

# **West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust**

## **ACTION PLAN FY2024-2026**



**Adopted: April 20, 2023**

**Prepared for**  
West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust

**Prepared by**  
Elizabeth Rust, ECR Enterprises

## **PURPOSE**

**The purpose of the West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust is to provide for the preservation and creation of affordable and community housing in the Town of West Newbury for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households.**

## Table of Contents

<b>PURPOSE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TRUST GOALS AND STRATEGIES.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WEST NEWBURY'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>GOALS AND INITIATIVE DETAIL.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of Trustees of the West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust, adopted this Action Plan to guide Trust initiatives over the next three years (fiscal years 2024-2026).

The Trust mission is to expand housing opportunities in West Newbury for people in need by facilitating the creation and preservation of affordable units and connecting residents to housing assistance.

Through the mission, the Trust aims to increase housing opportunities and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in West Newbury while also advancing the town's progress toward the State 10% affordable housing mandate. While the 10% affordable housing mandate requires that West Newbury add 113 units to its 40B inventory, this target is beyond the Trust resources, capacity or the time frame of this plan. A project of that magnitude, if ever proposed, would be most likely initiated by a private developer (not the Trust) whereby the entire Town, and all its boards, committees and residents, will have an opportunity to comment.

## Trust Goals and Strategies

- 1) GOAL: INCREASE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES.
  - A. STRATEGY: ADVOCATE FOR ZONING AND PLANNING INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT HOUSING DIVERSITY AND AFFORDABILITY.
  - B. STRATEGY: ASSESS MUNICIPAL AND PRIVATE LAND FOR HOUSING.
  - C. STRATEGY: ADVOCATE FOR INCREASED AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS.
- 2) GOAL: PROVIDE WEST NEWBURY RESIDENTS WITH HOUSING ASSISTANCE.
  - A. STRATEGY: ESTABLISH A SMALL GRANT PROGRAM.
  - B. STRATEGY: PROVIDE INFORMATION AND REFERRALS ON AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE.
  - C. STRATEGY: INVESTIGATE PROVIDING TAX ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE OWNERS.
- 3) GOAL: FOSTER STRENGTH OF HOUSING OPTIONS THROUGH A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN.
  - A. STRATEGY: PUBLISH AND MAINTAIN CURRENT HOUSING INFORMATION.
  - B. STRATEGY: SPONSOR TRAININGS, FORUMS, INFORMATION SESSIONS.
  - C. STRATEGY: IMPLEMENT A PROFESSIONAL MARKETING STRATEGY.
- 4) GOAL: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS.
  - A. STRATEGY: SOLICIT STRATEGIC PARTNERS
  - B. STRATEGY: REGIONAL COLLABORATION.
- 5) GOAL: GROW THE CAPACITY OF THE HOUSING TRUST.
  - A. STRATEGY: OBTAIN STAFF ASSISTANCE.
  - B. STRATEGY: CONTINUE TO FUND THE TRUST.

# INTRODUCTION

## **What is the West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust?**

A housing trust allows municipalities to collect funds for affordable housing, segregate them out of the general municipal budget into a trust fund, and use the funds for local initiatives to create and preserve affordable housing.

On October 23, 2021 West Newbury voters authorized the Select Board to establish the West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 55C for the purpose of creating and preserving affordable housing in West Newbury for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households, and for the funding of community housing.

On November 15th, the Select Board adopted a Charge to establish a new Affordable Housing Trust Bylaw Committee, in order to advise the Select Board on development of a draft bylaw for consideration at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting. On December 6th, the Select Board appointed 5 members to the Affordable Housing Trust Bylaw Committee. Through their hard work and dedication, on May 14, 2022 West Newbury voters authorized the establishment of the Affordable Housing Trust for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households, through approval of the presented bylaw.

The Declaration of Trust is recorded at Southern Essex District Registry of Deeds book 41431, page 1 and the bylaw and other materials are posted on the town website [West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust](#).

## **What does the Board of Trustees do?**

The Town bylaw created the Board of Trustees to oversee the West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust funds and is composed of one ex officio non-voting member and seven voting members. The Town Manager serves as the ex officio member. The Board of Trustees also must include one member of the Select Board. The Select Board has the authority to appoint the other six members. The voting members shall have relevant experience in the fields of affordable housing, zoning, real estate, banking, finance, law architecture, social services or other areas of expertise applicable to advancing the purpose and goals of the trust.

