

NORTHFIELD COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

NORTHFIELD COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN

A PLAN TO GUIDE THE DISBURSEMENT OF CPA FUNDS AS AUTHORIZED
BY THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

NOVEMBER 2021



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Use of the Community Preservation Act Funds	4
The Project Application Process	6
Project Application Guidelines	7
Evaluation Criteria for the Detailed Narrative	9
Historic Preservation	17
Open Space	14
Recreation	17
Affordable Housing	20

Introduction

About the Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a Massachusetts law that allows participating cities and towns to adopt a real estate tax surcharge of up to 3% in order to fund the four community preservation purposes of open space, historic preservation, community affordable housing, and recreation. In addition to the community tax surcharge, the state provides matching funds that are not less than 5% and not more than 100% of the funds raised by the community. The actual percentage varies from year-to-year dependent on the health of the Commonwealth's community preservation trust fund, which is funded by a surcharge on Registry of Deeds transactions.

CPA in Northfield

The town of Northfield adopted the CPA and local bylaw by popular vote in the fall of 2008. The Northfield bylaw adopted a rate of 3% for the property tax surcharge and established a Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Certain exemptions from the surcharge are available for any person who qualifies for low-income housing or low to moderate income senior housing in the town, as defined by Section 2 of the Community Preservation Act. In the fall of 2009, the town voted to reduce the surcharge to .5%. In the fall of 2018, a warrant article was put to vote to increase the surcharge to 1% but was voted down. The current surcharge continues on as .5%.

The CPC in Northfield is made up of nine members that include a member of the Conservation Committee, a member of the Historical Commission, a member of the Planning Board, a member of the Open Space Committee, a member of the Council on Aging, a member of the Recreation Commission, a member of the Finance Committee, and two members at large appointed by the Northfield Board of Selectmen.

Role of the Northfield Community Preservation Committee

The Community Preservation Committee has 2 main roles:

1. To develop a Community Preservation Plan working closely with town committees, department heads, and concerned citizens.
2. To make recommendations for the use of CPA funds. The Committee does not initiate projects; rather it collects and reviews proposals submitted by individuals or groups. The CPC then makes recommendations to town meeting regarding the use of funds. Only a vote at an annual or special town meeting can allocate and appropriate CPA funds.

THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN

The CPA mandates the creation of a Community Preservation Plan in each participating municipality, to be revised annually as local circumstances may change. This Plan serves as a guide to the types of

projects that are eligible for CPA funding and that are in keeping with the unique needs and priorities that have been identified by the citizens of Northfield.

The general purposes of the Plan are as follows:

- To establish clear criteria that form the basis of the CPC’s evaluation of applications for funding
- To establish the processes and timelines that the CPC will use in its review of applications
- To provide application forms and background information for applicants
- To inform both applicants and the public of the CPC’s goals and of its commitment to an open and transparent approach to reaching its recommendations
- To provide townspeople and town officials with the background information they need in reviewing the CPC’s recommendations

PROJECT APPLICATION PROCESS

In a typical year, the Community Preservation Committee will conduct an application process as follows:

CPA Public Informational Forum	November
Completed Applications Due	January 15 th
Meeting with Applicants	February
Application Approval Notification	March
Estimated Project Award	May (following Town Meeting)

Committee recommendations of projects eligible for CPA funding are reviewed by the Board of Selectman and approved by the residents of Northfield at the Annual Town Meeting (typically held on the first Monday in May). The committee may, under highly extraordinary circumstances, vote to accept applications that, because of market opportunities or other deadlines, require consideration outside of the normal funding cycles. Potential applicants who believe that their circumstances call for such unusual action may contact the committee chairs to discuss the possible submission of an off-cycle submission.

The committee also recognizes that, in some cases, preliminary work must be undertaken in order to complete a viable application. When this is the case, the CPC will consider applications for study grants that can be used to test feasibility and develop work plans that would result in a stronger CPA project.

Finally, applicants should be aware that not all projects will be funded, even if funds are available, and that in a given year funds may be carried over to subsequent years for future projects.

GENERAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Town of Northfield Community Preservation Committee gives preference to proposals which address as many of the following general criteria as possible:

- Eligible for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding according to the requirements described in the CPA legislation (Chapter 44B of Massachusetts General Laws)
- Consistent with various plans which are relevant to and utilized by the town regarding open space, recreation, historic resources and affordable housing
- Preserve and enhance the essential character of the town
- Protect resources that would otherwise be threatened
- Serve more than one CPA purpose or demonstrate why serving multiple needs is not feasible
- Demonstrate practicality and feasibility, and that the project can be implemented within budget and on schedule
- Leverage additional public and/or private funds (e.g. qualify the project for additional grants from other sources) or receive partial funding from other sources and/or voluntary contributions of goods and services
- Preserve or improve town-owned assets
- Receive endorsement from other municipal boards or departments and broad-based support from community members

CATEGORY SPECIFIC CRITERIA

In addition to the general criteria delineated above, there are category specific criteria which relate to the three program areas: Open Space and Recreation; Historic Preservation; and Community Housing. Category specific criteria are described in each of the sections of this Plan.

Use of the Community Preservation Act Funds

How CPA funds can and cannot be used

The CPA requires that communities spend, or set aside for future spending, a minimum of 10% of annual CPA receipts for: open space (excluding recreational purposes), historic preservation, and community housing. The remaining 70% of funds may be allocated to any one or a combination of the three main uses, including public recreational purposes, at the discretion of the Community Preservation Committee and subject to the approval of town meeting.

Committee Costs

Up to 5% of the annual CPA funds may be spent on the operation and administration costs of the CPC.

Incidental Project Costs

CPA funds may be used for site surveys, environmental assessments, historic or housing consultants, architectural and engineering fees, permit processing fees, construction consultants, financing consultants, legal and accounting fees, and similar costs associated with and incidental to the development of a CPA project.

Projects in Other Communities

CPA funds may be spent anywhere in Massachusetts, meaning communities are not confined to expending funds only within their jurisdiction. For example, this flexible provision allows a community to purchase land surrounding its water supply even if located in another city or town. CPA funding may also support inter-community cooperation on regional housing needs, allowing development that spans borders or shared development in one community that serves several towns. Another example is the coordinated efforts of several communities to establish a "heritage corridor" that celebrates the shared history of a region.

Leveraging CPA Funds

CPA funds may be used as a municipality's matching monies for state and federal grant programs that require a local match such as the Massachusetts Housing Partnerships' Soft Second Program, state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Self-Help program, Massachusetts Preservation Program Fund (MPPF), and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Massachusetts Forest Legacy program, Self-Help and Urban Self-Help programs. CPA funds can also be used as matching or starting monies to acquire grants from private organizations or individuals such as the Nature Conservancy or the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts, among others.

No Maintenance

CPA funds cannot be used for routine maintenance of existing facilities. For example, communities cannot use CPA funds to maintain a municipal park (such as mowing the lawn, emptying trash barrels or dumpsters, etc.) or to maintain a historic town hall (such as cleaning the common areas or paying for utilities, etc.).

No Supplanting

The CPA is directed toward augmenting municipal funds, not replacing existing funding. To this end, CPA funds may not be appropriated to pay for project costs that have already been appropriated from another source. Any CPA eligible costs for a project that are identified in a municipality's capital improvement program are eligible for funding under the Act, if the municipality has not made a prior funding commitment to pay for such costs.

The Project Application Process

In a typical year, the Community Preservation Committee will conduct an application process yearly as follows:

CPA Public Informational Forum	November
Completed Applications Due	January 15 th
Meeting with Applicants	February
Application Approval Notification	March
Estimated Project Award	May (following Town Meeting)

Committee recommendations of projects eligible for CPA funding are reviewed by the Board of Selectman and approved by the residents of Northfield at the Annual Town Meeting (typically held on the first Monday in May). The committee may, under highly extraordinary circumstances, vote to accept applications that, because of market opportunities or other deadlines, require consideration outside of the normal funding cycles. Potential applicants who believe that their circumstances call for such unusual action may contact the committee chairs to discuss the possible submission of an off-cycle submission.

The committee also recognizes that, in some cases, preliminary work must be undertaken in order to complete a viable application. When this is the case, the CPC will consider applications for study grants that can be used to test feasibility and develop work plans that would result in a stronger CPA project.

Finally, applicants should be aware that not all projects will be funded, even if funds are available, and that in a given year funds may be carried over to subsequent years for future projects.

Applications

- Application forms will be available at the town hall, library, and online at the CPC website (<https://www.northfieldma.gov/community-preservation-committee>).
- Starting in November, the CPC will advertise on the town's web site and in a local publication the fact that it will be accepting project applications through January 15th.
- Submitted applications will be for consideration for the following spring annual town meeting.

Time Sensitive Applications

- At the discretion of the CPC, applications for time sensitive projects which cannot wait for the usual winter submission window may be submitted and reviewed by the CPC at any time of year.

- These applications will be considered as described below (“CPC Consideration”), and if deemed appropriate and necessary, considered for possible referral to the annual town meeting or a special town meeting for approval.

CPC Consideration

- After the close of the application period, the CPC will review all proposed projects and determine which applications should be declined and which ones should go on for more extensive review.
- For those applications that have been chosen for further review, the CPC will invite the applicant to come to a public meeting and present their case as to how the project benefits the town and why it should be funded.
- The CPC will also solicit input from any appropriate town committee or department regarding a specific proposal.
- After the extended review process is completed, the CPC will vote in open session as to which proposals it will include on the town meeting warrant.
- The accepted proposals will be included in a town meeting article that will be presented to the Board of Selectmen prior to the close of the warrant for inclusion on the Town Meeting Warrant.

Town Meeting

- At the annual or special town meeting a member of the CPC will only read the warrant article for the proposed project’s CPA funding - it is the responsibility of the proposal’s applicant to present and defend their projects need for CPA funds to the Town residents.

Project Application Guidelines

Application Requirements

Applications **must** be submitted by **January 15th** at the Northfield Town Hall to be considered for recommendation at the spring annual Town Meeting. Applications may be delivered to the Town Clerk, placed in the secure Drop Box located outside the back door of the Town Hall, or mailed to: Community Preservation Committee, 69 Main Street, Northfield MA 01360.

General Guidelines

- Each project must be submitted to the Community Preservation Committee using the Project Submission Form as a cover sheet. **A detailed narrative** that addresses the general guidelines and applicable project specific guidelines as outlined within the Community Preservation Plan **must be attached** to the cover sheet.

- Applicants are encouraged to include any maps, diagrams, and/or photographs pertaining to the project. Letters of support for the project from community organizations or other sources may also be submitted
- The Community Preservation Committee may require additional (or more detailed) information to further clarify a submitted application.
- Applicants should provide two quotes and/or estimates for project costs that are dated within the past 2 years of time of the application submission.
- If the request is part of a multi-year project the total project costs and allocations should be included.
- Applicants that have multiple project requests should prioritize projects.
- Applicants should pursue matching or supplemental funds from state, federal and/or private sources when appropriate and available.
- Applicants should detail who will be responsible for project implementation and management. Their relevant experience should be included in the narrative. Please be sure that project management costs have been included in the overall project budget.
- Project funding should be planned to be completed within 3 years of the approval of the application. A short update will be required each year. Extensions may be granted but must be submitted to the committee for approval.
- Please note: State CPA legislation prohibits reimbursing work that has already been funded, started or completed on municipal assets.
- Northfield CPA project applications requesting additional funding/reimbursement of work that has already been completed on private property will be considered only under the following conditions: 1. The reimbursement proposal must be for work done as part of a previously approved Northfield CPA project in which the project ran into unexpected, unforeseen, and emergency problems. 2. The already completed work must have happened within one year of the start of the previously approved proposal work. 3. The Northfield CPC must be notified within 30 days of when the unexpected need for more funds has been discovered. Financial documentation and a description of why the overage should be considered for additional funding/reimbursement will be required at this time.

Evaluation Criteria for the Detailed Narrative

In the detailed narrative of the project application be sure to answer all applicable questions from the General Criteria list **and** all applicable questions from the Specific Criteria lists for either Open Space, Recreation, Historic, and/or Affordable Housing.

General Criteria

1. Does the project fit the criteria and spirit of the Community Preservation Act?
2. Is the project consistent with Northfield's Open Space and Recreation Plan, and other planning documents that have received wide input and scrutiny?
3. Is the project feasible?
4. Does the project require urgent attention?
5. Is the project affordable?
6. Does the project serve a currently under-served population?
7. Does the project serve multiple needs and populations?
8. Is the project consistent with recent town meeting actions?
9. Does the project help with the preservation of currently owned town assets?
10. Does the project involve the acquisition of threatened resources?
11. Does the project have multiple sources of funding?
12. Does the project promote the use of local contractors when possible?
13. Does the project comply with current or proposed zoning regulations?
14. Does the project have a means of support for maintenance and upkeep?
15. Does the project have community support and provide a positive impact to the community?
16. Does the project have sufficient supporting documentation?
17. Does the project have support from another Northfield town board or committee?
18. Does the project have the support of the majority of immediate abutters?
19. Is the project in the best interest of the town of Northfield?

