

# SUDBURY HOUSING AUTHORITY

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SHEILA M. CUSOLITO  
Executive Director

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March 19, 2025

Dear Matt:

Thank you for your continued interest in the SHA's proposed redevelopment project. The simplification of your question and desired response is problematic, for it belies the complexity of the factors SHA must consider beyond property maintenance. This accounts for my inability to respond in more timely manner, as well as for the detail that follows.

As I previously told you, SHA does not have documentation responsive to your request. As outlined in the December 18 narrative, I am not an estimator. The narrative also outlines that each of the four properties in question has unique capital needs that are not accounted for within a typical vacancy turnover scope. The additional information provided in my initial response to you was to underscore the point that a \$137K unit rehab (selective improvements) is not a valid comparison—materially or financially—to new construction. I'll add one specific example: each of these four unique homes has/had a fossil fuel based heating system that is no longer supported by the State. As previously stated, any rehab, which by its nature is a retrofit with its associated challenges, would require separate architectural and engineering schematics and would likely require replacement of these heating systems with an electric system. As you are aware, the construction cost for a recent such installation was upwards of \$80K. Moreover, because these properties are unique and scattered, they typically do not qualify for wholesale property improvement awards.

SHA's proposed project will streamline maintenance operations by affording a degree of uniformity of construction, components and interior finishes. It will create more energy-efficient and financially and physically sustainable homes to replace the four oldest properties in SHA's portfolio.

It's important to understand that the challenges of maintaining properties within the State public housing portfolio are neither unique to Sudbury, nor is Sudbury considered to be low-performing or out of compliance with its building maintenance or turnover rates. State portfolios suffer not only from limited capital funding resources, but also from restrictions on staffing. These challenges were featured in a report [WBUR Report 2023](#) that broadly identified limited capital resources and a recently implemented, cumbersome wait list system, as well as limited staff capacity, as factors

creating a bottle-neck to housing those in need across the state. In response, the State initiated several solutions to address these concerns, including new opportunities to reposition, or recharacterize, State public housing to create more sustainable programs that rely on non-state revenue streams and afford the local housing authority an opportunity to create additional modern, energy-efficient and self-sustaining housing.

In 2024, Sudbury Housing Authority was one of three housing authorities awarded competitive funding under one such initiative by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). But this project took shape several years prior to the 2023 announcement of the Public Housing Innovations funding round. Here is an outline of the steps SHA took over several years, steps that likely demonstrated to EOHLC the merits of its proposal:

1. 2019: application to the Sudbury Foundation to assess several parcels, including these specifically for redevelopment as duplexes (2020 award);
2. 2020: application and award of Technical Assistance from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership to broadly assess and identify the potential for development/redevelopment of the parcels outlined in the Sudbury Foundation proposal, as well as others of interest to SHA;
3. 2021: pre-development engineering feasibility work on these four parcels that verified the potential for constructing duplexes;
4. 2022: engaging Cambridge Housing Authority as a development consultant to assess the financial feasibility, as well as the path, to redevelop the parcels.

It is the SHA's position that the project as envisioned over time and under formal consideration since 2019, and deemed feasible by subject-matter experts—to raze existing structures and to build duplexes anew on the sites of its existing homes—stands on its own merits. In addition to addressing building maintenance considerations, this proposal will maximize the equally important opportunities to effectively house both our existing family housing residents in appropriately sized units, and those nearly 16,000 applicants seeking similar such housing.

The proposal considers existing and trending demographics of residents as well as applicants, which parallel those trends outlined in Sudbury's Master Plan and its Housing Production Plan: multi-person households are getting older *and* smaller. These documents also acknowledge the need for a greater degree of diversity of housing types. Additionally, the recently revised state regulation regarding accessory dwelling units will be contemplated locally for changes to Sudbury's zoning bylaw, which *might* come under consideration for SHA's effort. Single-family structures are not the housing type of highest or only value for SHA's purposes:

1. Multi-dwelling structures such as the proposed duplexes better meet the demand and need of SHA's wait-list, given the limited availability of parcels available for housing purposes, and further, represent the best use of these parcels;
2. The existing single-family unit bedroom counts do not meet the existing or trending tenant demographics or the demographics of SHA's state family housing waitlist, which currently stands at nearly 16,000 applicants for 16 units of housing:
  - 75% of these four structures represent over-housed households, meaning the number of bedrooms exceeds the need of the household;
  - Portfolio-wide, the current incidence of over-housing is 25%;
  - With additional units of various sizes, the SHA will be able to move current residents to units with the appropriate number of bedrooms to make way for applicants in need of the larger units;
  - Wait list data show the following: roughly 45% in need of 2-bedroom units; 26% in need of 3-bedroom units; and 23% in need of 1-bedroom units for those ineligible, or likely ineligible, by age or disability status, for housing at Musketahquid Village;
  - There is anecdotal and historic evidence that the need for one-bedroom units for people under 60 and not disabled is significant for Sudbury residents in need of housing at the lowest ends of the income spectrum. This represents an unmet need.

As envisioned, SHA's proposal aligns with the mission of the Housing Authority and the criteria of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to:

1. Create physically and financially sustainable housing programs that diminish reliance on State funding; and
2. Create additional affordable rental housing opportunities.

Most of these points are covered in the SHA's FAQs, which were sent to you directly as well as posted on SHA's website: [Redevelopment FAQs](#).

Before I close, I also want to clarify three additional matters: how the financial proforma is utilized; suggestions that SHA construct new housing on other parcels containing duplexes (Fairbank Circle, Old Meadow Road and Pine Lakes); and the pending CPA funding proposal.

- Proforma: while it should be no surprise that costs invariably rise over time, the proforma is intended to be updated as key milestones are reached. SHA anticipates the costs will be refreshed as part of the recently initiated design considerations, for example.
- Development of other referenced parcels: the SHA has explored development potential on these parcels and is in agreement that there is potential to do so. However, for the reasons outlined, SHA believes its proposal meets the overarching needs without invoking the use of

other sites. The decision to move forward as proposed has nothing to do with the status of deed restrictions. Given the SHA's interest in expanding affordable rental housing opportunities and the limited availability of non-SHA parcels to consider for that purpose, it is likely that these properties will be revisited at some point.

- Pending CPA funding request for \$450,000: these funds are earmarked for construction activities related to the proposed project. The SHA has recently engaged architectural and engineering services that will provide specific information related to the viability of the proposal. If the data suggest the proposal is not viable and an appropriate alternative model for these sites is not identified, these funds would not be used. Should the project demonstrate viability at the design stage, it will still be subject to several board reviews related to permitting. Unless and until these additional sources of information and expertise demonstrate otherwise, it behooves the SHA to continue on the path it has outlined.

I would have welcomed the chance to meet by appointment with you or other members of the public about this project or other areas of concern. It is unfortunate that to date, that option has not been explored and that SHA's offer to one of your neighbors to serve as an associate member of the Board was declined. I happened to have served for several years in such a capacity, which afforded me the opportunity to understand and advocate for public housing, ultimately leading to a very significant shift in my professional undertakings.

I hope this explanation provides you with a better understanding of the SHA's rationale for exploring the redevelopment of these four properties.

Finally, if you have not already received it, this week, a notice was mailed about a virtual listening session scheduled for Thursday March 27 at 6:30 pm. This is an opportunity for you and others to provide design input to the newly hired architect firm Zero Energy Design. I should have the notice posted on SHA's website shortly, but am sending it separately by email.

Thanks again for your interest.  
Sheila

## Sheila M Cusolito

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**From:** [redacted]  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 23, 2025 3:43 PM  
**To:** Sheila M Cusolito  
**Cc:** [redacted]  
**Subject:** Re: Records for 705 Property Repair Needs

Hello Sheila,

Thank you for your response. I attended both meetings you mentioned in your response and watched the replays, which is why the Treasurer's comments were surprising.

To clarify and simplify my question, do each of the four single-family homes require \$500,000 in comprehensive capital improvements to make a safe and comfortable living environment for renters?

The main concern is whether the total capital improvements amount to \$2 million, as presented to the CPC. This seems like a substantial sum relative to the needs outlined as part of your documentation to the state.

Respectfully, without any supporting documentation, studies, or estimates to substantiate this high amount, objectively it may be misleading to make such statements to audiences that may not have background and context on this controversial project.

I look forward to your response and closing the loop on the question. Thank you and take care.

Regards,  
Matt

On Tue, Feb 18, 2025 at 4:15 PM Sheila M Cusolito <[Director@sudburyha.org](mailto:Director@sudburyha.org)> wrote:

Hello Matt.

The SHA does not have documentation responsive to your request. You might find it helpful to review the December 18, 2024 comments made in response questions following the SHA's presentation to the CPC on its current request, approximate time frames 2:03:19 – 2:05:17; and 2:08:54 – 2:11:37.

As well, you might review the attached (and posted) minutes of the November 12, 2024 public meeting open forum portion that touches on this topic.

The distinction is between selective capital improvement project that might be done periodically during a tenancy or at turnover (such as was outlined in the \$137K cost estimate for Great Lake) vs. a comprehensive capital

improvement project that would address all needs within the near ten-year range (for example) at some greater overall cost.

Thanks again for your interest.

Sheila

**\*\*SHA Public Hours: M Tu Th F (9 am–2 pm)\*\***

Sheila M Cusolito, MPHA; MCPPO

Executive Director

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**From:**

**Sent:** Friday, February 7, 2025 8:43 AM

**To:** Sheila M Cusolito <Director@SudburyHA.org>

**Cc:** li

**Subject:** Records for 705 Property Repair Needs

Dear Ms. Cusolito,

I hope this message finds you well.

During a recent CPC meeting on January 15th, your treasurer Ms. Cline stated you, the SHA Executive Director, estimated \$500,000 in capital needs/repairs is required for each of the four properties in the proposed 705 redevelopment project (thus totaling est. \$2 million to repair these as 4 single family

houses). This statement made on behalf of the SHA to seek the CPC's application approval (minute mark 26:05 of this [meeting recording link](#)) is information not previously disclosed and contradicts information provided to residents during various information sessions, meetings and hearings.

As the Executive Director, is it accurate that each of the four properties requires an estimated \$500k in repairs as stated in this meeting?

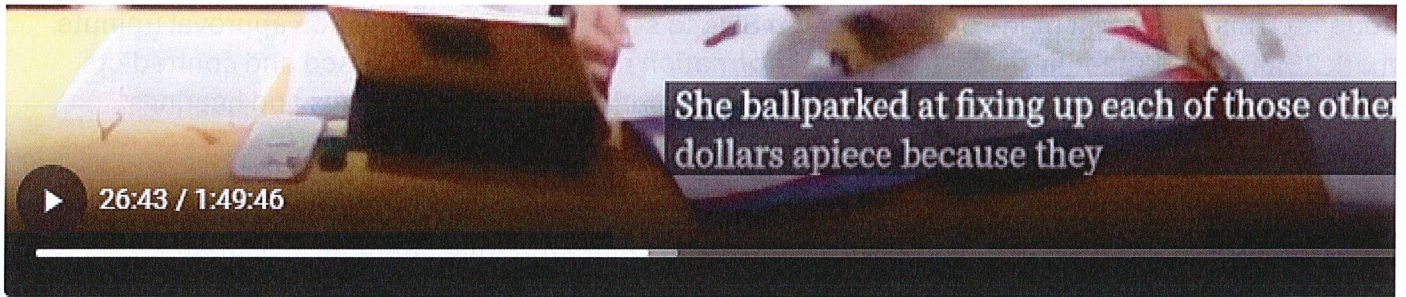
Based on the SHA's state funding application from Feb 2024, the following capital repair needs were outlined for each property (pg. 4 of application):

- **8 Oakwood Ave:** "requires updates to its electrical system and replacement of its inefficient oil-based heating system."
- **2 Beechwood Ave:** "requires modernization, its gas-fired furnace is nearing the end of its useful life and the property's plumbing needs upgrading."
- **9 Richard Ave:** "poor condition, including damaged interiors, poor quality finishes and water infiltration in the basement."
- **21 Great Lake Dr:** "vacated in September 2021, is in poor condition, including damaged interiors, weatherization needs, and water infiltration." SHA's assessment by an external consultant, as outlined on your own website, estimated \$137 in necessary repairs which is far from \$500k.

Can you please provide any supporting information for the \$500,000 repair estimates for each property, including studies, assessments (including copy of Hancock's assessment), or related documentation?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Best regards,



"...the housing executive director did say that, you know, you'd say we could fix up those other houses. She ballparked fixing up each of those houses would be a half million dollars apiece because they would all need individual architectural drawings and designs. They are all of different ages, different sizes, and different designs." - Ms. Cline, CPC Meeting Jan 15, 2025.

#### SUDBURY HOUSING AUTHORITY

#### Proposed Redevelopment of Single-Family Homes

#### QUESTIONS RAISED

**Question #1:** Given that 21 Great Lake Drive was in disrepair, what confidence is there that the new units won't fall into disrepair? Why didn't you fix 21 Great Lake Drive for the tenants?

**Response:** This property needed substantial work which was not readily apparent until the tenant vacated the property. The estimate for repairs and updates to 21 Great Lake Drive was over \$137,000 which the SHA had available. Because of a number of factors, including the age of the building, the greater need for units with fewer bedrooms, and the availability of funding from the State, the SHA chose not to use its reserves to make these repairs. Both the State and SHA believe it is better to

*Excerpt from SHA's public FAQ, outlining \$137,000 in estimated repairs and updates to 21 Great Lake Drive.*

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