The Trust powers and authority are set forth in accordance with MGL c.44 s.55C and the bylaw. Select Board approval is required to purchase or retain any interest in real property. Select Board and Town Meeting approval is required to incur any debt, borrow any money, grant any mortgage, or pledge trust assets. The Trust must submit an annual report to the Select Board reporting on all activities.

It is the Trust's fiduciary responsibility, bestowed upon the Trust by the Town of West Newbury, to ensure that the Housing Trust funds are used in a responsible manner. In fact, the impetus for initiating this Action Plan is to establish a deliberate focus to the work and the use of the Housing Trust's resources.

Furthermore, the Trust recognizes that their work is but one facet of the Town's work to maintain a high quality of life for its current and future residents. It is the responsibility of the Trust to establish and maintain open dialogues and coordinate the work of the Trust with other town officials, boards, and commissions.

**West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust  
Board of Trustees (2022)**

Kevin Bowe  
Donna Garcia  
Deborah Hamilton  
Karen Holmes  
Derek Mitchell  
Wendy Reed (SB Appointee)  
Pamela Shaffer

**Staff Support**

## **How was this Action Plan developed?**

In November 2022, the Town of West Newbury contracted with planning consultant Elizabeth Rust of ECR Enterprises to develop an Action Plan, budget, program descriptions, and supporting documents for the West Newbury Affordable Housing Trust.

Working with the planning consultant, the Board of Trustees identified and assessed West Newbury's housing needs. The planning consultant updated and supplemented the information provided through this review to create materials for the action plan. The Trust held a Listening Session March 16, 2023, incorporated comments received, and adopted the final plan on April 20, 2023.

It is the intent of the Trust to update the action plan in three years' time, as it reflects on their accomplishments and opportunities.

# WEST NEWBURY'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS

This brief description of West Newbury's affordable housing needs is based on the detailed housing needs analysis completed in 2017 through the Housing Production Plan, with some updated figures provided by the Trust's planning consultant. In this analysis, the trust considered the needs of low-income<sup>1</sup> and moderate-income<sup>2</sup> households, families, elderly, and special needs populations, in addition to availability of affordable rental and homeownership units and programs.

## Low-Income and Moderate-Income Households

Low-income households are households with incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income. Households with this level of income often include young professional singles and couples just entering the workforce, families, single-parents, elderly individuals, disabled individuals, as well as teachers and municipal employees. For example, a four-person household making at or below \$79,900 (gross income) annually is considered a low-income household.

For housing to be counted on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory, it must be restricted to low-income households (80% AMI or lower) through a property restriction or deed rider, and marketed using an Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan. Individual units within housing programs often have income limits for the residents. In this way, the governmental agencies that provide the required subsidy and grant amounts ensure that the housing developed benefits the intended residents.

The West Newbury specific limits for 2022 are listed below. These limits are published by the federal Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD) annually for Metropolitan Statistical area in the country.

<b>Household Size Income Limits 2022, Lawrence MSA</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<u>50% – Very Low Income</u>	<u>36,050</u>	<u>41,200</u>	<u>46,350</u>	<u>51,450</u>	<u>55,600</u>	<u>59,700</u>
<u>80% - Low Income</u>	<u>55,950</u>	<u>63,950</u>	<u>71,950</u>	<u>79,900</u>	<u>86,300</u>	<u>92,700</u>
<u>100% - Moderate Income</u>	<u>79,800</u>	<u>91,200</u>	<u>102,600</u>	<u>114,000</u>	<u>123,120</u>	<u>132,240</u>

According to the 2019 American Community Survey data, West Newbury has 1,680 households of which 92% are owners and 8% renters. Of the 135 renter households, 78% (105) are of low and moderate incomes, while 24% (365) of the 1,540 owner households are low and moderate income. Overall, 28%

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Low income = household income at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI). In West Newbury, which is part of the Lawrence Area, a four-person household with low-income has an income at or below \$79,900. This Metro FMR Area includes the Towns of Andover, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, North Andover and West Newbury.

Moderate income = household income of up to 100% of the area median. In West Newbury, a four-person household with moderate-income has an income of up to \$114,000.

of households, or 1 in 4, are low and moderate income. One measure of affordability is to look at the cost burden figures. As defined by the US Department of Housing and urban Development (HUD), housing cost burden' occurs when a household spends more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs. When a household is cost burdened, it has less income to spend on other necessities and to circulate into the local economy – this is especially challenging for low and moderate income households. In West Newbury, 18% of low- and moderate-income owners and 30% of low- and moderate-income renters are cost burdened.

There a very low inventory of low and moderately priced homes in West Newbury, either for sale or rent. From a market perspective, there are currently no homes for sale or rent in West Newbury (2/3/2023), at any price point, much less affordable to a low- or moderate-income household.

