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55 YEARS

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Community Preservation Act

November 06, 2008 - Spotlights

In November 2001, Cambridge voters approved adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), a state law that allows the city to receive matching funds from the state for money raised locally in support of affordable housing, historic preservation and protection of open space. The local portion of CPA funding is raised through a 3% surcharge on property taxes. With the latest appropriation for fiscal year 2008 of \$12.6 million, the city has appropriated/reserved a total of \$72.2 million in CPA funds, of which approximately \$30.9 million was the result of the state match. Those funds have enabled the development or preservation of over 2,800 units of housing in the city.

The CPA surcharge has an essentially neutral impact on tax bills because funding of affordable housing, historic preservation and open space initiatives has been shifted from the tax levy to the surcharge. The city continues to allocate a similar amount of local funds to these initiatives. However, the state match has enabled the city to actually double the amount of funding appropriated for these initiatives.

To date, Cambridge has received more CPA matching funds from the commonwealth than any other participating community. Consequently, Cambridge residents will benefit from important housing, historic preservation and open space initiatives throughout the city for years to come.

The CPA committee, appointed by the city manager, consists of Cambridge residents, representatives from the Affordable Housing Trust, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Cambridge Housing Authority and city staff. This volunteer group makes recommendations on how the CPA funds should be used annually. Prior to forwarding recommendations to the city council, the CPA committee holds an advertised public meeting each year to solicit input from Cambridge residents regarding priorities in the areas of affordable housing, historic preservation and open space.

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