

TOWN OF AGAWAM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

JULY 2004

Prepared by
McGregor & Associates, P.C.
for
the Town of Agawam

*Funded under Executive Order 418 by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community
Development, Massachusetts Department of Economic Development, Executive Office of Transportation and
Construction and Executive Office of Environmental Affairs*

Project Administration for this project was provided by the Pioneer Valley Planning Council

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(Page 1 of 1)*

	Page
Credits and Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Housing	6
Open Space and Resource Protection	21
Transportation	39
Putting it All Together	59

List of Tables

Housing

Table 1:	Land Use Change in Acres, Agawam 1971-1999	7
Table 2:	Population History	8
Table 3:	Agawam Population by Age	8
Table 4:	Households by Type	9
Table 5:	Housing Stock Characteristics	9
Table 6:	Median Income Levels	10
Table 7:	Family Income by Type of Household	10
Table 8:	Owner Occupied & Renter Occupied Units	11
Table 9:	Type of Housing Unit Rented by Percentage	11
Table 10:	Age of Rental Housing Stock by Percent	12
Table 11:	Age of Householder by Tenure	12
Table 12:	Subsidized Housing	14

Transportation

Table 1:	Key Study Roadways	39
Table 2:	Key Accident Locations	44
Table 3:	Means of Transportation to Work	46
Table 4:	Worker Related Travel Patterns	47
Table 5:	Planned and Ongoing Roadway Projects	51

List of Figures

Transportation

Figure 1:	Traffic Volume Plan	40
Figure 2:	Accident Summary Plan	43

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(Page 2 of 2)*

Figure 3:	Travel Time to Work	47
Figure 4:	Red 14 Bus Route	49

List of Maps

Map #1:	Housing Opportunities	66
Map #2:	Open Space Protection & Key Recreational Opportunities	67
Map #3:	Natural Resources & Significant Habitats	68
Map #4:	Open Space Inventory	69
Map #5:	Summary of Recommendations	70

Appendix A		71
-------------------	--	-----------

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Department of Community Development and Conservation

Debbie Dachos – Town Planner

Consultant – McGregor & Associates, P.C.

Ralph R. Willmer, AICP – Project Manager

Mary M. Coolidge – Project Planner & Mapping

Consultant – MS Transportation

William Scully

Dan Dumais

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Agawam received funding pursuant to Executive Order 418 from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to research and put together this Community Development Plan. Executive Order 418's purpose is to help communities plan to meet their housing, economic development, open space protection and transportation needs. Agawam used this funding to research and formulate a Housing Plan, an Open Space and Recreation component, and Transportation piece as well.

The Department of Community Development coordinated the planning process and provided guidance to McGregor & Associates to complete this Community Development Plan. McGregor & Associates held several meetings with the Department of Community Development Department and the Community Development Plan Committee.

HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Agawam is a community in western Massachusetts that is known for its convenient location and small town feel. It is a town where people consistently participate in civic activities, sports teams and school programs. The recreational opportunities in the area are abundant and interesting, ranging from touring historic homes and villages to hiking in the mountains to enjoying a picnic at a local stream or river. Agawam is appealing to families, entrepreneurs, people who want to purchase a home and even to those who are looking for a friendly, quiet place to retire.

Purpose of the Project

Each town and city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a responsibility to provide for affordable housing. Not only will this commitment by every municipality benefit local residents, but it will also assist each individual town as a whole by granting them more municipal control over instances where there is developer driven housing. Some additional benefits of planning for affordable housing are that the municipality can communicate the location, type and amount of housing to be provided and they can insist that the housing plan be consistent with other local planning initiatives. Proactive planning and implementation can demonstrate progress in moving towards local and state goals.

In 2003, the services of McGregor & Associates, P.C. were retained to research and develop an Affordable Housing Plan for the community as an element of their Community Development Plan. This housing needs analysis will help the community identify and specify what types of housing are needed and where potential new housing should be located. Looking at past trends, income, housing stock characteristics, population and age range, vacancy rates and affordability levels together help clarify what the current housing and demographic situation is, and what needs the community will have in the future. The Town of Agawam is a place that is proud of its rural heritage and commitment to its citizens. Creating and implementing this affordable housing plan will encourage the maintenance of variety of housing choices and bring to light the key housing affordability issues. Ensuring that the people who live in Agawam today will be able to stay there as well as welcoming in new residents is a responsibility of the community and will both be supported by this plan.

