

Wilbraham Community Preservation Plan
Local Needs Assessment
December 28, 2017

Introduction

About the Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a Massachusetts law that allows participating cities and towns to adopt a real estate tax surcharge of up to 3% in order to fund the four community preservation purposes of Open Space, Historic Preservation, Community Housing, and Outside Recreation. In addition to the community tax surcharge, the state provides matching funds that are not less than 5% and not more than 100% of the funds raised by the community. The actual percentage varies from year to year dependent on the health of the Commonwealth's community preservation trust fund, which is funded by a surcharge on Registry of Deeds transactions.

CPA in Wilbraham

The town of Wilbraham adopted the CPA and local bylaw at the November 2004 Annual Town Meeting. The Wilbraham bylaw adopted a rate of 1.5% for the property tax surcharge and established a Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Additionally, certain exemptions from the surcharge are available for any person who qualifies for low income housing or low to moderate income senior housing in the town, as defined by Section 2 of the Community Preservation Act.

The CPC in Wilbraham is made up of nine members that include a member from six town committees: Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Historical Commission, Playground and Recreation, Housing Authority and Planning Board, plus three members at large appointed by the Wilbraham Select Board.

Role of Wilbraham Community Preservation Committee

The Community Preservation Committee has 2 main roles:

1. To develop a Community Preservation Plan by working closely with town committees, Town Department Heads, and interested organizations and citizens.
2. To make recommendations for projects presented to the CPC that qualify for use of CPA funds. The Committee may initiate projects; but primarily collects and reviews proposals submitted by individuals or groups. The CPC then makes recommendations to Town Meeting regarding the use of CPA funds. Only Town Meeting can allocate and appropriate CPA funds.

Use of the Community Preservation Act Funds

How CPA funds can and cannot be used

The CPA requires that communities spend, or set aside for future spending, a minimum of ten percent of the annual CPA receipts for: Open Space (including Recreational purposes), 10% for Historic Preservation and 10% for Community Housing. The remaining 70% of funds may be allocated to any one or a combination of the three main uses

at the discretion of the Community Preservation Committee and subject to approval of Town Meeting.

tee Costs

Up to 5% of the annual CPA funds may be spent on the operation and administration costs of the CPC.

Incidental Project Costs

CPA funds may be used for site surveys, environmental assessments, historic or housing consultants, architectural and engineering fees, permit processing fees, construction consultants, financing consultants, legal and accounting fees, and similar costs associated with and incidental to the development of a CPA project.

Projects in Other Communities

CPA funds may be spent anywhere in Massachusetts, meaning communities are not confined to expending funds only within their jurisdiction. For example, this flexible provision allows a community to purchase land surrounding its water supply even if located in another city or town. CPA funding may also support inter-community cooperation on regional housing needs, allowing development that spans borders or shared development in one community that serves several towns.

Leveraging CPA Funds

CPA funds may be used as a municipality's matching monies for state and federal grant programs that require a local match such as the Massachusetts Housing Partnerships' Soft Second Program, state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Self-Help program, Massachusetts Preservation Program Fund (MPPF), and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Massachusetts Forest Legacy program, LAND grant and PARC grant programs. CPA funds can also be used as matching or starting monies to acquire grants from private organizations or individuals.

No maintenance or postponed repairs.

CPA funds cannot be used for routine maintenance or operating costs of existing or new facilities. For example, communities cannot use CPA funds to maintain a municipal park (such as mowing the lawn, emptying trash barrels or dumpsters, etc.) or to maintain a historic town hall (such as cleaning the common areas or paying for utilities, etc).

No Supplanting

The CPA is directed toward augmenting municipal funds, not replacing existing funding. To this end, CPA funds may not be appropriated to pay for project costs that have already been appropriated from another source. Any CPA eligible costs for a project that are identified in the municipality capital improvement program are eligible for funding under the Act, if the municipality has not made a prior funding commitment to pay for such costs.

Conservation and Open Space Committees

The Wilbraham Open Space and Recreational Plan Committee (OS&RPC) develops multi-year plans for Wilbraham in order to qualify the Town for State funding of open space and recreation land purchases. The Committee has endorsed several projects for open space acquisition using Community Preservation Act funds beginning in 2004 with purchase of the Rice Nature Preserve. The McDonald Farm Nature Preserve was completed in 2009 then Mount Marcy purchase was approved by Town Meeting in 2016. The Committee has declined other proposals because they were not suitable for recreational potential or connectivity to other resources. The Committee recognizes the value of open space but also recognizes that Wilbraham voters at the 2013 Town Meeting rejected the sale of town owned forest land to a local developer. The Committee has no potential land acquisitions presently in mind but may reconsider if CPA funds should be accumulated for future Open Space opportunities. The immediate need is to ensure that the Mount Marcy acquisition will proceed successfully using CPA and state grants. There is a current need for a handicapped accessible conservation trail around Spec Pond or at Thayer Brook Preserve. Steep grades, privately owned land on the east side and conservation issues have caused the Committee to suspend action at Spec Pond and may re-examine this plan in the future.

Goals

Goals of the 2014-2021 Updated Plan include:

- Maintaining an ongoing base of support for the Open Space and Recreation Plan from Town boards and from the public through education and cooperation, communicated through public meetings, newspapers and the Town website.
- Promoting active growth management to reduce residential sprawl and prevent open space / recreation land fragmentation.
- Fostering inter-connectivity of Town lands throughout Wilbraham through formal, well-maintained trail systems.
- Preserving and protecting environmental resources, including wetlands, water resources, upland wildlife habitat and wildlife travel corridors and encouraging synergy among all community, state and regional partners for conservation and preservation.

Land Resources

Total Town area: 22.4 square miles

Permanently Protected Open Space: 1564 acres

Semi-Protected Open Space: 1041 acres

Unprotected Open Space: 4610 acres

Conservation & Open Space Focus Sites for Town Needs Assessment

Wilbraham Mountain / Rice Nature Preserve

White Cedar Swamp rescue and recovery plan developed by UMass Study

McDonald Farm Preserve

Community Gardens Invasive brush

Thayer Brook Conservation Forest

Twelve Mile Brook 80 acres invasive brush control

Emerald Ash Borer damage to trees on Conservation and municipal owned pasture and forest land

Hollow Road town owned land needs forest management plan

Handicapped accessible, level Conservation Trail. Possibly-Shady Lane Conservation property north of Springfield St. or Town Hall Campus west of parking lot or Thayer Brook Forest entrance by Community Gardens, Brainard Park Manchonis Extension.

2048 Boston Road Phragmites detention pond across from Red Robin

Community Preservation Role in Wilbraham Needs Assessment

3. To protect and preserve the Town's natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.
4. To preserve the quality, character and rural atmosphere of Wilbraham
5. To promote balanced commercial and residential development consistent with the natural resources, town character, and rural atmosphere of Wilbraham.
6. To develop a linked system of conservation and recreational hiking trails and areas for human and wildlife use
7. To promote public awareness, use and education regarding Wilbraham's historical and natural resources, conservation and recreational goals
8. To increase opportunities to achieve the above goals and objectives through regional or multi-community cooperation with adjacent towns, the regional planning agency and non-governmental organizations.

Historic Preservation

History

Wilbraham was settled in 1730, then incorporated in 1763. Originally an agricultural economy that grew and brought in manufacturing, transportation, higher education and prosperity to the community.

9. Historic Educational Institutions: Wesleyan Academy 1817-1890, now Wilbraham & Monson Academy
10. Historic Structures: Atheneum Society, Methodist Chapel at WMA
11. Major Landscape Features: Wilbraham Mountain Lookout & Mt. Marcy Bronze Marker trails, Red Bridge Crossing
12. Historic Event Sites: Original Boston Post Road Stage Coach Trail over the Mountain

Community Preservation Committee Historic Goals

13. Recognize, preserve and enhance the historic heritage of the Town of Wilbraham.
14. Optimize the use and enjoyment of the Town's historical resources by residents and visitors and the contribution such resources make to the Town's fiscal stability.
15. Preserve the natural and man-made features that contribute to Wilbraham's character such as former farm open fields, waterfalls, country roads, mountain trails, scenic vistas, wet meadows for songbirds and stonewalls.
16. Restore those natural and man-made features that have been degraded or impaired.

Affordable Housing

Background

Wilbraham's housing inventory is a blend of single family homes, farms, and several Subsidized Housing complexes such as Pines Community Complex on Stony Hill Rd and Miles Morgan Apartments on the west side of Main St.

•Several single family houses are located in several different neighborhoods within the Town.

Foreseeable needs: Modern Housing facilities to be introduced at Pines Housing Complex.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has established a goal that all 351 cities and towns should strive to have at least 10% of their housing stock priced (including principal, interest, taxes and insurance using a 5% down payment) in the affordable range. Wilbraham Housing Authority presently have plans for modern housing conversion at Pines Complex.

Affordable Housing Goals

17. Promote a variety of community housing options for those with modest means, including young adults, families, long-time residents, elderly downsizers, returning Wilbraham natives and municipal employees, while preserving the natural, historic, rural quality and character of our town. To advance our objective of a diverse, integrated safe and wholesome community.
18. Ensure that new affordable housing is harmonious with the existing community by making sure that proposed projects are in agreement with the Wilbraham Open Space and Recreation Plan and with existing Planning Board regulations and local zoning laws.
19. Fulfill the 10% State Standard for Affordable Housing.

