

Amherst Affordable Housing Forum: 10/25, 7 pm

Working the Amherst Housing Puzzle: A Community Problem Solving Forum

Dear All,

We invite you to participate in next Wednesday's Amherst Housing Forum (October 25). We have new data and new ideas to share with the community. We expect to engage in interesting and valuable conversations about what we can do to address our local housing problems.

During the past 10-15 years, Amherst has lost an estimated 800 households with children under 18, according to US Census data. Significant numbers of homeless individuals are served each year by local service providers, but rarely placed in housing. Barriers to developing new affordable housing in Amherst for both individuals and families often appear insurmountable. What can we do?

These are the issues to be addressed by this Forum. We are bringing together persons from both within and outside Amherst to lend their knowledge and experience to these issues. But most importantly we are convening the community to discuss and develop ideas about what we can do to make changes.

This is a collaboration of the Amherst League of Women Voters, the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, Valley Community Development Corporation, and the Unitarian-Universality Society of Amherst. It is set for **Wednesday, October 25, 7 P.M.** in the Social Hall of the Unitarian Universalist Society, 121 N. Pleasant St, Amherst.

The sponsors wish to encourage the broadest possible participation in this Forum. This invitation was also sent to other individuals and organizations in Amherst. However, we probably did not include everyone we should have. So please forward this to anyone you know who might be interested, even if that results in some duplication. Also, a flyer about the event is attached for posting.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

John Hornik, Chair, Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

Rebecca Fricke, President, Amherst League of Women Voters

Joanne Campbell, Executive Director, Valley Community Development Corporation

P.S. Looking for more detail?

Our plan is to organize the forum into three parts:

(1) An introduction and presentation of what the Trust and the Town are doing to address issues of both affordable housing and homelessness in the past year.

(2) This will be followed by a panel presentation on the development of a small, studio apartment building in Amherst to serve the needs of persons who have very low incomes or are homeless.

(3) The final segment will break the larger group into five smaller groups to discuss actions that could be taken to further address these problems. They are as follows:

Studio Apartments: Continued discussion.

Encouraging and Supporting Development: How can Amherst best leverage available resources to maximize affordable housing? What are the barriers to affordable housing? What changes are needed?

Preventing homelessness: outreach counselors - small investment for significant returns; useful models, effective strategies

Finding homes: recruiting landlords; caseworkers to assist individuals and families in getting housed; useful models, effective strategies

Changing the Amherst housing market: Developing Town and University policies to assure greater access to housing.