

What is CHAPA? Article

Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) is a statewide non-profit organization founded more than 50 years ago, during the Civil Rights Movement. Their mission is to encourage the production and preservation of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income families and to foster diverse and sustainable communities through planning and community development. They advance this mission by advocating for affordable housing opportunities, expanding access to housing, and developing the field through education, training, and networking. Their Municipal Engagement Initiative (MEI) program supports the Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition.

Founded in 2018, the Municipal Engagement Initiative works with residents on the ground to change the conversation and support existing local efforts in favor of more affordable housing. The Municipal Engagement Initiative focuses on bringing together broad coalitions to support affordable housing production. These coalitions include municipal staff, housing advocates, planning board members, councils on aging, school representatives, interfaith organizations, and more. Because every city and town has its unique housing challenges, a diverse group of stakeholders is necessary to bring a range of voices to the table, all of whom deserve to be heard and have a stake in their community's housing. The MEI program also works as a convener of Metro-Boston and statewide technical assistance organizations working in local communities to coordinate among organizations to work in partnership. The goal is to not recreate the wheel, but to support one another on common goals.

The Municipal Engagement Initiative has worked in over 45 communities across the Commonwealth, including Amherst, Andover, Lynn, Milton, Northampton, Revere, and more. The MEI team worked with the Amherst Affordable Housing Coalition to successfully advocate for allocation of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to support new affordable housing by Valley Community Development Corporation and fought back opposing neighbors to advance the development. The Lynn Housing Coalition advocated for passage of their first Housing Production Plan, including significant emphasis on deep affordability through Inclusionary Zoning and additional funding. In Revere, MEI worked with the Revere Housing Coalition to advocate for the creation of an Office of Housing Stability and the creation of the Revere Affordable Housing Trust. A successful coalition looks different in every community but is successful nonetheless. To find out more about CHAPA and the Municipal Engagement Initiative, visit their website at chapa.org.

The Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition is an advocacy group for more affordable housing in the communities of Newburyport, Amesbury, Newbury, West Newbury, and Salisbury. With assistance from CHAPA's Monica Keel, program associate with the Municipal Engagement Initiative, the Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition has brought together local stakeholders who have created working groups

focused on specific opportunities in Greater Newburyport and actions for the coalition. CHAPA will continue to work with the Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition throughout 2024, though the coalition will continue its work long after it graduates from the MEI program.

If you are interested in housing and want to take part in our activities or if you simply want to learn more about the issue, please get in touch at jmeers@ywcanewburyport.org. We are excited for you to join us on this journey from housing to home. We are always asking who is still missing from our coalition. If you are that missing piece, please join us for our next meeting. Our coalition meets on the third Thursday of every month.

My name is Monica Keel and I am a Program Associate with CHAPA and support the Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition.