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East Longmeadow to assess opportunities for new housing

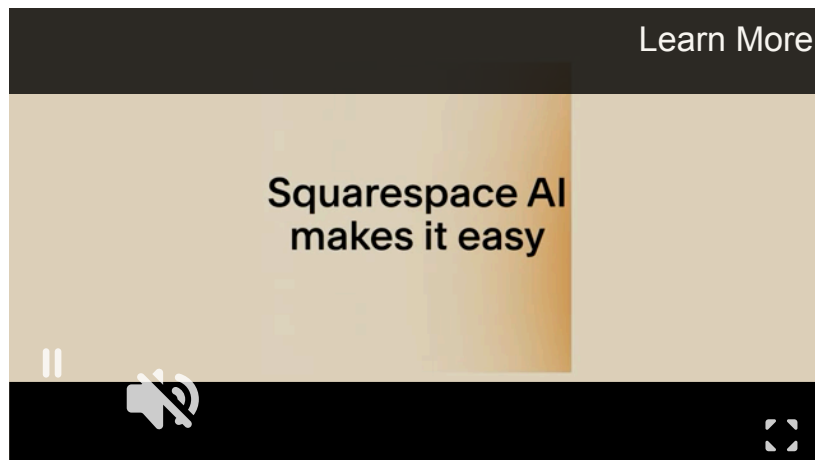
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EAST LONGMEADOW — With the ongoing housing crisis and changing town demographics, East Longmeadow officials say the town needs an updated look at its housing stock.

Earlier this week, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission awarded \$6,500 to study the town's housing needs.

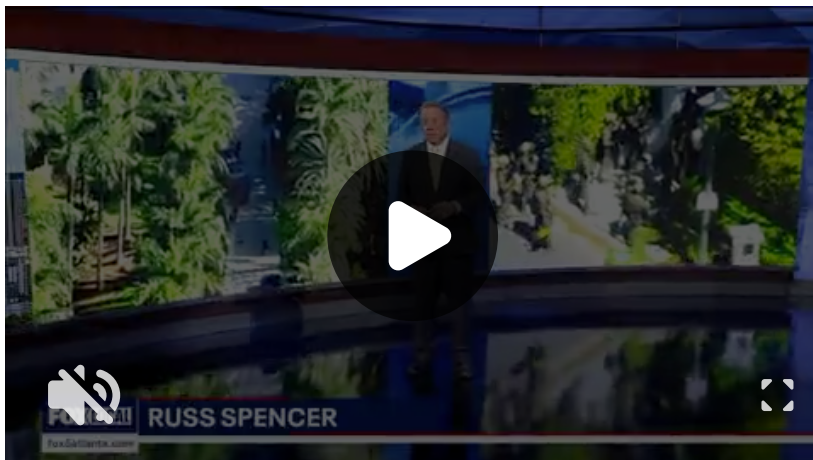


“The assessment will survey our housing portfolio and compare that to projections for changing demographics and workforce impacts,” said Rebecca Lisi, the town’s deputy manager.

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The finished housing production plan will help the town strategize the development of affordable housing.

Roughly three years ago, the town produced its [Resilient Master Plan](#) with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, which tackled housing and identified trends. It also determined who new housing opportunities should be available to.

In 2021, “the town’s questions about housing were answered or at least addressed,” said Kenneth Comia, deputy director of land use and environment at Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

According to that plan, 6,157 units made up the town’s housing stock in 2017.

Many of its homes were newer than the rest of Hampden County: In 2019, while only 6% of homes across the county were built after 2000, a full 16% of East Longmeadow’s homes were constructed after 2000.

Meanwhile, affordable housing accounted for about 7.44% of the residential units in the town as of November 2019, the plan said.

But since that 2021 plan, Lisi said the town’s demographics evolved.

Lisi applied for the Direct Local Technical Assistance [grant](#) offered through the planning commission. These grants help local municipalities, especially those that are smaller and have fewer resources, address key issues such as housing, zoning and water protection.

The assessment is set to begin in the upcoming weeks.

As part of the award, towns are asked to provide a 5% match of the grant to help pay for the time of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's staff during the work.

East Longmeadow, whose population is just over 16,300 people, is predominantly made up of adults in the workforce, according to [data](#) from the U.S. Census.

"The housing assessment will help us understand where we can look to build diverse housing opportunities like age-friendly, transit-oriented, and affordable housing developments," Lisi said.

Comia said the current housing stock of East Longmeadow consists of mainly single-family homes.

"We may find that with people wanting age-friendly or transit-oriented housing, there will be a need for more apartments and condos," he said. "Developments

near transit are generally higher in density.”

He also said that assessments like these have been successful in other towns in helping to jumpstart community conversations around housing.

In South Hadley last year, the planning commission worked with the town’s manager to hold [public forums](#) and invited major housing players to participate, including local developers.

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During the assessment of East Longmeadow, Comia said he hopes there will be a lot of resident engagement.

Lisi said that the town is prioritizing housing and the assessment is a part of tackling that issue.

“We want to be informed so that we’re prepared to make changes and handle any challenges that arise,” she said.

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