



Preservation Goals and Needs Assessment

Town of Harvard Community Preservation Committee - Spring 2010

"Rural conservation calls for the foresight to manage change: to minimize its negative effects and to use it to improve the community's economic vitality, employment and educational opportunities, municipal services, and civic amenities. We believe change can occur while respecting natural areas, retaining agriculture, and preserving diverse cultural and historic resources. Indeed, rural communities should demand no less."

Samuel N. Stokes et al in Saving America's Countryside, A Guide to Rural Conservation.

BACKGROUND

The Community Preservation Act (MGL chapter 44B) was enacted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2000 because critical preservation activities (historic, open space, recreation space, and community housing) were deemed essential to maintaining the character of the cities and towns of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Included in the Act are provisions for towns to receive matching funds from a state Community Preservation Trust Fund, based on each town's own preservation tax surcharge collections. The Harvard Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and Community Preservation Fund (CPF) were authorized by vote of a Special Town Meeting in 2001. Four members of the committee are elected at town elections to serve on the CPC for three year terms. In addition to those elected by the public, membership includes one representative from each of the following town boards: Historical Commission, Housing Authority, Park and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board. The CPC meets monthly in open meetings; on an annual basis it solicits and reviews grant applications, interviews all grant applicants, and provides recommendations for CPF appropriations to be included in the warrant for Annual Town Meeting. CPC also undertakes periodic review of the town's preservation goals and needs, of which this document is the result.

PRESERVATION GOALS AND NEEDS IDENTIFICATION

The state statute recommends that the CPC study both the long and short term preservation needs of the Town. This study should also aid in the development of criteria for evaluating proposed acquisitions and initiatives, prioritization of projects and determination of their financial impacts. In the fall of 2002 the Harvard

Community Preservation Committee formed three “Preservation Study Groups” to assist the CPC in the development and identification of Preservation Goals and Needs for the Town of Harvard, as required by the state law. The study groups were created to enlist the help of both public and private entities in Harvard that are committed to preservation activities. That effort in 2002 led to the first “goals and needs” document, which was published by the CPC in 2003. While informal reviews of that original document have occurred over the last several years, this report reflects the first significant update. CPC again invited input and comment from town boards and organizations with an interest in the four main areas that the CPF can impact, and also reviewed relevant studies and documents, including the 2006 Heritage Landscape Inventory Report, the 2009 update to the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the 2002 Town Master Plan, and the updated Affordable Housing Production Plan, among others, to generate this updated “Preservation Goals and Needs Assessment.”

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

“The open spaces are the “voids” which give meaning to the “solids”...the areas which provide the balance in our lives, with contrast between natural and man-made, between living, growing things and buildings, pavement or mechanical devices.”

Charles Eliot, Planning for Harvard (1969)

Under the Community Preservation Act, “Open Space” includes but is not limited to land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, fresh water marshes and other wetlands, river, stream, lake and pond frontage, lands to protect scenic vistas, and land for wildlife or nature preserve.

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION IN HARVARD

Both natural and cultural resources are critical elements of the Town’s “rural character.” These two elements form a unified whole, which is an important part of the extant fabric of Harvard and merits protection. The community recognizes that scenic vistas and visual corridors, which may be part of a specific historic or natural setting, are equally important and deserve protection. In Harvard, significant wildlife habitat, environmentally sensitive areas, sweeping vistas and agricultural landscapes endure today almost entirely because of local initiative. Residents value open space as an emblem of their town’s rural character and the quality of life that attracts people to Harvard.

Harvard currently benefits from an extensive inventory of preserved open space owned and managed by a variety of entities. This includes land owned by the town under the auspices of the Conservation Commission, land and preservation restrictions owned by the Harvard Conservation Trust, as well as regional areas managed by the state and federal government. The latter include Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area, Delaney Wildlife Management Area, open space at Devens, and the Oxbow National

Wildlife Refuge.

OPEN SPACE GOALS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Protection and preservation of natural resources, including: streams, wetlands, aquifers, Bare Hill Pond, and other recharge areas, non-fragmented forests and wildlife habitats and scenic vistas.
2. Acquisition or other preservation of open space that connects existing parcels, especially in support of the “greenbelt” concept. Also acquisition of trail linkages and/or trail easements that connect existing protected land.
3. Preservation of orchards & farms.
4. Enhancement of common space in or near village centers, including the town center, Still River, and Shaker Village.
5. Acquisition or other preservation of land that improves access to conservation and recreation land, for both parking and improved handicapped accessibility.
6. Management and stewardship of Town-owned Conservation Land.