On the 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, maintained by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), there are a total of 43 units recorded for West Newbury, 30 rental units operated by the West Newbury Housing Authority, and 13 affordable deed restricted ownership units. These 43 units are 2.76% of West Newbury's year round housing units (1,558 from the 2010 Census), 113 units short of the 10% mandate. (Note: the SHI denominator is planned to be updated with the 2020 Census data in May 2023.)

From 2019 information (pre-COVID) to capture the affordability gap, the estimated median house in 2019 was \$704,401, requiring an annual income of \$190,000. However, the median household income for the same period was \$150,844, able to purchase a home in the \$560,000 range.

( <https://www.city-data.com/city/West-Newbury-Massachusetts.html>)

# GOALS AND INITIATIVE DETAIL

The Trust goals respond strategically to West Newbury's housing needs. There is a particular need to provide affordable rental and homeownership housing for low-income households, including families and young professionals, and to assist low- and moderate-income elderly homeowners, including registering units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

The Trust advocates a clear call to execute a proactive and intentional housing agenda to create affordable units and to help people, to promote and fund affordable housing as a centralized municipal service, and to use the Housing Trust as a repository for CPA housing funds.

**1) GOAL: INCREASE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES.** Promote and create new affordable units through new development or redevelopment, advocating for diversity of housing prices and styles. Support healthy aging in the community by expanding the range of affordable and intergenerational housing options. As mentioned above, West Newbury is currently 113 units short of the 10% threshold to achieve safe harbor from 40B developments. The Trust will assist in creating units eligible to register on the SHI through the strategies below.

**A. STRATEGY: ADVOCATE FOR ZONING AND PLANNING INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT HOUSING DIVERSITY AND AFFORDABILITY.** Promote and advocate for Planning Board initiatives, including adding Accessory Dwelling Units to existing housing, and supporting the MBTA/3A zoning initiatives.

**B. STRATEGY: ASSESS MUNICIPAL AND PRIVATE LAND FOR HOUSING.** This includes reviewing municipal properties, including potential tax takings, and performing initial feasibility studies. The assessor's office can generate a list of municipal properties, and the Trust can filter out the potential parcels. The Trust can actively search for property with development or redevelopment potential by working with a real estate broker to research land on the market, land about to come on the market, and underutilized sites.

Once a property meets physical feasibility review (environmental, survey, soil testing, access) then a zoning analysis can be completed, to create a project proforma (a financial projection of project costs and revenue) based on a preliminary determination of how many units the site could accommodate. The proforma would estimate how much the development would cost, projected revenue, and potential subsidy needs and sources. Often the target income levels and populations, rent/own options, density and other parameters are discussed and conceptually

agreed to at this point, including whether the units created would be SHI-eligible or targeted to a higher income for workforce housing needs

The Trust, with public support could then petition the Select Board to transfer the parcel to the Trust at Town Meeting. The Trust may hire consultants and subject matter experts to formalize a potential project proposal.

Once a parcel is acquired, the Trust can proceed with conceptual site plans to assist in the assessment of density, building type, and other project details to include in a Request for Proposals (RFP) for disposition and/or construction.

The Massachusetts Housing Partnership's *Developing Affordable Housing on Public Land: A Guide for Massachusetts Communities* provides instruction for assessing sites, setting goals, preparing an RFP, and other information. Download a free copy at:

[https://www.mhp.net/writable/resources/documents/mhp\\_public\\_land\\_guide2.pdf](https://www.mhp.net/writable/resources/documents/mhp_public_land_guide2.pdf)

**C. STRATEGY: ADVOCATE FOR INCREASED AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS.**

The Trust will become involved in private housing proposals before the Planning Board or Zoning Board, taking the seat at the table for future residents. The Trust can advocate for equitable layouts and disbursement, parking and access to amenities, as well as potentially increasing the number of affordable units, or the level of affordability. The Trust can request local preferences in developments from the subsidizing agency (MassHousing or DHCD), within the regulatory requirements, at most 70% of the units at initial purchase or leasing.

Ideally, the permit issuing board (Planning and ZBA) will develop a policy to ask the Trust for their comments on each development project before issuing a decision. The Trust can invite developers to make presentations at their meeting, focusing on the affordable housing element of the proposal.

