Brookline Community Workshop: Needs & Goals Summary of Results

Summary

The purpose of the first of four community workshops for the Housing Production Plan (HPP) project was to solicit input from participants on draft housing goals and to learn about Brookline's housing needs. Through prior focus group discussions, the consultant team identified seven housing goals across a broad variety of themes.

With the affordability gap widening and an increasing need for affordable housing, Brookline faces a considerable challenge. The town has the opportunity to plan strategically and creatively about how to address its affordable housing needs. The ideas generated by the public during this workshop will help to further articulate Brookline's affordable housing planning and direction. The following issue emerged as the most critical:

> ***How can Brookline increase density while protecting the Town's character?:*** While it appears the majority of participants supported the development of affordable housing and see it as a laudable goal, many were concerned about the impact development might have on neighborhood character - both in terms of architectural harmony and loss of green or open space.

Workshop Design

The workshop took place on Monday, March 28, 2016 at the Pierce School in Brookline. Forty-eight people attended. The purpose of the workshop was to engage Brookline community members in an interactive process that both informs and solicits ideas. The main objectives of the forum were the following:

- Information: A presentation gave participants an introduction to the purpose of a Housing Production Plan including statutory guidelines, affordability criteria, and indicators of housing need.
- Public input: Participants examined and commented on seven draft housing goals in an open house format.

Methods

The workshop consisted of a presentation and digital group polling in addition to an open house. To start, participants gathered in the auditorium to participate in an interactive presentation by consultants Jennifer Goldson and Judi Barrett. This presentation included digital group polling as well as information about the Housing Production Plan and housing needs. The participants then moved into the cafeteria for the open house where they could ask

questions of the consultant members, town working group members, and town staff and make comments about each of the seven draft goals. Large posters were displayed on the walls of the cafeteria describing the draft goals adjacent to a large blank sheets of paper for comments. In addition, participants could add a visual thumbs-up or down to other people's comments by placing a green or red dot sticker next to the comment. Finally, consultant team members presented the major themes they observed at their stations to the entire group at the close of the workshop. Brief summaries of the results of each exercise are provided below with detailed summaries attached.

Digital Group Polling

Group polling enables workshop organizers to get a picture of who participants are, what their connection to affordable housing is, and how familiar they are with housing issues. In addition, polling shows participants where they fit in the demographic composition of the community.

The digital group polling exercise consisted of eight questions. The results show that the majority of workshop participants live in Brookline, moved there between 1970-89, and own their own homes. Participant's household size is small, with 67% of respondents living alone or with one other person.

Fewer than half of participants are affiliated with Brookline in an official capacity, as employees, Town meeting members or members of Town boards or committees. There was a range of familiarity with affordable housing issues amongst the participants. Thirty-four percent describe themselves as "very familiar," forty-eight percent as "somewhat familiar," and close to twenty percent as "Somewhat" or "Very unfamiliar" with affordable housing. Asked about their reason for attending the workshop, most respondents identified one of two reasons: to advocate for production and preservation of affordable housing or to ensure protection of neighborhood integrity. Twenty-five percent were in attendance in order to gather information and learn about the project.

Open House

As illustrated by the polling question about participants' reasons for attending the workshop, it is clear that the main drivers of interest about affordable housing are production of affordable housing and protection of neighborhood integrity. The third major category of interest was to learn about affordable housing. This mix of interest and perspective was evident in the comments made about each goal.

Summary of Comments about Draft Goals

✓
1. **Production & Preservation: Provide more than 10% of Brookline's year-round housing stock as affordable housing to address documented housing needs and preserve the long-term affordability and physical condition of existing affordable housing units.**

Participants affirmed this goal with some suggesting that Brookline strive to go beyond the 10% minimum and serve the actual number of residents in need.

✓ **2. Populations in need: Create housing that supports documented housing needs for seniors, people with physical and cognitive disabilities, young adults, and low/moderate- income families.**

This goal was largely affirmed. Seniors are the group about which participants were most concerned. Concerns included that some seniors are overhoused, and that there is a shortage of housing with supportive services tailored to seniors. Participants also expressed an interest in alternative housing models like co-housing.

✓ **3. Population diversity: Actively promote and preserve economic, racial, and social diversity throughout Brookline through provision of more rental units and housing affordable to a range of incomes from extremely low- to middle-income.**

Many comments referred to the need to increase economic diversity through provision of housing to households with different incomes. It was noted that social and racial diversity will improve once economic diversity is enhanced, though the comment that receive the most affirmative votes (green dots) noted that "Brookline is not perceived as welcoming to minorities."

✓ **4. Neighborhood integrity & stability: Protect and enhance the physical and architectural character of Brookline's neighborhoods and encourage new environmentally- sustainable affordable housing in all neighborhoods that complements neighborhood identity and provides additional public benefits where possible, such as public green space.**

Comments that received the most affirmation referenced the need for new development to blend in with or match existing architecture in the neighborhoods. Comments that encouraged more density or referenced the inevitability of change received the most negative reaction. Participants are concerned with loss of green space and the loss of sunlight due to taller buildings. There is a base of support to change zoning by-laws to reduce the parking requirement.

✓ **5. Related community goals: Recognizing housing as but one of many elements to help achieve community development and preservation goals, encourage sensitive reuse of historic resources and new residential development on previously developed or underutilized sites that:**

- **enhance existing neighborhoods**
- **help strengthen the local economy and tax base**
- **support an active and accessible transportation system**
- **preserve and maintain priority open space**
- **support other related community goals**

Most comments affirmed this goal. Some added that Brookline's commercial base is not affordable to non-corporate businesses and that there are underutilized parcels like parking lots suitable for development.

✓ **6.   Housing types: Encourage development of innovative and diverse housing options such as intergenerational housing, co-housing, cooperative housing, service-enriched housing, accessory apartments, naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), and micro- units.**

Again, participants expressed interest in housing for seniors, protection of neighborhood integrity and an interest in innovative options like co-housing and granny flats, NORCs and micro-units. Also, participants supported sustainable design and construction.

✓ **7.   Local implementation capacity: Build local capacity to address housing needs through collaborative public/private partnerships, expanded local resources, and leveraging of federal, state, and private funding.**

Participants affirmed this goal. Ideas for increasing capacity included support for inclusionary zoning and 40R zones, increase amenities provided by developers, strategize with foundations and improve public transit in under served parts of town.

Appendix 1: Open House

1. PRODUCTION & PRESERVATION: Provide more than 10% of Brookline's year-round housing stock as affordable housing to address documented housing needs and preserve the long-term affordability and physical condition of existing affordable housing units.

Public Comment	+	-
More equitable distribution of needed affordable housing throughout ALL of Brookline, not just North Brookline	12	0
Focus on term of new affordable developments with emphasis on getting developers to agree to perpetuity.	11	0
10% goal should be a minimum. Brookline can work toward more.	5	0
Provide housing to teachers and other town employees to promote diversity in hiring.	3	0
It is important to educate community members about the need for affordable housing so that it can be approved outside of 40B.	3	0
Meet the 10% goal and then go beyond it.	2	1
Rental units within affluent neighborhoods have rents ≥ $2350.	1	0
But not 40Bs at all costs. The size of these developments are ruinous for existing streets and neighborhoods. You're making a Faustian bargain.	0	0
40B development gives the town an opportunity for non-supported development, privately created 20-25% affordability.	0	0
What does 40B define as "fair share" distribution? 5%? 10%? 50%?	0	0
Isn't far more than 10% of the population in need of affordable housing?	0	0

2. POPULATIONS IN NEED: Create housing that supports documented housing needs for seniors, people with physical and cognitive disabilities, young adults, and low/moderate-income families.

