

#### Needham Housing Plan Working Group Meeting Thursday March 10, 2022

7:15 p.m.

#### Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Meeting ID: 811 9113 9515 (Instructions for accessing below)

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Direct Link to meeting: <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81191139515">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81191139515</a>

- I. Welcome (Jeanne McKnight)
- II. Approval of Minutes from February 10, 2022 Working Group Meeting
- III. Discussion of Subgroup Logistics (Natasha Espada)
- IV. Discussion of Plans for the Community Housing Workshop (Karen Sunnarborg)
- V. Next Steps (Lee Newman)
  - a. 3/24 Community Housing Workshop
  - b. 4/14 Debriefing on Community Housing Workshop and review of draft Community Housing Survey
- VI. Other Business
- VII. Adjournment

#### Housing Plan Working Group Membership

Natasha Espada	Planning Board, Co-Chair	Dan Matthews	Select Board
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board, Co-Chair	Oscar Mertz	Citizen At Large
Emily Cooper	Citizen At Large	Marcus Nelson	Select Board
Ed Cosgrove	Board of Health	Michael O'Brien	School Committee
Laura Dorfman	Community Preservation Committee	Ed Scheideler	Housing Authority
Carol Fachetti	Finance Committee	Rhonda Spector	Citizen At Large
Helen Gregory	Council on Aging		

## NEEDHAM HOUSING PLAN WORKING GROUP \* MINUTES \* February 10, 2022

7:04 p.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 <a href="https://www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021">www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021</a>. Present were Jeanne McKnight and Natasha Espada representing the Planning Board, Dan Matthews and Marcus Nelson from the Select Board, Laura Dorfman from the Community Preservation Committee, Michael O'Brien from the School Committee, Helen Gregory from the Council on Aging, Ed Cosgrove from the Board of Health, as well as Emily Cooper, Rhonda Spector and Oscar Mertz as Citizens At Large. Also present were Director of Planning and Community Development Lee Newman, Assistant Town Planner Alexandra Clee, Public Information Officer Cynthia Roy Gonzalez, and Community Housing Specialist Karen Sunnarborg.

**Welcome and Introductions** – Ms. McKnight, Co-Chair of the Housing Plan Working Group, offered a welcome and asked for a roll call of Working Group members. She mentioned that there was a quorum and additional members would be brought into the meeting as they became available. She also introduced staff and noted that the Town had a special website dedicated to the preparation of the Housing Plan at <a href="www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021">www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021</a> and invited community members to access these housing resources.

While Ms. McKnight indicated that public comments will not be entertained as part of this meeting, the Working Group sponsored a Public Education and Listening Session on January 27<sup>th</sup> to obtain early input from the community on the Housing Plan and there will be other opportunities for community input throughout the planning process. She emphasized that written comments were also encouraged.

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Motion: Ms. Espada moved that the Minutes from the December 9, 2021 meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mertz. Approved: 6-0 with Ms. Cooper abstaining as she was not present.

Motion: Mr. Matthews moved that the Minutes from the January 27, 2022 Public Education and Listening Session be approved. The motion was seconded by Ms. Spector. Unanimous: 7-0.

**Debriefing on January 27**<sup>th</sup> **Meeting** – Ms. Espada indicated that the Working Group has a great deal of talent among its members and some have expressed an

interest in being more involved in preparing the Housing Plan. She went over a list of issues that were presented at the January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting and suggested that it might be useful to break into Subgroups to focus on particular categories of housing strategies. She then shared a first take on an organizational framework for these Subgroups. Mr. Mertz indicated that Subgroups would be a great structure to enable the Working Group to divide and conquer various elements by meeting in small groups between regular Working Group meetings. Ms. Espada added that NUARI has organized Subgroups which have been helpful.

Ms. Cooper thanked everyone for including her as part of the Working Group and suggested that breaking into groups was the only way to deal with the material, breaking it into manageable pieces. She stated that she was not sure she was fully aligned with the recommended categories.

Ms. McKnight indicated that she will be delving deeply into the zoning strategies and is particularly interested in the Housing Choice Initiative requirements for MBTA Communities. She added that while she is retired, she is involved with so many boards and committees that scheduling Subgroup meetings would be challenging. Consequently, she preferred daytime meetings.

Ms. Spector indicated that breaking into Subgroups was a great idea and offered that there were overlaps in the proposed categories of strategies that need to be addressed. Ms. Dorfman indicated that she was not sure what capacity building meant as a category, and Ms. Espada responded that the categories were just a first pass at trying to organize the Subgroups and deserve further discussion.

Ms. Gregory voiced her interest in participating in a Subgroup, expressing a particular interest in senior housing and some other topics. Mr. Cosgrove asked whether there can be a doodle poll to identify Working Group member preferences for particular Subgroups. Ms. Cooper would like to be on a Subgroup but suggested there be a different structure starting with a problem statement and moving to specific findings and solutions. She would like to see a topic on teardown activity.

Ms. Spector offered that it was difficult to fully articulate the full breath of any single topic under the proposed framework but stressed the need to focus on the MBTA Communities zoning issue and teardown activity. Ms. McKnight also proposed a doodle to evaluate responses from members on their interests in various topics and then appropriately divide them into Subgroups.

Ms. Cooper then suggested that starter housing was tied to teardowns. Ms. Spector mentioned that possibility of considering subsidized housing and market housing separately, also looking at different strategies related to seniors and first-time homebuyers. She stated that racial equity is an issue that is pertinent across all strategies and added that there could still be a category related to zoning.

Ms. Dorfman offered that the historic preservation category relates to changes to existing housing whereas housing development pertains to the creation of new units. She added that starter housing can be a product of both new construction and housing rehab or conversion. Additionally, she suggested that under housing development, there may be some consideration of subsidized versus market rate projects. She also mentioned that the Town already has permitting for ADUs and that regional approaches to housing production should be explored.

Mr. Matthews indicated that the initial grouping of actions was pretty good and interrelationships of housing issues across categories can be sorted out. He stressed the need to focus on goals and offered that the implementation of the NHA's Capital Plan should stand out on its own. Project plans are ready to go if the necessary pieces come together. He added that racial equity crosses over all issues, and that infrastructure needs have to be addressed. The Town has not had a property tax override in years but may have to do some rethinking on infrastructure investment in the future given continued growth. He added that the Group should not be too concerned about the specific Subgroup categories.

Ms. Espada stated that categories might include NHA, zoning, and perhaps a breakout under Housing Development by subsidized versus market rate units. Ms. McKnight suggested that the first two issues under the Capacity Building category are relevant to all actions but the capacity of Town resources and transportation/traffic issues are important. Working Group members should be able to answer questions related to these issues.

Ms. Cooper shared her screen and provided a spreadsheet for organizing the activities. Ms. Spector responded that the chart provided some clarity but the original breakdown was good too, concluding that everyone was on the right track.

Ms. McKnight mentioned the issue of time and recommended that there be a separate Subgroup on the NHA. She followed up with the suggestion of a doodle to help sort out the Subgroups.

Mr. Mertz recommended that there be a focus on housing goals, rethinking the goals that are listed on page 11 of the Housing Needs Assessment. Mr. Matthews said that developing some unified goals is a good idea, and members should submit written suggestions.

Ms. Espada concluded that the discussion of the Subgroups is fluid, and there will be more information forthcoming on a framework for moving forward.

**Review of Draft Housing Needs Assessment** – Ms. Sunnarborg provided a PowerPoint Presentation on the highlights of the draft Housing Needs Assessment with initial slides from the Public Education and Listening Session pertaining to the basics of affordable housing and key demographic, economic, and housing

characteristics and trends. She also presented some new slides related to indicators of need and other considerations that prioritize housing needs.

Ms. McKnight noted that the draft document is very detailed, and she has not gotten through it all. Mr. Nelson brought up the problem of limited options for those with disabilities including those for young adults who were raised in Needham. He added that approving changes to ADU requirements should not be a huge lift and that the Town should be able to tackle it in the near term. He further added that NHA has \$150 million in new funding available to make progress on its Capital Plan.

Mr. O'Brien said that the Housing Needs Assessment was very comprehensive and thorough but there should be more information on the impact of various actions on infrastructure and schools. He suggested that we need to look at the needs of multigenerations as well as those who work in Needham and would like to live in the community. He added that perhaps the upcoming survey can address this.

Ms. Dorfman mentioned that there should be a focus on first-time homeownership, offering that there are so many financing programs available and perhaps lenders can be helpful to those looking to purchase homes in Needham.

Mr. Matthews provided a slide comparing the definition of affordable housing in the Plan and a recommended alternative. He emphasized that need to look at affordability based on the ability to pay for the house, providing a further definition of market affordable housing. He suggested that there are two housing shortages, one related to subsidized affordable housing, which is affected by limited land availability, as well as market affordable housing which is largely caused by an imbalance in regional housing supply and demand.

Ms. Cooper indicated that she works in the affordable housing industry and emphasized that affordable housing is tied to income. She also mentioned different definitions of subsidized housing. She offered that it was important to enable households with different incomes and of different races to afford to live in Needham and also stated her agreement that the Working Group needs to come to an agreement on the definition of affordable housing.

Ms. Spector voiced her agreement and added that the term of affordable housing is a term of art. They include units that are subsidized by some governmental entity including tax credit projects. Affordable housing also includes units that people can afford including market rate affordable units.

Mr. Mertz mentioned that the NHA Capital Plan is very important and this Working Group's task is to support project feasibility. Hopefully there will be sufficient funding coming from the federal government. He offered the need to look at smaller units and greater density in proximity to the MBTA stations. He stressed

the importance of honest discussions with the community and the substantial need for more subsidized housing.

Mr. Matthews reemphasized the importance of the NHA Capital Plan which is almost shovel ready and should become a separate topic as part of this planning process. He suggested that there are a lot of things the Town can do to support development plans including help in the area of community relations. In regard to market affordable units, he stressed the need to increase the regional housing supply to bring prices down. He also noted that ADUs can be helpful in promoting market affordable units.

Ms. Cooper indicated that ADUs are still market-based units but perhaps there are ways to better promote them as affordable such as requiring that they be occupied by those with incomes at or below 80% AMI or available to Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher holders. She pointed out that there is currently a great deal of funding available for affordable housing through the American Rescue Plan, and this is an unprecedented time for new rental development which should help the NHA projects. She also identified the need for supportive housing for seniors and that the Town should be prepared to do a tax credit project. Mr. Mertz offered the example of a project that is being developed in East Boston that includes both market rate and affordable units as part of a private/public partnership.

Ms. Espada interjected that state requirements regarding MBTA Communities are moving forward with some deadlines in May, well before the Housing Plan is completed. Ms. McKnight suggested that the MBTA Communities requirements present a challenge which will involve by-right zoning for over 2,000 multi-family units within a half mile of transit in order to be in compliance.

Mr. Matthews pointed out that there are a lot of moving parts to the MBTA Communities guidelines that impact 175 communities in the region. He stated that the requirements involve zoning to include 50 acres, and early calculations suggest that Needham has 14 acres that meet the requirements. He said that the Town might consider allowing three-family dwellings by-right in the General Residence District. He added that the Town needs a thoughtful and engaged approach to the rezoning.

Ms. Dorfman inquired as to whether compliance with the MBTA Communities requirements is something the Town has to do and whether not being eligible for certain state funds is a problem. Mr. Matthews responded that the Town has not received much state funding in the past and non-compliance in the short-run is unlikely a problem. However, in the long-run it is better to comply given future benefits in better balancing housing supply and demand throughout the region.

**Next Steps** – Ms. Newman mentioned that the Working Group will next meet on March 10<sup>th</sup> to focus on plans for the Community Housing Workshop scheduled for March 24<sup>th</sup>. The Workshop will include a presentation of the highlights of the draft

Housing Needs Assessment and then small group discussions in breakout groups to obtain important community input on a vision for Needham's housing future, housing goals, as well as priority strategies. The Working Group also intends to conduct a Community Housing Survey as a means for obtaining further community input and will hold another community-wide forum to present the Strategic Action Plan once it has been prepared.

