



PLANNING & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

Needham Housing Plan Working Group Meeting

Thursday December 9, 2021

7:15 p.m.

Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Meeting ID: 859-8344-7617

(Instructions for accessing below)

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Direct Link to meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85983447617>

- I. Welcome (Working Group Co-Chairs Jeanne McKnight and Natasha Espada)
- II. Approval of Minutes from October 22, 2021 Meeting
- III. Progress Report on Work Plan (Karen Sunnarborg, Community Housing Specialist)
- IV. Public Engagement Process (Cynthia Roy Gonzalez)
- V. Member Comments on Key Housing Issues/Concerns
- VI. Questions and Comments
- VII. Next Steps (Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development)

Housing Plan Working Group Membership

Ed Cosgrove	Board of Health	Oscar Mertz	Citizen At Large
Laura Dorfman	Community Preservation Committee	Marcus Nelson	Select Board
Natasha Espada	Planning Board	Mike O’Brien	School Committee
Carol Fachetti	Finance Committee	Ed Scheideler	Housing Authority
Helen Gregory	Council on Aging	Rhonda Spector	Citizen At Large
Dan Matthew	Select Board	TBD	Zoning Board of Appeals
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board		

NEEDHAM HOUSING PLAN WORKING GROUP
*** MINUTES ***
October 22, 2021

9:04 a.m. A meeting of the Needham Housing Plan Working Group was convened by Jeanne McKnight, Co-Chair, as a virtual Zoom Meeting. Ms. McKnight announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. She said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on a special section of the Town's website www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021. Present were Jeanne McKnight and Natasha Espada representing the Planning Board, Dan Matthews from the Select Board, Laura Dorfman from the Community Preservation Committee, Michael O'Brien from the School Committee, Ed Scheideler from the Housing Authority, Carol Fachetti from the Finance Committee, Helen Gregory from the Council on Aging, Ed Cosgrove from the Board of Health, and Rhonda Spector and Oscar Mertz as Citizens At Large. Also present were Assistant Town Manager Kathleen King, Director of Planning and Community Development Lee Newman, Assistant Town Planner Alexandra Clee, Public Information Officer Cynthia Roy Gonzalez, Director of Public Health Timothy McDonald, and Community Housing Specialist Karen Sunnarborg.

Welcome and Introductions – Ms. McKnight welcomed all members of the Needham Housing Plan Working Group to this initial meeting and also introduced staff that will be providing support during the duration of the planning process. She then provided some brief words on her interest and background in the issue of affordable housing and requested that each member introduce themselves and provide some information on what drew them to participating as part of the Working Group. Members then introduced themselves and provided such information.

Project Goals – Ms. Espada, also Co-Chair of the Working Group, provided a summary of the purpose of the project. She indicated that Needham has not had an approved Housing Plan in place since 2007, although it has made considerable progress in producing affordable housing since then, adding 894 new units to the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory and surpassing the state affordability goal of 10%. Despite reaching this threshold, the Town recognizes that significant unmet housing needs remain in the community, particularly in the context of unprecedented housing prices and the pandemic. Consequently, the Town has determined that it should revisit its housing agenda by obtaining updated documentation to identify priority housing needs and then prepare an Action Plan to strategically address these needs.

A Review of the Scope of work and Timeline – Ms. Sunnarborg, the Town's Community Housing Specialist, reviewed the project's Work Plan. In addition to

this initial meeting, early work will involve background research and information gathering. She indicated that only very limited 2020 U.S. census data has been released thus far, and the Census Bureau estimates that the bulk of the data will not be available until the end of November. In the interim, she is accessing and analyzing data from other sources.

It is expected that the draft Housing Needs Assessment will be completed by February 2022, and the first community workshop will occur in March. This community-wide meeting will highlight the key takeaways from the Housing Needs Assessment followed by small breakout group discussions to engage participants in a housing visioning process and key questions related to housing challenges, goals, and priority actions. Based on this meeting, Working Group meetings, interviews of local and regional housing stakeholders, and a local survey, she will then draft a Strategic Action Plan that summarizes key short-term and longer-term strategies to promote greater housing diversity and affordability in Needham. This Action Plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of spring 2022 and will be presented for community input as part of a second community-wide meeting in June. The Housing Plan will then be finalized in the summer. Ms. Sunnarborg further mentioned that Working Group meetings will be scheduled on a monthly basis.