Recreation

Resources

Wilbraham's recreational needs are currently well served by Spec Pond Recreational Complex featuring multiple baseball, soccer and football fields. The YMCA facility at Spec Pond provides indoor swimming exercise and game courts for volleyball, basketball and senior physical activities.

Meeting the needs of future recreational projects and open land interest remain high in recent citizens' feedback. Other specialized recreation sites are the town's public nature and farm preserves like Rice Nature Preserve, McDonald Farm Preserve, Atlantic White Cedar Swamp and privately-owned Fountain Park

Recreation Possible Needs Identification

Playing Fields and Playgrounds at

Spec Pond Complex: Security camera installation, Park rules signage, Shaded walkway around bathhouses, Beach building condition analysis, Pavilion electrical improvement, floor repainting & traffic flow pattern.
Develop ADA walking path, warm-up pitcher mounds by Farrell & Burnham, Pond invasive analysis,
Park Maintenance building status, develop open space between Basketball & Softball Field.
Soule Road School: survey school population and abutters for building and neighborhood needs.
Mile Tree School: possible conversion to multi sport field with adjacent playground open space
Memorial School: baseball fields, remove invasive brush, expand entrance visibility, fix warm-up mounds
Stony Hill School: determine future use of the building and grounds.
Middle School on Stony Hill Road: improve front fields drainage, re-grade former Pony Baseball diamond.
Brainard Park: 230V Manchonis Road Extension by Lance Ln & Glen Drive. 'Pocket Park' has attracted undesirable activity. Survey neighbors & police. Possible multipurpose field. Improve it or remove it?
Children's Museum on Main St. at Tinkham Road: grounds and building improvements now in design

Recreation Goals

20. Provide varied recreational facilities & programs appropriate for all demographic groups of Wilbraham residents.
21. To develop a safe, hike-able system of conservation and recreation trails in scenic, rural areas for human and wildlife mobility.
22. To promote public awareness, use and education regarding Wilbraham's historical and natural resources, conservation and recreation goals.
23. To increase opportunities to achieve the above goals and subsequent objectives through regional or multi-community efforts in cooperation with adjacent towns, the regional planning agency and non-governmental organizations.

The Funding Process

Annual Applications Cycle

- Application forms will be available at the Town Hall and online at the Wilbraham Town website.
- Starting in August, the CPC will advertise on the Town website and in local publications the fact that it will be accepting applications for proposed projects up to the mid-January Application deadline. From September to January monthly CPC public information meetings will be held at the Town Hall to learn of community needs and determine if potential projects fit into the CPA.
- Submitted applications will be for consideration at the following Spring Annual Town Meeting. With approved projects receiving funding on July first.

Time Sensitive Applications

- At the discretion of the CPC, applications for time sensitive projects which cannot wait for the usual autumn submission interval may be submitted and reviewed by the CPC at any time of year.
- These applications will be considered as described below ("CPC Consideration"), and if deemed appropriate and necessary, considered for possible referral to the annual town meeting or a special town meeting for approval.

CPC Consideration

- After the close of the application period, the CPC will review all proposed projects and determine which applications do not fit within the CPA requirements, may need additional information or funding sources or may not offer sufficient benefits to the community. Continuing projects will be discussed for more extensive review.
- For proposals that have been chosen, the CPC will invite the applicants to attend a CPC public meeting and present their case as to how the project benefits the town, fits the CPA requirements and why it should be funded.
- The CPC will then solicit input from any appropriate town committees or departments regarding a specific proposal.
- The CPC will then hold an Annual Public Hearing for further input on past, current and future projects.
- After the extended review process is completed, the CPC will vote in open session as to which proposals it will include on the town meeting warrant.
- The accepted proposals will be included in a town meeting article that will be presented to the Board of Selectmen prior to the close of the warrant for inclusion on the Town Meeting Warrant.

Town Meeting

- At the annual or special town meeting as well as the annual public hearing, it is the responsibility of the proposal's applicant to speak about how their project fits within the CPA requirements, will improve the quality of life in Wilbraham and answer questions from the Town Meeting audience.
- The CPC will present its reasons for referring the selected proposals to Town Meeting.

Project Submission Guidelines

Submission Requirements

Applications must be received by the deadline date shown on the CPA Application Instruction sheet (usually January) to be considered for recommendation by the CPC at the Spring Annual Town Meeting. Applicants need to complete the Project Submission Cover Sheet and attach a detailed narrative that addresses the general guidelines and applicable specific project guidelines outlined below.

General Guidelines

24. Each project must be submitted to the Community Preservation Committee using the Project Submission Form as a cover sheet. Requests must include a statement of need and be documented with appropriate support information.
25. Applicants are encouraged to include any maps, diagrams, and/or photographs pertaining to the project. Letters of support for the project from community organizations or other sources may also be submitted.
26. The Community Preservation Committee may require additional (or more detailed) information to further clarify a submitted application. Additional funding sources are recommended.
27. Applicants should obtain quotes for project costs whenever possible. If not available, estimates may be used, provided the basis of the estimate is fully explained. State law requires the 'Prevailing Wage' be paid. Consult the Wilbraham Procurement Officer in the Town Hall.
28. If the request is part of a multi-year project the total project costs and allocations should be included.
29. Applicants that have multiple project requests should prioritize projects.
30. Applicants should pursue matching or supplemental funds from state, federal and/or private sources when appropriate and available.
31. Applicants should detail who will be responsible for project implementation and management. Their relevant experience should be included in the narrative. Please be sure that project management costs have been included in the overall project budget.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals submitted to CPC will be evaluated under two sets of criteria. The first will be general criteria and the second will be project-type specific.

General Criteria

- Does the project fit the criteria and spirit of the Community Preservation Act?
- Is the project consistent with Wilbraham's Open Space and Recreation Plan, and other planning documents that have received wide input and scrutiny?
- Is the project feasible?
- Does the project require urgent attention?
- Is the project affordable?
- Does the project serve a currently under-served population?

- Does the project serve multiple needs and populations?
- Is the project consistent with recent town meeting actions?
- Does the project help with the preservation of currently owned town assets?
- Does the project involve the acquisition of threatened resources?
- Does the project have multiple sources of funding?
- Does the project promote the use of local contractors paying prevailing wages?
- Does the Anti-Aid Law become involved with this project?
- Does the project comply with current or proposed zoning regulations?
- Does the project have a means of support for maintenance and upkeep?
- Does the project have community support and provide a positive impact to the community?
- Does the project have sufficient supporting documentation?
- Does the project have support from another Wilbraham town board or committee?
- Does the project have the support of the majority of immediate abutters?
- Is the project in the best interest of the town of Wilbraham?

Specific Criteria for Open Space Projects

- Does the project permanently protect important wildlife habitat including areas that are of local significance for biodiversity?
- Does the project provide opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education?
- Does the project protect or enhance wildlife corridors (i.e., promote connectivity of habitat and/or prevent fragmentation of habitats)?
- Does the project provide connections between existing trails or create trail linkages?
- Does the project preserve scenic views that border a scenic road?
- Does the project protect drinking water quantity and quality?
- Does the project provide flood control / water storage?
- Does the project preserve important surface water bodies including wetlands, vernal pools, or riparian zones?
- Does the project preserve primary or secondary priority parcels listed in the Wilbraham Open Space and Recreation Plan?

- Does the property have historic significance such as old foundations, stonewalls, old roads, trails, cart paths, or scenic vistas?

Specific Criteria for Historic Preservation Projects

What is the historical / cultural significance to the Town of the proposed project?

What is the public benefit?

What is the appropriateness and professionalism of proposed work? (Rehabilitation work is expected to comply with Standards for Rehabilitation stated in the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.)

What are the additional financial or in-kind services beyond CPA funds committed to the project?

What are the administrative and financial management capabilities of the applicant in order to ensure that the project is carried out in a timely manner and that the historic resource can be maintained for continued public benefit?

What is the potential loss or destruction of the resource if proposed action is not taken?

Does the project protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate Town-owned properties, features, artifacts, documents, or resources of historic significance?

Specific Criteria for Affordable Housing Projects

Does the project promote the goal of having 10 percent of Wilbraham's housing stock considered affordable?

Does the project ensure long-term affordability?

Does the project promote the use of existing buildings or construction on town-owned land?

Does the project attract matching funds or grant opportunities to complete construction?

Does the project convert market-rate housing to affordable housing?

Does the project intermingle affordable and market-rate housing?

Does the project require limited management by the Town of Wilbraham?

Does the project have less impact on town or natural resources than market-rate housing on the same site?

Does the project provide housing that is harmonious in design and style with the surrounding neighborhood?

Does the project promote a socioeconomic environment that encourages a diversity of income, ethnicity, religion and age?

Does the project give priority to local residents, Town employees, and employees of local businesses?

Specific Criteria for Recreation Projects

- Does the project support multiple active and passive recreation uses?

- Does the project serve a significant number of residents of all ages, gender, and ability?
- Does the project expand the range of both active and passive recreational opportunities available to Wilbraham residents through acquisition of appropriate parcels, acquisition of permanent conservation easements, or development of recreational resources on existing Town-owned land, including trail connections, playing fields and play area, open space, and parks?
- Does the project jointly benefit Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission initiatives by promoting a variety of recreational activities?
- Does the project maximize the utility of land already owned by Town of Wilbraham?
- Does the project further broaden the diversity of Recreation Commission-administered programs to include activities beyond traditional "sports and games"?
- Does the project promote the creative use of abandoned roads, railroad and other corridors to create safe and healthful non-motorized transportation opportunities?