Mr. Mertz suggested that it would be helpful to promote the participation of those who work in Needham as part of the planning process. Ms. Espada responded that it would be useful to check with Ms. Gonzalez on this.

9:01 p.m. Motion: Ms. Espada moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Matthews. Unanimous: 11-0.

## TOWN OF NEEDHAM HOUSING PLAN

#### Community Housing Workshop Agenda March 24, 2022

#### I. Welcome and Introductions

Jeanne McKnight, Working Group Co-Chair

#### **II.** Summary of Project

Natasha Espada, Working Group Co-Chair

#### **III.** PowerPoint Presentation

Karen Sunnarborg, Community Housing Specialist Highlights from the Housing Needs Assessment

#### **IV.** Roundtable Brainstorming/Breakout Groups

#### V. Group Reports

#### VI. Wrap-up and Next Steps

Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development

## Needham Community Housing Workshop Instructions for Roundtable Brainstorming/Breakout Groups March 24, 2022

#### I. Identify a Recorder (2 minutes)

Each group will have an assigned <u>Facilitator</u> to keep the group on track in fulfilling the assigned tasks within the allotted timeframe. Group members will identify a <u>Recorder</u> who will record the key comments of each group member on the easels/flip chart sheets that are provided. The recorders will present the Group's Report.

#### II. Introductions (8 minutes)

The Facilitator will ask group members *in turn* to introduce themselves and provide a brief statement on what affordable housing means to them.

#### III. Visioning (25 minutes)

The basic assignment is to focus on a local vision for affordable housing that will be used to help define priority housing goals and strategies in the Housing Plan. 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 <i>challenge</i> 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
(The goals included in
the last Housing Plan will be provided and members can add new goals, tweak
existing ones, or confirm those they believe are especially important.)
The best locations for new housing development include .

#### IV. Identify Actions (15 minutes)

Each participant will *in turn* indicate what they think are the <u>two most important</u> actions or strategies for the Town to implement to address priority housing needs. (A list of potential strategies will be provided to aide in the discussion.)

#### V. 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 <u>top 6 actions</u> that received the most support <u>in order of priority</u> importance. This prioritized list of

actions would ideally be agreed to by consensus but, if necessary, could be reached by voting.

#### **VI.** Present Priority Actions (15 minutes)

All meeting participants will be reconvened, and the recorder of each group will present the priority actions from his/her group.

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



# COMMUNITY HOUSING WORKSHOP



## VIA ZOOM

HTTPS://US02WEB.
ZOOM.US/MEETING
/REGISTER/TZETC-PQZIPETPLTV625CLWZQO1E\_RNIUK

THURSDAY
MARCH 24TH
7 PM

Registration required for purposes of breakout rooms & follow-up

CAN'T MAKE IT BUT WANT TO SHARE YOUT THOUGHTS?

EMAIL: PLANNING@NEEDHAMMA.GOV

USE THE SUBJECT "HOUSING PLAN WORKING GROUP"



#### Town of Needham, Massachusetts Media Release

Office of the Town Manager Town Hall, 1471 Highland Ave, Needham, MA 02492

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** Thursday, March 3, 2022

CONTACT

Cyndi Roy Gonzalez Cell: 781-765-0394

Email: Croygonzalez@needhamma.gov

## Needham Housing Plan Working Group Seeks Public Participation in Community Housing Workshop

Community invited to share input as Housing Plan Working Group prepares

Needham's next Housing Plan

NEEDHAM – Thursday, March 3, 2022 – The <u>Needham Housing Plan Working Group</u>, created late last year by the Planning Board, will host a Community Housing Workshop on Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup> to share information and solicit input from the community as the Working Group develops Needham's next Housing Plan. This workshop is part of the Housing Plan Working Group's continued conversation with the community about the future of housing in Needham, which began with an initial public forum in January to hear local perspectives on housing needs and priorities.

