

Town of Norwell Affordable Housing Plan

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INTRODUCTION

760 CMR 31.07(I) Planned Production - A decision by the Board to deny a comprehensive permit or grant a permit with conditions shall be consistent with local needs if the municipality has adopted an affordable housing plan approved by the Department pursuant to which there is an increase in its number of low or moderate income housing units (which are eligible for inclusion on the subsidized housing inventory) by at least three-fourths of one percent of total units every calendar year until that percentage exceeds 10 percent of total units.

A. BACKGROUND

After a population explosion in the 1950s and 1960s, Norwell's population stabilized and remained static from 1973 through 1996. In 1997 the population

increased by 6%, but it has remained stable since then. Largely as a result of Norwell's unusual soil and water table situation, its rate of growth has remained less than all of its neighboring towns.

The Town's school age population has decreased considerably from a high in the 1970s, during which time the Vinal School and the present high school were built. In the interim the Osborne School has been de-commissioned, and is currently serving as the town hall. Norwell is now completing a substantial investment in its schools involving a \$54 million rebuilding program, with an all-new Middle School and substantially rebuilt and enlarged Cole and Vinal elementary Schools and a complete remodeling of the High School. The previous Middle School, built as the high school in 1964 has been demolished. The Sparrell School, built as the high school in the 1920s has been decommissioned as a school; however, its future fate remains uncertain. The extensive financial commitment alone demonstrates that Norwell has had a strong commitment to its schools.

While the population has scarcely increased, there has been a steady although small rate of new home construction. Together with a stable overall population, this would indicate a smaller average family size. Moreover, there is a nationwide aging of the population. The median age of Norwell's population is up 7.7% from 37.2 years in 1990 to 40.1 years in the 2000 census. Between 1990 and 2000, there was a 27% increase in the number of citizens aged 65 or older from 963 to 1227. In the same period there has been a staggering (albeit perhaps not statistically as significant) 71.4% increase from 133 to 228 in citizen population aged 85 and over. If these senior residents continue to stay, it seems a likely prediction that there will be a demand for more elderly housing, possibly including assisted living.

Since the mid 1960s Norwell has emphasized the residential character of the town; however, the town has developed an industrial park, an event unforeseen in the 1958 Master Plan. Norwell's one acre residential zoning has remained unchanged since its inception thirty years ago.

The increased availability and affordability of mortgages has fueled a strong building market throughout the country. Norwell, however, is endowed with much land which has traditionally been regarded as unbuildable - wetlands, dense glacial tills, and areas of clay soils. This surfeit of undesirable land has limited the number of available building lots in Norwell for the last decades. Building lots are traditionally among the most volatile commodities of the real estate market; that fact, together with the fundamental scarcity of good lots in Norwell, has caused the cost of a building lot in Norwell to skyrocket. It is difficult to find a building lot available in Norwell for less than \$300,000. At that price, even given all the possibilities for affordable housing discussed later in this document, building affordable units in single-family homes in Norwell is not feasible.

Norwell presently has 3,299 total housing units, according to the official Massachusetts

Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) statistics, of which 97, or approximately 3%, are qualified Chapter 40B affordable housing units. At present, Norwell is shy of its state mandate of qualified affordable housing by approximately 233 units.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide for more affordable housing as mandated by the state, consistent with local and area needs, and consistent with the character of the town.

1. To identify and address specific housing needs of the Town of Norwell.
2. To formulate a plan to create more affordable housing in Norwell within the intent of the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law, G.L. c. 40B s. 20- 23.
3. To plan for this housing in a manner consistent with Norwell's long-term objectives.
4. To develop a plan to provide for this housing in a manner which will accommodate the needs of residents of Norwell and the local area and also preserve the character of the Town.
5. To identify wetland areas, aquifers, watersheds, flood plains and other conservation areas.
6. To have the town acquire identified conservation areas where development might most severely endanger the environment but might not be protected from development by state statute or regulation.
7. To support affordable housing developments which are 100% genuine affordable homes, both ownership and rental developments.
8. To try to protect some of the existing low and moderate income households from being forced out of their homes, and preserve some of the existing stock of affordable housing by including these homes in the DHCD inventory of affordable housing.
9. To identify present or future Town owned parcels of land, which might be suitable for creation of subsidized affordable housing.
10. Solicit Requests for Proposals to build affordable housing on land owned by the town or to be acquired by the town.
11. Build the projected number of units or have them built over a 7 to 10 year span as needed.

I. COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

760 CMR 31.07(I) 1. The affordable housing plan shall be based upon a comprehensive housing needs assessment, which must include an analysis of the most

recent decennial census data of the municipality's demographics and housing stock; of development constraints and limitations, as well as of the municipality's ability to mitigate them; and of the municipality's infrastructure.

A. POPULATION AND HOUSING SUMMARY

Norwell's population grew modestly by 5.2 percent in the 1990s, adding 486 people, three-quarters of who were under 15 years old. The number of households, however, grew at a faster rate, as did the number of owner-occupied housing units. In contrast, the few housing units estimated by the Census to be available for rental in Norwell hardly grew at all. Average household size in the U.S. has been declining for many years, and in Massachusetts it fell 2.7 per cent from 2.58 in 1990 to 2.51 in 2000. Because Norwell has a relatively high proportion of large, detached houses and families with children, its year 2000 average household size is higher at 2.94, declining from 3.1 in 1990. Almost 44 per cent of households had a child under 18, suggesting broad demand for homes with 2-3 or more bedrooms.

| Norwell Population and Housing Changes 1990-2000 | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | % Change 1990-2000 | Average annual change (%) |
| Total population | 9,279 | 9,765 | 5.2 | 0.5 |
| Total households | 2,988 | 3,250 | 8.2 | 0.8 |
| Total housing units | 3,079 | 3,318 | 7.8 | 0.8 |
| Total owner-occupied year-round housing units | 2,748 | 2,993 | 8.9 | 0.9 |
| Total renter-occupied year-round housing units | 256 | 257 | 0.4 | 0 |
| Vacancy rate for ownership year-round units | 1.5 | 0.3 | -20.0 | -2.0 |
| Vacancy rate for rental year-round units | 5.0 | 0.8 | -16.0 | -1.6 |

Source: US Census 1990, 2000

B. AGE COMPOSITION AND HOUSING

In 2000, Norwell's population was concentrated in the prime earning years of 35 to 60. With a median age of 40, the town's population is somewhat older than the Boston regional population, but very similar to neighboring communities such as Scituate and Cohasset, which have median ages of 41. The most striking feature of Norwell's 2000 census profile is the abrupt drop since 1990 in the 20-29 age group. The number of Norwell residents in there twenties dropped by half between 1990 and 2000, from 1,070 to 533. This is the "baby bust" generation, but the drop in numbers and percent of the population was greater in Norwell than in the state, metro Boston, or the South Shore Coalition subregion. For example, the 20-24 age group in

Norwell represented only 2.6 percent of the town’s total 2000 population, while that age category represented 6.4 percent of the Boston metropolitan region’s population. Although people in their twenties often prefer to live in more urban locations, this is also a time when many young adults first enter the housing market. Norwell’s high cost of ownership housing and few rentals make entry difficult for young people.

Yet, at the same time, the proportion of persons over 65 is growing. While 12.6 percent of the Norwell population is aged 65 or older, 23 percent of Norwell households in 2000 included people aged 65 or older. Some of the population increase among the elderly came from a doubling (to 200) of the number of people in nursing homes. As the population ages, demand for smaller houses, condos, and apartments will increase among Norwell residents who want to stay in town but wish to downsize from the larger houses in which they raised their families. In public meetings, many older residents expressed this desire for smaller and less expensive housing.