Historic Preservation

HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS

- To maintain and celebrate the heritage of Northfield through preservation and interpretation of its historic and prehistoric sites, buildings, and monuments
- To promote the rich, diverse historic and cultural resources of Northfield, including Native American history, history archeology, early 18th-19th century architecture and the legacy of D.L. Moody and other prominent Northfielders, to foster appreciation, stewardship, and increased tourism
- To promote balanced commercial and residential development consistent with the natural resources, town character, and rural atmosphere of Northfield
- To retain the character, distinct identity and comfortable scale of the individual villages and neighborhoods that are Northfield

Background

During the extensive two-year planning process that went into creating “A Master Plan for Northfield”, residents expressed their desire to protect and preserve the character of Northfield and its many historic treasures.

Much of the information and language in this Plan that is specific to Northfield is taken directly from the Master Plan and is based on the input of interested Northfield residents. Northfield residents greatly value their town’s rich history, as stated in the introduction to “Historic and Cultural Resources”:

“The Town of Northfield, settled in 1673, has a wealth of history and historical assets. The historic resources of Northfield can be seen in the buildings that recall earlier times and in the unique and remarkable unchanged districts, landscapes and places that reflect Northfield’s heritage.”

The preservation and use of these resources are linked to the quality of life of Northfield citizens. Because of its age, location, educational legacy and historical significance, Northfield draws many visitors and admiring guests eager to learn more about this town and savor its history. The Plan recognizes that stewardship of historic and cultural resources serves everyone.

Resources and Trends

Northfield’s historic resources are specific places, landscapes, artifacts, memorials, and structures that provide meaningful connections to the past. In some cases, these links have been preserved or protected through the efforts of government and institutions; in other instances, valuable historic resources remain unprotected. Unfortunately, several historic resources have been lost to demolition, including the Northfield Hotel and the Schell Mansion, known locally as The Chateau.

Northfield contains an unparalleled collection of houses designed and built by the Stearns family, as well as buildings designed by world-renowned architects on the Northfield Mount Hermon School campus. Many of the Town's historic buildings and landscape remain intact, giving Northfield's Main Street an authentic, early 19th century appearance. The town's setting, beneath the broad slopes of Northfield Mountain and overlooking the Connecticut river, enhances this visual appeal.

In public forums and during focused discussions, residents of Northfield observed that better promotion of historic and cultural resources can broaden public appreciation of them while simultaneously capitalizing on them as a means of bolstering the local economy. Attracting visitors interested in viewing our historic sites, known as "heritage tourism", expands public awareness of history and fuels local and regional economic growth.

The Northfield Historical Commission spear-headed efforts to establish the National Register Historic District on Main Street. These historic treasures are defining features of downtown and are cherished by Northfield residents.

SOME IDENTIFIED NEEDS

It is fair to say that some of Northfield's greatest attributes also present some of its greatest challenges. The future of Northfield's historic resources is dependent on the stewardship that its citizens can offer. Some of Northfield's earliest homes are significantly degraded, early burial grounds and cemeteries are in disrepair, and the town's valuable records and archives need additional secure storage space. The archaeological assets remain largely unprotected.

SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR NORTHFIELD

As mentioned earlier, there are many ongoing efforts to preserve and restore some of Northfield's most cherished historic resources. The preservation of the town's archives, which date back to the colonial era, is a priority. Good quality safes are a necessity. Visitors can be attracted to town by encouraging and supporting heritage tourism, recreational-based tourism and eco-tourism featuring the legacy of the Squakheag Indians and D.L. Moody, historic homes on Main Street, the Connecticut River, and other natural resources.

USEFUL REFERENCE MATERIALS

On the Town of Northfield website at www.northfieldma.gov:

1. "A Master Plan for Northfield, 2014", especially the section on Promoting Northfield's History and Culture.

For general Community Preservation Act and Historic Preservation information:

1. www.communitypreservation.org
2. www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/

The following are examples of the types of historic preservation expenditures that may be carried out with CPA funds:

Acquisition

- Acquire a historic site or landscape
- Provide a match for federal or state grants such as the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

Preservation

- Purchase a preservation easement to protect façade or other historical features
- Restore historic buildings to reverse inappropriate alterations
- Restore and/or protect archival documents
- Provide grants to acquire or preserve a historic property in private non-profit ownership provided that the town acquires a preservation restriction to protect the public's investment
- Rehabilitation and restoration
- Restore or upgrade municipal historic resources such as town halls, libraries, town commons, parks, or cemeteries
- Adaptively reuse historic sites such as the upgrade and rehabilitation of fire houses, churches, mills, police stations, town halls, or schools for community housing or another municipal use
- Capital improvements to historic resources that are necessary to comply with state building codes
- Provide new utilities and other site work necessary for a preservation project
- Mitigate environmental contamination at historic sites
- Provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) compliant accessibility at historic sites, such as elevators, ramps, restrooms, etc.
- Restore and preserve historic landscapes

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

A historic resource is defined as a building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact that is either:

- Listed or eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places; or
- Determined by the local Historical Commission to be significant to the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the city or town.

Community Preservation funds may be used for rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources. This includes handicapped access and other capital improvements that may be necessary for historic properties to meet federal and local building codes or to make those sites functional for the intended use of the facility.

Specific Criteria for Historic Preservation Projects

1. If the project application is asking for Historic Category funds, then the application must be accompanied with a letter from the Historical Commission stating that the project is officially recognized as Historic to the Town of Northfield.
2. What is the historical/cultural significance to the Town of the proposed project?
3. What is the public benefit?
4. What is the appropriateness and professionalism of proposed work? (Rehabilitation work is expected to comply with Standards for Rehabilitation stated in the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.)
5. What is the additional financial or in-kind services beyond CPA funds committed to the project?
6. What are the administrative and financial management capabilities of the applicant in order to ensure that the project is carried out in a timely manner and that the historic resource can be maintained for continued public benefit?
7. What is the potential loss or destruction of the resource if proposed action is not taken?
8. Does the project protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate Town-owned properties, features, artifacts, documents, or resources of historical significance?
9. Does the project protect, preserve, enhance, restore and/or rehabilitate the historic function of a property or site?

Open Space

OPEN SPACE GOALS

Northfield's Open Space and Recreation Plan (2021) identifies the following goals for the period 2021-2028:

Open Space Goal: Ensure that Northfield protects farmland, forest land, scenic views, and other open space vital to sustaining the town's historic rural character and maintaining the quality of air, water, and wildlife habitats.

Recreation Goal: Ensure that Northfield maintains and improves the variety, quality, and accessibility of recreational facilities and any organized programming thereof.

Land Resources

Total area in the town of Northfield is 22,633.62 acres. Approximately 41.1% of the total land area is open space with some level of protection from development. Fifteen percent of this total land area is publicly owned open space.

BACKGROUND

Northfield residents place great importance on their open spaces, including forest land and active farmland, and have proactively sought to preserve these public and private lands. The Open Space and Recreation Plan of 2021, the adoption of the CPA in 2008, and the Master Planning process of 2014 have all contributed to a clear vision for Northfield's future. The information and language specific to Northfield in this plan is taken directly from these earlier plans and is therefore shaped by the input of interested Northfield residents. The Town of Northfield is committed to a course of action that promotes sustainable agriculture, economic revitalization and stability, while preserving our natural environment.

Northfield's natural resources include large tracts of contiguous forestland and watersheds. The rich soils of the Connecticut River valley have supported agriculture from time immemorial. The town has numerous working farms and farmsteads selling locally raised and made produce and products. There is a weekly Farmers' Market from May to October. The town is uniquely defined by its relationship to the Connecticut River. It is the largest river ecosystem in New England, spanning four states, and flows directly through the center of Northfield (the only town with land on both sides of the river), and forms its western border south of the town.

Other natural resources include large tracts of contiguous forestland and watersheds and there are several farmstands selling locally raised and made produce and products. One farm specialized in sod starting in the 1980's, grew wheat to supply local restaurants and bakers in the 2000's, and has recently begun a hop operation with a brewery, planning to incorporate dual use solar with grazing on a portion of its fields.

According to the 2017 U.S. Census data the population of Northfield was estimated to be 3,023 and the age distribution of residents in Northfield is comparable to that of Franklin County and Massachusetts. In Northfield 25% of residents are age 19 and younger, 25% are age 20-44, 35% are age 45-64, and 15% are age 65 and over.

Northfield enters the 2020's with two new sources of economic growth. One is the establishment of the Thomas Aquinas College and the Moody Center on property formerly belonging to Northfield Mount Herman School. The other is the announcement of the Department of Transportations' plans to begin construction in 2022 of a recreational bridge spanning the Connecticut River to replace the no longer viable Schell Bridge.

In 2016, 74% of Northfield's land area (22,634 acres) was forested and 9.5 acres was agricultural. A 2019 Mass GIS study showed that most landcover in Northfield is forested, while most land use is residential.

PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

The Seven-Year Action Plan (Section 9) gives concrete substance to the goals and objectives that were developed from the results of the 2019 Open Space and Recreation Survey and from the community members' understanding of and input regarding their Town's natural resource base. Within the overarching goal of strengthening resiliency to climate change, the 2020 Northfield Open Space and Recreation Plan prioritizes actions that will:

- Preserve the rural character of the town
- Protect and preserve natural resources in preparation for a changing climate
- Improve and maintain public education related to open space
- Promote wide recreational usage of Northfield's resources

A few of the specific needs identified in the plan are:

- Maintain the printed Northfield Trails brochure and the Northfield Trails website
- Increase access for swimming in the Connecticut River, working toward a riverside park
- Promote the Pioneer Valley Regional School Land Management Plan that encourages conservation, open-air educational options, and recreation on the school land
- Maintain the Mill Brook trail, repairing stream and wetland crossing, and manage for invasive species
- Help provide land protection and estate planning information to landowners in the region
- Build a path connecting Schell Bridge to Pauchaug Boat Ramp

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

The Community Preservation Act requires that a participating community "...shall spend, or set aside for later spending, not less than 10% of the annual revenues in the local Community Preservation Fund for open space..."

Open space is defined to include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Agricultural land
- Well fields, aquifers, recharge areas, and other watershed lands

- Grasslands, fields, or forest lands
- The Connecticut River, wetlands, streams, ponds and certified vernal pools
- Scenic and historic vistas
- Land for wildlife habitat or biodiversity or nature preserves
- Regarding permissible purposes for which CPA funds may be spent on open space, the Act specifically provides that CPA funds may be expended for “...the acquisition, creation, and preservation of open space...and for the rehabilitation or restoration of such open space...that is acquired under the CPA.”

The following are examples of the types of open space expenditures that may be carried out with CPA funds:

Acquisition

- Purchase land to protect water supplies such as well fields, aquifers, recharge areas, and lake or reservoir frontage and other watershed lands
- Purchase easements or rights-of-ways that maintain or enhance access to existing open spaces
- Purchase land strategically located to protect or create trail networks or wildlife corridors

Preservation

- Purchase permanent conservation or agricultural preservation restrictions to protect open space or farmland from future development
- Remove invasive plant species from permanently conserved ponds, wetlands, and wooded areas to protect existing open space and wildlife habitats from harm and injury
- Purchase easements to protect water supplies such as well fields, aquifers, recharge areas, and lake or reservoir frontage and other watershed lands

Rehabilitation and Restoration

- Restore natural areas such as wetlands or marshlands acquired using CPA funds to their original state
- Seed and plant native non-invasive trees and otherwise landscape an open space created by the removal of buildings on site

SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR NORTHFIELD

As proponents identify land appropriate for open space protection, they could utilize CPA funds in combination with other funding sources to purchase properties or to obtain conservation restrictions to ensure their permanent protection as open space.

In the case of particularly ecologically significant lands, proponents may apply CPA funds in combination with additional acquisition strategies including obtaining rights of first refusal, long-term purchase options, or life estate agreements. Additional possibilities include the use of CPA funds to create or restore critical wildlife habitat areas.

USEFUL REFERENCE MATERIALS

On the Town of Northfield website at www.northfieldma.gov:

1. A Master Plan for Northfield
2. The Town of Northfield Open Space Plan 2021
3. The Town of Northfield CPA Project Application

For general Community Preservation Act information: www.communitypreservation.org

Specific Criteria for Open Space Projects

1. Does the project permanently protect important wildlife habitat including areas that are of local significance for biodiversity?
2. Does the project provide opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education?
3. Does the project protect or enhance wildlife corridors (i.e., promote connectivity of habitat and/or prevent fragmentation of habitats)?
4. Does the project provide connections between existing trails or create trail linkages?
5. Does the project preserve scenic views that border a scenic road?
6. Does the project protect drinking water quantity and quality?
7. Does the project provide flood control/water storage?
8. Does the project preserve important surface water bodies including wetlands, vernal pools, or riparian zones?
9. Does the project preserve primary or secondary priority parcels listed in the Northfield Open Space and Recreation Plan?
10. Does the property have historic significance such as old foundations, stonewalls, old roads, trails, cart paths, or scenic vistas?

Recreation

RECREATION GOALS

- To ensure that Northfield maintains and improves the variety, quality, and accessibility of recreational facilities important in the twenty-first century for health and well-being of all residents
- To promote the use of these facilities and any organized programming thereof

Background

Northfield has a variety of recreation resources and gathering places managed by various public and private entities. Public entities include the Recreation Commission, the School Department, the Library, the

Conservation Commission, and the State Forest. Private resources include churches, Northfield Mountain Recreation Area, the Northfield Golf Course, and some small businesses.