Some major issues in Agawam include housing choice for renters and owners, housing affordability, the need to provide housing for municipal employees, the loss of younger residents (the desire for families that grew up in Agawam to be able to remain there over successive generations), and the significant increase in residents over 55 years of age.

Land Use

The Town of Agawam is located in the southwestern part of Massachusetts and is bordered by the Connecticut state line, Suffield, Southwick, Westfield, and West Springfield, and is separated from Longmeadow and Springfield by the Connecticut River.

Since 1971, Agawam has seen a significant decrease in its acreage of agricultural, forest and other open land. Looking back even further, since 1950, the amount of agricultural land alone has decreased 70%.¹ This land is being converted into

Table 1: Land Use Change in Acres, Agawam 1971-1999

Land Use	1971	1985	1999	Change	
				1971-1999	% Change 1971-1999
Agriculture	3,382.2	2,866.3	2,143.2	-1,239.0	-36.6%
Forest	6,092.1	5,302.2	5,157.8	-934.2	-15.3%
Recreation & Urban Open Space	848.6	1,253.1	1,061.1	212.5	25.0%
Multifamily Residential	104.6	199.6	263.5	159.0	152.0%
High Density Residential	589.0	606.0	596.5	7.4	1.3%
Moderate-Density Residential	2,075.2	2,811.3	3,251.2	1,176.0	56.7%
Low-Density Residential	487.3	604.1	736.3	249.1	51.1%
Commercial	169.8	204.5	300.9	131.1	77.2%
Industrial	152.2	230.9	504.8	352.5	231.6%
Transportation	161.0	123.1	202.2	41.2	25.6%
Open Land, Mining & Other Uses	893.7	755.8	739.3	-154.4	-17.3%
Wetlands	67.0	67.0	67.8	0.8	1.2%
Water	594.2	593.0	592.2	-2.0	-0.3%

Source: MassGIS

residential, commercial and industrial uses and it continues to face development pressures because it comprises a large portion of the remaining undeveloped buildable land in town. Such changes in land use have altered the character of Agawam, and transitioned it from a rural farming community to a residential suburb (see Table 1).

Goals & Objectives

In 1993, Agawam developed “*A Working Statement of Goals and Objectives to Guide Agawam Into the Future*” as a way to help guide future development and preservation efforts. This document detailed the fact that a decade ago, Agawam was struggling with the development patterns of businesses, expanding neighborhoods, farmland and housing needs. At the time there seemed to be a conflict between the rural history of the town and the growing population and all of the needs and services that accompany growth. Being organized, sharing a common purpose and goal, and balancing needs and objectives with existing resources to help Agawam grow within its means remained a focus throughout the planning effort. Interestingly, housing was not directly addressed as a separate topic, but was touched on in other elements. Ideas that pertain directly to housing issues and growth include:

- The desire for “safe, friendly neighborhoods whose distinguishing characteristics are respected and protected, where sidewalks and trails link homes to schools, playlots, parks, and other family recreation facilities”,
- Agawam should strengthen cooperation (and understanding of the issues) among the business, resident, and Town Hall communities,
- Agawam should work to diminish the negative impacts of businesses on neighborhoods, and
- Educate the public about zoning and local community pride.

Agawam has already taken a step towards protecting the future of the Town by adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in November 2001. The CPA is a surcharge that is 1% of the annual real estate tax levy on local property. The funds are used for the acquisition, creation and preservation of land for open space and recreational use, for historic preservation (including rehabilitation and restoration), and to support the creation and maintenance of low to moderate-income senior housing.

