

# Wrentham Community Preservation Plan



2023

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# Introduction

The Town of Wrentham Community Preservation Committee (“WCPC” or the “Committee”) is pleased to present the Town of Wrentham Community Preservation Plan (“the Plan”). This Plan describes the process for administering the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in the Town of Wrentham.

The Plan presents a description of the CPA as it applies to the Town, a definition of CPA goals, and procedures by which the CPA is administered. As such, it represents an informational document for the citizens of the Town, a guideline for applicants seeking project funding through the CPA, and blueprint for this and future CPA Committees in making recommendations to Town Meeting for project funding.

The Committee recognizes and encourages that the Plan be modified by future CPA Committees in response to changing goals and experience with the CPA over time.

For additional information on the CPA statute and how it is being applied in municipalities across the State, visit the Community Preservation Coalition website at [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org). For information on Wrentham’s Community Preservation activity, visit the Town website at <https://wrentham.ma.us>.

# The Community Preservation Act in Wrentham

## Establishment & Funding the Community Preservation Projects

The Community Preservation Act, M.G.L. c. 44B, (“the CPA”) allows Massachusetts cities and towns to raise monies through a surcharge, of up to 3% of the real estate tax levy, on real property.

In November, 2016 Wrentham passed the Community Preservation Act in a Town Election, and the following Spring the Wrentham Community Preservation Committee was formed.

Wrentham voted to enact a 1% surcharge on real estate property tax with an exclusion of the first \$100,000 of each taxable parcel of residential property. A taxpayer receiving a regular exemption or tax abatement would also receive a pro rata reduction in the surcharge.

At the state level the Community Preservation Trust is funded through a charge that is levied when deeds are registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That funding goes into the state entity to be disbursed later in the year, partially matching those funds that are raised locally. To date, the State has matched approximately 20% of those funds raised in Wrentham for the years the WCPC has been active, allowing the town to accomplish more than if it were to independently fund projects.

## Wrentham Community Preservation Committee

The WCPC was formed and shall consist of one representative from the following town bodies:

1. Board of Selectmen
2. Conservation Commission
3. Open Space Committee
4. Planning Board
5. Recreation Commission
6. Housing Authority
7. Historical Commission
8. At Large Member
9. At Large Member

The WCPC meets on a regular basis to oversee existing grants from the Community Preservation Fund, consider new applications and manage the goals of the WCPC to make sure they align with the overall goals of the community.

This Community Preservation Plan attempts to distill the goals from various town stakeholders into one reference document and sourced its information from Open Space and Recreation Plan, documents from the Historical Commission, and input from the Wrentham Housing Authority.

## Funding Projects in Wrentham

The CPA requires that communities spend, or set aside for future spending, a minimum of 10% of their annual CPA revenues for each of the three following categories: open space/recreation, historic preservation, and community housing. The remaining 70% of the funds are undesignated, and can be used for any allowable project in any of the CPA categories. Note that up to 5% of the annual fund revenue may be spent on administrative and operational areas. Community Preservation Funds may not be spent on uses other than are allowed by the Community Preservation Act, outlined above, and explained below.

A recommendation by the Committee and an appropriation by Town Meeting are both required to spend any Fund monies for particular community preservation purposes. Appropriations from the Fund, except in the cases of bonding under CPA, are made by a simple majority vote. Borrowing money for CPA purposes requires a two-thirds majority vote. Town Meeting may approve, reduce, or reject any amount of spending appropriation recommended by the Committee.

Town Meeting may not, however, increase any recommended appropriation. In addition, Town Meeting may not appropriate or reserve any fund monies on its own initiative, without a prior favorable recommendation by the Committee.

Currently, the Committee recommends a budget at the Annual Town Meeting (Spring), and then recommends projects for funding in a Special Town Meeting (Fall). If needed, a special request for funding may also occur at a Town Meeting other than the Special Town Meeting that usually takes place in the Fall.

The WCPC prefers to fund projects brought to it through town of Wrentham entities, or through an IRS section 501(c)(3) non-profit. The act of funding an entity and then making sure that the funds are properly disbursed for the project that was approved at Town Meeting is best achieved if the funds are funded through one of these two mechanisms. If you are applying for funding, and are not a part of one of these two entities, the WCPC may elect to disburse funds through one of these entities for the benefit of your project, if it is approved.