Public Comment	+	-
Make senior housing attractive enough to encourage seniors in large homes to downsize.	7	0
Senior housing	6	0
Families with young children are being priced out of Brookline.	3	0
If that's the case, why are the schools overcrowded? (attached to above comment)	0	0
Live-work units	3	0
Many seniors in town are over housed. Maybe with more senior housing availability some of these folks can find a more appropriately sized affordable home and can remain in town.	2	1
These seniors need to rent out some rooms and then stay in their homes. (attached to above comment)	0	0
Develop co-housing	2	0

	+	-
Develop a continuing care retirement community (independent living, assisted living and nursing care in a single community/facility.	2	0
Housing for artists	2	0
Housing for moderate income	2	0
Housing for seniors and others in need is greatly needed.	2	0
Mid-career professionals with advanced degree are still considered low-income	1	0
This works fine but needs to be adaptive real estate as times change.	0	0
Need more senior housing.	0	0
Co-housing is a great model for this town. I'd like to see this pursued.	0	0
What is co-housing?	0	0
Focus on income. Help those who are low/mod income. The wealthy can help themselves.	0	0
What is the household size and unit need of cost burdened households?	0	0
Take into account the cost and availability of services in the town.	0	0
If able {bodied} people can't get affordable units, how can those who are challenged be placed ahead of them? These are awful decisions to have to make.	0	0
No very low income person makes $3000/month. They would need to combine with others into a household of some sort. Rather confusing.	0	0
I believe that young people deserve to have a break starting out, let's help them get established. They lend so much to a community. I moved here at 23 and have stayed and contributed. Let's replicate that.	0	0

3. POPULATION DIVERSITY: Actively promote and preserve economic, racial, and social diversity throughout Brookline through provision of more rental units and housing affordable to a range of incomes from extremely low- to middle-income.

Public Comment	+	-
Brookline needs to work hard to actively promote diversity. Brookline is not perceived as welcoming to minorities.	7	0
Increased number of units at various prices will ensure diversity. High prices reduce diversity.	5	0
But how to regulate "various prices"? The market calls the shots in a capitalist society. (attached to above comment)	0	0
Socio-economic diversity	2	0
Provide as-needed transportation, shopping shuttles to affordable housing units to allow equal distribution of affordable housing to ALL Brookline.	2	0
Try to avoid having Brookline reflect the growing income gap in the rest of the state.	2	0
Housing production and preservation should help maintain and promote racial diversity.	1	0
Rent control?	1	0

Public Comment	+	-
How do you promote diversity as it pertains to housing without violating privacy rights or creating prejudicial "review boards" who say who gets a place and who doesn't? It is possible? It should be fair for everyone.	1	0
Yes, but do not assume a specific demographic for extremely low income.	1	0
Offering community living with a diverse population (income, language, age, ability, culture, religion and more) is a natural and beautiful model.	0	0
This idea that we don't have racial diversity is a farce. Enough already.	0	0
Not enough information: How much housing? What types of disabilities?	0	1
Good for diversity! Now let's do something about density.	0	1
Too complicated. Choose economic and disregard racial and social. (They are not the real problem and will take care of themselves)	0	3

4. NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRITY & SUSTAINABILITY: Protect and enhance the physical and architectural character of Brookline's neighborhoods and encourage new environmentally-sustainable affordable housing in all neighborhoods that complements neighborhood identity and provides additional public benefits where possible, such as public green space.

Public Comment	+	-
Preserve architectural context of existing neighborhoods.	9	0
Light is important for neighborhood integrity. New buildings shouldn't tower over existing housing and cast shadows.	7	0
I am concerned that new housing blend architecturally with older Victorian structures: sight lines, peaks, molding and sill details. Green space as well.	5	0
Reduce parking requirement so green space can be preserved.	5	3
Zoning should require that all new housing meet or exceed sustainability guidelines.	4	0
Integrated and accessible green space.	4	0
In the rush for developers to cash in, and town coffers to be filled, and affordable housing to be created (the only way possible is via large development), WE ARE LOSING THE LIVEABLE INTIMATE QUALITY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS!	2	0
Avoid destruction of healthy, viable housing stock to satisfy short-term 40B goals.	2	0
Look to reduce parking requirements for a couple of pilot affordable developments to see how it goes.	2	0
Follow examples from other communities that prove you can have both density and open space.	1	0
Character of neighborhoods will inevitably change. As we can all see, change is underway and cannot be stopped. (Face it).	1	6
Look at the "year built" map. Most housing built before 1900, next before 1940. These deserve protection because these eras built for community health and well being and good architecture!	1	0
Granny flats a good solution in many neighborhoods, especially on large SF lots that can be 2-3 unit building.	1	0

	+	-
Building design can integrate the character of the neighborhood + green space while meeting the growing needs of our aging population.	1	0
Create incentives to create lower building heights.	1	2
Look for opportunities to build taller and denser in commercial areas. Multiple benefits: More affordable housing; more foot traffic to businesses; green space preserved.	1	0
Small green yards and flowers feed the soul. They need not be huge.	0	0
The goal is laudable but too wordy. How can we simultaneously build more units and more public open space?	0	0
We need air and space.	0	0
We live in a market economy. The only way that we can attain long-term affordable housing is to build lots of housing of all kinds everywhere in town so that we depress the outrageous housing costs.	0	4

5. RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS: Recognizing housing as but one of many elements to help achieve community development and preservation goals, encourage sensitive reuse of historic resources and new residential development on previously developed or underutilized sites that:
- enhance existing neighborhoods
- help strengthen the local economy and tax base
- support an active and accessible transportation system
- preserve and maintain priority open space
- support other related community goals

Public Comment	+	-
Smart growth very important, try to locate housing near transportation and services when possible.	5	0
Encourage mixed use with both commercial and housing units.	3	0
Brookline should encourage re-use of historic buildings and areas but also preserve open space. Green spaces and light are very important to urban life.	3	0
Please add transportation to areas like South Brookline and put some affordable living there. North Brookline already does its share.	2	0
Neighborhoods can and should be thought of holistically, and master planning is key to success.	2	0
Enact form based zoning.	2	0
Recognize it is the 21st century. Dynamic change is inevitable. Facilitate good change.	2	1
Most Brookline residents are here because of public transportation and neighborhoods with parks and trees. Preserve this balance.	2	0
And schools! Which requires open space and affordable living. (attached to above comment)	0	0
Need to better use under utilized properties and properties that are a drag on the neighborhood. Could be public or private property. Examples: 1. Various parking lots, stack parking. 2. Stop 'n Shop.	1	0

Public Comment	+	-
Need to encourage affordable commercial spaces so we have small businesses, not just chains, cell phone stores and banks.	1	0
Dramatic and rapid changes make it difficult to plan for community services (schools).	1	0
So far, the principles of smart growth have been abused by excessive parking requirements.	0	0
Brookline is very short on commercial tax base. Housing should not be encouraged in areas that are attractive for commercial development and the housing should be encouraged toward areas not attractive for businesses and offices.	0	0
Enhance pedestrian accessibility integrated into transportation infrastructure.	0	0

6. HOUSING TYPES: Encourage development of innovative and diverse housing options such as intergenerational housing, co-housing, cooperative housing, service-enriched housing, accessory apartments, naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs), and micro- units.

Public Comment	+	-
Senior options are much needed; including for moderate income seniors.	4	0
Any large developments need to take into account scale of surrounding neighborhood.	3	0
Sustainable design in all construction.	3	0
No, to congregate housing. It is an old model. Most people want their own bathroom.	2	1
Co-housing.	2	0
Our obsession with parking is probably the single biggest obstacle to housing production in Brookline. Break the parking obsession juggernaut and catch up with best practices.	2	1
Senior housing not group-in with family housing. More of a senior community with housing and recreation.	1	0
Work-live units.	1	0
Yes, to diverse options.	1	0
It is vital that we expand availability of housing with supportive services to ensure the safety and well being of adults as they age.	1	0
Accessory apartments: when will we change zoning restrictions? Precinct 14 vs 8, for example.	1	0
Encourage neighborhood stability, not transience.	1	0
Small, yes. Micro, no. The tiny units being made now are too expensive.	0	0
Allowing 24/7 on-street parking would encourage housing development.	0	0
Develop "Continuing care retirement community" (independent living, assisted living and nursing care, in a single facility).	0	0
All housing types should adhere to quality construction materials and architectural integrity and context.	0	0
Ensure that senior and supportive housing provides adequate support for continuing care-meals, transportation, medical, etc. These communities need to	0	0

	+	-
provide adequate parking and to take into account additional traffic they may create.		
Micro units can be an option if done correctly but will probably have high rents.	0	0
Naturally occurring retirement communities seems like an interesting concept.	0	0
Yes to micro-units for singles, young and old.	0	0
Yes to congregate housing, senior housing and granny flats.	0	0
Allow existing house owner to tear down and re-build into multi unit apartment or condos.	0	1
Problem with accessory apartments-no zoning requirement that they be for seniors. Might attract more students to North Brookline.	0	1

7. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY: Build local capacity to address housing needs through collaborative public/private partnerships, expanded local resources, and leveraging of federal, state, and private funding.

Public Comment	+	-
I believe in inclusionary zoning providing for integrated housing.	5	0
It is essential that we work collaboratively to leverage public and private funds in a way that reduces costs (housing and health care) and improves quality of life.	3	0
These resources should be marketed/advertised more aggressively. How many Brookline residents know these exist?	2	0
Take advantage of Chapter 40R/40S smart growth tools.	2	0
Tax credit for landlords to keep long-term stable tenants that are moderate income.	2	3
Increase public (MBTA bus service) and quasi-public transportation to under served parts of town to make housing production there-and accessibility to new moderate income residents-more attractive. Perhaps one of the amenities to be provided by developers should be to sponsor or contribute to shuttle service to more commercial parts of town.	1	0
Solicit "housing donations"! Convert to affordable and to be managed by "X".	1	0
BIC is now BAHCDC. Town needs to do more seed money. Get non-profit CDCs doing the deals.	1	0
Yes, to increased capacity to address **affordable** housing needs. Need better coordination between these entities.	0	0
Set up private fundraising mechanism, maybe a fund within the Brookline Community Fund.	0	0
Developers need to contribute to the town's resources, schools and other services to support their development.	0	0

Appendix 2: Digital Group Polling Results

Session Name
Current Session

Date Created	**Active Participants**	**Total Partic**
3/28/2016 6:00:59 PM	59	59
Average Score	**Questions**	
25.00%	8	

Results by Question

1. Do you . . . (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
Live in Brookline	86.36%	38
Work in Brookline	6.82%	3
Own property in Brookline but do not live or work here	4.55%	2
Other	2.27%	1
Totals	**100%**	**44**

2. Are you . . . (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
A Town Meeting Member	12.77%	6
Member of a town board or committee (not a TM Member)	25.53%	12
Town Employee	8.51%	4
Other	53.19%	25
Totals	**100%**	**47**

3. How familiar are you with affordable housing issues and concepts? (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
Very familiar	34.09%	15
Somewhat familiar	47.73%	21
Somewhat unfamiliar	11.36%	5
Very unfamiliar	6.82%	3
Totals	**100%**	**44**

4. What is your primary purpose for being here tonight? (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
Advocate for affordable housing production & preservation	34.04%	16
Ensure protection of neighborhood integrity	31.91%	15
Ensure protection of open space/natural resources	0.00%	0
Ensure vitality of commercial areas	2.13%	1
Gather information/learn about the project	25.53%	12
Other	6.38%	3
Totals	**100%**	**47**

5. When did you move to Brookline? (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
2010 or later	20.00%	9
1990-2009	17.78%	8
1970-1989	53.33%	24
Prior to 1970	2.22%	1
I don't live here	6.67%	3
Totals	**100%**	**45**

6. Do you own or rent your home? (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
Own	67.39%	31
Rent	30.43%	14
N/A	2.17%	1
Totals	**100%**	**46**

7. Do you . . . (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
Live alone	23.40%	11
Live with one other person	44.68%	21
Live with 2 or more people (no children under 18)	14.89%	7
Have children under 18 living in Brookline	17.02%	8
Totals	**100%**	**47**

8. Roughly how many Brookline households have low/moderate income? (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	**Count**
250 (1%)	0.00%	0
2,300 (9%)	27.66%	13
4,800 (19%)	40.43%	19
7,285 (29%) (c)	31.91%	15
Totals	**100%**	**47**