¹ Town of Agawam, *Agawam Open Space and Recreation Plan*, 2001

DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Table 2: Population History

	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change
Massachusetts	4,248,326	4,316,721	4,690,514	5,148,578	5,689,377	5,737,037	6,016,425	6,349,097	5.5%
Hampden County	335,496	332,107	367,971	429,353	459,050	443,018	456,310	456,228	-0.02%
Agawam	7,095	7,842	10,166	15,718	21,717	26,271	27,323	28,144	3.0%
Southwick	1,461	1,579	2,855	5,139	6,330	7,382	7,667	8,835	15.2%
Westfield	16,684	18,793	20,962	26,302	31,433	36,465	38,372	40,072	4.4%
West Springfield	19,775	17,135	20,438	24,924	28,461	27,042	27,537	27,899	1.3%
Springfield	149,900	149,554	162,399	174,463	163,905	152,319	156,983	152,082	-3.1%
Longmeadow	4,437	5,790	6,508	10,565	15,630	16,301	15,467	15,633	1.1%

Sources: MISER, US Census

In the past decade, Agawam experienced only a slight increase (3%) in its population. With the exception of Southwick and the City of Springfield, which actually saw a small population decline, this was somewhat consistent with the other nearby communities. Since 1980, Agawam's population has only grown in small increments, which is very different from the growth the community saw in between 1950 and 1980 (see Table 2).

Agawam's change in the age groups of its population over the last decade help to identify what some of the housing needs in the community might be. There has been a decrease in children up to age 9, a decline in the late teen and young adult population, and residents aged 60-74 have also decreased. There were increases in middle age residents; the elderly and children aged 10-14 (see Table 3). Many communities in

Table 3: Agawam Population by Age

Age Group	Agawam			% Change	MA	U.S.
	1990	2000	% Change			
Under 5	1,700	1,560	-8.2%	-3.69%	4.5%	
Age 5-9	1,726	1,725	-0.1%	13.97%	13.5%	
Age 10-14	1,592	1,840	15.6%	23.89%	19.9%	
Age 15-19	1,755	1,717	-2.2%	1.42%	13.9%	
Age 20-24	1,526	1,191	-22.0%	-21.29%	-0.3%	
Age 25-34	4,715	3,556	-24.6%	-15.85%	-7.6%	
Age 35-44	4,560	4,796	5.2%	15.74%	20.1%	
Age 45-54	2,907	4,339	49.3%	45.54%	49.4%	
Age 55-59	1,159	1,614	39.3%	22.31%	27.9%	
Age 60-64	1,220	1,103	-9.6%	-9.63%	1.8%	
Age 65-74	2,327	2,072	-11.0%	-7.0%	1.6%	
Age 75-84	1,292	1,818	40.7%	18.1%	34.3%	
85 years+	514	813	58.2%	26.6%	37.6%	

Source: Census 2000, Summary File 1

Massachusetts are experiencing a loss of young adults in their twenties. This age group is crucial to any community because as the rest of the population ages, it is these people who will be there to provide the services that middle aged and elderly individuals rely on such as health care, public services and other needs. Agawam has an opportunity to plan for the housing needs of its population as it exists and changes in the future. An aging population may potentially put strain on services in Agawam like the Senior Center, alternative transportation methods, meal programs and healthcare.

Almost 17% of Agawam's population is dealing with some type of disability, whether it is mental, physical or something specific that hinders their employability. The term disability in this case is used in a broad sense and may or may not limit a person's ability to live in a certain type of housing.

Approximately 66% of the households in Agawam are families. According to the Census, a household is defined as "all the persons who occupy a housing unit" and a family "consists of a householder and one or more other persons living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption." Over 80% of these families are

married couples and 35% of the married couple families have children under the age of 18. Agawam also has a fair number of female head of household families and elderly households (see Table 4).

Table 4: Households by Type

	Households	Families	Married Couple		w/ Children < 18		Elderly Households
			Families	Families w/ Children < 18	Female Head of Household	Male Head of Household	
Massachusetts	2,444,588	1,587,537	0.8%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%
Hampden County	175,475	116,570	70.2%	31.1%	15.0%	3.0%	36.9%
Agawam	11,271	7,447	81.3%	34.8%	8.0%	1.7%	36.9%
Southwick	3,312	2,419	82.9%	40.4%	5.8%	2.4%	27.5%
Westfield	14,798	10,029	78.6%	36.6%	8.7%	2.2%	34.0%
West Springfield	11,866	7,193	74.2%	32.8%	9.9%	3.9%	41.6%
Springfield	57,178	44,376	36.8%	20.6%	20.8%	5.7%	28.8%
Longmeadow	5,738	4,446	89.2%	42.0%	4.7%	0.3%	40.5%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Summary Files 1 & 3

Reviewing the types of households in Agawam helps to clarify additional types of housing the Town needs. For example, with a high number of families, single parent and elderly families in the community, single family homes, affordable multiple bedroom units, condos and accessible apartments might all be important to consider. The construction of Agawam's current housing stock has been spread out over decades with less than 20% being built every ten years. This gradual housing unit increase is complementary to the gradual population increase.