**2) GOAL: PROVIDE WEST NEWBURY RESIDENTS WITH HOUSING ASSISTANCE.**

Assist low- and moderate-income residents, including seniors with financial assistance to allow them to stay in their homes, lessening the housing burden to the 18% of households that are cost-burdened. Older adults and other households can face challenges in single-family housing situations, such as routine maintenance and upkeep, cost of property taxes, access to services, and transportation. This goal and strategies are not aimed to produce new housing units, and instead oriented to making housing more affordable to its residents.

**A. STRATEGY: ESTABLISH A SMALL GRANT PROGRAM.** Implement a Small Grants Program for eligible homeowners to address health and safety repairs in their homes, modeled from

successful programs in Bedford, Concord and Sudbury. This program provides a limited amount of funding to modest value homes for health and safety purposes. The programs use standards for eligibility – income under 80% or 100% AMI, home valued under the median assessment – and award up to \$5,000 twice a year to qualified applicants. The applicant provides estimates from qualified contractors, signs a grant agreement upon the award, and the funds are paid directly to the contractor at the verified completion of the work. The Trust could consider a program that includes a lien with repayment provisions. The Trust could also explore a grant program as a collaboration between historical preservation and affordable housing to preserve the facades on Main Street.

For more information, download Sudbury’s program description and application at:

<http://www.sudbury.ma.us/committees> and click on “Sudbury Housing Trust.”

**B. STRATEGY: PROVIDE INFORMATION AND REFERRALS ON AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE.**

Provide current and accessible information on available assistance through an easy-to-locate place on the town website as well through Council on Aging outreach.

**C. STRATEGY: INVESTIGATE PROVIDING TAX ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE OWNERS.**

Investigate filing legislation for a senior means tested exemption, using examples from other communities that have implemented such programs – Sudbury and Concord for example. The Sudbury and Concord Means Tested Senior Exemption Programs reduce real property taxes for some low to moderate-income senior citizens through a redistribution of the property tax burden within the residential class. The programs requires residency for a minimum of 10 years prior to eligibility. This program relies on the annual income criteria established by the Massachusetts State Income Tax Refundable Credit known as the Circuit Breaker. The program includes requirements that the resident is over age 65, income eligible, and there are asset and home assessment limits. As with any special legislation, the Town Meeting first approves the filing, then onto the state. The process takes some number of years.

**3) GOAL: FOSTER STRENGTH OF HOUSING OPTIONS THROUGH A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN.**

Foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community through a positive public relations campaign. Increasing outreach and education about local and regional affordable housing needs will strengthen the base of knowledge and support for affordable housing. Through a concerted effort, the Trust will provide ongoing outreach to increase awareness of existing affordable housing programs and assistance at local and state levels.

**A. STRATEGY: PUBLISH AND MAINTAIN CURRENT HOUSING INFORMATION.** The Trust, as a town entity, has access to a wide range of communication channels to promote and educate the public on housing concerns. The following list outlines actions for a comprehensive communication strategy:

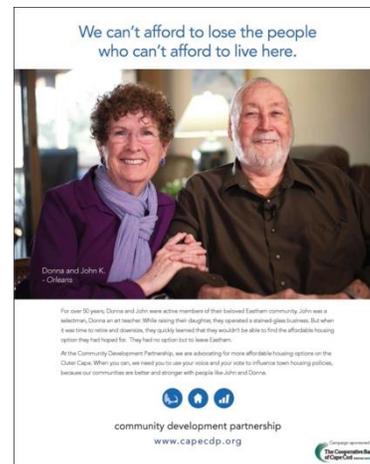
- Maintain up-to-date information on the town website on programs, eligibility requirements, deadlines, and links to external housing resources;
- Distribute hardcopy program literature and information at the library and/or town offices;
- Publish regular articles about affordable housing, at least quarterly, and publish on social media, email blasts, Facebook, Town Meeting;
- Send quarterly housing updates, and other timely information to a developed outreach list comprised of the following:
  - Town Boards and Committees, Council on Aging;
  - Regional networks;
  - Nearby organizations serving people of color, immigrant groups, low-income families, veterans, and other protected classes;
  - Faith-based organizations;
  - Educational institutions, school social workers and parent- teacher organizations;
  - Local hospitals and employers.
- Submit editorials and press releases and housing opportunities to local news agencies.

**B. STRATEGY: SPONSOR TRAININGS, FORUMS, INFORMATION SESSIONS.** With the robust outreach list developed above, the Trust can sponsor public forums and training. This is an opportunity to collaborate with other regional entities.

- Sponsor fair housing training, and other relevant topics, for municipal boards/committees, real estate and professionals, civic groups and general public. CHAPA offers programs to the public – <https://www.chapa.org>.
- Staff tables at community events, town meeting and other gatherings bringing brochures, pictures of local housing developments, and other visual materials.
- Host public forums and panels (annually) with housing experts and advocates.