| AGE GROUP | Norwell Age Composition | | | % of total South Shore Coalition Region population in 2000 | Norwell % Above / Below SSC in 2000 | % of MAPC Region in 2000 | Norwell % Above / Below MAPC in 2000 |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | % of total population in 1990 | % of total population in 2000 | % change in proportion of total 1990-2000 | | | | |
| <5 | 6.3 | 7.2 | 14.3 | 7.1 | 1.4 | 6.3 | 14.3 |
| 5-9 | 7.2 | 8.5 | 18.1 | 7.4 | 14.9 | 6.8 | 25.0 |
| 10-14 | 7.3 | 8.2 | 12.3 | 7.4 | 10.8 | 6.8 | 20.6 |
| 15-19 | 7.9 | 6.4 | -19.0 | 6.0 | 6.7 | 6.5 | -1.5 |
| 20-24 | 6.5 | 2.6 | -60.0 | 3.7 | -29.7 | 6.4 | -40.6 |
| 25-34 | 11.2 | 8.6 | -22.5 | 12.0 | -28.3 | 14.6 | -41.1 |
| 35-44 | 18.6 | 17.1 | -8.1 | 18.0 | -5.0 | 16.7 | 2.4 |
| 45-54 | 15.5 | 17.4 | 12.3 | 15.5 | 12.2 | 13.8 | 26.1 |
| 55-59 | 4.9 | 7.2 | 47.0 | 5.9 | 22.0 | 4.9 | 46.9 |
| 60-64 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 2.4 | 4.2 | 2.4 | 3.7 | 16.2 |
| 65-74 | 6.1 | 6.3 | 3.3 | 6.9 | -8.7 | 6.7 | -6.0 |
| 75-84 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 188.7 | 4.4 | 9.1 | 5.0 | 20.0 |
| 85+ | 1.4 | 2.3 | 64.3 | 1.5 | 53.3 | 1.8 | 27.8 |
| | 100.1 | 100.1 | | 100 | | 100 | |

Source: U.S. Census; MAPC

C. INCOME PROFILE

Median household income in Norwell increased by 44.5% over the decade of the 1990s from \$60,462 to \$87,397 and the proportion of households with incomes over \$100,000 increased dramatically from 19.3% to 41.9%. The Boston Metropolitan Consumer Price Index over the period grew more slowly (34%) than Norwell median income. Family median income was even higher in 1999 at \$96,771. In contrast, non-family households, 85 percent of whom were single person households, had a median income of only \$30,027. Despite Norwell’s large population of high-income households, 27.5 per cent of households and 20 percent of families in 1999 had incomes below \$50,000. Moreover, about 30 percent of the town’s homeowners and 30 per cent of renters were paying over 30 per cent of their income for housing.

| Norwell Household Income | 1989 | 1999 | % Change in Proportion of Total |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| <\$25,000 | 17.3% | 15.3% | -11% |
| \$25-\$49,999 | 20.5% | 15.2% | -26% |
| \$50-74,999 | 23.6% | 13.4% | -43% |
| \$75-99,999 | 14.2% | 15.0% | 6% |
| \$100-149,999 | 9.7% | 18.5% | 90% |
| \$150,000+ | 14.7% | 22.6% | 53% |

Source: US Census, 1990, 2000

D. HOUSING STOCK AND HOUSING SUPPLY

Norwell’s housing stock is predominantly detached, single family homes – estimated at 93 per cent of the total in the 2000 census. The 2000 census counts a total of 3,318 housing units (of which 3,299 are year-round housing units). The Town’s 2001 assessor’s list shows 3,129 single-family homes, 50 condominiums, 8 two-family homes, 1 three-family home, and 1 multi-family building of 4 to 8 units and 1 with more than 8 units. In addition there are 21 parcels with multiple houses on one parcel, two parcels with mobile homes and a nursing home serving approximately 200 people. Since 2001, approximately 40 more condos have been added to the town’s inventory.

Norwell Age of Housing Units

| <u>Build Date</u> | <u>Percent of Total</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Before 1950 | 23% |
| 1950-1979 | 60% |
| 1980-1989 | 10% |
| 1990-2000 | 7% |

Average Annual Increase in Housing Units 1950-1999

| | |
|-----------|----|
| 1950-1979 | 65 |
| 1980-1989 | 34 |
| 1990-1999 | 24 |

Source: US Census, 1990, 2000

Norwell's housing is overwhelmingly owner-occupied at 90%, compared to the statewide average of 62%. The 259 renter-occupied units estimated in the 2000 census include a handful of small apartments and mobile homes, but most are found in the stock of single family homes and the few two- and three-family houses. The largest rental property is the Norwell Housing Authority's 96 apartments for seniors and disabled persons, accounting for 37 percent of all the rental units reported in the census. Many of the other rentals undoubtedly include homes being rented for brief periods while their owners are away. The median gross rent reported by the census was \$619 a month, but this was based on a sample in which nearly two-fifths of the units are subsidized.