Public Engagement Process – Ms. Newman provided some history on work related to affordable housing including past planning efforts, zoning changes, Local Chapter 40B Guidelines, the establishment of the Needham Affordable Housing Trust, the passage of the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw, and special programs to support the housing needs of homeowners and tenants through the Small Repair Grant Program and Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Ms. Newman emphasized that engaging the community in the process of preparing the Housing Plan is pivotal to the work ahead and will be accomplished through a series of workshops, interviews, and a local survey, for example. She indicated that unlike previous housing planning work, the Town now has a Public Information Officer who will be involved in conducting outreach to the community on opportunities to provide meaningful input into the planning process. She then introduced Ms. Gonzalez who expressed her enthusiasm for the project. Ms. Gonzalez pointed out major components of the project's community outreach effort including the dedicated website, social media outreach, the Town's newsletter, support from other Town departments and local organizations, the Needham Channel, local papers, and a new community polling tool.

Ms. Espada mentioned that Needham United Against Racial Inequity (NUARI) can be a useful group to bring into the process. Ms. McKnight referred members to written materials that will be posted in the project's website including a Housing and Zoning Analysis prepared by the Planning and Community Development Department and a Demographic Study commissioned by the School Department.

Ms. Dorfman asked whether any of the materials will be translated into other languages, and Ms. Gonzalez replied that she will take a look at this. Mr. Mertz suggested that the Working Group review the Pioneer Institute's report on ADUs. Ms. Espada emphasized the usefulness of making good use of existing information from other sources that are pertinent to our effort.

Mr. Matthews spoke to emphasize a number of key issues related to the Housing Plan that should serve as a context in moving forward. These include the importance of stakeholder participation, the need for family housing but likely challenges to moving such projects forward, and the benefits of Town control due to surpassing the 10% Chapter 40B affordability threshold. He identified two affordable housing crises related to not only a shortage of housing that counts as part of the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) but also the lack of market-based affordable housing due to an imbalance in housing supply and demand not only locally but throughout the region. He stated that there are 101 communities in the region within Route 495 which makes important regional coordination around the issue of housing production, including affordable housing, daunting. He further mentioned that the League of Women Voters is sponsoring a public forum on affordable housing on October 28th and urged members to attend.

Mr. Mertz mentioned that the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) includes some market units, given a community's ability to count all units in Chapter 40B developments as part of the SHI. Mr. Matthews pointed out that this is only the case with rental developments and that such projects have helped diversify Needham's housing stock. Ms. McKnight added that while the Town's SHI is at 12.7% of its year-round housing stock, the actual percentage of affordable units is 6.7%.

Ms. Espada suggested that there is some information on ethnicity that she will share and pointed to the need for information on school capacity issues. Mr. O'Brien offered that the schools are currently at capacity and discussions are underway regarding potential new school construction. He added that enrollment projections indicate that there will be increases in student enrollment over the next few years which are then forecasted to plateau. These projections are based on the current housing stock, however.

Ms. Spector suggested that the Town consider public subsidies to finance new affordable housing development including Low Income Housing Tax Credits for example.

Next Steps – Ms. Newman asked whether Thursday evenings would be a good time to schedule Working Group meetings. She will follow-up with members on a meeting schedule. She will also follow-up with Marcus Nelson who was unable to attend this meeting.

Mr. Mertz asked if there was any homework for the Working Group, and Ms. Sunnarborg responded that it would be useful for members to review the materials included in the project website.

