

Town of Ashland

Community Preservation Act Committee

June 2003



MISSION STATEMENT

Working within the legalities and spirit of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act, the Committee shall recommend funds for qualified projects that preserve, promote and protect historic properties, affordable housing, and open space and recreation, recognizing the needs of the Ashland community.

I. Introduction

The Community Preservation Act, “CPA”, MGL Chapter 44B, which has been adopted by the Town of Ashland, is statewide enabling legislation allowing cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to adopt a property tax surcharge which, along with state matching funds, will be used for open space preservation, creation of community housing, preservation of historic buildings and landscapes, and creation of recreation opportunities.

Consistent with the requirements of the CPA, the Community Preservation Act Committee (“CPAC”) was formed to study the needs, possibilities and resources of the town regarding community preservation. The CPAC includes representatives of the town’s Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Open Space Committee, Affordable Housing, and citizen members appointed by the Selectmen.

The CPAC meets to discuss its role as a facilitator for community preservation in Ashland and strives to:

- Be a catalyst for projects
- Be a funding source, not a developer
- Utilize community goals previously set forth in other public documents that have received wide scrutiny and public input
- Attempt to meet multiple community preservation goals in each project
- Communicate its mission and goals to the general public

Ashland’s Commitment to Community Preservation

For quite some time the residents of Ashland have been concerned with erosion of the town’s historic and rural character. It is crucial to look ahead, trying to preserve the community’s past, present, and look towards the future, both through actions and words.

II. Goals, Needs and Proposed Projects

The basic goals of the Ashland CPAC are personified in the goals and objectives of the town’s Master Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Affordable Housing, and Historic needs. It is important that in recommending to Town Meeting the award of Community Preservation Act funding, the Community Preservation Act Committee will give preference to projects that address more than one area.

Open Space

Overview

Ashland needs a variety of open space resources distributed throughout town.

Ashland's Open Space Goals

Goal: Protect and preserve critical natural resources and wildlife habitat

- (1) Identify critical parcels of land for municipal purchase or other methods of permanent protection from residential or commercial development
- (2) Establish and maintain lines of communication with landowners to take advantage of opportunities to acquire and/or preserve property
- (3) Support town acquisition of open space based on identified priorities, and
- (4) Explore means and costs of purchasing development rights and other options for funding open space preservation

Goal: Protect and maintain surface and groundwater quality and quantity

Goal: Preserve, enhance and connect, where feasible, large parcels currently in agriculture, open space and recreational use, and other undisturbed natural areas.

Goal: Prioritize areas of critical concern and develop a process to purchase land for preservation or other sustainable land uses

Goal: Develop sustainable land uses on town-owned and private properties, such as eco-tourism

Goal: Create trail linkages including new trails, bike paths, walkways and greenways

Specific Criteria for Open Space Projects

Open space proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Permanently protect important wildlife habitat, including areas that
 - are of local significance for biodiversity
 - contain a variety of habitats, with a diversity of geologic features and types of vegetation
 - contain a habitat type that is in danger of vanishing from Ashland
 - preserve habitat for threatened or endangered species of plants or animals
- Preserve Ashland's existing rural and agricultural character
- Provide opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education
- Protect or enhance wildlife corridors, promote connectivity of habitat or prevent fragmentation of habitats
- Provide connections with existing open space and offer potential trail linkages
- Preserve scenic views
- Border a scenic road
- Protect drinking water quantity and quality
- Provide flood control/storage
- Preserve important surface water bodies, including wetlands, vernal pools or riparian zones
- Preserve priority parcels in the Open Space and Recreation Plan

Recreation

Overview

Ashland has a long tradition of offering diversified active and passive recreational opportunities. These activities are organized and supported by a variety of town departments and groups including the Recreation Commission, the School Department, citizen-run sports leagues, the Open Space Committee, and the Council on Aging.

Funding through the CPA is limited to the “acquisition, preservation, and creation of land for recreational use.” Outdoor recreational activities are generally classified as “active” or “passive” and the type of land needed for each is different. Under the CPA, recreational purposes are defined as “active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field.” Land cannot be used for “a stadium, gymnasium, or similar structure.”

