

Imagine Nashua – Housing Focus Discussion  
 6/21/21 – 6 pm via Zoom

**In attendance:**

Staff & Consultants	Steering Committee Members	Public
Sarah Marchant Matt Sullivan Julie Chizmas Carter Falk Bill McKinney  Taskina Tareen Will Cohen	Amber Logue-Morgan Gene Porter Peter Schaefer	Sherry Dutzy, ConComm Erica Brooks, NeighborWorks Paul McLaughlin, NeighborWorks Julie Glosner Tom Woodward Michael Pedersen Caroline Betsy Houde Betsy Gamrat

**Review Goals and Action Items**

**2.5 Housing Accessibility**

Sherry: Describe what community housing looks like? How does maintenance of duplex/tri-plex with multiple owners work?

Matt: Re: Maintenance – homeowner association, condo-ized, or prop managers. Re: Community housing – doesn’t necessarily look like any one thing.

Will: What is the next triple-decker? Used to be cheap and easy, now less cheap way to build something that looks like neighboring properties. Deep pockets – want to build things that are predictable and can be built with wood. The “big house” concept – looks like a big house but has multiple units with a shared component – kitchen, community space, etc. Provides a level of cost effectiveness. Community housing is an active question.

Gene (chat): You mentioned only accessory dwellings as need legislation. How about the "Commonwealth Ave" approach to becoming more of a city than a bedroom suburb? In particular, at least in down town, business at street level; several level of apartments above. Is this currently permitted?

Will: Rule of thumb as to # units/sq ft of retail to support it.

Matt: Two recommendations from the Housing study: Housing trust fund – critical component. Potentially updating city’s inclusionary zoning - actively working on.

Betsy (chat): Love that! Will help reduce need for retrofit later

Peter: Re: publicly owned property. City has been selling it all for development. What does that mean?

Matt: Some property may be viable for housing but we haven't done detailed audit yet. This rec drives that.

Bill (chat): I caution that ADA compliance may not mix well with "affordable"

Gene (chat): Not just currently city owned property; city should consider acquiring suitable land for future affordable housing

Gene: City should acquire new property for future development of affordable housing.

Peter: Some sites the City bought at a reduced cost and then sold it for a profit.

#### **4.1 Housing Affordability and Stability**

Betsy G: Big fan of the City buying land to protect environment.

Tom: Connected to Family Promise and the Soup Kitchen is adding space for the homeless. How do we educate people on how to evaluate property?

Matt: Need collaboration and coordination between those involved in real estate.

Amber: Group in Manchester that helps new home buyers and host education programs. Realtors would do that too.

Paul (chat): [www.hometeamnh.org](http://www.hometeamnh.org)

Paul (chat): NeighborWorks Southern NH

Betsy H: Education should be multi-lingual.

Erica (chat): [stewartproperty.net](http://stewartproperty.net) for affordable housing

Paul (chat): New Hampshire Housing has great loan programs but don't do seminars. We do classes in Spanish as well

Peter: Used to have program downtown. Mostly about loans?

Paul: Gave info about NeighborWork's Home Team program. Hope to bring them back soon now that COVID is over. 8-hour submissive home owner program.

Peter: Lots of people have only rented and don't know how to transition to home ownership.

Paul: Home Team program doesn't focus on any specific age group – you don't know what you don't know. We need to really realize - what is affordable housing? Sweet spot is about \$250K for many they work with. Think about people working in service industry, making little more than minimum wage. They want to own, too. Incentivize builders to build something affordable.

Will: This needs to go into text of Master Plan. Question of how you build stuff is significant. Supply-side availability.

Julie G (chat): The median home price in NH is \$409k going to a news segment on WMUR.

Betsy G (chat): What about emphasizing more owner-occupied multi-unit housing? Especially near the center of the City.

Peter (chat): So we should focus on housing mix

Paul (chat): Check out 40 Pine St to see the 2 Family recently built and sold for an example of a great collaboration. It was developed by NWSNH.

Betsy H: Are there funds for beautification like paint or new siding. Neighborhood pride through make-overs.

Julie C (chat): <https://www.nashuanh.gov/316/Housing-Improvement-Programs-Rehab>

Gene (chat): Nashua should stop permitting natural gas and bio mass heating sytemes and require heat pumps.

Pete: Multi-family rentals (?)

Betsy H: At Southern, they can't do Google Docs, so that may be why they haven't submitted feedback.

#### **4.2 Environmental Sustainability**

Sherry: What about code changes regarding amount of grass people can have or developers have to include. Rules like planting a tree on every lot.

Matt: Worthwhile looking at open-space requirements to see if they are providing results we want. Somewhat arbitrary percentages worth a review. We do require trees be planted and should audit those. Role for ConComm to play when they review those recs.

Gene: All good stuff but its nibbling around the edges of the GHG problem. Reduce natural gas hookups and incentive use of heat pumps. Stop permitting biomass installations. Both would make serious reductions in GHGs.

Peter: Currently electric is very expensive for heating

Will: summarized Carbon-free Transportation and Building Design goal.

Peter: Concerned about this because retired. Has both electric and gas heating. Electric is super expensive.

Will: Lots of options. Municipal aggregation, community solar that city owns or helps make happen. Combination of options that could require cooperation of neighboring towns.

#### **4.3 Form and Design**

*No comments*

#### 4.4 Livability and Development Coordination

Gene: re: Peter's concern of cost of heat pumps. Cost of running is about 50% higher than gas. So need some kind of fund to defray that cost. Gov't has responsibility to incentivize people to get rid of fossil fuels.

Peter: Gov't will raise taxes and fees on utilities and they will pass costs on to consumers.

Amber: Re: ADUs and allowing for zoning of smaller sq footage – is that only for apartments or also for tiny homes?

Matt: We don't have strict minimum size for multi-family. There are rules on number of units, not size. Tiny homes are different issue – concern in two places. Minimum building standards and tiny homes on wheels. Been a general lack of interest in NH.

Will: A Tiny Home is lifestyle choice but hasn't really taken off. Keep separate from ADU.

Caroline (chat): I want to say that I like the universal design and emphasis on environmental friendly buildings for the future. I think that urban sized used housing where apartments are on top of stores is a good way to accommodate multiple generations, diverse cultures, and people of various incomes.

Betsy G (chat): I agree with Caroline

Matt: There's nothing that would disallow small homes to be built. Runs up against density issue.

Carter: Since Tiny Homes became popular, had one or two phone calls a year about them. They generally don't meeting building codes. But have 18 – 24 ADUs come before the planning board every year.

Sherry: Q for Will – re: height limitations in wood buildings –5 floors? Isn't there research on wood being as sturdy as steel?

Will: CLT – cross laminated timber. Been 'about to happen' for a decade but shouldn't bank on it solving affordable housing. More expensive. Building code needs to reflect.

Sherry: Applaud exercise but would need to increase staff to implement Master Plan. Level of detail – so many. Zoning changes, whole vision to put in place – implementation of various parts will need more staff than we currently have.

Matt: Maybe. But we get more efficient all the time. May require reprioritization of staff time.

Will: Once passed, won't be force of law but will guide. General priorities that help guild direction. Big steps are there. Zoning has actual teeth to make regulatory things possible. Use momentum of this process to modify zoning code to allow changes to happen.

Matt: We can make most impactful changes with staff we have today.