

Affordable Housing for Amherst

Due to the combination of Covid restrictions and the timing of proposals, there was less activity in the past year than in previous years.

The major projects of the Affordable Housing Trust, and the Coalition of which the League is a member, were a new opportunity for affordable housing on Belchertown Road and a series of forums about specific issues.

Belchertown Road and East Street School

Proponents of affordable housing learned in the spring that parcels on Belchertown Road across from Colonial Village and east of the gas station were for sale. Determined work by John Hornik of the Housing Trust and town staff led to the town purchasing the land. Since previous efforts to develop housing at the site of the East Street School had not received much response from developers, at least partly because of the small number of units that would be possible, it was decided to combine the two sites in east Amherst. At this time a Request for Proposals for the combined two sites is nearing completion.

132 Northampton Road

Work continues on the Studio Apartment Project on Northampton Road. After the Department of Housing and Community Development accepted this project within the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (in March 2020) the Zoning Board of Appeals held extensive hearings on the project. There was considerable public comment and questions from ZBA members. The project was given a permit, with conditions, and Valley Community Development is moving forward, working on funding. The proposed building will be a Net Zero building.

Housing Forum

The League co-sponsored forums with the Housing Trust: "Creating a Path to Home Ownership," "Racial Equity and Housing in Amherst," and "The Climate Crisis and Affordable Housing." All provided important information. Recordings of the first two forums are available on the Town website, and the third will be soon. The recordings are in the section for the Amherst Affordable Housing Trust Fund.