The workshop will be held at 7 pm via Zoom and will begin with a presentation of the key takeaways from a recently prepared Housing Needs Assessment, a major component of the Housing Plan. The Needs Assessment provides information on affordable housing in Needham, updated demographic and housing characteristics and trends, as well as indicators and other considerations regarding unmet housing needs in the community.

The presentation will be followed by small breakout group discussions. While the Housing Needs Assessment focuses on current housing conditions and priority housing needs, participants in these small groups will provide important input on future Town priorities with respect to housing goals and strategies to address identified needs.

Those interested in participating in the workshop must register by 6:45 pm Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup>. Participants are asked to provide their email addresses so that the Housing Plan Working Group may follow up with a survey post-workshop to better identify the housing priorities that emerge from the small group discussions. Individuals who wish to offer comments but cannot attend the workshop can send an email to <a href="mailto:planning@needhamma.gov">planning@needhamma.gov</a> with the subject line "Housing Plan Working Group."

The Housing Plan Working Group hosted a public forum in January to begin a conversation with the community about the future of housing in Needham.

The <u>last housing plan</u> for Needham was released in 2007. Since then, the makeup of the community has changed significantly, with an expanding population and an accompanying increase in housing costs. The Town has made important progress in addressing affordable housing needs during that time, adding nearly 900 units of housing to the Town's state-defined Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and surpassing the state's 10 percent affordability goal. However, the Town acknowledges that numerous unmet housing needs remain. The Working Group will develop a plan that attempts to meet those needs and will present the plan to the community later this year.

For more information on the Housing Plan Working Group and housing in Needham, visit the Working Group's web page.

#### **Workshop Information**

When: Thursday, March 24th at 7 pm

Where: Zoom

Please register by 6:45 pm on Thursday, March 24th to ensure your participation. You must register to

receive the Zoom link. Register here.

#### **Members of the Working Group**

Natasha Espada Planning Board, Co-Chair

Jeanne McKnight Planning Board, Co-Chair

Emily Cooper Citizen At Large

Ed Cosgrove Board of Health

Laura Dorfman Community Preservation Committee

Carol Fachetti Finance Committee

Helen Gregory Council On Aging

Dan Matthews Select Board

Oscar Mertz Citizen At Large

Marcus Nelson Select Board

Mike O'Brien School Committee

Ed Scheideler Housing Authority

Rhonda Spector Citizen At Large

From: Nancy Dimatteo
To: Planning

Subject: Housing Plan Working Group

Date: Saturday, February 5, 2022 7:35:55 AM

I am interested in co-op housing. It would give financial aid to the homeowner and have social and physical benefits.

There are a few in Beacon Hill. I am not aware of any in this area.

Looking forward to your response.

Thank you,

Nancy Di Matteo

From: <u>Jenn Scheck-Kahn</u>

To: Planning

Subject: Info for the Housing Plan Working Group
Date: Monday, February 14, 2022 10:03:16 AM

#### Hello Members of the Housing Plan Working Group,

I've just watched the recording of your public meeting. Thank you so much for the important work that you're doing and for providing so many opportunities for input from the community as you proceed.

As you develop a housing strategy that considers existing affordable housing as well as new structures, I'd like to share an example of a net-zero affordable housing project that was just finished in Newburyport:

https://www.ywcanewburyport.org/ywca-at-hillside/

I realize that this detail of information may be premature, given where you are in the process, but I hope it will help inform your scope of what's possible and aid in your vision for our community's future.

I learned about this project from a friend who worked on it. She works for Mass Housing. I'd be happy to introduce her to you if you have any questions for her.

Thanks, Jenn Scheck-Kahn

### WICKEDLOCAL.com

#### **NEEDHAM TIMES**

# Housing plan working group listen to residents for input on future plan



Taylor Driscoll
Wicked Local

Published 5:37 a.m. ET Feb. 3, 2022

Needham's housing plan working group held a public education and listening forum, sharing insight on the history of housing in Needham, then opening the floor for public input.

More than 60 residents attended. The presentation gave an update to the current state of housing in Needham and shared some historical background to zoning by-laws in town.

