

**Valley Community Development Corporation (CDC)  
Timeline of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Supportive Housing  
Prepared by the Amherst Planning Department**

*DRAFT - May 2, 2019*

*Revised - May 28, 2019; June 18, 2019; June 27, 2019*

**HISTORY**

Prior to Valley CDC's neighbor meeting on April 24, 2019, discussion of Valley CDC's Supportive Housing Project had taken place mainly at three board/committee venues—the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Committee, Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (AMAHT), and the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC). At the 2017 Annual Town Meeting the Planning Board also supported, and Town Meeting passed, a zoning change to effectively allow an affordable project with the same unit type, such as small studio apartments.

As a little background on the topic of housing for low-income and homeless people:

The Town of Amherst has long recognized the need for housing for low income and homeless people. This is identified in the community's Master Plan (2009), Housing Production Plan (2013) and the Comprehensive Housing Market Study (2015).

Craig's Doors at the First Baptist Church opened 7 years ago as a seasonal shelter for homeless people; this year it housed 172 individuals, during the months of December through April.

In July of 2016, the town held a public forum on homelessness that was attended by over 100 people. Representatives of several service providers spoke about the region-wide need for shelter and housing for low-income people. Residents came together to address issues related to housing for low-income and homeless people.

The timeline below indicates when Valley CDC's supportive housing project was discussed at a public meeting or hearing, and when there was local media coverage of the project. At this time, nothing formal has been submitted to the Town for permitting.

**January 2017**

- Valley CDC submits a request for \$51,000 in CDBG funds for site assessments and feasibility studies to help identify a site for a supportive enhanced small studio apartment development.
- Valley CDC discusses small studio apartments with Planning Board's Zoning Subcommittee to change Zoning Bylaw to allow the same size apartments if all units are affordable.

### February 2017

- CDBG Advisory Committee holds public hearing and votes to recommend funding for Valley CDC.

### March 2017

- The Planning Board holds a public hearing to discuss the zoning amendment related to allowing the same size units if all affordable, and votes to recommend the zoning amendment to Town Meeting.

### April 2017

- Article in the Daily Hampshire Gazette describing Valley CDCs efforts to find a site for supportive housing project.

### April - May 2017

- Planning Board presents Article 35 Report to Select Board, Town Meeting Coordinating Committee and League of Women Voters.
- Annual Spring Town Meeting votes to approve Article 35: Zoning – Apartment Bedroom Mix (Planning Board) VOTED Yes 145, No 25 with 10 abstaining to amend the Standards and Conditions of Section 3.323, Apartments, by adding the language in ***bold italics***, as follows:

... No more than 50% of the total number of dwelling units shall be of any one size (i.e., # of bedrooms). ***For projects in which all dwelling units provided, other than those occupied by resident manager(s), are Affordable (see Article 12, Definitions), the Permit Granting Board or Special Permit Granting Authority authorized to act under the applicable section of the Bylaw for this use may waive or modify this requirement.***

A management plan, as defined in terms of form and content in the Rules and Regulations adopted by the Permit Granting Board or Special Permit Granting Authority shall be included as an integral part of any application under this section. In all districts, the Permit Granting Board or Special Permit Granting Authority shall apply the provisions of Sections 3.2040 and 3.2041 to any construction, renovation, or expansion resulting in the creation of new dwelling unit under this section.

Action taken 5/15/17.

### November 2017

- The Town of Amherst and Valley CDC enter in a CDBG contract for site selection. The initial contract ended in September 2018 and was extended through February 2019.

### June 2018

- The CDBG Advisory Committee held a Public Hearing on current activities, including an update on the Valley CDC site selection process.

Excerpt of minutes from the hearing:

*Joanne Campbell, Valley CDC: Explained that the primary purpose of the CDBG funding is for planning enhanced Single Room Occupancy (SRO) project in Amherst, with funds used for predevelopment work such as site feasibility studies, site analysis, concept plans, and work by outside consultants. The goal is to find a site that could support 16-40 units for these small studio apartments, with some units reserved for those coming out of homelessness. The units are for independent living, with property manager on site part-time and social service workers coming once a week or as needed. This is not a group home. Recent accomplishments include setting site parameters, identifying potential properties, mailing letters to 60 property owners and receiving 8 responses. Valley is seriously considering two properties and is negotiating options for them. Laura Baker, Valley's Real Estate Project Manager, is working on preliminary budget for construction and operations and has been attending local homelessness systems meetings. This project fits with Valley's portfolio, as they own and manage 53 SRO units in Northampton with 20 set aside for those coming out of homelessness. They work with service providers to help with case management for tenants. These projects take time. The next few months will be more site work, zoning and land use assessments, appraisals, environmental review and preliminary architectural drawings. If a property is under their control, permitting and financing could take 6 months to year or two, and then more time for construction. It will likely be 3-5 years before this project is completed and ready for tenants. If a property is found to be feasible, Valley would also engage in a public process to let the neighbors and community know, and to have input that would help keep the project moving forward.*

#### **November 2018**

- The Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust sponsors a public forum with Valley CDC that discussed the need for small affordable units, including SRO housing.
- Valley CDC discussed their current CPA proposal for the project with the Housing Trust.