10:25 a.m. **Motion: Ms. McKnight moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Espada. Unanimous: 11-0.**

NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY HOUSING SURVEY



**Responses are due no later than January 28, 2022.
Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated!**

Needham Housing Plan Working Group

Natasha Espada, Co-Chair
Jeanne McKnight, Co-Chair
Ed Cosgrove
Laura Dorfman

Carol Fachetti
Helen Gregory

Planning Board
Planning Board
Board of Health
Community
Preservation Cmte.
Finance Committee
Council on Aging

Dan Matthew
Oscar Mertz
Marcus Nelson
Mike O'Brien
Ed Scheideler
Rhonda Spector
TBD

Select Board
Citizen At Large
Select Board
School Committee
Housing Authority
Citizen At Large
Zoning Board of Appeals

January 2022

Town of Needham Community Housing Survey

The purpose of this survey is to ask Needham residents about the community's housing needs, including the need for more affordable housing, and what priority actions the Town should take to address these needs. The Town is currently preparing a Housing Plan which will serve as a blueprint for future housing development, and your opinions will be an important part of this process. Responses to this survey are due no later than **January 28, 2022**.

Please provide your perspectives on the following:

1. The **best locations** for new multi-family housing development include: (choose your top three)
 - Transit-oriented Business areas: Center Business (landmark (Im) - Harvey's Hardware); Chestnut Street (Im Roche Bros.; Avery Square (Im - Trader Joe's) Business [Highland Ave from May St to Rosemary St] (Im's - Eaton FH, Sudbury Farms); Hillside Avenue Business (Im - Center at the Heights)
 - Transit-oriented Industrial areas: Hillside Avenue between Rosemary Street and West Street (Im Needham Community Council); Crescent Road off West Street near Hunnewell Street (Im Brookline Oriental Rug); Highland Avenue/Arbor Street (Im Simon & Sons clothing store)
 - Neighborhood Business areas: Central Ave/Reservoir Street (Im Panella's Market); Great Plain Avenue at Broad Meadow Road – note this is a very small district (Im - Dunkin' across from Hersey); River Street at South Street – this is also a small district near Charles River approaching Dover
 - Highway-oriented Business areas: Highway Commercial 1 (Im - Muzi); Highland Commercial – 128 (along Highland Avenue from Route 128 interchange to Charles River/Newton, Im – Staples); Mixed Use – 128 (Im – You Do It Electronics); New England Business Center (Im's – Trip Advisor, Sheraton Hotel)
 - Highway-oriented Industrial areas: Reservoir Street Industrial (Im – Brothers Pizza); Gould Street Industrial - 1 (Im's – Bulfinch Group, Bin Ends liquor store)
 - General Residence District
 - Other Residential Districts

Comments: _____

2. The Town should focus on promoting the following **types of housing units** in the community (choose your top three):

- Accessory dwelling units within single-family homes (ADUs)
- Accessory dwelling units in detached structures
- Assisted living (for seniors or people with disabilities)+
- Rental apartments for age 55 and over population
- Condominiums for age 55 and over population
- Conversion of larger single-family homes into small apartments...?
- Handicapped-accessible housing with modifications for those with disabilities
- Housing in proximity to shopping, services, and transportation
- Mixed-income development
- Mixed-use properties (housing and commercial together)
- Multi-family rentals for all ages
- Multi-family condominiums for all ages
- Single-family, detached homes
- Small cottage-style homes or bungalows in a cluster
- Special needs group homes
- Triplexes or quadraplexes
- Two-family properties
- Units with some shared living space (congregate or co-housing units)
- Public Housing redevelopment to include additional units in a mixed-income development
- 4-story multi-family or mixed-use housing in suitable locations
- Other (please specify) _____

3. Do you think that the Town should **amend zoning** to better promote any of the following types of housing? (check all that apply)

- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to broaden eligibility to those who are not family members or caregivers and allow homeowner-occupants to rent the units to help with taxes and other costs of home ownership
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to allow detached structures to be eligible
- Allow two-family homes in more areas
- Conversion of existing single-family residential properties to multiple units

- Increase the existing affordability requirement that 10% or 12½% of housing units in a building having six or more units, which is now mandated in some of our business areas, to a higher percentage
- Allow mixed-use development (commercial and residential in a single building) in more business and industrial areas, such as the Business district along Highland Avenue between May Street and Rosemary Street
- Allow multi-family development in more of our business and industrial areas
- Promote/incentivize smaller home development, for example by reducing lot sizes or reducing the ratio of floor area to lot area
- Require a certain percentage of units in new developments to include affordable units in all districts where multi-family or mixed-use with multi-family is allowed, for example in Hillside Avenue Business district.
- The redevelopment of potentially developable lots that do not conform to zoning by amending dimensional requirements under certain conditions
- In business zones where multi-family housing is now allowed only on upper floors above first-floor retail, restaurant or consumer service, allow multi-family-only buildings.
- Where affordable units must be provided only for multi-family or mixed-use developments of six or more housing units, require a proportionate monetary contribution to the Town's Affordable Housing Trust Fund in-lieu of the development of housing units.
- Rezone areas adjacent to transit-oriented business zones for multi-family housing, for example the Hartney-Graymont site adjacent to Roche Bros on Chestnut Street or 888 Great Plain Avenue across from Greene's Field, formerly Hillcrest Gardens
- Other (please specify) _____