Through the planning process that went into creating “a Master Plan for Northfield, 2014”, citizens clearly voiced support for public recreation areas and opportunities, affirming the desire of Northfield’s residents to enhance the town’s recreational opportunities.

Resources and Trends

Residents and tourists enjoy Northfield’s scenic landscapes and forests, wetlands and waterways for activities such as hiking, bicycling, bird watching, kayaking, swimming, and fishing.

The 95-acre Mill Brook wetland in the center of town is privately owned and its owner has expressed interest in working with the town to restore overgrown walking paths through the area.

The Recreation Commission is exploring options to secure much needed playing fields for the town’s residents.

SOME IDENTIFIED NEEDS

- Surveys and meetings in 2011 revealed the need for recreational swimming facilities, ice skating facilities, and playing fields for school-age baseball, softball and soccer teams
- The development of a “community park” with playing fields, tennis courts, swimming, playgrounds, ice skating, and other activities for all ages
- There is currently only a mutual use tennis court on Highland Avenue and only one basketball court available for recreational use
- Northfield needs a preschool playground for families and caregivers during the school day when the elementary school playground is reserved for elementary school children
- There is considerable interest in developing trails that would be convenient for most town residents
- Access to existing recreational trails
- Recreational access for groups with special needs, specifically handicapped accessibility and youth and the elderly

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Recreational use is defined to include active or passive recreational use. These uses may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Youth and adult sports
- Walking and biking
- Water sports
- Gardening
- Bird Watching
- Fishing

The following are examples of the types of recreational use projects that may be carried out with CPA funds:

Acquisition

- Purchase of land to create new athletic fields
- Purchase of existing, privately owned recreational facilities for municipal use, such as a tennis court
- Purchase of rights-of-ways for historic walking paths
- Purchase of rights-of-ways to existing trail networks
- Purchase of property or conservation restriction to link existing open spaces

Creation

- Convert existing structures such as a railroad bed to a recreational use such as walking, biking, or inline skating trails
- Convert underutilized municipal lots to community gardens
- Create new athletic fields, tennis courts or playgrounds

Preservation

- Install new drainage at an existing athletic field to prevent flooding and water damage. However, CPA funding cannot be used for routine maintenance or capital improvements for which municipal funding has already been committed.

Rehabilitation and Restoration of Recreational Lands Acquired Using CPA Funds

- Provide new recreational opportunities such as a new outdoor park, tennis courts or other athletic facilities
- Rehabilitate walking trails in forest land acquired with CPA funds
- Resurface tennis courts created with CPA funds on municipally owned property

****Note:** The Act prohibits using CPA funds to acquire, create or preserve facilities for horse or dog racing; or land for a stadium, gymnasium, or similar structure.

SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR NORTHFIELD

When the new Schell Bridge is complete, this pedestrian/bike bridge will enable bike trail loops throughout NH, VT, and MA. There may be an opportunity to add a playground and picnic area to the Schell Bridge/bike path area.

USEFUL REFERENCE MATERIALS

On the Town of Northfield website at www.northfieldma.gov:

1. A Master Plan for Northfield, 2014
2. The Town of Northfield Open Space Plan, 2021
3. For general Community Preservation Act and Historic Preservation information: www.communitypreservation.org

Specific Criteria for Recreation Projects

1. Does the project support multiple active and passive recreation use?
2. Does the project serve a significant number of residents of all ages, gender, and ability?
3. Does the project expand the range of both active and passive recreational opportunities available to Northfield residents through acquisition of appropriate parcels, acquisition of permanent conservation easements, or development of recreational resources on existing Town-owned land, including trail connections, playing fields and play area, open space, and parks?
4. Does the project jointly benefit Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission initiatives by promoting a variety of recreational activities?
5. Does the project maximize the utility of land already owned by Northfield?
6. Does the project further broaden the diversity of Recreation Commission-administered programs to include activities beyond traditional “sports and games”?
7. Does the project promote the creative use of railway and other corridors to create safe and healthful non-motorized transportation opportunities?

Affordable Housing

COMMUNITY HOUSING GOALS

- To encourage development of housing units for an increasingly elderly population
- To create additional subsidized low- and moderate-income housing, and modernize the existing facilities
- To devise strategies for further neighborhood development, interactions and stabilization

BACKGROUND

The extensive planning process that went into creating: “A Master Plan for Northfield” found that residents consider the availability of appropriate and affordable housing to be important.

Much of the information and language specific to Northfield in this Plan is taken directly from these earlier plans and is thus based on the input of interested Northfield residents.

