

**TOWN OF LINCOLN
HOUSING PLAN - INTERIM REPORT
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Prepared by the Lincoln Housing Commission

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CONSOLIDATED HOUSING PLAN

In 2003, the Lincoln Housing Task Force, consisting of members of the Housing Commission, Lincoln Foundation, Rural Land Foundation, Council on Aging, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, and an outside consultant, produced a Consolidated Housing Plan for Lincoln. At that time, a Strategic Plan for housing in Lincoln was developed. Since then, there has been action taken on most of the items identified in this plan.

The Housing Commission, working with a similar task force, intends to update this plan in 2011 to reflect the changes since the 2003 report and the developing needs of Town. This timing will coincide with the results of the 2010 Federal Census.

This document is intended to serve as an interim report on the Plan of 2003, including a look at Town housing needs for the near future.

Since this report was submitted in 2003, the Town has significantly changed strategy by passing the Community Preservation Act and establishing an Affordable Housing Trust.

Community Preservation Act (CPA) The CPA was passed by the state legislature in 2000 to allow cities and towns to exercise control over local planning decisions. Lincoln voted to adopt it at the March 2002 Annual Town Meeting, and voted in the November 2002 election to place a 3% surcharge on property tax bills. The State matches these funds up to 100%. CPA funds can be used only for land conservation, historic preservation, recreation, and affordable housing.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) By law, local legislatures must appoint a committee of local people to draw up plans for use of CPA funds, which are subject to local comment and approval. In Lincoln, the CPC consists of nine members. Five members are appointed by their respective Commissions or Boards (Conservation Commission, Historic Commission, Housing Commission, Recreation Commission, and the Planning Board). Four members are appointed by the Selectmen. All serve for three years. The CPC meets from September to March to analyze proposals and determine which proposals should be presented to Town Meeting for funding. The mission of the CPC regarding affordable housing is to preserve and increase Lincoln's affordable housing in order to foster economic, racial/ethnic and age diversity among its citizenry.

Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) The state allows a city or town to appropriate CPA money in any year to an affordable housing trust fund. Lincoln Town Meeting created the AHT in 2006 to hold funds designated for affordable housing. The AHT has the flexibility and funds to respond to market opportunities to acquire land or buildings for the purpose of affordable housing. In 2008, Town Meeting authorized \$900,000 from the CPC to fund the Trust. Using these funds, the AHT contributed 11 units of affordable housing.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2003

In 2003, the following were identified as populations whose needs should be addressed

- An elderly population that is aging in place
- Parents of METCO students
- Citizens with disabilities
- Town employees
- Young, first-time homebuyers

ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE 2003

In the five years since the 2003 report, the Housing Agencies, working with the Board of Selectmen, Town staff, and other Town Boards, took several steps to address these needs.

Sunnyside Lane Three additional units of affordable housing were built on Sunnyside Lane. Two modular units were built and installed by Pope Industries, one of which is a barrier free accessible unit. A one-bedroom apartment was created by adding onto an existing town-owned property also on Sunnyside Lane. The three Sunnyside units added in 2007 were awarded to applicants based on a lottery system approved by the State. All rental units managed by the Town have a local preference. Therefore, renters with Lincoln ties, including residents, employees, and METCO families, are given priority over those without. These properties were funded with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, as well as with donations from the Codman Trust and the Lincoln Foundation. Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School students built the accessory apartment with volunteer labor. Initial tenants for the units were determined using a lottery system, with preference given to Lincoln residents, employees, and families of METCO students. Subsequent tenants are found using the Housing Commission waiting list, which has the same local preference.

Minuteman Commons This 55-plus condominium development was completed in 2007, increasing the town's affordable housing stock by 6 units. One of these is also handicap compliant.

Buy Downs In addition to the above 6 units, the Town used CPA funds to reduce the price of two units at Minuteman Commons to an affordable amount. These two units were added in late 2008.

The Groves The Deaconess project, The Groves, had their official groundbreaking in December 2007, resulting in the addition of 30 units of affordable housing. In addition to the rental units, The Groves meets an identified need for elderly housing with some assisted living options.

Group Homes Two group homes for handicapped citizens located in Town in 2008, resulting in 9 units added to the Subsidized Housing Inventory (group homes add to the SHI according to the number of bedrooms). Both of these homes are owned and operated by private agencies, with State support. CPA funds contributed to the purchase and renovations of these homes in the form of a second mortgage. In exchange for Town support towards these purchases, the Town holds deed restrictions that would return the Town's contribution in the event of a change of use that would result in the loss of the affordable units. The Town also holds a Right of First Refusal to purchase these homes, if they are to be sold. There have been group homes in Lincoln prior to these two; however, these are the first to be counted in our Subsidized Housing Inventory.