The most recent Census indicates that Agawam had in 2000 11,659 total housing units. Of those units, over 96% are considered to be occupied year round housing units, which leaves only 3.4% of the total units in town as vacant. Sixty-five percent (65%) of Agawam's housing units are single-family homes, which compared to other nearby towns, is a significant portion of the housing stock (see Table 5). Agawam does also have a mix of two and four and multifamily units as well, but more may be needed.

Table 5: Housing Stock Characteristics

	Total Housing Units	Attached Single				
		Single Family Home	Family or Townhouse	2-4 Family Homes	Multi-Family (5+ Units)	Other
Agawam	11,659	65.0%	5.5%	11.5%	17.8%	0.3%
Southwick	3,533	77.3%	5.3%	6.1%	11.1%	0.3%
Westfield	15,441	59.2%	2.5%	19.9%	14.9%	3.4%
West Springfield	12,259	51.9%	2.3%	20.0%	24.7%	1.1%
Springfield	61,172	43.6%	5.7%	27.3%	22.3%	1.0%
Longmeadow	5,879	92.2%	1.1%	0.6%	5.9%	0.1%

Source: US Census, Summary File 3

FAMILY & HOUSEHOLD INCOME INFORMATION

Agawam has the third highest median household income (\$49,390) as compared to the other towns that surround it. Statewide, this median ranks 236th compared to the other 351 communities in the Commonwealth and Agawam's median family income \$59,088 ranks 226th. Over 50% of Agawam's households and 39% of families are earning less than \$50,000 annually. Looking at income levels even further shows that more than 32% of households

are actually earning less than \$35,000. Elderly households in Agawam and the other local communities are experiencing even lower incomes (see Table 6). This becomes a concern not only due to the rising housing costs, but because typically, people over age 65 are also paying for increasing health care and prescription drug costs on this limited income. In Agawam, there are 77 households where grandparents are the primary caretakers for their grandchildren. Although that does not account for a high percentage of families, it does represent a type of living situation in the community that needs to be considered. In most of these cases, there is not a high level of affordability for housing, but a need for multiple bedroom units or some kind of subsidized housing program can address this situation.

Table 6: Median Income Levels

	Household Income	Family Income	% Families Earning > \$100K	Median Income Age 65-74	Median Income Age 75+
Massachusetts	\$50,502	\$61,664	22.8%	\$33,589	\$21,522
Hampden County	\$39,718	\$49,257	11.9%	\$28,010	\$19,923
Agawam	\$49,390	\$59,088	13.7%	\$36,950	\$20,845
Southwick	\$52,296	\$64,456	14.3%	\$29,265	\$18,152
Westfield	\$45,240	\$55,327	13.4%	\$26,346	\$20,457
West Springfield	\$40,266	\$50,282	11.7%	\$32,188	\$18,969
Springfield	\$30,417	\$36,285	6.3%	\$24,551	\$19,830
Longmeadow	\$75,461	\$87,742	42.8%	\$53,750	\$30,530

Source: US Census, Summary File 3

Married couples in Agawam have higher median incomes than families and households do at \$63,809. This higher income status affords them housing opportunities that other people in the community may not have. So, while

Table 7: Family Income by Type of Household

	Median Family Income	Married Couples	With Children Under 18	
			Male Head of Household	Female Head of Household
Massachusetts	\$61,664	\$70,827	\$44,506	\$30,600
Hampden County	\$49,257	\$59,369	\$31,537	\$16,940
Agawam	\$59,088	\$63,809	\$34,250	\$35,614
Southwick	\$64,456	\$68,708	\$42,679	\$22,125
Westfield	\$55,327	\$61,002	\$29,464	\$23,102
West Springfield	\$50,282	\$62,893	\$36,932	\$17,128
Springfield	\$36,285	\$51,195	\$28,568	\$15,364
Longmeadow	\$87,742	\$94,489	\$55,000	\$58,188

Source: US Census, Summary File 3

affordable housing choices are important, so is housing that might appeal to those with larger incomes like luxury condo units or upscale single-family homes. Single parent households, both male and female have lower median incomes than the median overall for families. However, in Agawam, the female head of household families are faring better than the other surrounding communities with the exception of Longmeadow (see Table 7). Both married couples and single parent households with children have the responsibility of not only paying typical housing bills like rent or a mortgage, but they also must think about the needs of their children in the present and future. Many families cannot even afford to save or look ahead towards college because their money is committed to paying for housing and general living expenses.

