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NORTH READING, MA

Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

Mr. William Bellavance, Chairperson called the Tuesday, June 27, 2017 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:06p.m. in Room 14 of the North Reading Town Hall, 235 North Street, North Reading, MA.

MEMBERS

PRESENT: William Bellavance, Chairperson
Warren Pearce, Vice Chairperson
Jonathan Cody, Clerk
Christopher B. Hayden

STAFF

PRESENT: Danielle McKnight, AICP
Town Planner/Community Planning Administrator

Mr. Bellavance informed all present that the meeting was being recorded.

Housing Production Plan

Karen Sunnarborg, Consultant for the Town of North Reading presented the PowerPoint for the Housing Production Plan, that was shown at the June 20th meeting.

The board and public forum was then put into groups and given instructions (see attached). A facilitator and recorder were designated for each group.

Part I

Visioning Process

Appropriate Housing Goal

Best locations for new Housing Development

All groups then presented their priority actions (see attached forum summary).

10 & 12 Mt. Vernon Street – cont. P.H.

Mr. Cody moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden

that the Community Planning Commission vote to grant the requested extension of time in which to render a decision on the Eaton Circle – Definitive Subdivision Plan until July 21, 2017 and to continue the public hearing to July 18, 2007 @ 7:30PM.

Adjournment at 9:20PM

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan Cody, Clerk

**NORTH READING, MASSACHUSETTS
HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN**

**Community Housing Forum
Agenda
June 27, 2017
7:00 PM, 235 North Street, Room 14**

- I. Welcome and Introductions**
Who?
- II. PowerPoint Presentations**
Karen Sunnarborg, Consultant
Highlights from the draft Housing Needs Assessment
- III. Comment Period**
- IV. Roundtable Brainstorming/Breakout Groups**
- V. Group Reports**
- VI. Voting**
- VII. Wrap-up and Next Steps**

North Reading Community Housing Forum
Instructions for Roundtable Brainstorming/Breakout Groups
June 27, 2017

I. Identify a Group Facilitator and Recorder (5 minutes)

Each group will select a Facilitator to keep the group on track in fulfilling the assigned tasks within the allotted timeframe.

The group will also identify a Recorder who will record the key comments of each group member on the easels/flip chart sheets that are provided.

II. Visioning (25 minutes)

The basic assignment is to focus on a local vision for affordable housing to provide input into priority housing strategies and goals in the Housing Study. Each participant *in turn* will finish the following sentences (all group members should answer the first question before moving on to the next one):

The Town's greatest *challenge* related to preserving and producing housing affordability and diversity is _____?

An appropriate *housing goal* (something aspirational to strive for in the years ahead) for the Town to achieve is to _____.

_____ (Goals can relate to the numerical goals included in the PowerPoint presentation or ones concerning broader issues such as leveraging local resources, creating housing that is harmonious with local architectural fabric, guiding growth to smart locations, producing housing to accommodate the diverse needs of the community, focusing on housing for the most vulnerable residents, striving to find regional solutions to housing issues, etc.)

The best locations for new housing development include _____.

III. Identify actions (15 minutes)

Each participant will *in turn* indicate what they think are the two most important actions or strategies for the Town to implement to address priority housing needs.

IV. Prioritize actions (10 minutes)

Each member will respond *in turn* to the list of proposed actions by identifying their top 3 preferences. The group would then select the top 3 actions that received the most support as well as the next 3 in order of priority importance. This prioritized list of actions would ideally be agreed to by consensus but if necessary could be reached by voting.

V. Present priority actions (15 minutes)

All meeting participants will be reconvened, and a member of each group will present the priority actions from his/her group. The priority list of actions on the flip chart from each group will be displayed in the front of the room.

VI. Voting (5 minutes)

Following the group presentations, all present will be asked to vote on the actions. Each participant will be given 5 “positive” sticky dots to place as “votes” wherever they wish on the presented actions. Depending upon preferences, participants can place all 5 dots on one item or spread them among strategies denoting the extent of their support. Participants would also be given one “negative” dot to record strong opposition to a particular action.

