

TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN

2021



Photo by Frank Sibley

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan was prepared for the Town of Boxborough by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

Town of Boxborough Community Preservation Committee

<u>Member</u>	<u>Board/Committee/Commission</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
Dennis Reip, Chair	Conservation Commission	2023
Rita Gibes Grossman, Vice Chair	Citizen At-Large	2024
Hugh Fortmiller, Clerk	Citizen At-Large	2022
Robin Lazarow	Planning Board	2022
Priya Sundaram	Finance Committee	2024
Hilary Greven	Recreation Commission	2022
John Neyland	Agricultural Commission	2024
Alan Rohwer	Historical Commission	2023
Ron Vogel	Housing Board	2023

<u>Ex-Officio</u>	
Simon Corson	Town Planner
Wes Fowlks	Select Board Liaison

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SECTION I – PLAN SUMMARY

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the 2021 Boxborough Community Preservation Plan is to provide the Town of Boxborough with a guide for evaluating and selecting Community Preservation Act (CPA) proposals for recommendation to Boxborough voters at Town Meeting.

B. GOALS

1. Utilizing the Town’s Master Plan (Boxborough2030), Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)(2015-2022), and Housing Production Plan (HPP)(2015-2020), work with the Town’s boards and committees to achieve the Town’s goals for:
 - a. Open space protection for conservation, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.
 - b. Enhancement of community housing.
 - c. Preservation of historic resources.
2. Administer the CPA in a transparent manner with a clear process for project applications and their assessment.
3. Inform the public about the CPA.

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SECTION II – BACKGROUND

A. COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

On September 14, 2000, the CPA was signed into law (Massachusetts General Law [MGL] Chapter 44B) as an enabling tool for Massachusetts cities and towns to preserve community resources in the following three core areas:

- Acquisition and preservation of open space for conservation, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.
- Creation of and support for affordable housing.
- Acquisition and/or preservation of historic resources.

CPA towns create a Community Preservation Fund with monies from both a surcharge of up to 3% on local real estate taxes and an annual match of state funding. A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues of the fund must be used or set-aside each year for each of the three core areas. The remaining 70% of the revenues can be allocated for any combination of the allowed uses, including up to a 5% set-aside for administrative costs.

B. TOWN OF BOXBOROUGH

At the Annual Town Meeting of May 2014, town voters adopted the CPA with a 1% surcharge, and with an exemption for low income residents and low- and moderate-income seniors. At the ballot in November of 2014, voters ratified that action. The CPA became effective retroactive to July of 2014 (FY2015).

C. COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

In addition to adopting the CPA, the May 2014 Town Meeting established the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), consisting of nine members as required by law, with a representative from each of the stakeholder boards and commissions, one Finance Committee member, and two at-large members. The CPC's responsibilities include the following:

- 1) Study the needs, possibilities, and resources of the Town regarding community preservation pursuant to MGL Chapter 44B.
- 2) Consult with existing municipal boards, including the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission, the Planning Board, the Recreation Commission, the Agricultural Commission, and the Boxborough Housing Board in conducting such studies.
- 3) Review the Town's Capital Plan, maintained by the Finance Committee, and identify such overlap as may exist between Capital Plan prescriptions and community preservation proposals.

- 4) Hold one or more annual public information hearings on the Town's community preservation needs.
- 5) Prepare a CPA budget and make project recommendations for Town Meeting approval.
- 6) Prepare the Town's Community Preservation Plan and revise it annually.
- 7) Regularly review CPA account balances and spending; ensure that annual CPA state filing requirements are met.

Boxborough's Community Preservation Committee was sworn-in as of January 2015, held its first public hearing in April 2015, reviewed proposals (including projects meeting CPA criteria that were passed over at May 2014 Annual Town Meeting), and made recommendations to the May 2015 Annual Town Meeting.

D. PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH FY2022

Project	ATM Year	Category	Amount	Status
Steele Farm Barn Exterior Restorations	2015	Historic Resources	\$90,000	Complete
Preservation and Restoration of Historic Town Hall Exterior Front Steps	2015	Historic Resources	\$10,000	Complete
Conservation of Historic Town Records	2015	Historic Resources	\$12,000	Complete
Site Plan for Basketball and Tennis Courts at Liberty Fields	2016	Open Space and Recreation	\$5,500	Complete
Regional Housing Monitoring Services (Year 3 – Calendar Year 2016)	2016	Community Housing	\$5,465	Complete
Regional Housing Monitoring Services (Year 4 – Calendar Year 2017)	2016	Community Housing	\$6,000	Complete
Boxborough Rental Voucher Program	2016	Community Housing	\$26,280	Complete
Conservation of Historic Town Records	2016	Historic Resources	\$11,000	Complete
Rehabilitation of Grange Meeting Room	2016	Historic Resources	\$106,775	Complete
Rehabilitation of Historic Town Hall Exterior Front Steps	2016	Historic Resources	\$35,000	Complete
Transfer to the Conservation Trust Fund	2017	Open Space and Recreation	\$5,000	Complete
Regional Housing Monitoring Services (Year 4 – Fiscal Year 2018)	2017	Community Housing	\$3,025	Complete

Boxborough Rental Assistance Program	2017	Community Housing	\$37,650	Complete
Conservation of Historic Town Records	2017	Historic Resources	\$10,000	Complete
North Cemetery Restoration	2017	Historic Resources	\$9,025	Complete
Preservation of Steele Farmhouse	2017	Historic Resources	\$30,000	Complete
Flerra Meadows Playground Rehabilitation	2018	Open Space and Recreation	\$62,000	Complete
Boxborough Rental Assistance Program	2018	Community Housing	\$37,650	Complete
Transfer to the Conservation Trust Fund	2018	Open Space and Recreation	\$10,000	Complete
Veterans Monument	2018	Historic Resources	\$105,000	On-going
Preservation of Steele Farmhouse	2018	Historic Resources	\$190,000	Complete
Boxborough Rental Assistance Program	2019	Community Housing	\$37,650	On-going
Flerra Baseball Field Rehab.	2019	Open Space and Recreation	\$8,000	Complete
Flerra Playground Fence	2019	Open Space and Recreation	\$7,600	Complete
Transfer to the Conservation Trust Fund	2019	Open Space and Recreation	\$10,000	Complete
Sargent Memorial Library - Brick Patio Renovation And Expansion	2020	Open Space and Recreation	\$35,000	On-going
Flerra Community Garden Water Supply	2020	Open Space and Recreation	\$15,000	On-going
North Cemetery Restoration	2020	Historic Resources	\$9,500	On-going
Preservation Of Historical Records	2020	Historic Resources	\$10,000	On-going
Boxborough Rental Assistance Program	2020	Community Housing	\$38,050	On-going
Regional Housing Services	2020	Community Housing	\$12,000	On-going
Hager Land Connection	2020	Open Space and Recreation	\$54,000	On-going
Community Preservation Fund – Conservation Trust Fund	2020	Open Space and Recreation	\$10,000	On-going
Boxborough Rental Assistance Program	2021	Community Housing	\$38,050	On-going

Liberty Field Capital Improvements	2021	Open Space and Recreation	\$300,000	On-going
Community Preservation Fund – Conservation Trust Fund	2021	Open Space and Recreation	\$10,000	On-going

E. ANTICIPATED CPA REVENUES

Ending Balance Previous Years	
FY15	\$ 154,530
FY16	\$ 246,095
FY17	\$ 253,474
FY18	\$ 368,692
FY19	\$ 186,918
FY20	\$ 363,381
FY21	\$ 437,243
FY22	
Add: 1% Surcharge Collected (Estimate)	\$ 200,000
Add: State Match (15% Estimate)	\$ 30,000
Less: Appropriations (Approved June 2021)	\$ (348,050)
Less: Administrative Costs (Approved June 2021)	\$ (5,000)
FY22 CPA Fund Balance (6/30/2021) Estimated	\$ 314,193