Approximately a quarter of Norwell's housing units were built before 1950. Another 64 percent of the total was built in the next thirty years, from 1950 to 1979, when 1,973 housing units were built at an average rate of 65 per year. Residential development declined during the 1980s to an annual rate of 34 (a total of 343 units were added during the entire decade). In the 1990s, 239 housing units were added to Norwell's inventory, slowing the annual rate to 24. However, in recent years, the annual number of permits for new homes has returned to about 35-40, about one percent of the total housing units counted in the 2000 census. Building

| Norwell Single Family Building Permits | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Year | Number | Average Building Value |
| 1995 | 31 | \$186,428 |
| 1996 | 38 | \$199,974 |
| 1997 | 37 | \$207,581 |
| 1998 | 29 | \$230,097 |
| 1999 | 37 | \$276,059 |
| 2000 | 62 (all bldg types) | \$156,730 |
| 2001 | 35 | \$250,142 |
| 2002 | 57 (one 2-family permit) | \$245,605 |

Source: MISER/Mass State Data Center

permit numbers are shown in the table. Only in 2000, when over-55 condo units were permitted and in 2002, when a two-family was permitted, were any housing units other than single family homes permitted in Norwell. Typically, about half of the houses are built on frontage lots on existing roads as "Approval Not Required" projects. Most Norwell subdivisions are small, with two to five lots. A large subdivision by Norwell standards would be the 18-lot Simon Hill Estates development. In recent years, the proposed developments with a larger number of units tend to be Chapter 40B projects. Although the average annual growth in homes is less than in the early decades of postwar suburban expansion, residents are sensitive to the growth because the scarce remaining open space is more precious.

E. HOUSING PRICES

Compared to the houses built a generation ago during Norwell's first phase of suburbanization, many of the new and renovated houses in Norwell today are very large. Single family houses built in 2000-01 averaged about 3,500 square feet of living area. This is about 60% larger than the average in the 1970s, the peak years for new home construction in Norwell, and more than twice the size of homes built in the 1950s.

| Decade | Number of Houses Built | Average Living Area (Sq.Ft.) | % Increase in Size | Increase in Size from 1970's Average |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1950s | 579 | 1,571 | - | - |
| 1960s | 625 | 1,868 | 19% | - |
| 1970s | 638 | 2,177 | 17% | - |
| 1980s | 323 | 2,818 | 29% | 29% |
| 1990s | 303 | 3,378 | 20% | 55% |
| 2000s | 70 | 3,530 | 5% | 62% |

Source: Norwell 2001 Assessor's Data

| Year | Single Family Sales | Median SF Price | Condo Sales | Median Condo Price |
|-------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 2002 | 138 | \$451,200 | 20 | \$474,500 |
| 2001 | 143 | \$394,900 | 24 | \$408,017 |
| 2000 | 124 | \$342,475 | 19 | \$209,000 |
| 1999 | 162 | \$316,000 | 7 | \$220,000 |
| 1998 | 138 | \$242,250 | 4 | \$282,500 |
| 1997 | 117 | \$256,000 | 4 | \$186,875 |
| 1996 | 117 | \$225,000 | 2 | 0 |
| 1995 | 106 | \$219,100 | 2 | 0 |
| 1994 | 122 | \$201,250 | 9 | \$55,000 |
| 1993 | 178 | \$194,000 | 9 | \$84,000 |
| 1992 | 113 | \$185,900 | 7 | \$134,904 |
| 1991 | 92 | \$212,500 | 1 | 0 |
| 1990 | 59 | \$19,800 | 4 | \$579,000 |
| 1989 | 72 | \$229,000 | 10 | \$193,607 |
| 1988 | 102 | \$217,500 | 3 | |

Source: The Warren Group

F. EXISTING AND POTENTIAL AFFORDABLE UNITS

Only 2.94% of Norwell's housing units (97) are currently counted as affordable according to the state's definition under Chapter 40B in the most recent inventory, dated April 2002. This

affordable housing inventory is based on census year 2000 units. Since 2000, Norwell has added 19 ownership affordable condominium units. Eleven units, out of a project total of 44 units, are in the Jacobs Pond Estates Chapter 40B project. These affordable units were sold at \$95,000, less than half the market value of \$219,000 - \$259,000. The Silver Brook Farm Chapter 40B subdivision provides 8 affordable condominium units within a 30-unit project. The affordable units are priced at \$136,000 with similar market value units at \$489,000 - \$525,000. A lottery system for qualified buyers was administered by the Housing Authority. As required, the affordability of the units created by Chapter 40B is guaranteed by deed restrictions.

G. DEMAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Vacancy rates in Norwell reveal an extremely tight housing market. In 2000, the census estimated that only 0.6 per cent of Norwell's owner-occupied units, and 4 per cent of the rental units, were vacant. The escalation of property values has increased the wealth of those who bought before the price run-up, but many residents of Norwell would not be able to purchase their homes today. Some long-time residents, particularly seniors living on fixed incomes, may even find themselves "land-poor" as they struggle to pay the taxes on greatly appreciated property. Entry-level Norwell town employees could have a difficult time entering the local housing market without two incomes in the household

Based on an adjusted Norwell median family income of \$96,355 in 2001, a recent study found that the median family in town would qualify to buy a house for \$341,093 at 2001 interest rates. Although the financial assumptions used in this study might be very conservative, the main point of the study is still valid: a substantial number of current Norwell residents would find it hard to enter the Norwell housing market today, as indeed is true in many areas. Young people who grew up in Norwell may be unable to raise even a 5% down payment to purchase their first homes in the town without having a base of equity in other property.

Norwell housing is also expensive for new town employees with no other sources of income. The average full-time town employee salary is approximately \$42,000 a year. According to the Norwell School Department, the lowest starting salary for a teacher was \$36,148 in the 2002-2003 school year. However, Norwell town employees in two-income households would generally have incomes too high to qualify for subsidized affordable housing.

H. DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

Environmental constraints. Over a quarter of Norwell's area is composed of water and wetlands. With a topography that ranges from rugged hilltops to tidal flats, Norwell has a great diversity of wetland types, from salt marshes and wooded swamps to natural and cranberry bogs. Both streams and wetlands are distributed evenly across the landscape and throughout town, with the largest percentage within the First, Second and Third Herring Brook watersheds and along

the North River into which they ultimately flow. A series of large wooded swamps in the northwest part of town form the slow-draining headwaters of these three stream systems. Drainage problems are pervasive throughout town and any development must successfully resolve drainage issues. The Town has a Permanent Drainage Committee, which has identified public drainage projects town wide and established regulations regarding drainage calculation methodologies and design standards. The draft Master Plan recommends conservation easements and/or management agreements for upland buffers to wetlands in order to protect wetland ecological functions.

Protected Land. Almost 19 percent of Norwell's land area is permanently protected, including part of Wompatuck State Park and land owned by the Nature Conservancy, the Trustees of Reservations, Mass Audubon, the Conservation Commission and Norwell Water Department, and other entities. These permanently protected lands overlap with the large areas of wetland in town.

Public Water Supply. Norwell is served by a municipal water supply system. The system, with eleven groundwater wells, has over 3,200 customers who use an average of 1 million gallons of water per day. In total the system pumps approximately 337,000,000 gallons per year, with peak demand coming in June, when an average of 2 million gallons of water were pumped each year over the last two years. The town has a permit from the MADEP to pump a maximum of 1.35 million gallons per day from the Boston Harbor and South Coastal Aquifers. The town recently developed well eleven, a new 800-gallon/minute-water source and purchased 275 acres to create Well Eleven's well field, its associated buffer zone and the contiguous tract of land for the new service line

Because the town's wells are located in relatively shallow aquifers, they are more susceptible to contamination. Nitrates have been found in the town's water, indicating areas of failed septic systems or fertilizer runoff. The town has mapped its wells and associated wellhead protection areas and established an Aquifer Protection overlay district ordinance that restricts uses over Zone 2 and Zone 3 of the aquifer.

A recent study found that the Weir River Watershed was taxed as a water supply source and an aquatic habitat. The town of Norwell has four wells, which draw from this watershed. The Weir River is under pressure to provide adequate drinking and aquatic water supply. Norwell is currently withdrawing less than its permitted volume from this sub-basin. However, the lack of conservation or improvement in the water recovery efforts of other users could have an adverse impact on Norwell's ability to use the Weir River watershed as a water supply.