Although progress has been made, the current down-turn in the economy has exacerbated the difficulty many Northfield residents have finding and keeping affordable housing and threatens their ability to achieve home ownership.

RESOURCES AND TRENDS

Northfield’s developed land is predominately devoted to residential uses. Current zoning sets aside a relatively small amount of land for commercial uses. Of the land available for new or redevelopment, relatively little is available for commercial uses. This has significant negative consequences for the tax and employment base for the town.

At the same time, substantial tracts of open land remain available for residential development. This residentially zoned land is vacant today due in large part to economic conditions, as well as to Northfield's relative distance to larger municipalities where jobs are more abundant.

Residential infill development has occurred on land that was previously 'unbuildable' because of granite ledge, the presence of wetlands, and generally poor drainage that limited use of sites. Increased land values and sewer extensions, both private and public, along with technical improvements to on-site wastewater management systems have opened these locations to potential development.

SOME IDENTIFIED NEEDS

- Encourage the development of housing units for an increasingly elderly population
- Identify appropriate areas for smaller homes (e.g., areas where residents can walk to shops and services)
- Encourage attached units to save land and reduce costs
- Identify and work with for-profit developers who are interested in smaller attached housing units
- Create additional subsidized low- and moderate-income housing, and modernize the existing facilities
- Expand and modernize the existing Squakheag Village Housing for the elderly
- Identify a site for low and moderate income non-elderly family housing
- Identify sites for non-profit affordable housing developers

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

The Community Preservation Act requires that a participating community "...shall spend, or set aside for later spending, not less than 10% of the annual revenues in the local Community Preservation Fund for community housing." Community housing is defined as low- and moderate-income housing for individuals and families, including low- or moderate-income senior housing.

- "Low-income housing" is housing for those persons and families whose annual income is less than 80 per cent of the areawide median income. The areawide median income is determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- "Low- or moderate-income senior housing" is housing for those persons having reached the age of 60 or over who would qualify for low- or moderate-income housing.
- "Maintenance" is incidental repairs which neither materially add to the value of the property nor appreciably prolong the property's life, but keep the property in a condition of fitness, efficiency or readiness.
- "Moderate income housing" is housing for those persons and families whose annual income is less than 100 per cent of the areawide median income. The areawide median income shall be the areawide median income as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR NORTHFIELD

The primary need for assisted living in Northfield is for affordable dwellings for persons with incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income. Development of this type of housing requires many forms of public support during planning, construction and operations. The ideal time for CPA assistance is in the planning stages to support the determination of need and to investigate designs and locations that best meet community objectives.

Conversion of large older homes along Main Street into multi-unit dwellings for elderly residents could allow them to remain in the town they know, close to stores and churches, once they have chosen to move out of their own, now too-large homes.

The following are examples of potential allowable uses that may be carried out with CPA funds:

Creation

- Convert existing non-residential properties to community housing
- Acquire real property (land and/or buildings) for new housing development, both rental and homeownership.
- Grant of loan funds for the creation of community housing to non-profit or for-profit parties (provided that the funds are not used by the private party to acquire a real estate interest and that the funds are used primarily for the creation of community housing)

Support

- Assist the local housing authority to support its low-income rental properties
- Underwrite a revolving loan fund or guarantee fund for tenants who cannot afford first month, last month, and security deposit
- Fund a housing trust or a housing authority to support a particular community housing initiative

Rehabilitation and Restoration

- Make site improvements such as water/sewer connections, well installation, septic installation or repair, or other underground utilities associated with the creation of affordable housing
- Rehabilitate or restore existing public or private property being converted to affordable housing units in a mixed income residential environment

USEFUL REFERENCE MATERIALS

On the Town of Northfield website at www.northfieldma.gov:

1. A Master Plan for Northfield

For general Community Preservation Act information: www.communitypreservation.org

Specific Criteria for Affordable Housing Projects

1. Does the project promote the goal of having 10 percent of Northfield's housing stock considered affordable?
2. Does the project ensure long-term affordability?
3. Does the project promote the use of existing buildings or construction on town-owned land?
4. Does the project attract matching funds or grant opportunities to complete construction?
5. Does the project convert market-rate housing to affordable housing?
6. Does the project intermingle affordable and market-rate housing?
7. Does the project require limited management by the Town of Northfield?
8. Does the project have less impact on town or natural resources than market-rate housing on the same site?
9. Does the project provide housing that is harmonious in design and style with the surrounding neighborhood?
10. Does the project promote a socioeconomic environment that encourages a diversity of income, ethnicity, religion and age?
11. Does the project give priority to local residents, town employees, and employees of local businesses?