

Community Preservation Act

More cities and towns are adopting this inventive funding tool, but it needs updating to remain effective.



The Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps cities and towns address three core community concerns: acquiring and preserving open space, protecting historic assets, and creating affordable housing. Communities raise funds by voting to assess a dedicated property tax surcharge, which is matched by the state. Each of the three funding areas must receive at least 10% of annual CPA revenues, and the remaining 70% can be allocated among the three uses at the municipality's discretion. Communities can establish a surcharge of up to 3% and may include exemptions for low-income and elderly homeowners. Through 2007, 46 cities and towns in the region adopted the CPA.

The program has faced challenges. In nearly a quarter of the region's municipalities, voters have rejected the CPA, due to concerns about the burden of the surcharge and uncertainties about the future of matching funds. MAPC and the Community Preservation Coalition support legislation filed by Senator Cynthia Creem (D-Newton) that would require the state to match at least 75% of local revenues; this legislation would also allow municipalities to combine a small property tax surcharge with other sources of revenue that would also be matched. As a result, more cities and towns could use this tool to improve their community.

