

Community Housing Trust Annual Report 2020

The Community Housing Trust (“CHT”) is the 7-member Town committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen to address a range of community housing needs in the Town of Norwell. CHT funds are primarily sourced from the Community Preservation Act as voted by Town Meeting. The CHT uses these funds to acquire, create, preserve, and support housing that is affordable throughout Town in a manner consistent with the Town’s interests as articulated in the Housing Production Plan (*updated: December 2019*) and Town Master Plan (*2005; update in process*).

Core activities during FY2020 included:

- **COVID-19:** The CHT was responsive to COVID-19 and its impact on our most vulnerable residents. The Trust quickly mobilized to work with community partners to educate residents on available state resources for rent/mortgage assistance.
- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING MONITORING AGENT:** The CHT continues to act as the Town’s Affordable Housing monitoring agent, handling affordable properties inquiries, as well as monitoring sales of existing affordable units, communicating with the owners about improvements, refinances and potential sales, and monitoring the property to ensure it is within the requirements of the affordable deed rider. Due to the subject matter expertise required to fulfill this responsibility, the CHT engaged *LDS Consulting Group, LLC* to advise the CHT in its capacity as monitoring agent. The CHT oversaw 1 affordable home sales, which included updating the affordable housing deed riders. The CHT also entered into a P&S at the end of 2020 to purchase a 3-bedroom unit in order to preserve the ongoing affordability. The CHT will address deferred maintenance and safety concerns at the home before selling the unit to a qualified buyer.
- **DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:** As indicated in Norwell’s 2005 Master Plan, “by establishing a proactive affordable housing policy, Norwell can shape affordable housing to fit its own needs for more diversity in housing types and affordability, while still complementing the town’s traditional development patterns and meeting state goals”. The CHT has been focused on the development of small scale housing concepts throughout town that is harmonious with the character of the existing community.
 - **CARLETON:** The CHT collaborated with the Carleton Committee highlighting the results of the December 2019 Housing Production Plan, which led to a subsequent article at Town Meeting to designate an 8.3-acre parcel for potential affordable housing. The article received a majority of votes but not the required 2/3 and did not pass. The CHT was charged to work on a preliminary concept for the Town to reconsider at the 2021 Town Meeting. The CHT began efforts immediately by engaging third parties (*Merrill Engineering & Strelakovsky Architecture Inc.*) to conduct site feasibility and design concepts.
 - **WILDCAT:** Efforts on the preliminary design of and preparation of a Request For Proposals for development on a 6 acre parcel on Wildcat Lane were stalled as a result of the Carleton efforts discussed above; the CHT will reengage its efforts in early 2021. The concept has been presented to the Select Board and is a core near term goal of the Housing Production Plan.
- **SENIOR SMALL GRANT PROGRAM:** The CHT continued to administer the Norwell Senior Small Grant Program providing grants for health and safety improvements. Since the program has been introduced, the Community Housing Trust has provided 19 grants totaling \$32,221.00 including \$3975.00 funded in FY2020.

- **SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY (“SHI”)**: The CHT continues to monitor progress towards the 10% SHI state mandate. Norwell ended 2020 at 4.9% with a total of 180 SHI units. Currently, the 2010 Census Data is used (3,652 year-round housing units) to calculate the percentage, but the 2020 Census Data (expected in Spring 2021) will be used. Based off of town data, Norwell’s year-round housing unit count has increased to 4006 and therefore, pending 2020 Census Data, the number of SHI units required to reach the 10% minimum will likely increase to 401. One year of safe harbor will now require a 20 unit addition to the SHI, up from the 18 units previously required.
- **OTHER INITIATIVES:**
 - Stay informed on 40B initiatives in Town.
 - Promote community engagement and informational opportunities to educate the community on the housing needs of our community.

Schedule

The Community Housing Trust meets once or twice per month or as needed. Meetings are open to the public. Please check the Town website for specific meeting dates and times.

Respectfully submitted,

Community Housing Trust

Gregg McBride, Chair
Elizabeth Hibbard, Vice Chair
Ellen Allen, Selectman Representative
Robert Charest
Cara Hamilton
Peter Shea
Leanne Walt

Kristin Ford, Administrator