Future Water Supply. The recent Water System Master Plan completed in 2002 states that current sources are inadequate to meet present and projected demands through 2020. Major recommendations include development of Well No. 11 (completed); water audit and conservation programs; and identification of new water supplies and development of wells and

pumping stations. The population projections used by the Plan are higher than those by state and regional agencies and do not take into account development capacity or population characteristics. They are based on a linear projection of an average of 35 new connections per year between 1982 and 2000 and an average household size slightly higher than in the 2000 Census data. They may therefore somewhat overstate future demand. The Plan also recommended distribution system improvements and details a set of preventive maintenance, routine maintenance, and water conservation programs.

Wastewater Issues. The prevalence of wetlands and proximity to water supply sources makes siting and design of septic systems in Norwell critically important. Many Norwell septic systems were found to be failing in 1995 when Title V regulations were implemented. However, changing technologies and the use of local communal septic systems may make previously undevelopable lands open for development.

Norwell has historically had an abundance of poor draining soil. There were problems with failed septic systems and percolation tests in the 1960s, long before the state became concerned with the issue. Prior to the 1995 Title V septic system regulations, Norwell had more stringent regulations than the new state standards, generally requiring separate leaching fields for laundry and other waste. Much of Norwell's land area is either unbuildable due to poor soil or wetlands, or due to proximity to aquifer protection zones. During the 1960s and 1970s also, Norwell was still building its town water system. Another factor contributing to the town's growth pattern is that it has relatively little commercial exposure along Route 53 and a conveniently located area of town just off Route 3, which enabled the town to designate an industrial zone, which added substantially to Norwell's tax base without the attendant traffic, congestion, and demand for services attendant to large scale retail commercial growth. All of these factors have contributed to Norwell's relatively stable growth.

Land Use Regulation. In addition to its two residential zoning districts and three business districts, Norwell has five overlay districts – for salt marsh protection; floodplain, watershed and wetlands protection; wireless facilities; aquifer protection; and village-style (cluster) development for people 55 or over. All districts have a one-acre minimum lot size. The base zoning for the residential districts permits only single family homes, with two exceptions: 1) conversion to two-family dwellings of houses in existence before the 1952 adoption of the bylaw; and 2) accessory dwellings occupied by relatives by blood, marriage or adoption or by persons 60 years old or more. A special permit from the Board of Appeals is required for occupation of the accessory housing unit.

The town's cluster overlay district (VOD or Village Overlay District) was created as part of a limited development strategy to preserve important open space parcels known as the Donovan Fields. The by-law requires a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting to include land in a VOD, 40 contiguous upland acres, and one acre of upland for each dwelling unit. The only form of

development allowed is a Village Residence Development with over-55 housing by Special Permit of the Planning Board.

Development capacity. The state's build out analysis estimated that 2,395 dwelling units could be added under existing zoning. This estimate was completed without benefit of parcel data. Using assessor's and map data, the Master Plan consultants estimated approximately 1,794 potential building sites. Most of these however, would be on lands currently classified only as potentially developable or through subdivision of parcels that already have a house on them. The real total development capacity under current zoning is considerably lower and probably nearer to 1,000. Although Norwell's development capacity is limited, creation of affordable units on a clustered or multi-unit structure model is possible.

School Population and Capacity. Like all family-oriented communities, Norwell is experiencing the consequences of the "baby boom echo" as the children of the baby boom generation go through their school years. Almost all children attend the public schools. Norwell's school enrollments peaked in the 1970s during the first baby boom and then declined to their lowest levels in 1992. Since then enrollments have been rising and are expected to peak again in 2006 or 2007, before the small "baby bust" generation enters its childbearing years. As long as Norwell's general demographic composition remains more or less the same, another cycle of rising enrollments is anticipated to peak a generation from now in about 2030.

The Town is completing a \$54 million school construction and renovation program for the first time in 25 years. With the completion of this program there will be four school buildings (two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school) with a total enrollment capacity of 2,290 students. Enrollment in 2002-2003 was 2,020, leaving space for another 270 students.

II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

760 CMR 31.07(I) 2. The affordable housing plan shall address the matters set out in guidelines adopted by the Department, including:

- a. a mix of housing, such as rental and home ownership opportunities for families, individuals, persons with special needs, and the elderly that are consistent with local and regional needs and feasible within the housing market in which they will be situated;***
- b. the strategy by which the municipality will achieve its housing goals established by its comprehensive needs assessment; and***
- c. a description of the use restrictions which will be imposed on low or moderate income housing units to ensure that each unit will remain affordable long term to and occupied by low or moderate income households.***

A. HOUSING MIX:

Goals: To identify and address specific housing needs of the Town of Norwell. To formulate a plan to create more affordable housing in Norwell within the intent of the

Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law, G.L. c. 40B s. 20- 23. To plan for this housing in a manner consistent with Norwell's long-term objectives. To develop a plan to provide for this housing in a manner which will accommodate the needs of residents of Norwell and the local area and also preserve the character of the Town. To identify wetland areas, aquifers, watersheds, flood plains and other conservation areas. To have the town acquire identified conservation areas where development might most severely endanger the environment but might not be protected from development by state statute or regulation. To support affordable housing developments which are 100% genuine affordable homes, both ownership and rental developments. To try to protect some of the existing low and moderate income households from being forced out of their homes, and preserve some of the existing stock of affordable housing by including these homes in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development inventory of affordable housing. To identify present or future Town owned parcels of land, which might be suitable for creation of subsidized affordable housing. Solicit Requests for Proposals to build affordable housing on land owned by the town or to be acquired by the town. Build the projected number of units or have them built over a 7 to 10 year span as needed.

Rental vs. ownership opportunities. Other than the subsidized housing units owned by the Norwell Housing Authority, rental opportunities in Norwell are few. The 40B projects in Norwell to date have all been private condominium developments, 25% qualified affordable, and all ownership. This type of affordable unit targets the first time home buyer of moderate income. The existing rental units in town, by contrast, are run by the Norwell Housing Authority and target lower income households. Often these people have incomes as little as the SSI minimum, and for them, subsidized rental is a necessity.

One way to meet 40B requirements is to allow rental units, because then even the market rate units would qualify for the housing inventory by DHCD guidelines. Having rental units owned and operated by a non-profit agency, such as the Norwell Housing Authority, or a newly created separate entity or subsidiary, could provide for fully subsidized, qualified, low income rentals and market rate rentals, balanced to provide for self-sufficiency. This would enable the Norwell Housing Authority or similar agency to maintain rental complex with enough market and near-market rate units to insure a self-sustaining entity with financial stability.

To proscribe a mixture ratio at this time would be counter-productive: The mixture of market v. subsidized rates will be determined by expenses, with a goal to provide as much low and moderate income housing as the projects can support. The mixture of size of units will be determined based on site location, market demand, and the Request for Proposals.

Feasibility In a nutshell, in Norwell, anything listed sells and anything rented rents. It is axiomatic that if sales and the few rentals in Norwell at market rates go quickly, then any subsidized bargains will go even more quickly. There are also waiting lists and lotteries on the

few affordable units, which have come on the market recently at Silver Brook and Jacob Estates.

B. PLAN TO ADDRESS HOUSING NEED/DEMAND

Environment: Norwell needs to ensure that any developments, Comprehensive Permits or otherwise, do not endanger the environment, wetland areas, aquifers, watersheds, flood plains, and other conservation areas. The comprehensive permit process allows developers to avoid town regulations and ordinances; it does not allow developers to bypass state laws and regulations. The Wetlands Protection Act and Title V must still be complied with. Thus, the Town Board of Health and the Conservation Commission retain active roles in the oversight process. Norwell's situation is unique with regard to its shallow aquifer and poorly draining soil. Development on unsuitable or problematic land will benefit no one in the long run.

Genuine 100% Affordable Projects: Norwell will accept proposals for 100% qualified affordable Housing development only, either as 100% affordable ownership units or as rental projects. The Town will look for projects owned and operated by genuine non-profit organizations, whose goal is to provide as much assistance for low and moderate-income people as the finances will allow. To that end, Norwell will provide town owned land and request proposals for build-out over a 7 to 10 year period as required of approximately 230 qualified units.