SECTION III – NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Historically, Boxborough voters have valued the protection of open space. Currently, of the Town's 6,660 acres, approximately one-third is protected as follows (note: acreage is approximate):

- 1) Town-owned conservation land: 960 acres (14% of Town's land area).
- 2) Non-profit land trusts (Boxborough Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees): 150 acres (approx. 2% of Town's land area).
- 3) Privately owned land protected with agricultural, conservation, open space, or historical restrictions (easements): 399 acres (6.0% of Town's land area).
- 4) Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Fisheries and Wildlife Division) land: 19 acres (<1% of Town's land area).
- 5) Privately owned land temporarily protected for managed forest land, agricultural land, or private recreation land through enrollment in Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B: 824 acres (12% of Town's land area).

The Town of Boxborough has a well-researched and detailed Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) that was updated in 2015. The intention of the needs assessment as specified by the CPA is to build on the OSRP, specifically focused on the following land protection goals:

- 1) Land for conservation of habitat, wildlife, and wildlife corridors.
- 2) Land for water resource protection.
- 3) Land for agriculture and agricultural soil preservation.
- 4) Land for outdoor recreation, including trails, sports fields, and recreational venues for all age groups and abilities.
- 5) Land which protects scenic vistas and natural and historic landscape features.

The CPC will prioritize land and outdoor recreation proposals that are consistent with the goals and objectives specifically outlined in the OSRP. Desirable, privately owned parcels are identified in Table 28 of the OSRP (Private Lands of Open Space, Conservation, Agriculture, and Recreation Interest [Priority Parcels]). Many of these parcels are currently enrolled in the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B program, which gives the Town the right of first refusal for those parcels being sold for development or with a proposed change in use that is not consistent with land protection.

Recreation Goals

The Recreation Commission has also developed a number of goals, and the CPC will prioritize proposals which advance each of the following recreation initiatives:

- 1) Redesign and/or add to existing Town fields to accommodate additional recreational opportunities (e.g. basketball court, tennis courts, outdoor fitness).
- 2) Update and/or redesign the existing playground at Flerra Field.
- 3) Pursue possibilities for expansion of recreation areas (e.g. purchase of land or existing space).
- 4) Research and possibly develop an outdoor Town swimming facility (e.g. pool or pond).
- 5) Develop recreation opportunities for the community's teen population which is considered an underserved population in town.
- 6) Work with the Town and other committees to create scenic pathways (emulating Town of Lincoln paths).
- 7) Work with regional communities to expand recreational opportunities (e.g. skate park, bike trails, etc.).

B. COMMUNITY HOUSING

One of the Housing Board's primary objectives is to encourage housing that will expand affordable-housing options in Boxborough. As of 2020, Boxborough attained a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) of 12.9%, which provides the community more control over proposed MGL Chapter 40B developments. The Housing Board supported the development of a large Chapter 40B rental project, known as Paddock Estates at Boxborough. The project's first occupants moved in during July of 2017 when the first buildings were completed. The improving real estate market enabled this project to move forward and it was completed in early 2018. This project has enabled the Town to meet the 10% SHI threshold for the foreseeable future.

Another important objective is to provide affordable housing that is suited to Boxborough's current demographics. The data in Boxborough's Housing Production Plan (HPP) suggests that Boxborough, like many of its neighboring communities, has a growing share of senior residents and senior-headed households. The data also suggests that Boxborough has a declining share of younger families and a declining number of school-aged children. Meeting the changing housing needs of downsizing empty nesters, and attracting more families to Boxborough are of critical importance.

