

Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting
Thursday, March 21st, 2024 | 6:00-8:00 pm
Zoom meeting

MINUTES:

Attendees: Joe Camaratta, Chris Balzano, Madeleine Young, Owen Sette-Ducati, Alyssa Johnson, Skip Flanders, Kati Gallagher, Peter Hack, Tom Leitz, & Brian Voigt. 4 Public guests

Called the meeting to order at 6:02 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. (Kati Gallagher abstained)

Relevant Task force Updates

- Visitor: Brian Voigt
 - Program Manager at Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. Working in Barre City - looking at infill development and post-flood recovery
 - Dense population of individual parcels
 - Is the parcel vacant?
 - Looking at past damage, flood damage, environmental buffers, etc.
 - Brian is assigning these attributes to all parcels to calculate the best areas to develop for additional capacity (rough estimate)
 - Map by CVRPC 2012: Future Housing Distribution Maps - Growth Centers, Map 1-5
 - Question: What is the size of a unit that can go on these lots?
 - Use bylaws and zoning to determine different scenarios
 - Brian can determine the capacity of the parcels, and would look to us to determine size of the units needed.
 - Brian asks, "Can we determine what ADUs already exist?"
 - Question: For areas with water, but not sewer (ie: Maple St. area), can we account for this additional land for septic capacity?
 - Some septic systems may not be accounted for due to age - need to research.
 - How much development could be accommodated if we added additional sewage?
 - Question: How will Act 250 impact putting new sites on these parcels?
 - After we filter out the areas that development should not occur
 - Use Act 250 at the end with building footprints to determine final capacities.

- Next Steps:
 - Brian will process variables for Waterbury area (1 month deliverable)
 - Once Brian has summarized the data/outputs, the Housing Task Force may have more questions.
- Feedback from Unified Development Bylaws Phase #1 hearing from Kati:
 - Concerns about building heights, setbacks, no new single family homes in downtown/mixed use areas, etc. Most concerns based on downtown/mixed use areas. “How will this impact my property?”
 - Interest in opportunities for home ownership
 - Not a lot of opportunities for new development. It is preferred to build multi-unit structures versus single family homes.
 - Folks appreciated work towards making housing more accessible.
 - Much of the meeting was spent educating and defining the physical zoning districts. Most attendees were from the general downtown area of Waterbury.
 - ADU: 30% of square footage of main house, or 1500sq ft - Whichever is greater.

Update on on-going Initiatives

- Housing needs assessments
- Vermont Property Transfer Tax Return Analysis database
 - Joe put together a data analysis chart.
 - Data is from 2019-Present
 - Used the data to determine: Can we tell how many out of state buyers are buying properties? Did this accelerate during the Covid-19 pandemic?
 - Yes we can determine this.
 - Transfer from 2019 to 2023 Net impact 35
 - Transfer from rental to non rental: Net impact loss - 41 rental properties.
 - Transfer from primary residence to other use: Primary residences - Net impact loss 68 properties
 - Primary residences decreased by 1%
 - Rentals decreased by 5%. Our current vacancy rate is <1%. Healthy vacancy rate is 5%
 - Question: Does this data include the construction of new properties?
 - Would only show vacant land. Property would need to be bought after 2019.
 - There have been families recently that have bought a duplex/multi family house and converted to a single family home, because they want to live in Waterbury and cannot find single family housing.
- Housing Attainment Analysis
 - 63% of Waterbury renters (424 of 676) are cost-burdened (30% or more of income spent on rent/utilities). This does not include those who would like to rent in Waterbury. This does not include utilities.
 - Median income is \$50,000
 - Only 42% of our rentals are in the affordable range.
 - Question: Do roommates count as individual households?

- No. They count as individual households only if they have separate egress.
- Many renters with roommates do not want to have a roommate but can only afford to have a roommate.
 - Question: Do they work full time? Are any of these subsidized?
 - 101 households are making more than \$75,000 and spending less than 20%. Can we look deeper into this demographic? Do they want to buy properties but cannot?
- Who rents in Waterbury?
 - 81% of householders older than 65 years are cost-burdened
 - Many seniors are looking to downsize, which would free up housing
 - Incentive to build ADU in an “oversized” senior owned housing?
- Comment: Why are we spending time researching instead of simply adding more?
 - Proposal to focus on building a senior housing unit as our first action to create housing.
 - If we build senior housing immediately, this would not consider the cost burdened folks who are not elderly. It is worth building intentionally in a way that meets our community’s needs.
- Question: Will this raise property taxes by providing more services? ie: Burlington
- Reappraisals will start this summer and will be a 3 year process.
- State Department of Housing and Community Housing: “Steps on developing small property”

Joe makes a motion for the **Housing Task Force to look at education on development opportunities for small scale development.**

Chris Balanzano seconds the motion. All in favor.

Further discussion:

- Locational tiers discussion. 4 tiers (based on area) to determine Act 250 exemptions with protocols based on tier descriptions.

Next Meeting:

- TJ Kingsbury to join?
- Look into providing education & support on development
- Look at owner occupied affordability
- Look at infill potential (Brian Voigt)
- Look at tax stabilization, is this an option? (Alyssa)

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm