

Network Letter in Support of Amherst Affordable Housing Development

The Valley Community Development Corporation is proposing to develop 28 supportive studio units of affordable housing in Amherst. Unfortunately, some residents of the neighborhood are organizing intensely in opposition. Below is the text of a letter the Network sent to the Amherst Town Council, FYI.

The Town of Amherst is hosting a **COMMUNITY FORUM: Monday, June 24, 6 pm Town Hall, Amherst**. This will be an open discussion.

The Amherst Affordable Housing Coalition encourages all to attend: "Even if you do not plan to speak, your presence alone will be important. Wear your "I Support Affordable Housing" button."

If your organization would like to weigh in with positive neighborhood experiences around affordable housing developments, please do so! Email towncouncil@Amherstma.gov (this email address reaches the entire council).

The Network's letter in support:

Dear Amherst Town Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness ("Network") in support of the Valley CDC's proposal to develop 28 supportive studio apartment units at

132 Northampton Road.

The Network, which includes hundreds of partners from every sector across the four Western Counties, creates collaborative solutions to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach. Our [Leadership Council](#) reflects the broad-based support of the Network's mission.

As I'm sure you are aware, Massachusetts faces a significant affordable housing crisis, and Amherst is no exception. Based on a recently released report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, we know that for every 100 extremely low income households in Massachusetts there are only 48.6 units available. **In Amherst the gap is even larger, with only 42 units available for every 100 extremely low income individuals.**

We are extremely fortunate to have Valley CDC in our community, leading the way in the local response to this affordable housing crisis. This particular proposal is extremely sound, reflecting evidence-based best practices: well-designed housing units with available support services in a location that is accessible to public transportation and employment. It also provides affordable housing for those individuals earning between approximately \$25,000-\$49,000/year, providing homes for those with a mix of incomes and experiences.

What an exciting opportunity! Data from across the region and the country tells us these developments work. While we can have compassion for the fear of change, even for the fear of difference, it is our collective duty to push forward with housing policy that brings us closer to the healthy communities we all seek and reflects the values of inclusivity and opportunity that are true to the Amherst community.

The Network and its many partners stand at the ready to assist in making this development a success for residents and

neighbors alike. Please let me know how we can help.
Thanks so much for your leadership and commitment.

Best,

Pamela

Pamela Schwartz, Director

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

413-219-5658

<http://westernmasshousingfirst.org>