ADDITIONAL HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Agawam's median single-family home sale price has increased steadily in the past five years and as of 2003 people were paying a median price of \$162,200. The median condo price has increased even more dramatically from approximately \$72,000 in 1997 to over \$120,000 in 2003. Agawam experienced a tremendous amount of growth in the 1980s when people were

attracted to the Town because of its reasonable home and rental prices, its undeveloped land and its small town feel. Many residents feel that as a result of this growth, there was a significant loss in open space and rural land used for farming. While preserving the open space that is left in Agawam is one way to limit development, planning for housing may help as well. By taking a look at the current stock and identifying what types of housing are needed, the Town can better gauge how much residential development should be constructed. Part of this plan will also be identifying where the best locations for housing development might be, which includes new construction, reuse and redevelopment.

Renter and Owner Occupied Housing and Housing Costs

Of the 96% occupied housing units in Agawam, 73.6% are owner occupied and only 26.4% are renter occupied (see Table 8). Only Southwick and Longmeadow have lower renter occupied percentages. Agawam's vacancy rate was at 3.4% in 2000, and of those 399 vacant units, only 130 of them were considered to be available as rentals. Rental prices in Agawam vary slightly with one-bedrooms ranging from \$450-\$750, two bedroom units from \$650-\$875 and three bedrooms from \$850 to over \$1,000. For residents who use the services of the Agawam Housing Authority, there are maximum rent levels that they are allowed to pay which include up to \$596 for a one bedroom, \$795 for a two bedroom and \$1,057 for a three bedroom apartment or house.²

Table 8: Owner Occupied & Renter Occupied Units

	Total Housing Units	Occupied Units	Vacant Units	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Renter as % of Total Occupied
Massachusetts	2,621,989	2,443,580	178,409	1,508,052	935,528	38.3%
Hampden County	185,876	175,288	10,588	108,517	66,771	38.1%
Agawam	11,659	11,260	399	8,288	2,972	26.4%
Southwick	3,533	3,318	215	2,699	619	18.7%
Westfield	15,441	14,797	644	10,030	4,764	32.2%
West Springfield	12,259	11,823	436	6,880	4,943	41.8%
Springfield	61,172	57,130	4,042	28,499	28,631	50.1%
Longmeadow	5,879	5,734	145	5,211	523	9.1%

Source: US Census, Summary File 1

The type of housing rented in Agawam is similar to the other local communities in that there are a variety of rental options like single-family homes, condos, townhomes, apartment units and multifamily units. The largest percentages of rentals are in two family homes and single-family homes (see Table 9). While there are a variety of housing options in the community, the quantity of them and their availability become a more pressing issue. For example, if a family of four was looking to rent a three-bedroom unit, but all they could find due to the unit vacancy rate was a one bedroom, they would be forced to make some difficult choices.

Table 9: Type of Housing Unit Rented by Percentage

	Renter Occupied	1 detached	1 attached	2 unit	3 or 4	5 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 49	50 or More Units	Mobile Home
Agawam	2,968	15.3%	3.9%	22.9%	12.3%	10.5%	10.1%	14.8%	10.2%	0.0%
Southwick	616	33.4%	1.3%	12.7%	9.1%	9.6%	18.7%	10.9%	4.4%	0.0%
Westfield	4,770	11.3%	2.7%	24.5%	19.8%	11.6%	6.1%	10.6%	12.5%	0.9%
W. Springfield	4,942	6.7%	2.4%	18.7%	16.2%	12.0%	7.5%	20.6%	15.8%	0.0%
Springfield	28,633	10.9%	8.5%	23.7%	14.3%	14.1%	6.6%	7.4%	14.1%	0.4%
Longmeadow	523	35.2%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	18.5%	17.6%	25.4%	0.0%

Source: US Census, Summary File 3

Or, if an elderly resident wanted to rent a small apartment because they were not able to take care of their single family home any longer but there were no small units available for rent or purchase, this person would have to make some serious decisions as well, particularly if they had additional medical reasons for wanting to move.