**C. STRATEGY: IMPLEMENT A PROFESSIONAL MARKETING STRATEGY.** A professional marketing strategy can elevate awareness and support for affordable housing. There may be some grants to assist with funding such an approach. One example is the Lower Cape Community Housing Partnership’s public education media campaign, which features three videos and accompanying print ads, emphasizing the diverse members of the community who benefit from affordable housing.

(<https://capecdp.org/affordable-housing/community-housing-partnership/media-campaign> )



**4) GOAL: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS.** Strengthen partnerships with organizations focused on addressing housing needs in West Newbury and the region.

**A. STRATEGY: SOLICIT STRATEGIC PARTNERS.** By working collaboratively with its local and regional housing partners, the Town can enhance and promote community education while advancing its affordable housing goals. Proactively soliciting strategic partners, responding to inquiries, identifying properties and resources can strengthen collaborative strategies, including working together with the West Newbury Housing Authority. Partners such as Habitat for Humanity (for smaller scale), Harborlight Community Partners (for larger scales), and YWCA in Newburyport are some examples, as well as churches and other entities with changes of use on their land. West Newbury is a member in the North Shore HOME Consortium ([Peabody - North Shore Home Consortium \(peabody-ma.gov\)](http://Peabody - North Shore Home Consortium (peabody-ma.gov))) and has access to specialized HUD funds through this regional group. There are other local and regional housing development agencies that may offer opportunities to create housing - demonstrating public and private partnerships.

**B. STRATEGY: BOOST REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS.** Creating joint housing and open space projects is an innovative approach to serving multiple municipal land use priorities. Land Protection agencies such as Essex County Greenbelt may be interested in exploring creating joint housing and open space projects. Such partnerships help to reframe the conversation, providing the public with ideas that recognize the importance of both housing needs and environmental priorities. This is an opportunity for innovative solutions that are consistent with open space and housing and zoning goals.

**5) GOAL: GROW THE CAPACITY OF THE HOUSING TRUST.** Growing the capacity of the Trust is critical to the effectiveness of the Town’s efforts to implement community priorities as established through the housing planning efforts. This includes both professional staff capacity and funding.

**A. STRATEGY: OBTAIN STAFF ASSISTANCE.** Staff assistance is needed to both provide greater technical expertise as well as more dedicated time. The Trust is comprised of volunteers that have limited availability for the initiatives identified in this action plan. The work of the trust includes administrative activities (agendas, minutes, reporting) and the array of project details listed. Another staffing dimension to consider is the need to procure assistance with the technical complexity of housing work.

The Trust can work with the town staff to develop a staffing strategy. Options include arranging some support from existing town staff, collaborating with nearby municipalities to share housing resources, hiring a consultant – or a combination of a number of these approaches. One model of shared resources is the Regional Housing Services Office ([www.RHSOhousing.org](http://www.RHSOhousing.org)).

**B. STRATEGY: CONTINUE TO FUND THE TRUST.** A key attribute of the Trust is to isolate and dedicate funds to affordable housing. The Trust has two current sources of revenue – CPA funds and funds from inclusionary housing payments. These are estimated below over the plan period, including the appropriation of accumulated CPA reserves to be requested at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. Additional CPA funds may be requested for specific projects. Note that the Trust can also accept private donations. CPA funds can only be used on housing that is deed restricted to households under the 100% AMI. Note that this is a higher limit than the SHI-eligibility limit of 80% AMI.

On the expense side, placeholders are shown for staffing, monitoring, project feasibility, and marketing/outreach – as well as the Small Grant Program outlined above, and an estimated \$350,000 for unit creation through any of the strategies identified in this plan. This is a placeholder amount, and actual project details are needed to finalize or authorize any specific amount.

	FY24	FY25	FY26
<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>\$191,672</b>	<b>\$301,850</b>	<b>\$74,850</b>
CPA Housing Reserves	\$172,178		
CPA Annual 10%		\$55,000	\$55,000
Inclusionary Payments		\$40,000	\$40,000

CPA Project Specific Funds			
Total Revenue	\$172,178	\$95,000	\$95,000
Consulting/Staffing	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Monitoring	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Feasibility	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$15,000
Marketing	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Program: Small Grants	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Program: Unit Creation		\$250,000	\$100,000
Total Expenses	\$62,000	\$322,000	\$162,000
<b>Ending balance</b>	<b>\$301,850</b>	<b>\$74,850</b>	<b>\$7,850</b>