

# Town of Brookline

## Massachusetts

### HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

Virtual Public Meeting

March 15, 2023

5:30 – 7:30 pm

**HAB Members:** Roger Blood, Bernard Greene, Steve Heikin, Rita McNally, Jenny Raitt, Pam Goodman, and Jonathan Klein

**Staff:** Emily DeHoog, Joe Viola

**Presenters:** Judi Barrett (Judi Barrett Planning), Dylan Sussman (Dodson and Flinker)

*Roger convened the HAB meeting at 5:33 p.m.*

#### 1. Approval of minutes from January 25, 2023 HAB meeting

*Pam moved the vote. Rita seconded.*

**VOTED** for Approval: Steve, Mike, Pam, Jenny, Rita, and Roger

Abstained: Bernard

#### 2. Presentation and HAB discussion of draft Housing Production Plan - followed by public comment

- Roger explained the process of producing the HPP document for the most recent draft. He said the HAB will make its recommendation in the next meeting. Roger said the HPP needs to be approved by the Planning Board and Select Board following a required public hearing by each.
- Judi gave a presentation on the Housing Production Plan (see slides attached)
- Dylan from Dodson & Flinker talked about zoning, density and design recommendations
- Judi reviewed further recommendations from the draft HPP.
- Bernard said that the HPP doesn't talk about infrastructure and other externalities to housing. He said if you don't talk about these aspects, we are setting low-income people up for failure.
- Judi said she was referring to municipal services. She said DHCD does not want the HPP to go into that.. Judi said that Brookline has Mental Health and Diversity and Inclusion Departments that the HPP can highlight. Bernard said he is also referring to schools. Judi said capacity of municipal schools is a topic for another plan. Bernard said we should not ignore these infrastructural aspects.
- Jonathan thanked the consultants for their work product. Jonathan said what Bernard is saying is important, but we need to move forward with the Plan.
- Jenny also thanked the consultants and said that the Plan is good. That it's not just about Brookline, but about what the region needs as That many cannot find a place to live in Brookline. That it's important to listen to people who have housing needs. That when we talk against development that doesn't exist, it detracts from what those people are saying. That there was a MAPC study that said the school enrollment growth does not have a correlation to housing growth- particularly with multi-family housing and public schools enrollment growth. That concerns around schoolchildren is a violation of the Fair Housing

Act and the Massachusetts anti-discrimination laws.

- Bernard asked what Jenny meant about Fair Housing and schools. Jenny said that the schools are not part of this Plan. She reiterated what she said about the MAPC study.
- David Rockwell said he is representing the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization. David said that helping the Brookline Housing Authority is important, as repairs to the BHA's state-financed buildings are badly needed. He said that Brookline should not stop adding units to the housing supply even though the Town has achieved 10% on the Subsidized Housing Inventory. He supported land use changes to provide growth opportunities. He said rents are way too high and people are despairing even thinking about living in this Town.
- Deborah Brown said she is the board president for the Brookline Community Development Corporation. She asked what an implementation strategy would begin to look like. She said Brookline continues to be in the top three communities for poverty levels in the Metro West area. She said wants us to understand what's going on in Brookline to be on par with Waltham and Framingham. Deborah said she'll be submitting detailed comments and recommended reading the MetroWest study.
- Lisa Shatz was asking how towns grow. She asked whether we would expand infrastructure and schools after we grow, or do we have everything in place before people move in.
- Steve said the HPP will not look at the impact on schools. In the HPP he said the Town has only added 3,000 units of housing in the last thirty years. Steve asked if all the school expansions in the last few years have achieved what we would have had achieved in creating a new 9<sup>th</sup> elementary school.
- Saralynn Allaire asked in Q&A asked: "How was the information about the unmet housing needs of people with cognitive or mental conditions needing

supportive care obtained?” Judi said interviews with providers.

- John Hebert (TMM P7) said the plan is looking into the Stop and Shop parcel and the parking lot behind the Coolidge Corner Theater as part of a transit overlay district. John asked if that will be under Planning and Community Development, HAB, or Chapter 40B. He asked if there is a target for the SHI percentage. He said if we were able to implement all of them in the plan, we would be well over 10%. He also asked about school capacity.
- Roger said the Stop and Shop mock-up and the rest of the designs are visioning exercises. He said it doesn't signify any targeting and doesn't move along any specific development. Roger said that what we count in SHI is not only affordable units, but also a large number of market rate units in Chapter 40B rental projects. Roger talked about having Brookline also setting a “real” production target that only includes affordable housing units.
- Stephen Burrington asked in the Q&A: “Following up on Bernard Greene’s comment — can the plan be advanced to the Planning and Select Boards with the observation that some locations with significant potential (e.g., the ‘Emerald Isle’ location and potential locations on Boylston Street) could be improved as equitable affordable housing sites with ‘complete streets’ makeovers, in some cases already proposed, that create decent low-speed urban streetscapes to replace the current highway-like environments?”
- Judi said they looked at what they were directed to look at by the Town. Steve said that some sites were not included because they are already undergoing studies.
- Steve said that the sites that were presented to the public by the HPP consulting team were tests. They are visions of how sites of scale could be developed in theory. He said the plan makes other recommendations as well.
- Naomi Sweitzer said she works to create housing for extremely low-income housing throughout the nation. She said it’s difficult to face neighbors that are

struggling and there are no options for them. Naomi talked about how difficult it is to get a unit in affordable housing lotteries. She encouraged people to read the six-word stories and the Brookline Community Foundation's report. She said we have an issue of time (these units should have been built 50 years ago) and an issue of will. She said that we have site-control of some parcels, and we have to decide to produce affordable housing on those sites. She said she would encourage HAB to support WA 13 for people to stay in Brookline.