The age of Agawam's rental housing stock is similar in nature to the age of the housing stock throughout the community. Over 30% of it was built prior to 1960 and during the 1960s and 1970s; an additional 40% was constructed (see Table 10). Most of the other adjacent communities have a slightly older housing stock than Agawam does. An older rental housing stock does require repairs and maintenance by the landlord, so the condition of the stock varies depending on how old it is and whether or not there has been a lapse in occupancy that would allow upgrades and repairs to be done.

Table 10: Age of Rental Housing Stock by Percent

	Renter Occupied	1939 or earlier	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1994	1995-1998	1999 to Mar-00
Agawam	2,968	16.9%	6.8%	9.7%	21.7%	21.3%	14.4%	5.2%	3.5%	0.6%
Southwick	616	22.9%	6.5%	7.1%	12.7%	25.5%	19.0%	1.1%	1.5%	3.7%
Westfield	4,770	36.3%	7.4%	10.0%	13.5%	19.4%	10.4%	2.2%	0.6%	0.2%
W. Springfield	4,942	21.3%	12.1%	15.4%	18.2%	20.6%	9.1%	2.7%	0.2%	0.4%
Springfield	28,633	34.8%	10.1%	12.6%	14.3%	15.9%	7.6%	2.9%	1.4%	0.4%
Longmeadow	523	17.0%	2.9%	11.1%	7.6%	9.0%	18.5%	8.2%	21.8%	3.8%

Source: US Census, Summary File 3

Thirty percent (30%) of Agawam renters are earning less than \$20,000 annually while 55% are earning less than \$35,000, both of which are well below the median. This is indicative of the fact that there may be a need for some more affordable rental housing options in the community. The measure for the term "affordable" is not spending more than 30% of monthly income on housing cost.

Overall, 31.4% of tenants are paying more than 30% of their monthly income for rent. The tenants who are actually spending this much range in age from 35-55 and over the age of 75, so it is older community members, not those individuals who are just starting out. This could be happening not only due to the cost of housing, but because of some type of disability that limits their ability to work, unemployment, or lack of reliable income in general. It also could be single parent households who are struggling, as well as some of the older Agawam residents who are spending too much of their income to provide for a roof over their heads.

Owners are also paying a significant amount of their income for monthly mortgages and owner costs. Twenty five percent of owners with a mortgage pay 30% or more of their monthly income for assorted owner costs, as do 9% of owners without a mortgage. For residents who are earning at or above the median household

Table 11: Age of Householder by Tenure

	1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000
Owner occupied:	7,715	8,292	7.5%
15 to 24 years	53	26	-50.9%
25 to 34 years	1312	775	-40.9%
35 to 44 years	1930	1,892	-2.0%
45 to 54 years	1383	1,980	43.2%
55 to 64 years	1276	1542	20.8%
65 to 74 years	1174	1091	-7.1%
75 years and over	587	986	68.0%
Renter occupied:	2,717	2,968	9.2%
15 to 24 years	207	188	-9.2%
25 to 34 years	838	545	-35.0%
35 to 44 years	513	791	54.2%
45 to 54 years	277	527	90.3%
55 to 64 years	224	229	2.2%
65 to 74 years	363	167	-54.0%
75 years and over	295	521	76.6%

Source: US Census 1990 & 2000, Summary File 3

² Kathryn Costa, Agawam Housing Authority to Mary Coolidge, McGregor & Associates 26 April 2004.

income of \$49,390, there is only an affordability gap of \$200 for home purchase and for a condo purchase; there is no gap at all. However, for those who earn only 80% or the median household income (or less), the gap for property purchase is significant at \$43,200 for a single family home and \$40,700 for a condo. With a large number of renters at low incomes, for them, purchasing a home may not even be possible.