CPC SUPPORT OF OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

In evaluating applications and proposals for open space preservation, CPC will give preference to those projects that address as many of the following criteria as possible:

1. Permanently protect important wildlife habitat, particularly areas that include locally significant biodiversity; variety of habitats with a diversity of geologic features and types of vegetation and endangered habitat or species of plant or animal.
2. Preserve active agricultural use.
3. Provide opportunities for passive recreation and/or environmental education.
4. Protect or enhance wildlife corridors, promote connectivity of habitat or prevent fragmentation of habitats.
5. Provide connections with existing trails, protected open space or potential trail linkages.
6. Preserve scenic views.
7. Border a scenic road.
8. Protect drinking water quantity and quality.
9. Provide flood control/storage.
10. Preserve and protect important surface water bodies, including streams, wetlands, vernal pools and/or riparian zones.
11. Buffer for protected open space, or historic resources

PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND

Since adopting the Community Preservation Act in 2001, the town has voted just over \$1mm in preservation funds to preserve open space, including the following:

1. Acquisition of additional conservation land
2. Transfers to the Conservation Fund for future acquisitions of land,
3. Initiatives to preserve Bare Hill Pond from eutrophication due to invasive species infestation.

RECREATION

Under the Community Preservation Act, "Recreation Use" is 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. "Recreational use" shall not include horse or dog racing or the use of land for a stadium, gymnasium or similar structure. The Act provides that CPA funds may be expended on "... the acquisition, creation, and preservation of land for recreation use ... and for rehabilitation or restoration of ... land for recreational use ...that is acquired or created" under the CPA. As of this writing, Senate Bill 90, which expands the allowable uses of CPA funds for recreation, is working its way through the legislative approval process on Beacon Hill.

RECREATION IN HARVARD

Harvard abounds with recreation opportunities, mostly centered on Bare Hill Pond and conservation land. The Park & Recreation Commission manages the town beach on the pond, and also oversees several playing fields that are primarily used for soccer, lacrosse, baseball, and softball. Four tennis courts and a basketball court behind The Bromfield School are accessible to the public, as is the 400 meter track at Harvard Park. Over 100 acres of town-owned land are dedicated to recreational use, in addition to the trail system that criss-crosses and connects much of Harvard's 1600+ acres of conservation land. The "trail keepers" of the Harvard Conservation Trust take primary responsibility for trail upkeep and basic maintenance on both town-owned and trust-owned conservation land

RECREATION GOALS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Acquisition or other preservation of recreation space that is appropriate for a variety of age groups, abilities and activities, including biking & walking trails and pathways.
2. Acquisition of land that is suitable for future recreation activities.

CPC SUPPORT OF RECREATION INITIATIVES

In evaluating applications and proposals for recreation projects, CPC will give preference to those projects that address as many of the following criteria as possible:

1. Support multiple recreation uses.
2. Serve a significant number of residents.
3. Expand the range of recreational opportunities available to town residents of all ages.
4. Jointly benefit Conservation Commission and Park & Recreation Commission initiatives by promoting recreation such as biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing.
5. Promote the creative use of railway and other corridors to create safe and healthful non-motorized transportation opportunities.

PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND

Since adopting the Community Preservation Act in 2001, the town has voted just over \$80,000 in preservation funds to create or restore recreation assets, including the following:

1. Restore tennis and basketball courts behind The Bromfield School.
2. Study the structural integrity of the boathouse foundation near the town beach.
3. Develop a plan for, and create a trail system linking town center with playing fields at Depot Road and Lancaster County Road.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

"We build on foundations already established – but sometimes have to rebuild or reinforce the foundations, and change the superstructure for new or changed uses. Planning must therefore be directed toward the correction of past mistakes or present trends, and toward the prevention of future errors and seizure of opportunities for desirable change."

Charles Eliot, Planning for Harvard (1969)

Under the Community Preservation Act, an historic resource is defined to include a building, structure, vessel, or other real property that is either:

- listed or eligible for listing on the state register of historic places; or
- determined by the local Historic Commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the city or town.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN HARVARD

Private individuals and organizations have organized and executed the majority of the activities related to Historic Preservation in Harvard. The groups responsible for keeping Harvard's history alive include private homeowners, The Harvard Historical Society, Fruitlands Museums, Freedom's Way, Harvard's Historical Commission, The Harvard Conservation Trust, The Harvard Public Library, and The Harvard Public School System. The responsibility for the protection, stabilization and rehabilitation of Harvard's historic resources falls on all of our shoulders as a community.

Harvard should strive to develop the same culture of stewardship toward historic preservation that it has applied to open space protection. Understanding that buildings are not isolated objects but are interpreted within their cultural settings, Harvard should preserve not only its significant buildings but also their surroundings, or historical context.

Harvard possesses an inventory of approximately 500 historic properties that include historic landscapes as well as ancillary features such as barns, sheds, stone walls and mill sites. These are documented in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Inventory of Historical and Archaeological Assets. These elements are major contributors to Harvard's rural character and they are at risk. Every effort should be

made to continue to identify, inventory and protect them.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Create an inventory of historically significant places, structures and landscapes.
2. Assess the condition of inventory
3. Estimate the cost of restoration and ongoing preservation
4. Identify and prioritize restoration projects according to historic and educational value and risk of loss.
5. Identify historic resources for addition to State and or Federal Register of Historic Places.

CPC SUPPORT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION INITIATIVES

In evaluating applications and proposals for historic preservation projects, CPC will give preference to those projects that address as many of the following criteria as possible:

1. Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate historic, cultural, architectural, and/or archaeological resources of significance, especially those that are threatened.
2. Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate town-owned properties with features or resources of historical significance.
3. Protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate the historical function of a property or site.
4. Demonstrates a public benefit.
5. Provide long term protection for the historic resource via an Historic Preservation Restriction.

PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND

Since adopting the Community Preservation Act in 2001, the town has voted almost \$400,000 in preservation funds to preserve or restore historic assets, including the following:

1. Restoration of the exterior and landscape of the Hildreth House.
2. Restoration of meeting space and creation of handicapped accessibility at Town Hall.
3. Preservation of the Shaker Herb Drying House.

AFFORDABLE COMMUNITY HOUSING

Planning for Harvard Massachusetts, the town's first comprehensive planning report, prepared more than 30 years ago, acknowledged the mounting pressure for greater variety of housing types, particularly low and middle income housing for the elderly, public employees and young people. Two subsequent master plans, the latest in 2002, and an affordable housing plan, have echoed the goals of retaining a population diverse in age and income while protecting the town's natural resources and historic built assets. In 2005, pursuant to Chapter 491 of the Acts of 2004, Harvard established the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund (MAHTF). The purpose of the MAHTF is to

provide for the creation and preservation of affordable housing in the town for low and moderate income households and that count towards the town's subsidized housing inventory. Under the Community Preservation Act, the CPC is authorized to support housing for low and moderate income individuals, including low or moderate income seniors through funding for the acquisition, creation, preservation, support (including funding for the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund), and certain rehabilitation and/or restoration of community housing projects.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN HARVARD

Affordable housing in Harvard continues to fall far short of the goals set by the State and the town's affordable housing plan. As of September 2009 61 housing units (approximately 2.8% of the total housing units in Harvard) are credited as affordable housing units. Projects that were planned to add affordable units, such as the project at Trail Ridge (with a potential for 13 affordable units) and Harvard Common (with a potential for 3 affordable units) are either proceeding slowly or have been cancelled (Village at Harvard) due to current economic conditions. In March 2009 a Special Permit was granted for a 42 unit affordable senior housing project on Ayer Road. This project was supported by MAHTF utilizing CPA funds and has received DHCD approval under the State's Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

AFFORDABLE COMMUNITY HOUSING GOALS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Harvard's 2002 Master Plan identified the need for the development of a detailed implementation strategy to guide Harvard's efforts to expand its supply of affordable housing. In December 2004 the town developed an Affordable Housing Plan that was approved by Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in January 2005. This plan was updated and submitted to DHCD in January 2010. The plan identifies the housing needs in Harvard, establishes goals for meeting the state's affordable housing requirements and identifies a strategy to meet these goals. In 2004 the DHCD established a goal of 216 affordable housing units based on 2000 census data. Based on this data Harvard (as of September 2009) has a shortfall of 155 units and an affordable housing production requirement of 11 units per year.

AFFORDABLE COMMUNITY HOUSING GOALS

1. Meeting local housing needs along a full range of incomes, ages and special needs, while promoting diversity and the stability of individuals and families living in Harvard
2. Ensuring that new community housing is harmonious with the existing community
3. Leveraging other public and private resources to the greatest extent possible.
4. Meeting the 10 percent state recommended standard for affordable housing

CPC SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY HOUSING

In supporting the town's community housing goals the CPC evaluates applications for CPA funding for community housing projects that address as many of the following criteria as possible:

1. The project contributes to the goal of affordable housing as defined by MGL. C. 40B

2. The project provides housing that is harmonious in design and scale with the surrounding community
3. The project intermingles affordable and market rate housing at levels that exceed state requirements for percentage of affordable units pursuant to chapter 40B.
4. The project ensures long-term affordability.
5. The project addresses the needs of a range of qualified households, including very low, low and low-to moderate income families and individuals.
6. The project promotes use of existing buildings or construction on previously developed or Town owned sites.
7. The project converts market rate units to affordable units.

ACTIVITIES FUNDED BY CPC

Since its establishment in 2001, the CPC has supported a number of projects related to affordable housing with funding of just over \$500,000 through 2009, including the following:

1. Transfers to the MAHTF to support various affordable housing projects.
2. Housing Partnership efforts to develop affordable housing plans and site assessments.
3. Housing Authority support of a senior housing project.

Harvard's CPC expects to continue its informal reviews of this document annually and commits to a significant update every 5 years, taking into account updated planning goals across town boards and shifting priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

Town of Harvard Community Preservation Committee
March 17, 2010

Steven Rowse, Chairman & Treasurer – elected term expires May 2010

Donald Boyce, Vice Chairman – elected term expires May 2011

Deborah Thomsen, Clerk – elected term expires May 2012

Chris Cutler – appointed representative of Historic Commission

Charles Gorss – appointed representative of Conservation Commission

Margaret Grogan – appointed representative of Park & Recreation Commission

Bruce Nickerson – appointed representative of the Housing Authority

Joseph Sudol – appointed representative of the Planning Board