Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting
Thursday, February 15th, 2024 | 6:00-8:00 pm
Zoom meeting

MINUTES:

Attendees: Joe Camaratta, Chris Balzano, Madeleine Young, Mary Ellen Lamson, Eliza Novick-Smith, Owen Sette-Ducati, Alyssa Johnson, & Peter Hack

Called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

Review Agenda
No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and approve minutes from the 01/18/23 meeting:
- Change to the language in the first bullet point
- Motion made to accept changes accepted.

Relevant Task force Updates
- Welcome Peter Hack to the Housing Task Force
- Links to zoning updates on the Town's website
  - Bylaws are posted on the website
- It is helpful for us to go to the public Planning Commission meetings to learn and represent the Housing Task Force
- Proposed homeless shelter at the Armory downtown
- Revitalizing Waterbury - Owen met with State legislation, talked about the 3 different ACT 250 bills proposed
- Select board meeting- 2 presentations
  - Short Term Rental presentation
    - Registry recommendation was well received
    - Will help us gather more information to make decisions from
    - Nothing has been implemented yet
  - 2024 objectives
    - Goal is to increase housing overall, not specifically focus on STR
- We do have information on residences that move from primary residences to secondary residences, specifically if bought from out-of-state/corporate owners. "VT Property Transfer Tax Return"
  - Joe to set up time for HTF to collect this data
    - Should note long term rentals owned by corporations if possible?

Update on on-going Initiatives
- Discussion on 2024 objectives and responsibilities:
  - Assess potential for "infill development" to address housing needs
    - How much housing will we need in the next 5 years?

- Healthy vacancy rates: 5% rentals, 3% owners
- Estimated current rate: 0.82% rental, 0.78% owners
  - Need 50-70 more units, ie: 2.8% increase in housing
  - Look at Londonderry, VT "Housing Needs Analysis" chart showing housing need by income. 2/3rd size of Waterbury
    - "Housing attainability"
      - "Cost burdened" Existing homeowners who spend 30% or more on housing? What would this definition mean in Waterbury?
        - Should we focus on this? It might be better to look at the cost range that workers in Waterbury (who don't live here yet) can afford.
      - Senior housing
      - Chart on housing affordability by income range is very helpful for perspective
    - We want to focus on
      - People who work in Waterbury, but do not live here
      - Current renters looking to buy a home in Waterbury
      - Existing home owners looking to downsize or have other unmet design needs
- Engage developers around specific opportunities
  - 3 types of Infill development opportunities
    - Greenfield or brownfield
      - Potential sites: 82 Armory Ave, Stanley Hall, 152 S. Main St, 131 & 150 Pilgrim Park
    - Reuse of existing buildings
    - Accessory dwelling units
  - Once new bylaws are in place, there is an opportunity for the HTF for provide guidance/education to the public on how to add housing
  - Once we gather more data, we can make better recommendations on the types of buildings we would see fit for these locations
  - We would like to bring a developer. What types of questions would we like to ask them?
    - Potential Invites (prioritizing local developers): Downstreet? Project Manager at 51 S. Main? Joel Baker? TJ Kingsbury? Aaron Flint? Jason Wolfe? Larger scale developer? Developer/owners who are also the contractor? Joe Green? Developer who did not get approved to build or had to nix a project? Pomerleau? Civil Engineer?
    - Potential questions:
      - What are barriers?
      - Are there things we are doing well that help?
      - Are there things we can change?

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      - Do you have proposals that would make you more likely to develop here?
      - What would make you interested in developing here in Waterbury? Strengths/weaknesses of developing here?
      - Projects that were improved and why?
      - What is affordable to build - how many units can bring construction costs down in relation to rental price? If not, why not?
        - Were there other costs that prohibit building?
      - Does quality become a sacrifice? Will these buildings last?
      - Timeline of projects - why such a long process?
      - Are finances an issue?
      - Is finding land an issue?
      - Permitting process feedback?
      - How is Waterbury different from other towns?
      - Are you building to sell or to rent?
      - Fire inspection barriers?
      - What are the risks of renting long term? How could we overcome these barriers?
    - Alyssa and Chris will reach out to a few developers to see if any are interested in joining us, and then choose questions from there.
  - Propose incentives to encourage development of long-term housing
    - Did not discuss
  - Grants
    - Can we gain grant money to research at vacant lots/rentals
    - ACCD?
      - Application is coming up early March
    - Think about other projects/grants that we could apply for?

Next Meeting:
- Work through choosing questions for developers
- Focus on Waterbury's affordability definition
- Set up time to go through "VT Property Transfer Tax Return"
- Discuss outreach & education on ADUs according to upcoming bylaws

Meeting adjourned at 7:36 pm