4. Do you think that the Town should establish or provide greater emphasis on any of the following ***housing-related programs, services and policies*** (choose your top 3):

- Better promote the collaboration of Town boards and committees on the issue of affordable housing
- Continue to fund the Small Repair Grant Program
- Extend Small Repair Grant Program eligibility to qualifying households who are not seniors 60 years or older or disabled
- Find additional ways to decrease expenses for seniors through reduced taxes/fees
- Help qualifying renters with upfront cash requirements
- Help first-time buyers of single-family homes, two-family homes, or condominium units with down payments

- Provide emergency rental assistance on an ongoing basis as needed
- Provide ongoing community education and outreach on housing issues through a variety of venues
- Other (please specify) _____

5. Do you think that the Town should promote any of the following **development and redevelopment strategies** (chose your top 3)?

- Construct starter homes for young families
- Convert existing housing to long-term affordable units
- Develop multi-family housing as condominiums (under state law, we can't require condos or rental – it must be left up to the market)
- Develop multi-family housing as rentals (see above)
- Develop new opportunities for seniors who own homes to move into new units that better accommodate their existing lifestyles, opening their homes to families
- Develop scattered infill sites such as those built by Habitat for Humanity for example?
- Preserve the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) inventory and support redevelopment opportunities
- Support the development of housing units for very low-income households (less than \$70,000 for a family of three).
- Support the development of housing units for low- and moderate-income households (\$70,000 to about \$100,000 for a family of three).
- Support the development of housing units for those with incomes above the limits of most assistance programs but still priced out of the housing market (more than \$100,000)
- Support the development of mixed-income housing
- Work with developers to ensure good design and other community amenities
- Work with non-profit developers and service providers on housing initiatives
- Other (please specify) _____

Demographic Information

The following demographic questions are designed to help us understand what segments of the population we are reaching and those are not. The information will be kept confidential, not attached to your name (should you choose to provide it) nor shared with others.

6. Do you own or rent?

- Own
 - i. Condominium unit ___ Single family home ___ 2-family home ___

- Rent
7. How long have you lived in Needham?
- Less than 5 years
 - 5 to 10 years
 - 11 to 15 years
 - 16 to 20 years
 - More than 20 years
8. Do you think that you might move out of Needham at some point in the future?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
9. Why might you move out of Needham If you answered yes to question #3 above?
- Housing/living costs too high
 - Prefer smaller unit
 - Prefer a handicapped accessible home
 - Prefer elevator-accessible, one-floor living that is scarce in Needham
 - Prefer to live in a more urban community
 - Prefer to live in a warmer climate
 - Prefer to live closer to my job
 - Prefer to live closer to family and friends
 - Prefer to live closer to transportation and services
 - Other (please specify) _____
10. Which category best describes your age?
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 and older |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
11. Which of the following best describes your household?
- Family with child(ren) living at home (includes single parent)
 - Couple with no child(ren)
 - Empty nester couple/single with children no longer live at home

- Single, living alone, less than 65 years
- Single, living alone, 65+ years
- Prefer not to answer

12. Which category best describes your annual household income?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,000 - \$99,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 - \$149,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$34,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150,000+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000 - \$49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 - \$74,999 | |

If you have any questions, please address them to [\(should we include a contact person?\)](#)

All responses are due by noon on (January 28)?, 2022

Thank you for your time and important input!
Please be advised that the Town will be holding a Community Housing Forum on March 24 at (TBD). Your continued participation in the planning process will be greatly appreciated!

For more information on the Needham Housing Plan go to
www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021