VII. Wrap-up and Next Steps (5 minutes)

TOWN OF NORTH READING, MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

Community Housing Forum
June 22, 2017

Meeting Summary

The North Reading Community Planning Commission sponsored a Community Housing Forum on June 22, 2017 at North Reading Town Offices to present key findings from a Housing Needs Assessment and obtain community input into the next phase of its work in preparing a Housing Production Plan. Following a brief introduction from Danielle McKnight, North Reading's Town Planner and Community Planning Administrator; the Consultant, Karen Sunnarborg, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the highlights of the Housing Needs Assessment and facilitated a brief question and comment period.

Participants were then provided with instructions on proceeding with Breakout Group Brainstorming, and asked to identify a Facilitator to keep the group on track in fulfilling the assigned tasks within allotted timeframes and to further identify a Recorder to document key comments from each group member. The purpose of the breakout groups was to obtain input from participants on their vision for community housing as well as priority actions for fulfilling this vision and addressing local housing needs.

Visioning

Each group member was asked in turn to complete the following three questions, resulting in these comments:

The Town's greatest challenge related to preserving and producing housing affordability and diversity is _____

- Limited developable property
- Limited Town control over housing stock
- Limited available funding
- Zoning constraints
- Large lot zoning requirements which drive up costs
- Lack of sewer services
- High property tax rate relative to neighboring communities
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of political will
- Lack of community awareness, education and interest in the issue
- Limited public transportation
- High cost of land and housing
- Small community with limited resources, "can we accomplish much?"
- Public housing/Peabody Court needs to be redeveloped
- High financial burdens
- Affordable housing development is complicated with so many moving parts

- Historic district limitations in Town Center
- Town had growth spurt and now residents are older with nowhere to downsize and thus moving out of town; new parents are paying a lot for housing
- People do not like to live above shops unless close to transit

An appropriate housing goal (something aspirational to strive for in the years ahead) for the Town to achieve is to _____?

- Promote greater Town involvement in the issue of affordable housing
- Provide municipal sewer services
- Address the needs of the elderly first (we have neglected them and they have funded the town) but not to the exclusion of others
- Promote more opportunities for mixed uses
- Provide sufficient housing for veterans and people with disabilities
- Provide starter housing for families
- Focus primarily on providing housing for North Reading residents
- Provide intergenerational housing opportunities
- Meet housing needs of all residents, current and future
- Modify zoning to allow smaller lot development

The best locations for new housing development include _____?

- Parcel off Carpenter Drive
- Locations within walking distance of shopping and services
- Main Street/Route 28
- Community Center
- Town-owned properties (Swan Pond and Smith ~~Read~~ Property are isolated – not much Town-owned land that is centrally located)
- Chestnut Street area
- Eisenhower Pond area
- Around postal facility and Walmart
- Redevelop Peabody Court into a denser development

Prioritizing Actions and Voting

Each member of the breakout groups was then asked in turn to identify the two most important actions or strategies for the Town to implement to address priority housing needs. They were then asked, also in turn, to identify their top three preferences based on the full list of proposed actions created by the group. The full group was then asked to select the top three actions that received the most support as well as the next three in order of priority importance and agreement.

Representatives from each group then presented the priority actions to all participants. Following these presentations, all participants voted on their preferred actions with five stickers which they could place on one item or spread among strategies. They also had one negative sticker that they could use to record opposition to a particular action.

This prioritizing and voting process produced the following actions and number of votes:

TOWN OF NORTH READING HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Executive Summary

The Town of North Reading has made significant progress in providing affordable housing opportunities for its residents with an affordability level of 9.6% of its year-round housing stock. Still, Town officials and other housing stakeholders recognize that additional affordable housing is needed to reach the state's 10% affordability goal and address unmet community housing needs. ~~These officials have~~ The Town has also identified some notable shifts in the local housing dynamic. For example, housing prices have been increasing and have surpassed pre-recession levels, thus widening the gap between housing prices and what residents can afford. This widening affordability gap has caused many households to pay far too much on housing costs.