The HPP's analysis of the Town's current affordable housing stock shows that a high proportion of Boxborough's current housing is affordable to low-income households. About 36% is affordable to low-income households, and about 22% of the housing is affordable to very-low-income households. This aspect of the Boxborough housing market is unique, most likely the result of the large number of older condominiums in Boxborough that provide lower cost housing.

In addition to developing housing for low-income households, Boxborough will pursue the development of housing that will serve moderate-income households, at 80-120% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The needs analysis of the HPP shows that housing for this income range is essential for several key constituencies: downsizing seniors, young families, Town employees, and school-district employees. The Housing Board wants to help provide housing for these constituencies, which today are not being well served by either low-income or open-market housing dynamics. Furthermore, the analysis in the HPP suggests that increasing the moderate-income housing stock could have the beneficial collateral effect of enabling low-income households to access Boxborough's affordably priced homes.

Housing Production Goals

- 1) Promote and support a wide range of affordable rental and homeownership housing that will allow older residents to downsize to smaller homes and will allow younger families and households to move to Boxborough.
- 2) Promote and support the development of a wide range of affordable housing that prioritizes housing-quality, while preserving Boxborough's open space resources.
- 3) Promote and support the preservation of a wide range of affordable housing that meets the needs of Boxborough residents across all income groups.

C. HISTORIC RESOURCES

Historic Resources are defined by the CPA as buildings, structures, vessels, documents and artifacts, or real properties that are listed on the State Register of Historic Places or are significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of Boxborough as determined by the Boxborough Historical Commission. CPA funds may be used for the preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation of historic resources (including Town-owned historic resources) but not for routine maintenance. Unless such historic resources are in public ownership, there must be a public purpose to the investment of CPA funds in them. For example, if the property owner of a private historic property agrees to grant a permanent preservation restriction on the property to the Town in exchange for a grant of CPA funds, this would be considered to be a public benefit. All rehabilitation projects funded in the Historic Resources category must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Currently, Boxborough has a number of historic assets, including municipal buildings, private homes, areas, burial grounds, and other artifacts. The town-wide Historic Resources Inventory,

completed in 2003 in accordance with Massachusetts Historical Commission guidelines and on file with the state, lists 113 such historic assets. Of these, 26 were deemed eligible for listing on the National Register, and 35 are currently declared “historically significant” by the Boxborough Historical Commission, subject to the Demolition Delay Bylaw and eligible for CPA funding. The listing of these properties is available on the Town website on the Historical Commission’s page.

Currently listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places are the Levi Wetherbee Farm (Steele Farm) and the Boxborough Old Center National Register Historic District, which includes 72 inventoried buildings and structures, 52 of which are declared to be “contributing resources.” Listing on the State and National Registers recognizes the importance of these properties as resources.

Historic Resources and Needs

The rural, agricultural, and historic character of Boxborough is threatened by the rapid rise of local land values. Owners/Developers often find it preferable to remove older structures and replace them with new, much larger structures that are frequently out of scale with their surroundings and setting, a development trend which damages the historic integrity of the town. Once demolished, the lost structures which gave a sense of history and cultural character to the town are gone forever. Similarly, the Town is frequently placed in a position of defending itself from developments and subdivisions that diminish its rural and historic character.

Historic Preservation Goals

- 1) Protect, preserve, and/or restore Boxborough properties and sites of historical, architectural, archeological, and cultural significance. Work to assist owners with adaptive re-use of historic properties.
- 2) Protect threatened properties of particular historical significance.
- 3) Preserve the remaining rural/historic character of the Town, including, but not limited to, residential and non-residential buildings, barns, outbuildings, burial grounds, markers, monuments, stone walls, fields, cart paths, historic land, streetscapes, and scenic vistas. Work to maintain the character of Boxborough’s country roads.
- 4) Preserve and protect Town historic documents, and work with the Boxborough Historical Society in preserving historic artifacts in their collection.
- 5) Survey and preserve the Town burial grounds.