## Uses for Community Preservation Act Funds

The CPA requires that communities spend in four areas: Open Space, Recreation, Historic Preservation or Community Housing. Note the CPA laws consider Open Space and Recreation one funding category for the purposes of setting aside funds. CPA revenues at the budgeting step must set aside at least 10% into accounts for Open Space/Recreation, Historic and Community Housing. The remaining 70% of the funds are undesignated, and can be used for any allowable project in any of the CPA categories.

**Open Space** - CPA funds may be spent on the acquisition, creation, and preservation of open space, and for the rehabilitation or restoration of any open space that has been acquired or created using CPA funds. It is important to note that a permanent deed restriction is required for all real property interests acquired under CPA.

**Recreation** - CPA funds may be used for the acquisition of land to be used for recreation, or for the creation of new recreational facilities on land a community already owns. A 2012 amendment to CPA broadened the law to also allow for the rehabilitation of existing, outdoor recreational facilities. The amendment made it clear that with respect to land for recreational use, "rehabilitation" could include the replacement of playground

equipment and other capital improvements to the land or the facilities thereon to make them more functional for their intended recreational use.

Another change ushered in by the 2012 amendment was a prohibition on the use of CPA funds for the acquisition of artificial turf for athletic fields. Communities may still use their CPA funds for other aspects of a field project, but must appropriate non-CPA funds to acquire the artificial turf surface.

**Historic** - CPA funds may be spent on the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources. Communities using CPA funds on historic resources must adhere to the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

**Community Housing** - CPA funds may be spent on the acquisition, creation, preservation and support of community housing, and for the rehabilitation or restoration of community housing that has been acquired or created using CPA funds. The CPA requires that whenever possible, preference be given to the adaptive reuse of existing buildings or construction of new buildings on previously developed sites.

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**What CPA Funds CAN NOT do** - CPA funds must be used in an effort to perform the above types of projects. CPA Funds can not be used to pave parking lots at local schools, they can't be used to install sidewalks (in fact a court decided that a sidewalk is not a recreational trail and does not qualify), fill potholes, build a new town building at the DPW, build new classrooms at the schools, or fund new positions in town government like teachers, police or fire.

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The CPA is targeted at building our community through specific areas, and Wrentham has ample opportunity to invest in the community in these areas for the foreseeable future. Townspeople get to propose projects and townspeople ultimately decide what gets funded.

## Funding Process and Application Overview

The Committee has adopted a process for filing an application for funding consideration - it is a two-step application process.

The first step is an eligibility step that allows the requester to submit an overview of the project with limited information to the Committee. The Committee will then determine eligibility and if approved, will guide the requester to submit an application for funding.

The application for funding is a more detailed application and the requester may be asked to present the project to the Committee so that clarifications can be made and questions can be answered.

The Committee will vote on all projects under consideration and if passed by simple majority, those approved projects will be submitted to Town Meeting for approval by the residents.

## **Eligibility Criteria:**

Under the provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act [MGL Ch.44B, §5, ¶ b(2)], in order to be eligible for Community Preservation funding, the purpose of your project must be for at least one of the following:

- The acquisition, creation, or preservation of **open space**
- The acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration of **historic resources**
- The acquisition, creation, rehabilitation, or preservation of land for **recreational use**
- The acquisition, creation, preservation, or support of **community housing**
- The rehabilitation and restoration of open space or community housing that has been acquired or created using monies from the Community Preservation Fund.