Local Initiative Units: Grant tax or other incentives for deed restrictions to qualify existing homes for inclusion in the DHCD list of Affordable Housing. Norwell will use the LIU Program to enable existing homes and land-poor residents to stay. Most of the focus on affordable housing has been on building new housing stock, which is not the only way to achieve the goal of creating affordable housing options. Also as noted previously, more than 10% of Norwell's single-family housing stock is valued within the range of affordable homes, but without certification or qualification. This program can be used also to preserve some of the older and smaller native Norwell homes which might otherwise be retrofitted or torn down and rebuilt into substantially different and more expensive homes, or where existing owners might be forced to move out of town. As such, this program is also consistent with principles underlying the SMART growth criteria, namely reuse and retrofit of existing structures where possible. It should also be noted that conversion/retrofit of older homes is almost always cheaper than new construction, which is a factor where money is limited and where maximum increase in housing for the dollar is desired.

This program will be on a voluntary basis. Determination of qualification can be made by the Norwell Housing Authority. The program will assist these homeowners in upgrading their homes to meet the Massachusetts Building and Sanitary Codes. The program will also exempt these owners from property taxes for the duration of the eligibility. In return, the homeowners will deed-restrict their homes for a minimum of 15 years, during which time, the homes can only

be sold to qualified buyers at qualified prices.

It is unknown how many people will desire and qualify for this program. However, this option will be presented to existing Norwell residents first, in part out of fairness to them and in part to determine the extent of interest in the program. Accordingly, the Norwell Housing Authority will commence a solicitation and screening process as soon as possible, in order to determine the extent of interest. Solicitation by the town for grant or Community Preservation Act funding can start when the cost has been established.

A Local Initiative Program Application will be sent to the Department of Housing and community Development (DHCD) for approval. The Program will need approval at Town Meeting. DHCD approval is anticipated.

Identify town owned land or land suitable for purchase with CPA funds for construction of qualified low and moderate-income housing.

Solicit Proposals. The town will send out RFPs for design/build projects meeting the above criteria to be phased at between 27 and 30 units per year.

C. DESCRIPTION OF USE RESTRICTIONS

Duration: Ensure that all Comprehensive Permits be permanently deed restricted, with the exception of the voluntary conversion units under the LIU program.

III. OTHER GUIDELINES

760 CMR 37.01(I) 3. *The affordable housing plan shall address one or more of the following, but shall not be limited to:*

a. the identification of zoning districts or geographic areas which permit residential uses which the municipality proposes to modify for the purposes of low and moderate income housing developments;

b. the identification of specific sites for which the municipality will encourage the filing of comprehensive permit applications pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40B, section 21;

c. characteristics of proposed developments that would be preferred by the municipality (examples might include cluster developments, adaptive re-use, transit-oriented housing, mixed-use development, inclusionary housing, etc.) or

d. municipally owned parcels for which the municipality commits to issue requests for proposals to develop low or moderate-income housing.

A. ZONING CHANGES:

As 40B provides for exemption from local zoning and planning regulations, there is no need for a re-zoning to accomplish the goal of affordable housing.

Moreover, as we seek only genuine affordable housing projects, to create a high density zone would result either in allowing development of private market high density housing, which would do nothing for affordable housing and is contrary to the spirit of Norwell or in creating a “low rent district”, which would be contrary to the spirit of blending in the community

and contrary to long-standing HUD policy.

B. SPECIFIC SITES

Town owned parcels As noted above, the town will seek to identify any parcels it may own or can acquire which would be suitable for affordable housing development.

C. PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS

The town should work to maximize affordable housing opportunities under Ch. 40B. Accordingly, as noted above, we will entertain only genuine 100% affordable housing projects, either as 100% affordable moderate income ownership units or as apartment complex managed by the Norwell Housing Authority or other non-profit agency.

To the extent possible, Norwell would like to preserve the character and feel of the community. Thus, any proposal for affordable housing which can help preserve Norwell's rural character would be favored, including cluster development with adjacent open space.

D. MUNICIPALLY OWNED PROPERTY.

See Town owned parcels above.

IV. APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

760 CMR 37.01(1) 4. Within 90 days after its submission to the Department by a municipality's chief elected official, the Department shall approve the plan if it meets the requirements specified herein, otherwise, it shall disapprove the plan.

The Town of Norwell requests that this plan be approved as soon as possible so that it can start implementation immediately.

Signed by the Selectmen of the Town of Norwell