Ashland’s Recreational Goals

Goal: Provide increased utilization of current town-owned recreational lands and facilities

Goal: Acquisition of land to fulfill identified current and future recreational needs

Goal: Support a diversity of recreational programs, both active and passive

Goal: Offer a range of recreational opportunities to all residents, regardless of age, gender or disability

Specific Criteria for Recreation Projects

Recreation proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Support multiple recreation uses
- Serve a significant number of residents
- Expand the range of recreational opportunities available to Ashland residents of all ages
- Jointly benefit Open Space Committee and Recreation Commission initiatives by promoting passive recreation, such as hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, on town owned or leased property
- Maximize the utility of land already owned by Ashland (e.g. school property, Stone Park, etc.)
- Promote the creative use of railway and other corridors to create safe and healthful non-motorized transportation opportunities

Historic Preservation

Overview

Respect for the past is demonstrated in Ashland in areas where the look and feel of a small New England town has been preserved. Residents treasure the open space, stonewalls, and beautiful older homes that grace the scenic roadways. An active Historical Commission and Historic Society work to enhance preservation efforts.

- Ashland currently has no registered historical sites to date.

Ashland's Historic Preservation Goals

Goal: Preserve and Maintain Ashland's historic landmarks and potential historic districts.

Goal: Maintain the community's traditional, historic character.

Goal: Restore & Enhance the buildings and property in the Town Center for increased public awareness and usage.

Specific Criteria for Historic Projects

Historical proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate historic, cultural, architectural or archaeological resources of significance, especially those that are threatened
- Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate town-owned properties, features or resources of historical significance
- Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate the historical function of a property or site
- Project demonstrates a public benefit
- Project demonstrates the ability to provide permanent protection for maintaining the historic resource

Affordable / Community Housing

Overview

For quite some time, concern was expressed that Ashland's housing stock was becoming more and more homogeneous due not to an overt plan but to the very nature of the zoning bylaws and the natural pressures of the housing market. Amendments are needed to the zoning bylaw encouraging more moderate priced housing, such as Incentive Senior Development and Accessory Apartment bylaws, to help provide sufficient incentive for builders to choose such developments over conventional single family subdivisions. Other efforts to encourage diversity, such as adoption of inclusionary zoning bylaws which require the construction of affordable housing within new subdivisions, should be developed to gain Town Meeting approval. Older residents, less affluent families and single people are being shut out of Ashland's housing market due to a lack of housing to fit different lifestyles.

State housing policy sets a goal of 10% affordable housing for municipalities throughout the state. We are currently at 3.7 % of the total housing stock certified as affordable. Ashland, with its concentration of single-family housing, condominiums and escalating land values, has a long way to go in providing the kind of diversity called for by the state and desired by the town.

Affordable Housing Units as certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development, October 2001:

- Park Road (40 elderly/disabled)
- Ashland Commons (96 units, mixed)
- Ashland House (66 units, elderly)
- Independent Living (4 special needs)
- Sudbury Park (10 LIP Homeowner units)

Total affordable units: 216

Ashland's Housing Goals

Goal: Encourage greater diversity of housing opportunities in Ashland to meet the needs of a changing and diversified population with respect to age, household size and income

Goal: Evaluate the impact of "tear-downs" on the community and the housing stock

Goal: Expand affordable housing opportunities in both business and residential districts

Goal: Encourage affordable housing units, including comprehensive permits that recognize the community's needs and goals

Goal: Allow incentives for inclusion of affordable housing units in single-family subdivisions (Inclusionary Zoning)

Goal: Support initiatives to create a Housing Partnership or Community Development Corporation to secure funding for, construct and administer affordable housing

Specific Criteria for Community Housing projects

Community Housing proposals which address as many of the following criteria as possible will receive preference:

- Contribute to the goal of 10% affordability
- Promote a socioeconomic environment that encourages a diversity of income, ethnicity, religion and age
- Provide housing that is harmonious in design and scale with the surrounding community
- Intermingle affordable and market rate housing at levels that exceed state requirements for percentage of affordable units
- Ensure long-term affordability
- Promote use of existing buildings or construction on previously-developed or Town-owned sites
- Convert market rate to affordable units
- Give priority to local residents and Town employees

III. Project Eligibility and Funding

The Community Preservation Act Committee requires that all proposed projects be eligible for CPA funding according to the requirements described in the legislation. Funds collected under the CPA can only be spent for three main community preservation purposes – open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing. In addition, at least 10% of the funds received in any fiscal year must be spent or set aside for each of the three areas. The remaining 70% of each year's funds may be allocated to any one or a combination of the three main uses, including public recreational purposes. However, these funds cannot be spent on maintenance or used to supplement funds being used for existing community preservation purposes. In addition, up to 5% of the annual Community Preservation revenues can be spent on administrative and operating expenses of the CPAC.