#### **December 2018**

- The Housing Trust votes to support Valley CDC's CPA proposal.
- Valley submits CDBG proposal for \$200,000 to fund architectural fees and energy consulting for the supportive housing project.
- Valley submits CPA proposal for \$500,000 for general costs of the project.
- Daily Hampshire Gazette Article describing Valley's CDBG proposal.

#### **January 2019**

- CDBG Advisory Committee recommends funding Valley CDC's proposal.
- Daily Hampshire Gazette article about Valley CDC's project moving forward.
- Valley CDC purchases property at 132 Northampton Road.

- Location and number of units made public.

### **February—March 2019**

- CPA Committee discusses Valley CDC's \$500,000 CPA proposal.
- The Housing Trust discussed progress and process of Valley CDC's project.
- The Town submits CDBG application to State, including Valley CDC's request for \$200,000.

### **April 2019**

- Daily Hampshire Gazette Article about Valley CDC's FY20 CPA Proposal for \$500,000 for the project.
- April 24<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 p.m. – Town Council Community Resources Committee meets and recommends CPA funds for 132 Northampton Road project
- April 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m. – Valley CDC holds an informational meeting to present development plans to abutters within 300 ft. and hear comments [in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 11, parties in interest are defined as follows: "Parties in interest" as used in this chapter shall mean the petitioner, abutters, owners of land directly opposite on any public or private street or way, and abutters to the abutters within three hundred feet of the property line of the petitioner as they appear on the most recent applicable tax list, notwithstanding that the land of any such owner is located in another city or town, the planning board of the city or town, and the planning board of every abutting city or town.]

### **May-June 2019**

- Town Council reviews and discusses Valley CDC's project and their CPA proposal.
- The Town receives comments from the community, including neighbors with questions and concerns about the project
- June 24<sup>th</sup> – Open Meeting of the Residents
- June 25 – Finance Committee review of CPAC request
- July 1 – Town Council votes on CPAC request

## **WHAT TO EXPECT GOING FORWARD**

The following timeline assumes that Valley CDC moves forward with the project, submitting the required information and documentation to begin the permitting process. The project application is expected to be submitted and reviewed through a 40B Comprehensive Permit by the Town's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). It is estimated that this review process will take 4-6 months to complete.

### **Month 1**

- Valley CDC submits Project Eligibility request to Subsidizing Agency, beginning the 40B application process.
- Once Valley CDC submits its request to the Subsidizing Agency, the Subsidizing Agency sends a notification to the "Chief Elected Official" and schedules a site visit.
- The Town then has 30 days to submit comments to the Subsidizing Agency in response to the Project Eligibility request.
- The notice and project eligibility (PE) application will be posted on the town's website and sent to relevant boards, committees and departments for comment; information about the project will be posted online; members of the public may then submit letters of comment, probably to the Planning Department staff; the Town will also set up an online comment process for members of the public to submit comments online.
- All public comments will be sent to the Subsidizing Agency
- The Subsidizing Agency will issue a Decision (either a Project Eligibility Letter – PEL – or a denial) at the end of the comment period; it can take varying amounts of time for the agency to issue a Decision;
- The developer (Valley CDC), the "Chief Elected Official" and the ZBA receive a copy of the Decision;
- The Decision will then be posted online.

### **Months 2-3**

- Assuming the Subsidizing Agency issues a Project Eligibility Letter (PEL), Valley CDC can submit its 40B Comprehensive Permit application to the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- The 40B Comprehensive Permit application consists of an application form, a list of requested waivers from requirements of the Zoning Bylaw and other town requirements, if applicable, a set of site plans, including civil engineering and architectural drawings and floor plans, describing the project, a management plan describing how the property will be managed, and information about proposed rents to be charged for the units; there is also a fee charged to the applicant to cover the cost of the review; and an application to the Assessor's Office for a list of abutters to the property within 300 feet of the property line;
- Application materials will be posted online.

**Months 4-6**

- Once Valley CDC submits its 40B Comprehensive Permit application, the ZBA has 30 days in which to open a public hearing on the project.
- Notice of the public hearing will be published in the Daily Hampshire Gazette and sent to abutters (those who own property within 300 feet of the property proposed for development) as well as surrounding towns.
- The Zoning Board of Appeals will open its public hearing, which may last for several sessions during which the public may submit comments.
- Within 180 days from the opening of the public hearing the ZBA must render a decision.
- There are opportunities throughout the public hearing process for members of the public, boards and committees to submit comments to the ZBA, both in writing and in person at the public hearing.
- The positive votes of three out of five ZBA members are required to approve a Comprehensive Permit (40B) project.

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