## **General Criteria:**

The Community Preservation Committee will give preference to project proposals which best address the following general criteria:

- Receives endorsement from relevant Town boards or departments.
- Preserves and enhances the character of the town, as described in the Wrentham Community Preservation Plan and other relevant documents
- Addresses, as applicable, recommendations contained in the Wrentham Community Preservation Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Historical Commission's "Report of Preservation Needs Assessment", and is consistent with other current town-wide planning efforts that have received broad-based scrutiny and can demonstrate wide community support
- Saves resources that would otherwise be threatened
- **Additional Criteria:**
  - Demonstrates practicality and feasibility
  - Can be implemented expeditiously and within budget
  - Produces an advantageous cost/benefit value
  - Leverages additional public and/or private funds
  - Preserves or utilizes current Town-owned assets
  - Does not supplant or replace other previously appropriated municipal funding





# Historic Preservation

Wrentham Historical Commission was established on March 27, 1967 and is responsible for the stewardship and exhibition of Wrentham's history. To these ends, WHC maintains an archives of historical materials and artifacts, manages the circa 1740's Wampum House, and operates a plaque program to mark locations of historical significance in the Town. In 2010, WHC renovated the Old Fiske Museum, which was formerly the town library, to make it suitable for the storage of historical collections. Following the renovation, the Commission relocated nearly all its historical collections into the Museum. In 2010, a significant consultation project for the Commission occurred, resulting in the cataloging and arrangement of many archival collections.

The WHC maintains a large collection of items on the history of Wrentham and the areas surrounding Wrentham as it is structured today. According to a recent survey, the WHC possesses an estimated 1,000 bound volumes, 1,500 issues of newspapers, 10,000 documents and manuscripts, 250 maps, and 65 posters. WHC also has a large photograph collection of 10,000 prints, 1,000 negatives, and 1,500 slides. Additionally, there are 25 AV materials, including film, CD's, and magnetic tape. There were 25 pieces of art on paper, 25 paintings, 12 textiles, and approximately 2,000 artifacts as well.

These materials tell the rich history of Wrentham from various perspectives.

## Historic Preservation Goals

- Acquire items of historical significance to the Wrentham community, and surrounding areas that tell Wrentham's existence and evolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Catalog, properly archive and store existing and new items of historical significance to the Wrentham community
- Restore and preserve items of historical significance to the Wrentham community

# Community Housing

## Community Housing Goals

Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws defines “community housing” as “low- and moderate-income housing for individuals and families, including low- or moderate-income senior housing.” Low-income housing is affordable to households with annual incomes of less than 80% of the areawide median income (AMI) and moderate-income housing is affordable to households earning less than 100% AMI. Furthermore, the CPA Statute defines “senior housing” as housing for persons 60 years old or over, who also meet the qualifications for low or moderate income. Per MGL c.40B, the town requires 10 percent of housing to be affordable to households at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI).

*The CPA Statute allows expenditures for the acquisition, creation, preservation, and support of community housing and for the rehabilitation of community housing that is acquired or created through CPA.*

Preservation is defined as the “protection of personal or real property from injury, harm or destruction, but not including maintenance.”

Rehabilitation, which is only permitted for housing created using CPA funds, is defined as “the remodeling, reconstruction and making of extraordinary repairs, to...community housing for the purpose of making such...community housing functional for their intended use, including, but not limited to, improvements to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal, state or local building or access codes.

The CPA Statute defines the term “support” as programs that provide grants, loans, rental assistance, security deposits, interest-rate write downs or other forms of assistance directly to individuals and families who are eligible for community housing . . .”

The CPA Statute also allows CPA funds to be appropriated to a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (MGL c.44 s.55C

### **Community Housing Goals-**

1. Create community housing units that will help address Wrentham’s documented housing needs, including units that will count on the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).
2. Create a Wrentham Affordable Housing Trust
3. Preserve affordable units at Wrentham Housing Authority through physical improvements, as enabled within the limitations of the CPA statute.
4. Support housing assistance programs that provide direct assistance to households with incomes up to 100 percent area median income (AMI) including, but not limited to, a rental subsidy program, first-time homebuyer programs, lease-to-own program, or a down payment/closing cost assistance program.

### **Key Housing Needs –**

1. Add and support more subsidized rental housing
2. Add more affordable housing options including first-time homeownership opportunities
3. Add or adapt for more adaptable and accessible units
4. Support home improvement programs, as allowed by CPA rules.