The town anticipates significant state matching funds in the first several years of the program. The town may receive an 80-100% state match of its local receipts. While anticipated local revenues during the 5-year CPA period may be bonded to fund a large project, any bonding undertaken over the 5-year period shall require collection of the surcharge for the life of the bond. Town Meeting action would authorize such extension of the surcharge. All Community Preservation Act funding requests require the recommendation of the project by the CPAC to Town Meeting, and a majority vote of Town Meeting.

IV. General Criteria

The Ashland Community Preservation Act Committee will give preference to proposals that meet the following general criteria:

- Are eligible for CPA funding according to the requirements described in the CPA legislation
- Preserve the essential character of the town as described in the Master Plan
- Save resources that would otherwise be threatened and/or serve a currently under-served population
- Serve more than one CPA purpose (especially in linking open space, recreation and community housing) or demonstrate why serving multiple needs is not feasible
- Demonstrate practicality and feasibility, and demonstrate that they can be implemented expeditiously and within budget
- Produce an advantageous cost/benefit value
- Leverage additional public and/or private funds
- Preserve or utilize currently owned town assets
- Receive endorsement by other municipal boards or departments

Each community preservation project will also be judged based on the category specific criteria listed in each area.

For a copy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Preservation Act, please visit the following website:

www.environmentalleague.org/Issues/Preservation/CPA_final.html

V. Solicitation of Project Proposals

The Community Preservation Act Committee welcomes project proposals that may contribute to community preservation in Ashland. Forms and guidelines for submission attached.

Community Preservation Act Committee:

Gary Dischel
Marcel Froc
Steven Greenberg
Beth Rosenblum
Cheri Vallone
Scott Weiss
Robert Winterhalter

TOWN OF ASHLAND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE

PROJECT SUBMISSION FORM

Submitter: _____

Submission Date: _____

Group or Committee Affiliation (if any): _____

Submitter's address and phone number:

Purpose (please select all that apply):

- Open Space
- Affordable/Community Housing
- Historic
- Recreation

Submitters email address: _____

Project Name: _____

Project Description (attach additional pages if needed):

Costs:

Fiscal Year	Total Project Cost	CPA Funds Requested	Other Funding Sources (amount and source)
2005			
2006			
2007			
2008			
2009			
Total			

How does this project meet the General Criteria and Category Specific Criteria for CPA projects (see attached)? _____

For Community Preservation Act Committee Use:

Form Received on: _____ Project Presented to CPC on: _____

Reviewed by: _____ Determination: _____

TOWN OF ASHLAND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE

Guidelines for Project Submission

- 1) Each project request must be submitted to the Community Preservation Act Committee using the Project Submission Form as a cover sheet. Applications should be submitted in eleven (11) multiple copies for distribution to the CPAC members and Town officials.
- 2) Requests must include a statement of need and be documented with appropriate support information. The use of maps, visual aids and other supplemental information is encouraged.
- 3) Obtain quotes for project costs whenever possible. If not available, estimates may be used provided the basis of the estimate is fully explained.
- 4) If the request is part of a multi-year project, include the total project cost and allocations.
- 5) For applicants that have multiple project requests, please prioritize projects.
- 6) Requests must be received by _____ to be considered for recommendation at the _____ Town Meeting.
- 7) Applicants must be present at a CPAC meeting to answer questions. The CPAC meeting schedule to review project proposals is as follows:

Please keep in mind that there are legal limitations on the use of CPA funds. Additional information on the CPA and the Community Preservation Act Committee can be found at <http://www.communitypreservation.org/index.cfm>

If you are in doubt about your project's eligibility, after consulting these sources, you are encouraged to submit an application so that the Committee can determine eligibility.

Please submit the Project Submission Form and accompanying documentation to:

**Community Preservation Act Committee
Town Manager's Office
101 Main Street
Ashland, MA 01721**