During public comment, residents made suggestions and voiced concerns regarding issues like housing for disabled residents, accessory dwelling units and affordability for the next generation of residents.

"What housing does the state consider affordable? Of the 11,047 currently counted year-round housing units 1,410 or 12.776% are included in the subsidized housing inventory (SHI)," Karen Sunnarborg, a housing and planning consultant working with the group, said.

Housing stock has increased in the past 10 years with 11,891 housing units in the town. According to the 2020 Census, this is a 6.9 percent increase from 2010 and has brought 769 units.

The population has also increased by 11.1 percent. Looking at the demographics, 74 percent of the population is made up of residents 18 years of age or older. The number of minorities that have moved to Needham has also grown 6 percent.

"It's worth noting that when the state established 40B, there was this real need to kind of incentivize and tried to ensure that rental multifamily rental development was happening across the state," Sunnarborg said. "The 40B counts all units in a rental project for SHI. Even though maybe 25% typically are.

Although developers can no longer override zoning by-laws under 40B, the planning groups hope that they can work with developers to bring in proposals that meet town affordability needs.

#### **Concerns for the future**

Many residents voiced concerns about the next generation of Needham residents. With housing more expensive, younger people are being priced out of their hometown.

Moe Handel, who lives on Rosemary Street, mentioned the starter home stock, saying their seem to be fewer affordable homes because they are being bought by wealthy developers.

"There are seven or nine houses on the market in Needham. The problem we face as a community with respect to starter homes at least is the land is far too valuable. That's a regional issue," Handel said. "Anything that goes on the market, if it's going to be affordable to a family who is less than relatively high income, it's going to go to a developer and it's going to be ripped down."

During Sunnarborg's presentation, she mentioned 98 percent of new units between 2010 and 2020 had involved tearing down an existing building.

Handel also talked about the wealth gap in town. Although there is more diversity in Needham, there is still an influx of wealthier families rather than moderate- and low-income families.

"We're becoming decreasingly economically diverse. The people who are moving to this town are relatively wealthy people," Handel said. "This town is becoming a very wealthy affluent suburb that already is a relatively wealthy, affluent suburb."

The presentation also mentioned the affordability gap has increased to to \$534,000. The number is based on the difference in the median price of a single-family home (\$1.3 million) and what a family making a median income could afford.

Deanna Springer, who lives on Webster Street, raised questions about how underserved populations like residents with intellectual and physical disabilities were being taken into account in the housing plan.

"We're just one family of many families of children who are going to be graduating we would like our children to stay in the community and they want to stay in the community into which

they raised, and they know." Springer said. "There is a housing shortage for disabled people ... Some can live independently but they're not going to be able to work competitively."

#### **MBTA** zoning

Many in attendance asked about the draft MBTA zoining guidelines.

"I am concerned and I'm looking for the more information on the new state legislation that designates multifamily housing by right in transit districts. And I know that they're still the state is still working on final regulations and language relative to that," John Bulian said.

On Jan. 12, 2022, the state Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development held a webinar about changing zoning guidelines to require a set percentage of multi-family homes in MBTA Communities.

"If the town doesn't meet the standards of those alarmed regulations, having a certain rather high number of multifamily units within a half-mile of its public transit resources. And by the way that includes the bus line. Then there are certain grants that the town would no longer be eligible to get," Jeanne McKnight, Co-Chair of the group said.

Select Board member Dan Matthews later commented on concerns regarding the proposed MBTA zoning guidelines.

"That's a process that really just is in its very beginning. The state has issued guidelines just within the past couple of weeks," Matthews said. "There's going to be a lot of work and adjustment to this presumably before it becomes the force of law, but it is a priority for current governor's administration."

The Needham housing plan working group will hold another listening session March 24 to keep the public updated on the status of the housing plan.

"Over the course of the next month, the committee is going to be working on completing what we call a draft housing needs assessment. This is basically a document that's going to summarize the key demographics and economic characteristics of Needham, and it's going to characterize what we have identified to be key housing needs," Lee Newman, director of planning and community development said.