Agawam has seen a decline in its owner occupied population in the age ranges of 15-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds (see Table 11). This could be for a number of reasons, the most obvious of which is that their populations in the community have diminished in the last decade. Another issue might be that the younger age groups just do not have the incomes to purchase a home in Agawam, or they prefer not to settle down in the community after finishing college. The increase in ownership among residents who are 75 and older is evidence of both the population increase and the fact that there is only a limited amount of senior housing available for the elderly. So, they are forced to own and maintain homes. The renter population in this age group has also increased for some of the same reasons. Increases in renter occupied with residents aged 35-44 years and 45-55 years may be due to a housing affordability issue, unemployment or just the desire to occupy a smaller dwelling unit. It could also be reflective of the low housing vacancy rate in Agawam, 3.4%. If the housing is not available for rental or ownership, people are forced to live in whatever accommodations they can find. Creating units that will allow residents to stay in Agawam and encourage new residents to move there may help the community sustain itself as it faces continued development and growth pressures.

Subsidized Housing

Agawam's Housing Authority has been serving the community since the early 1950s and they do not participate in any Section 8 or other federally funded subsidized housing programs. Currently they have 191 units of elderly housing spread out across four developments: Country View, Colonial Haven, Meadowbrook Manor and Danehy Schoolhouse. These units are typically one-bedroom, one-bathroom structures that are manageable for elderly residents who want to downsize from a large home. Ten of these units are considered congregate units where each occupant has their own bedroom, but a common kitchen and living room are shared.

For these elderly units, the waiting list for Agawam residents is over a year, and for non-residents, the waiting list can be as long as two to three years. The Housing Authority often suggests to non-residents that they move to Agawam while on the waiting list and rent an apartment to establish residency, which would make them eligible for the housing quicker. Ten of the units are modified for wheelchair bound senior citizens, but more units for disabled people are needed, particularly on the first floor. The monthly rent for these elderly units is below market, and costs 30% of the individual renters net income, which is the gross income, minus a medical deduction.

There are also 51 affordable family units in Agawam consisting of 1 one-bedroom unit, 15 three-bedroom units and 35 two-bedroom units. Brady Village and Wade Village are the developments where the family housing exists in the form of condo/townhome type units. There is a sizeable waiting list of one to two years for Agawam residents and over two years for nonresidents for these units as well. Occupants of family units also only pay 30% of

their net income, which is their gross income minus deductions such as child support, school expenses and sometimes deductions for work related expenses like uniforms. Like any housing unit or building, both the family and elderly housing need maintenance and upgrades. However, the Agawam Housing Authority does not have enough money to fund all necessary repairs like painting, upgrades, and replacement of windows or electrical work. The housing stock in the community as a whole was built at a consistent rate over decades of time, although no subsidized units have been built since the Danehy Schoolhouse approximately ten years ago.

As of 2002, Agawam had 461 “40B” housing units in town, which translates to 3.98% of the total housing stock (legislation adopted in 1969 to help create affordable housing). A 40B Comprehensive Permit can be granted pursuant to a state law (M. G. L. c. 40B) if the community does not have a minimum of 10% of it’s housing as “affordable.” The law allows developers to override local zoning and build projects in accordance with a Comprehensive Permit issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Compared to the other adjacent communities, Agawam has only slightly more 40B units than Longmeadow and West Springfield (see Table 12).

Table 12: Subsidized Housing

	Year Round	Developed Units		% Subsidized
	Units - 2000	Since 2001	40B Units	Year Round Base
Agawam	11,588	461	461	3.98%
Southwick	3,488	145	145	4.16%
Westfield	15,362	865	865	5.63%
West Springfield	12,196	377	377	3.09%
Springfield	61,001	11,231	10,879	17.83%
Longmeadow	5,832	172	172	2.95%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

Infrastructure³

Agawam purchases 99% of its water from the Springfield Regional Supply System. The remainder of the water used in the community comes from private wells. Recently, Berkshire Power was added onto the public water system, which significantly increases the consumption of water for the entire town. The water that comes from Springfield is treated before consumption and there are no limitations by contract on how much Agawam can use.

During the 1970s, Agawam used state and federal dollars to expand its aging sewer system enough so that as of 2001, 88% of the town was sewered. The sewage is pumped to a treatment plant that is owned by the City of Springfield on Bondi’s Island where it is managed. Agawam pays for their share of the maintenance and operating costs based on the volume and strength of the sewage that comes from the community.

Zoning

The Office of Planning and Community Development in Agawam was created and the first employees hired in 1983. This office was originally created for several functions, which includes those of the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, and the Industrial

³ Town of Agawam, *Agawam Open Space and Recreation Plan*, 2001