The Town has therefore embarked on a process to document current and growing priority housing needs. This Housing Needs Assessment will become a major component of the forthcoming Housing Production Plan, presenting an overview of demographic, economic and housing characteristics and trends for the Town of North Reading and the context within which a responsive set of strategies can be developed to address identified housing needs and goals. Based largely on census data and other housing market information, the following major demographic, economic and housing characteristics have been documented:

Demographic Trends

- *Significant population growth since 1990, growing from 12,002 to 15,500 residents.*
- *Continued population growth is being projected to about 16,500 residents by 2030.*
- *North Reading is losing younger residents and gaining older ones.* Population projections indicate a continuation of this trend with dramatic increases in those 65 years of age or older doubling in number between 2010 and 2030.

Economic Trends

- *Very high income levels* as the median household income was \$123,103 compared to \$85,118 and \$68,563 for the county and state, respectively.
- *An estimated 23% of North Reading households were earning at or below 80% of area median income for the Boston area* and thus based on income alone could potentially be eligible for government housing assistance. *72% of these households were spending too much of their income on housing with 48% spending more than half of their income on housing costs.*
- While the overall community has become increasingly more affluent over the past several decades with those earning more than \$100,000 increasing to 59% between 1990 and 2015, *there remains a very vulnerable population living in North Reading with limited financial means.* In 2015, 615 or 11% of households earned less than \$35,000, but there are only 233 actual affordable housing units.
- *Those working in town earn on average considerably less than residents* as the average weekly wage was \$1,372 for those with jobs in North Reading or about \$71,600 annually. This represents ~~and~~ 58% of the median household income of residents.

Housing Trends

- *Housing growth has slowed down* from an average annual of 32 permits between 2000 and 2010 to 22 per year between 2011 and 2016.
- *There has been substantial teardown activity*, representing about 19% of all new residential permits since 2008.
- *Large homes of 9 rooms or more have fueled 75% of the new housing growth since 1990.*
- *Significant multi-family housing development occurred in the last decade* of 524 new units including 433 affordable ones.
- *Extremely tight market conditions* with a zero percent vacancy rate for rentals and 1.3% for homeownership according to 2015 census estimates.
- *There is very little affordability remaining in North Reading* as there were less than 200 single-family homes assessed below \$300,000.
- *Market rents are high* as it is difficult to find a two-bedroom apartment for less than \$1,500, while the median income earning renter household could afford a unit for about \$1,123.
- *For those earning at 80% of area median income limit (\$65,750 for a family of three), the affordability gap is \$273,000*, the difference between the maximum they could afford of approximately \$236,000 and the median single-family house price of \$508,950.

Targeted Housing Needs/Goals

Rental housing is top priority – goal of about 80% of new units produced:

- Help diversify housing stock.
- Little housing available for local workers.
- Focus on most vulnerable residents.
- Higher turnover to benefit more occupants over time.
- Most state subsidies for rentals to help leverage local investments.

First-time homeownership is second priority – goal of 20% of new units:

- Provide starter housing and options for empty nesters to downsize.
- Few subsidized ownership units in town.

Integrate handicapped accessibility and supportive services into new development – goal of about 10% of units in family housing and 20% for seniors.

Regulatory Strategies

- Modify zoning to increase the availability of smaller affordable units (4 votes)
- Insure that there is no sunset clause on affordability (3 votes)
- Take Stop & Shop by eminent domain and redevelop for senior housing (1 vote)
- Take derelict properties by eminent domain or receivership (1 vote)

Town Programs and Services

- Allocate a percentage of the Berry property proceeds for affordable housing (9 votes)
- Collaborate with all Town boards and committees on the issue of affordable housing (8 votes)
- Preserve existing affordable housing (8 votes and 1 negative vote)
- Install sewer services on Main and Concord Streets (6 votes)
- Create a Master Plan Committee that involves all boards and committees (5 votes)
- Provide community education through a variety of venues (NORCAM, articles in the paper, website) (2 votes)

Development Opportunities

- Promote mixed-use development and a new downtown (13 votes)
- Pursue partnerships with non-profits (4 votes and 1 negative vote)
- Provide Town-owned property for potential swap or sale for affordable housing

Participants were informed that the Town will be working with the Consultant on the next sections of the Housing Production Plan that will include priority actions that were discussed during the public forum as well as annual production goals. After the draft is prepared, the North Reading Community Planning Commission will conduct another public meeting to present the highlights of the Plan for further input from local leaders, housing stakeholders and residents.