Accessory Apartment Affordability Program Town Boards encourage affordable accessory apartments through special permit incentives. These incentives are tied to a commitment on the part of the unit owner to rent them under the affordability terms established by the Housing Commission as reflected in the current Accessory Apartment Bylaw. The State did not approve our initial application to include these units in our Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), and at this time the Commission is not pursuing such a plan. Regardless, these units do add to the diversity of housing stock in Town. This program will be addressed further in our 2011 Plan.

TOUGH ISSUES STILL AHEAD

Lincoln Woods In the mid 1970s the Rural Land Foundation purchased land from the Codman Estate for the first major affordable housing project in town known as Lincoln Woods. This centrally located mixed income housing project contains the bulk of Lincoln's affordable housing. It is operated as a coop with low income, middle income, and market rate units, all 125 of which are counted in Lincoln's Subsidized Housing Inventory toward our mandated target of 10%. A combination of necessary capital improvements for the housing units and the associated septic treatment plant along with appreciation in the equity value of the coop units has created finance and marketability problems that threaten the long-term viability of the community.

Presently the Lincoln Woods Board of Directors is investigating options for addressing these issues. The Town and its housing agencies are assisting in these efforts as best they can in order to preserve this valuable housing resource and will continue to support Lincoln Woods in finding and implementing solutions.

Battle Road Farm In 1986 the Town of Lincoln purchased and rezoned a 30 acre parcel of land at the northern edge of Town. The parcel was under pressure for development and the Town wanted to make certain it was utilized in appropriate ways. Some of the land was carved out for an office park and the remainder was to be used for 120 new homes. This office park, Lincoln North, played a critical role in financing BRF, and remains a key taxpayer in town.

The Town partnered with Keen Associates which chose William Rawn Associates as architects. They designed a New England village cluster of homes. Each of the units resembles a single family farmhouse but contains two to four townhouses. The materials used are traditional clapboards with steep pitched roofs and welcoming porches. The units are centered around a “village green” and there is a large meeting house and shared community gardens.

Forty percent or 48 of the units are affordable. The concept of home ownership for affordable housing was designed to allow individuals an opportunity to build up equity and then be able to sell their units and move into single family homes in town. This laudable goal has been thwarted by high condo fees, special assessments, higher property taxes and rapidly rising home prices that - until recently - have prevented mobility.

We have learned from our experiences with Battle Road Farm that we have to establish limits on increasing costs so that the units truly remain affordable. The owners and the condominium association at Battle Road Farm have recently taken a very responsible and forward looking stance for necessary repairs and maintenance of the facility. The Lincoln Foundation which serves as the Town’s agent in transferring ownership and insuring continued affordability has assisted some unit owners with no interest loans to meet their special assessment obligations.

We have put these lessons into practice at Minuteman Commons where we have placed caps on the increases in condo fees.

Hanscom Air Base There are 850 units of housing located on Base. The houses were constructed by the federal government to provide housing for Hanscom personnel. In its current configuration, the Base operates as a self-sufficient community with the federal government solely responsible for providing all forms of services (education, public safety, public works, etc.) to those who reside in Base housing.

As long as the federal government continues to own the land on which the housing is located, it retains “exclusive legal jurisdiction” which limits the town’s authority and its responsibilities. However, all of the housing on base lies within the Town of Lincoln’s boundaries. In the event of a base closure, Lincoln could – under various scenarios – be faced with the prospect of reabsorbing the land and housing back into the community.

Recently, the federal government awarded a contract to a private development company to undertake a major housing improvement program. Most of the units will either be fully renovated or replaced. The privatization agreement does permit the developer to lease housing to non-military affiliated individuals if there are insufficient numbers of military affiliated individuals interested in residing on base.

The Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator led a four community effort to study various mission realignment and base closure scenarios and their implications for Lincoln. An extensive report entitled “Hanscom AFB Pre-BRAC Planning” was issued on behalf of the four host communities in 2005.

There are currently 2,366 residential units in the Town of Lincoln. In any typical year, the Town adds no more than a dozen units of new housing. The relatively modest and predictable growth rate enables the town to plan and finance its service obligations without major year-to-year fluctuations.

If Hanscom's land and housing were ceded back to Lincoln, it would be difficult to exaggerate the complexity of the planning challenges – not to mention the financial challenges. The net annual cost of reabsorbing Hanscom has been estimated at \$6 million.

The Town has long enjoyed its relationship with Hanscom. The base contributes mightily to the state and regional economy. Our school systems are linked, with benefits accruing to both parties. The high tech mission of the base results in many synergies with Massachusetts business and academic institutions. It is clearly in our best interest that Hanscom remain and thrive.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

LINCOLN AND 40B

By next year, Lincoln could find itself open to development under Comprehensive Permits under Chapter 40B, which allows developers, promising minimal levels of affordable housing, an avenue to avoid local land use standards. Chapter 40B was enacted in 1969 and enables developers to bypass local zoning restrictions for housing development if at least 20-25% of their units have long-term affordability restrictions. Current zoning restricts housing construction to one house per 2-acre lot; a 40B developer could put as many as eight homes on a single acre. Communities with 10% or more of their Housing stock in affordable housing are not required to accept these developments

With the inclusion of affordable housing in the above-listed developments, Lincoln reached its goal of 10% affordability until 2010. In 2010, a new federal census will result in a change to the calculation. The SHI (affordable housing percentage) is calculated as follows

$$\text{SHI \%} = [\# \text{ of SHI units}] / [\text{total housing units as per Federal census}]$$

The numerator changes as SHI units are added to (or removed from) the Town's inventory. The denominator only changes every 10 years, when the Federal census is completed. Because the Town's total housing stock has increased since 2000, the date of the last census, we can predict to a fair degree of accuracy where the SHI % will fall in 2010. At this time, and with the above additions to our SHI since 2003, we anticipate that the Town will be short of 10% by 5 – 7 SHI units.

LOOKING AHEAD

Avoiding a hostile 40B takeover is far from being the Town's primary reason for planning for affordable housing in Lincoln. However, given the timing of the census, the relatively short amount of time available to increase our SHI, and the potential cost to the Town if we do not, at this time the 10% target takes on great importance.

The Housing Commission, working with Town Boards and the Lincoln Foundation, has identified some potential strategies to work on in the near future to address this shortfall. These include, but are not limited to

- Additional buy downs
- Work with Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School to see if we can encourage them to establish two of their rental homes as affordable
- Work with private citizens or non-profit organizations to arrange long-term affordable rentals
- Additional apartment or condominium developments (“Friendly” 40B)
- Accessory apartments
- Land to be used for saving and moving smaller at-risk properties identified as historic or singular
- Lincoln Station area, a long-term potential mixed use project

Subsidized Housing Inventory

Housing per 2000 Census		2076	
+ New Homes	40		
+ Minuteman Commons	32		
+ Deaconess	193		
+ Accessory Apartments	25		
Total	290		290
Projected by 2010			
New Homes	5		
Accessory Apartments	5		
Total	10		10
Total Projected 2010	2376		
Affordable Units Needed 2010			
10% of Total			238
Affordable Units			
Rental Units			
Lincoln Woods	125		
The Groves Apartments	30		
Town Owned Rental Units			
Codman Farmhouse	2		
Pierce House	1		
Tower Road	2		
Sunnyside Lane	4		
Home Ownership Program			
Battle Road Farm	48		
Old Concord Turnpike	2		
Greenridge	1		
Minuteman Commons	8		
Dept. Of Disability Services			
Group homes	9		
Total	232		232
SHI Shortfall Today			6

Subsidized Housing Inventory Distribution

Project Name	Address	Type	SHI Units	Agency
Battle Road Farm	Old Bedford Road	Ownership	48	Mass Housing
Lincoln Woods	Lincoln Rd/Wells Rd	Rental	125	Mass Housing
Old Concord Turnpike Units	Old Concord Turnpike	Ownership	2	Dept. of Housing and Community Development
DDS Group Homes	2 Locations	Ownership	9	Dept. of Disability Services
Tower Road Units	Tower Road	Rental	2	DHCD
Codman Farm Farmhouse	Codman Road	Rental	2	DHCD
Pierce House Unit	Weston Road	Rental	1	DHCD
Sunnyside Lane Units	Sunnyside Lane	Rental	4	DHCD
Greenridge	Greenridge	Rental	1	DHCD
Minuteman Commons	82 Virginia Road	Ownership	8	DHCD
The Groves Apartments	17-19 Cambridge Turnpike	Rental	30	DHCD

Total SHI Units 232

Census 2000 Housing Units 2076
 Percent Subsidized 11.18%

Estimate 2010 Housing Units 2376
 Percent Subsidized 9.76%
 Units needed 238
 Units short 6

