



Town of Ayer| Ayer Town Hall| 1 Main Street| Ayer, MA 01432|978-772-8220 x100| www.ayer.ma.us

Statement from the Town of Ayer relating to
Devenscrest Neighborhood Notice to Tenants to Terminate Tenancy-at-Will
July 23, 2021

Along with all members of the community, the Town was made aware of the change in ownership at rental housing units in the Devenscrest neighborhood. The Town immediately took measures to gather information relating to the notices received by residents. Over the course of the past week, we have spoken with Devenscrest residents, state legislators, Town Counsel, Devenscrest Management, and area resource providers to ensure that all residents are provided with accurate information regarding their rights and available resources relating to relocation. We understand that the residents of Devenscrest are being placed in a distressing situation in which they are facing housing insecurity.

Many ideas and proposals were brought forth at the July 16, 2021, neighborhood meeting hosted by the Living Water Fellowship and Senator Eldridge. Some of these ideas included the Town of Ayer declaring the affected properties as affordable housing or the Town taking the land from the property owners via eminent domain.

- The Town of Ayer does not have the authority to simply declare private property as affordable housing. The process of creating state and federal certified affordable housing is lengthy. In Ayer's 2017 Master Plan "housing opportunities, for both renters and owners at all income levels" was identified as a priority. Since Master Plan adoption, the Town has created an Affordable Housing Committee, an Affordable Housing Trust, and has provided funds for the Trust through CPA funding. Zoning changes have been passed by Town Meeting which include an Inclusionary Housing Bylaw, which encourages the development of multifamily housing with an affordable component, an Accessory Dwelling Bylaw, and two Form Based Codes. In the Spring of 2021, the Town adopted a Housing Production Plan; a directive of which is that the Town work to partner with a qualified nonprofit low-to-moderate income developer to build more affordable housing within our community. The Town also supports our low-to-moderate homeowners through its Housing Rehabilitation Program.
- Taking land by eminent domain is a very complex, very lengthy process, which involves appraisals, Town Meeting authorization, funding, and very often lengthy legal proceedings. Additionally, we understand that many, if not all, of these rental units are in dire need of repair. As is with the new owners, the Town would have to take costly action to remedy these issues and would also likely need to relocate tenants.

We understand that this is a stressful and concerning situation and want to provide accurate information on available resources to all affected residents. To that end, we have invited [RCAP Solutions](#) (Resources for Communities And People) to the Devenscrest neighborhood to provide an overview of available services and resources to assist in this time of transition. For additional questions, please contact Alicia Hersey, Program Manager, Community Development Office at 978-772-8220 x142.

Please join us on Thursday July 29, 2021 at 5:30 PM at the Living Water Fellowship, 41 Littleton Road to hear from RCAP Solutions. Due to the increasing number of positive COVID-19 cases, the Town is requiring that masks be worn during this meeting. If you do not have a mask, one will be provided for you.