

Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting

Thursday, April 18th, 2024 | 6:00-8:00 pm

Zoom meeting

MINUTES:

Attendees: Joe Camaratta, Chris Balzano, Madeleine Young, Owen Sette-Ducati, Skip Flanders, Mary-Ellen Lamson, Kati Gallagher, Peter Hack, & Eliza Novick-Smith.. 4 Public guests

Called the meeting to order at 6:01 am

Review Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Review and approve minutes from the 03/21/23 meeting:

- Deferred to next meeting

Relevant Task force Updates

- Role of HTF in how we can educate the public about the Proposed Unified Development Bylaw. Who do we need to reach and what do they need to know?
- Overview of Rental Ordinance
- Planning Commission Update from Kati: Finalized the Unified Development Bylaws, and are officially off to the Select Board. Public hearing is on May 6th.
 - Education to come prior to Phase 2
- EFUD update from Skip: Plenty of water capacity, waiting for applicants to use the water. Ready to talk about incentives.
- RW update from Owen: Economic Development Strategic plan that will be up at the Select Board in May. No other relevant updates.
- Select Board update: There was a 'Rental Ordinance' proposed by Town Management, with other proposals involved.
 - Proposals:
 - Proposed a registry (Housing Task Force recommendation)
 - Privacy concern came up and will be resolved
 - Dropped: Lock box on property proposal
 - Landlord availability for emergency response guideline
 - Dropped: Landlords collect no more than 1 month deposit
- Kati Gallagher: Proposed Unified Development Bylaw - Phase 1
 - Hearing on May 6th
 - Resources on Waterbury website: Home -> Departments -> Planning & Zoning
 - Goal for Zoning:

- Support development in areas that make the most sense for growth. Grow in areas where we already have infrastructure, and protect our natural resources.
 - Recognizing our existing settlement patterns and historic downtown.
 - Implement goals of the 2018 Town Plan
 - Ensure compliance with the Home Act
 - Increase diversity of use in our area, and address flood resilience
 - Provide opportunities for small scale commercial opportunity and pedestrian friendly community.
- Recognizing that districts do not designate zoning necessarily. Overlay districts ensure quality control. Trying to simplify the Design Review Overlay. Historic district does have requirements.
- Flood Hazard Overlay District. Bylaw update will require any development in this area to meet the Flood Area Overlay District requirements.
 - Concern: Additional housing will create additional impervious areas.
 - “Conservation Floodplain” is an area where development will not be permitted in the future
 - Guidance will be provided on how to follow State guidelines with water runoff.
 - Need to consider future expansion of the floodplain
- Chart on “Allowable Uses” per district on type of housing
 - Downtown and Mixed Use Zoning district will no longer allow *new* Single-family dwellings
 - Concern: Will the Development Review Board simplify regulations so that multifamily buildings can be approved more easily?
 - Yes, working on simplifying requirements without over-regulating
 - Campus and Commercial-industrial Zoning district will now allow Multi-Family Dwellings
 - Duplexes and ADUs are now allowed anywhere that a single family home is allowed (part of the Home Act)
- Chart on Dimensional Requirements
 - Reduces lot size requirements
 - Increases lot coverage allowances
 - Reducing required setbacks
 - Increases building heights (Max height 60 ft)
 - No density requirement (the buildings will meet the other requirements)
- Planning commission did not talk about parking requirements (the Home Act does) and will need to have this discussion.

- Existing regulations had not been updated since the 1970s (reapproved in 2016, but not changed)
 - Pages of the old version do not line up with the new version. It supersedes portions of the old version, but not all of them.
 - The online version has an interactive map “story map” “Phase 1 Bylaw Update - Map Viewer”
 - Open House materials. Use the slider to see what districts are changing.
 - Question: How many parcels will be impacted by the new Phase 1 Bylaws? Empty lots?
 - Idea: Is there a way to create a map where you can “click” on a parcel and show what regulations are required?
- Discussion on “Vermont Homes For All” Toolkit
 - This is a tool to help promote small infill development. The document is 244 pages.
 - Mad River Housing - took an active role in educating property owners and developers
 - Idea: Small scale “Housing Fair”, similar to the recent LEAP Energy Fair
 - Owen can potentially work on this as part of his RW responsibilities
 - Topics to present:
 - Orientation on “how to be a landlord”
 - Finances
 - How and where to start
 - Apartment Association - does this still exist?
 - What other resources do we need? Let’s think about what resources we need.
 - We should look at the ‘affordability for renters’ vs. the ‘profitability for landlords’ when presenting to the public.
 - Concern about future appraisal rate and tax rates increasing
 - Landlords having a Short Term Rental in addition to their Long Term Rentals, could help offset any tax increases that may land on the long term renter.
 - Subdivision? (not in Downtown)

Update on on-going Initiatives

- “Why Data (from registry)?”
 - How does the data help:
 - Informs the design of additional housing units. Allows more housing.
 - Allows the town to promote and incentivize additional affordable housing. What opportunities do we see?
 - Enables advocating with the state on programs that support additional housing in Waterbury.
 - What state funding programs do we have? How are they useful (or not useful?)

- Objective 1 : Asses potential for “infill development” to address housing needs
 - How much housing will we need?
 - What are acceptable median income targets for potential owners/renters?
 - Median home sales price for 202-2023 exceeds affordability of two earner household chart
 - All of income data is from 2022 (5 year estimates), does not account for “big shifts”
 - Current market requires at least a household income of at least \$164,000 to be below 30% threshold
 - Housing turnover has slowed since pandemic, and median prices have increased
 - From 2020-2023: 227 houses sold, 3% annual turnover, median price of \$457,000
 - Turnover may have lowered because you cannot sell and then buy for the equivalent
 - Median price for a 3 bedroom home has increased 22% from 2020 to 2023 (condos & single family homes, no mobile homes in this data)
 - Loss of primary residences and rental housing from 2019-2024
 - Primary residences decreased by 68 units
 - Rentals decreased by 41
 - 63% of waterbury renters are cost burdened
 - To research: What prevents apartment units from being rented here to instead be sold to own?
- Final public comments:
 - Thank you for the work that is being done!
 - Homework assignment: Look at the slide Joe put together with all of the data we have gathered. What conclusions do we draw? What types of housing do we need and how much housing do we need?
 - Note: “Household” can mean one person when talking about rentals (ie: there can be 2 “households” in a one 2 bedroom rental unit)
 - Slides on the right depict the housing stock and how it may impact affordability

Next Meeting:

- What partners do we need to gather more data?
- Discussion on homework assignment (see above)

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm