



CITY OF EASTHAMPTON

Office of Mayor Nicole LaChapelle

August 22, 2022

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMUNITY HOUSING ADVOCATES AND MAYOR URGE CITY COUNCIL TO RELEASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

EASTHAMPTON, MA - Advocacy groups, residents, and the Mayor implored the City Council Property Committee to release the Request For Proposal (RFP) for the re-use of three elementary schools during their August 17, 2022 meeting. The groups also submitted a resolution reiterating its historical commitment to Affordable Housing to the City Council.

Throughout the meeting, advocates urged the City Council Property Committee to act swiftly in posting the RFP as there is demonstrated need for affordable housing in Hampshire County, specifically Easthampton. One advocate stated: “There are many people who’ve needed fair and affordable housing for a very long time, and Easthampton has designated filling this gap as a priority” through the school re-use RFP process.

After two years of public and City Council input, Affordable Housing was identified as the top priority, with the second priority being Community Connections. On page 29, the draft RFP scoring of bids rubric recognizes resident prioritized options.

A resident workgroup wrote the school building re-use draft RFP. The workgroup considered a dozen interactive public plans and input from state housing agencies to create the draft RFP. MassDevelopment granted the City \$200,000.00 for pre-development activities. The Planning Department shared updated timelines for the RFP release with the City Council and the Property Subcommittee over the last year.

Advocacy groups include the Easthampton Economic Development and Industry Council, the Affordable Housing Partnership, and the Eastamptton Housing Coalition. With the Mayor, advocates present a co-signed proclamation outlining the City Council of Easthampton’s long history of supporting Affordable Housing.

Easthampton Housing Coalition Coordinator and 24-year Easthampton resident Kiam Jamrog McQuaid emphasize, “I’m concerned by the lack of urgency shown by our elected officials surrounding the critical issue of housing. Our community is at risk of losing what makes it such an amazing place to live, and it does not feel like our city council sees this or is working quickly to stop more irreparable damage to the most vulnerable members of our community.

City of Easthampton



PROCLAMATION

Affirming City's Historic Actions For Affordable Housing

- Whereas:** *there is a shortage of housing at all levels and types throughout Easthampton and the region and there is critical need for safe, decent, and affordable housing for people with incomes below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) in Easthampton; and*
- Whereas:** *Easthampton was last successful in supporting the development of affordable housing in 2015 with the completion of 38 units at Parsons Village (40B) and 50 units at Cottage Square (40R); and*
- Whereas:** *the City now holds a Department of Housing and Community Development Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) as of April 22, 2022, of 6.9% of the 2010 Census of Year-Round Housing Units, representing 523 subsidized units; and*
- Whereas:** *several multi-member volunteer bodies such as the Affordable and Fair Housing Partnership, Easthampton Housing Coalition, the Community Preservation Act Committee, and the Planning Department are working with State agencies to leverage state programs to encourage and remove barriers to Affordable Housing in Easthampton; and*
- Whereas:** *beginning in 2018, the City has updated essential plans that address housing and affordability, including its Housing Production Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Downtown Strategic Plan, Arts and Culture Vision Plan, Local Rapid Recovery Plan; and*
- Whereas:** *in 2018, the Mayor tasked the Planning Department with a publicly driven Downtown Strategic Plan and in 2020 with a Housing Needs and Production Plan to guide the city decisions about housing, and the completed plans detail community needs and desires with data points on how best to and when and where to create housing; and*
- Whereas:** *since 2018, the City has made its first DIF District and approved its first tax incentive to support the creation of up to 150 units at 1 Ferry Street; and*
- Whereas:** *in 2020 and 2021 the Easthampton Zoning Ordinances were amended to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) with a building permit, to enable developments with 15% affordable housing by-right and to create a new 40R subdistrict on Northampton Street, all intended to reduce the barriers to the creation of new housing units; and*
- Whereas:** *in 2020 the Mayor tasked the Planning Department to utilize CPA funds to explore and evaluate sites suitable for the creation of Affordable Housing; and*

Whereas: *in 2021 the Affordable & Fair Housing Partnership was approved by CHAPA’s Municipal Engagement initiative to receive technical assistance to create a broad coalition of City residents and leaders to support affordable housing; and*

Whereas: *in 2021 the Mayor established an elementary school reuse committee supported by the Planning Department and a \$21,000 EEA Planning Assistance Grant to prepare a draft RFP for the reuse of the City’s three elementary schools based on the data collected from public input associated with the 2018 Downtown Strategic Plan and 2020 Housing Production Plan and which identifies the pursuit of affordable housing as the most beneficial use of the schools; and*

Whereas: *in May 2022 a resident-composed school reuse committee submitted to City Council a draft RFP for the elementary schools for Council consideration; and*

Whereas: *the time is now, given the well-thought-out, publicly inclusive process, to work with local, regional, state, and federal agencies to bring affordable housing units to Easthampton ASAP; and*

Now therefore be it resolved: *that the Mayor determines the current efforts to preserve existing affordable housing and add new affordable housing must be redoubled and asks staff, boards, committees, and the community to continue to identify opportunities to achieve that goal; and*

Further be it resolved: *that the City Council pursue all opportunities to preserve and increase affordable housing opportunities in Easthampton when responsible and possible; and*

Further be it resolved: *that the City aggressively explores the creation of affordable housing opportunities via the disposition of surplus and tax-title properties, housing feasibility studies, public outreach, capital planning, economic development, tax incentives, ordinance amendments, and grants to nonprofit affordable housing developers to create more inclusive neighborhoods and increase housing supply regardless of City address.*

Therefore: *I, Nicole LaChapelle, Mayor of Easthampton, do hereby proclaim:*

Easthampton’s Historic Commitment to Affordable Housing

in the City of Easthampton, Massachusetts

DocuSigned by:
Nicole LaChapelle
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Nicole LaChapelle
Mayor of Easthampton

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Affordable & Fair Housing

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Kiam Jamrog-McQuaid
Easthampton Housing Coalition