# Open Space and Recreation

The Open Space Committee and Recreation Commission engaged an outside firm to update our Open Space and Recreation Plan. The State has approved the Town's 2020 Plan. Through analysis and a survey of Wrentham Residents, the following Goals were established for Open Space and Recreation in Town. From this, each committee is developing specific action plans to meet these goals. Projects in the Open Space and Recreation areas that are submitted to the Committee will be evaluated for their ability to help the Town of Wrentham meet these goals.

## Goal 1: Protect Watersheds to Maintain Water Quality Objectives:

- Purchase/protect large, contiguous land parcels in Zone II/Aquifers.
- Encourage developers to use Open Space Preservation Bylaw.
- Assist landowners in preserving environmentally sensitive properties.
- Enforce Earth Removal, Watershed Aquifer Protection and Flood Plain Bylaws.
- Enforce Stormwater Management Regulations.

## Goal 2: Preserve Wrentham's Rural Appearance Objectives:

- Establish preservation alternatives for farmers.
- Protect land along East Street near Foxboro line.
- Protect land along Taunton Street near Plainville line.
- Enforce and publicize Scenic Roads Bylaw.

## Goal 3: Create Support for Open Space Protection Objectives:

- Produce user-friendly natural resource maps and make them available online.
- Conduct annual open space information sessions.
- Establish and document a network of trails.
- Inventory parcels in GIS interactive format.
- Develop, improve and promote bike and hiking trails.
- Improve access to open space areas with passive recreation potential.
- Develop a plan to create trails in former rail corridors.

## Goal 4: Protect Sensitive Habitat and Wildlife Corridors

- Target Top Ten Preservation Priorities.
- Identify additional lands that abut existing protected open space or wildlife corridors.
- Prepare management plans for protected parcels to address invasive species and permitted uses.
- Identify parcels important to improving resilience to climate change.

## Within Recreation:

### Goal 1: Improve Existing Recreation Facilities (General)

- Improve ADA accessibility at all facilities.
- Develop recreational spaces and playgrounds.
- Create walking paths at existing recreation sites.
- Develop or identify new revenue sources for maintenance and future growth.
- Acquire and install landscaping and hardscaping materials at all recreation sites.
- Evaluate feasibility of solar or other renewable energy tech recreation site.

### Goal 2: Improve Existing Recreation Facilities (Specific)

- Continue to build out the Rice Recreation Complex.
- Upgrade Sweatt Recreation Complex.
- Renovate Sweatt Beach Facilities.
- Develop plan for future of Sweatt Park.
- Improve Town Common.
- Identify and develop additional revenue sources to support maintenance and future growth.

### Goal 3: Develop new facilities and programs to serve all demographic groups

- Develop programs/activities/clubs to utilize recreation sites and further involve community members.
- Create and manage interactive events to involve residents of all ages.
- Develop outdoor adult fitness areas.
- Add ADA-compliant playground equipment.
- Develop Outdoor Senior Fitness Areas.

# Application Process

Please note that residents of Wrentham, or Town or Wrentham entities can apply for funding through the WCPC.

Application for funds happens in two parts - a submission for eligibility, and a submission for funding. The first eligibility submission is intended to screen projects for their eligibility, and should be quick and easy to fill out. The WCPC will determine eligibility, and get back to the requester after the eligibility meeting. The full funding application should then be submitted. Requestors will be invited to a future WCPC meeting to present their project, and answer questions. The WCPC will vote, often at a later meeting, to determine if the WCPC elects to push this project forward to Town Meeting for a vote by town residents.

The current application is available at:

[https://www.wrentham.gov/government/boards\\_committees/community\\_preservation\\_committee/forms\\_regulations](https://www.wrentham.gov/government/boards_committees/community_preservation_committee/forms_regulations)

## Dates for Application - 2023

Please note that the WCPC will attempt to do its best to adhere to these dates, but may deviate from these dates as specific cases come up for projects, and due to COVID-19 restrictions or difficulties.

- Eligibility Submission to WCPC no later than - May 15, 2023
- WCPC Meeting to determine Project Eligibility - End May
- Project Funding Requests to WCPC no later than June 12, 2023
- Project Presentations at July and August WCPC Meetings

For further information about the application process or to discuss a project's eligibility, please contact the CPC at [wrentham.gov](http://wrentham.gov).