- Linda Hamlin said she has not read the whole report. She asked if existing affordable housing density was considered for the report. Linda said she's an abutter to one of the sites that was shown as a potential development area. She said that there are communities throughout the country that are saying no to single family districts. Linda said that we should focus on transit-oriented development, but asked what happens if the transit leaves. She says it upsets her that the same areas of the Town are being looked at and not others. Linda said there are other zoning districts that could bear the burden of meeting this important housing need.
- Jonathan asked if the consultants were looking at other zoning areas like making all of our single-family zoning areas three family districts to increase the housing capacity. Judi said they were more focused on specific sites. She said she agrees with Jonathan.
- Dillion said the plan does look into regulatory issues that address single-family districts. He said one thing to look at is what your goal is. Dillon asked what kind of housing are you trying to produce and at what level of income. He said the Newbury west site test provides a model for producing housing that might be cheaper than building a three-family house and have more affordable housing.
- Steve said one thing we can do is to create an affordable housing overlay district.

Other Q&A comments on Zoom:

- David Rockwell: Table 2.4 indicates nearly half of Brookline's renters below 80% AMI, and about 42% of Brookline's homeowners, are "severely housing cost-burdened". On the homeownership side, can you explain what this means -- are existing homeowners so burdened, or is this a reference to potential homeowners?
- Kari Hannibal: The Green Line C line would need more frequency during rush hours to accommodate the increased housing along Harvard Ave. Was this taken into consideration in these possible sites?

### **3. Possible Inclusionary Zoning adjustments to create financial incentive for ground floor retail in commercially zoned districts**

- Roger presented text of the ground floor retail (see attachment). He said they want to create an incentive for ground floor retail on the Harvard Street corridor. Roger said he's talked to Maria and Kara about this. He said we lowered the AMI from 80% to 50% in a prior I.Z. zoning amendment, while keeping it feasible with the existing 15% affordable housing requirement. He talked about waiving the one-time fee in exchange for ground floor retail. He said that Mike Jacobs recommended raising the requirement from 50% to 80% area median income or a 60-80% range for occupants of the affordable units. Roger said Maria is going to talk further with EDAB about this recommendation.
- Steve said it's a good approach to incentivizing instead of requiring it. He said he would not be upset if we didn't have some buildings that did not have ground floor retail. Steve said it may be useful to incentivize and not require ground floor retail as part of the MTBA Communities area. He talked about how it can be difficult to fill the ground floor retail space.
- Jonathan said he was initially concerned about this. He said it doesn't change our affordable housing requirements. Jonathan said it could incentivize helping the Town by potentially getting more affordable units on-site. Jonathan said

the MBTA Communities proposal gives us a chance to enliven the corridor.

- Pam said she agrees. She said it is hard to rent ground floor retail. Pam talked about live-work space being an option. She said we need some flexibility but shouldn't be mandating ground floor retail.
- Bernard said he thinks it's a good idea. He added that we want retail in these buildings to lessen the burden on residential taxpayers by having more commercial taxpayers.
- Michael said that he is concerned about how high 80% of the area median income has gotten. He said we really need more units serving people at 50% AMI. He said there are not a lot of new vouchers coming out for those high Brookline rents.
- Pam said she thinks there are housing needs at every income level. Pam said we need to be able to provide a range of housing for different income levels.
- Roger said that the inclusionary zoning is the only affordable housing option we do that is not subsidized with public funds. He said that maybe 80% is not what is required to achieve the needed incentive and that maybe something a bit less than 80% might suffice.
- Pam asked- if we know how the 80% units have been rented out? Board members didn't think there had been any problem renting them out.
- Roger said he talked with Maria about including a density bonus, and she gave reasons why this shouldn't be a preferred option. Roger said Maria told him that 40Bs are a better way to get more density with more than 15% affordable housing; that if we did a density bonus, it would essentially be a five story district instead of a four story zoning district. Michael said that the Tatte site is four stories with a fifth floor setback, which design-wise, looks like four stories.
- Michael said Newton is enacting a density bonus for commercial.

- Jonathan said that Hancock Village and 1299 Beacon (? Correct address?) are putting units at 50% of area median income.

#### **4. Appointment of Affordable Housing Overlay District (AHOD) Study Committee members**

- Jonathan said the AHOD Study Committee is to be appointed by the HAB. He talked about the composition of the Committee according to WA41.
- Jonathan shared the proposed members on the screen. (see attachment) He urged HAB to adopt the members
- Jonathan said that he wants to wrap this committee's work up in 9 months and meet every three weeks.
- Steve said it would be worthwhile to look at Cambridge's zoning ordinance for setting up an AHOD: 11.207 in Cambridge's zoning ordinance.

*At 7:02 Roger moved that the HAB approve Jonathan's recommended AHOD Committee members with the correction of committee member's name Marion Freedman-Gurspan. Pam seconded.*

**VOTED** In favor of appointing the Affordable Housing Overlay District Study members: Pam, Jonathan, Rita, Steve, Roger, Michael

Abstained: Bernard

#### **5. Updates as needed**

- Roger said that the next HAB meeting will be on April 19<sup>th</sup>

*The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm*