of more housing that is affordable to seniors and families in the community.

The Trust intends to contract a consultant to undertake an Affordable Housing Feasibility Study of Surplus Town Properties, which would help the Trust identify suitable sites and establish next steps for possible development. Potential properties to be included in this study include:

- DPW – 130 Centre Street – 2.6 acres
- Police Station – 46-48 Lothrop Street – 5 acres (stream/wet at sides and back)
- Water Department and Fire Station – 417 and 413 Bay Road – 2.4 acres and 9.1 acres (11.5 acres total) (water department is a historic building; fire station will remain in use)
- *Frothingham Hall – 15 Barrows Street – 2.8 acres (historic building, ledge)
- *Center School – 388 Depot Street – 13 acres (wet at back)
- *Moreau Hall – 360 Washington Street – 3.4 acres

(those marked * likely have other / continued uses and are lower priorities)

Timeframe: FY 23

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust, Town Administrator, Department of Planning and Economic Development

Cost estimate: \$50,000 for consultant, to start

PRIORITY INITIATIVE 4:

Collaborate with owners of private property with redevelopment potential

The Trust will continue to look out for private properties in the community with redevelopment potential and collaborate with private property owners to develop win-win plans that may include housing that is affordable for seniors and families. The YMCA (18 Oliver Street) is a historic factory with potential, for example, should the Y decide to move to another location. The site could perhaps be redeveloped similar to the abutting Shovel Works for senior and family affordable housing. Similarly, Crofoot Gear (20 Central Street) is a historic factory building in poor condition that could be redeveloped for mixed-income housing, perhaps also using Shovel Works as a model. Several strip-malls throughout town are underutilized and could be encouraged to redevelop as mixed-use with some affordable housing. The Trust will also continue to look for smaller parcels that would be suitable for affordable single-family homes.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout FYs 23-27

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust, Department of Planning and Economic Development, Private Property Owners

Cost estimate: Board and Staff time, to start

PRIORITY INITIATIVE 5:

Explore potential for joint open space and affordable housing projects

As a community, Easton highly values the conservation of its open spaces, and this is a value that the Trust shares. Development on many open space parcels is often naturally constrained by wetlands and other issues and is also undesirable due to the ecological, scenic, and/or historic value of a site. There may be potential, however, for modest housing developments that are affordable for seniors and families to be carefully integrated into open spaces so as not to diminish their scenic and conservation values.

The Trust intends to explore this potential, working collaboratively with the Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, and others. Possible areas of exploring this potential include the following:

- Langwater Farm – 88 Acres
- Marshall Farm – 148 Acres
- Clover Valley Farm – 210 Acres
- Simpson Springs – 149 Acres

Timeframe: FYs 25-27

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust, Department of Planning and Economic Development, Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, and others

Cost estimate: Board and Staff time, to start

PRIORITY INITIATIVE 6:

Continue to provide education about affordable housing issues, programs, and assistance as well as improve community understanding of the Trust’s work

The Trust will continue to provide education through the following:

- Written Annual Update included in the Town’s Annual Report
- Regular updates to the Select Board and Community Preservation Committee, and other town boards and committees as needed
- Posting of information in the Town Crier Newsletter, to Town social media pages, and regular updates to the Trust’s webpages on the Town’s website
- Annual updates, if needed, to the Town’s resources brochure, and year-round dissemination at points of public contact (e.g., library, Council on Aging, Town Hall, etc.)

In addition, the Trust will

- support Easton Housing Authority applications for Community Preservation Act funds,
- support the work of the Health and Community Services Department’s Benefits and Grants Navigator, and
- continue to observe, participate, and advocate at related town meetings, including Select Board meetings, Planning Board meetings and Town Meeting.

Timeframe: Throughout FYs 23-27

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust, Department of Community Planning and Economic Development

Cost estimate: Board and Staff time

PRIORITY INITIATIVE 7:

Repair Grants for Affordable Home Re-Sales

As Easton’s affordable ownership units age and change hands there may be some that need more significant renovations like a new roof, furnace, bathroom, or septic system. Such repairs could cost as much as \$15,000 each and neither the seller nor the new buyer are likely to have the funds to do the work. The Trust could provide small grants of up to \$30,000 - \$45,000 (enough for two or three big projects) to new income-qualified buyers of restricted-affordable homes to fix issues identified by a home inspection. The grants could be paid directly to licensed contractors upon successful completion of the work. Such a grant program could help preserve affordable units at a lower cost than creating new ones.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout FYs 24-27

Responsible: Easton Affordable Housing Trust

Cost estimate: About \$15,000 - \$45,000 per grant

5-Year Budget Estimate

	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	5-year Total
Revenue						
CPA funds carried over from FY22 (allocated equally over five years)	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$630,000
Other funds carried over from FY22 (allocated equally over five years)	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000	\$135,000
CPA appropriation	\$202,500	\$205,000	\$205,000	\$205,000	\$205,000	\$1,022,500
Other funding (interest)	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$6,000
Subtotal (Revenue)	\$356,700	\$359,200	\$359,200	\$359,200	\$359,200	\$1,793,500
Expenses						
Staff Support (Initiative 1)	\$44,000	\$44,000	\$44,000	\$44,000	\$44,000	\$220,000
Surplus Property Study (Initiative 3)		\$50,000				\$50,000
Repair Grants (Initiative 7)	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$75,000
Subtotal (Expenses)	\$59,000	\$109,000	\$59,000	\$59,000	\$59,000	\$345,000
Surplus in reserve for opportunities	\$297,700	\$250,200	\$300,200	\$300,200	\$300,200	\$1,448,500