

10/22/2015

Housing Production Plan Committee

Present: Jennifer Raitt, Laura Wiener, David Fields, Laura Kiesel, Pamela Baldwin, Dan McCue, Lourie August, Wendy Barr, Kate Casa, Andrew Bunnell, Pam Hallett

Absent: John Griffin

Meeting began: 6:08 PM

1. Introductions and short exercise – Members participated in a short exercise that identified key housing issues in Arlington. Laura Wiener gave a brief introduction about why a Housing Production Plan (HPP) is necessary and explained that the previous plan dates from 2004. Background information on the \$15,000 state grant that will be funding MAPC and J.M. Goldson for the plan was discussed by Jennifer Raitt. Members then identified why they were interested in participating in the Housing Production Plan process.
2. What is a Housing Production Plan (HPP)?—Jennifer Raitt explained that an HPP is a community's proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing. Ms. Raitt explained that it is put together as a component of Massachusetts Chapter 40b to meet the goals of that legislation through creating more housing units eligible for placement on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The plan is a five year plan with four components. The components are:
 1. Needs and Demands
 2. Development Constraints
 3. Strategies
 4. Implementation Plan
 - a. Ms. Raitt explained that the plan must be formally adopted by the Arlington Redevelopment Board and the Board of Selectmen, prior to submittal to DHCD for approval.
 - b. Ms. Raitt explained the [policies of the HPP can be found in full on DHCD's website](#).
3. The role of the committee in relation to the plan was discussed in that it is mainly advisory and will be involved in public outreach and some information gathering.
4. Ms. Raitt covered the timeline for the plan and the project schedule, including the public outreach which will be guided by Jennifer Goldson of J.M. Goldson consulting. Two public meetings are anticipated.
5. The committee then discussed key issues that impact housing in Arlington, which included: external housing factors such as walkability, socioeconomic diversity, zoning, location and other land use issues, and tear downs, etc.; housing accessibility; and the difficulty of gathering data on forced evictions.

- Affordability issues with regard to loss of long-time community residents was discussed among the committee. Those who want to live here may not be able to unless their income has kept up with price inflation, which has been drastic. .
 - Issues of gentrification—Ms. Raitt reported on the issue of a “transit premium”, in which a higher value is placed on housing close to transit. Discussions of affordability ensued regarding the turnover in housing stock; services for housing for those with special needs of some sort and how there are not many options in Town.
6. The committee reviewed participants input on what has been successful, with regard to housing in Arlington to date:
- Inclusionary zoning, created 50+ units
 - The Arlington Housing Authority (AHA) and number of units created by that entity was reported on by Ms. Wiener, though it was noted that there has been no new construction by AHA in several decades.
 -
 - Housing Corporation of Arlington. Strong CDC has created 90 units of affordable rental housing.
7. Barriers and constraints—discussion of density in town, creation of more density, the benefits of that and how our current built-out status constrains development.
- Many committee members noted the constraints on lot size and shape and also restrictions on building heights, which may inhibit multi-family construction.
8. Future meeting date of Thursday December 3, 2015 @ 6:00 PM.
9. Meeting ended at 7:50 PM

Detailed Notes from discussion follow below.

Key Housing Issues in Arlington

A. Key Housing Issues that Arlington is Facing

1. Housing affordability / Loss of workforce housing
2. Cost of housing, cost of land
3. Priced out low and middle income, which affects diversity
4. Rent prices increasing exponentially
5. School overcrowding
6. Housing availability
7. Zoning
8. Oversized development
9. Density. Arlington is largely built out.
10. Lack of Section 8 opportunities in Arlington—rents too high
11. Losing rental housing through condo conversions
12. Tear downs and new construction
13. How to do more mixed use, transit-friendly development?
 - a. Lack of on street parking / number of spaces required
14. Tear downs / densification
 - a. Multi-unit
 - b. Scale
15. Walkability
 - a. Housing location / transit access
16. Taxes
 - a. Contributes to older residents not being able to afford homes (cash poor / house rich)
 - b. Leads to turnover
17. ADA accessible housing
18. In and out migration
19. Town is already dense, crowded and congested
20. Forced evictions – homelessness / security. Need for supportive housing
21. Rapid change – turnover / new people (many lived here a long time, now can't afford to live here)
22. Gentrification
23. Multiple full time employees per household and changes to the social fabric
24. The transit premium – seems to impact housing prices. Need a balanced mix of housing

B. What are the barriers / constraints

1. Density – perception that change will bring more density. Results in resistance, particularly to infill development
2. Larger economic concerns (income inequality)
3. Resistance to converting commercial or industrial uses to residential –
 - a. Get more taxes from commercial uses (assumed)

- b. Not enough commercial land
 - c. Tax base not high
 - d. Single rate
- 4. School children – schools (needed) to accommodate growth
- 5. No trains, only buses – distance to the T drives prices up
- 6. Not a lot of large, regular lots for development – land assembly needed
- 7. No mixed use currently allowed in zoning
- 8. Land prices very high

C. What has been successful

- 1. Inclusionary Zoning—53 units
- 2. Housing Corporation of Arlington—90 units
- 3. Arlington housing authority
 - a. 800 + units (more than half elderly housing)
 - b. No recent construction
- 4. Access to transit
- 5. Increasing the stock of affordable housing
- 6. Diverse housing options
- 7. Livable density
- 8. Diversity of housing styles
- 9. Zoning
- 10. Design guidelines
- 11. Millbrook Square
- 12. Fair amount of support for affordable housing, but NIMBY fears with location of units in neighborhoods
- 13. Section 8 voucher holders
- 14. Urban renewal (former Symmes hospital)
 - a. Land
- 15. Entitlement community (CDBG / HOME and Consortium)
- 16. CPA