



Housing Plan Implementation Committee

Date: October 21, 2021
Time: 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM
Location: Conducted via remote participation

Attendees

Committee: Patricia Worden, Karen Kelleher, Steve Revilak

Absent: Ben Bradlow, Jonathan Nyberg

Staff: Jennifer Raitt, Kelly Lynema

Guests: Len Diggins, Judi Barrett, Alexis Lanzillotta, Rebecca Gruber, JoAnn Preston, Kristin Anderson

DRAFT Minutes

1. Housing Plan: Goals and Strategies

Kelly Lynema began by reminding the HPIC that she had sent out draft goals for review in advance of the meeting and that Barrett Planning Group would be sharing supporting information regarding the draft goals as part of their presentation. She also invited participants to share feedback via email after the meeting.

Patricia Worden asked if Barrett Planning Group would be incorporating her comments into the plan, and Kelly noted that Patricia's comments were on a portion of the plan (the Needs Assessment), not the entire plan, and that they had been shared with Barrett Planning Group.

Judi Barrett (Barrett Planning Group) shared that they are finalizing comments on the Housing Needs Assessment. They had received comments from two readers and town staff and are verifying accuracy of comments and addressing as appropriate.

Presentation

Judi presented the draft goals for the Housing Plan, noting how the draft goals relate to the data gathered through research conducted for the development of the Needs Assessment and through the public engagement completed through meetings, focus groups, surveys, meetings in a box, and interviews. After discussing each goal, Judi explained preliminary suggestions for strategies that could be incorporated into the plan to help reach the goal.

- ***Goal 1: Increase rental and home ownership housing options in Arlington for extremely-low to middle-income households.***

Judi explained that this goal involves increasing housing options for low income, very low income, and extremely low income households while paying attention to cost burden. There was an expressed interest during interviews and focus groups on providing more affordable home ownership opportunities. Based on the data from the Needs Assessment, roughly 29% of Arlington households would be classified as having low or moderate income. One strategy would be to leverage Arlington's Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) to achieve this goal. Housing Trusts can be used to enhance home buying assistance. MHP and MassHousing offer assistance to first time home buyers. The AHTF can be used to enhance these programs by writing down the purchase price or reducing the interest rate on loans. They can also be used to deepen affordability (i.e., take affordable units and make them even more affordable). Housing Choice vouchers and ARPA funds for rental assistance are other options.

- ***Goal 2: Preserve and maintain Arlington's existing supply of affordable homes to provide healthy, safe, and stable living environments.***

Judi shared that a large proportion of Arlington's affordable homes are provided by the Arlington Housing Authority (AHA). During interviews, several expressed concern about the condition of AHA properties and the need for greater collaboration between AHA and other groups. Judi noted that this is not unique to Arlington. Housing Authorities have a difficult time trying to meet the needs of low income households and receive the necessary funds to maintain properties. She noted it is very hard to preserve an existing supply of affordable homes, often because of the lack of capital reserves and inadequate or unpredictable funding.

Strategies include granting ARPA funding to the AHA, building relationships with property owners (especially for properties that are not subject to perpetual deed restrictions), tracking the town's inventory of subsidized housing, and establishing a short-term rental tax to fund the AHTF. Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and general obligation funds could also be used to subsidize affordable housing.

- ***Goal 3: Provide equitable access to affordable homeownership and rental homes suitable for a variety of household types, including senior households and families with children.***

Judi explained that "variety of household types" includes housing for seniors and families. Only one of five AHA properties is for families, and there's a question as to whether the available family affordable housing is adequate. Nearly half of Arlington's non-family households are considered low or

moderate income and are cost burdened or severely cost burdened. Senior needs are important to people who participated in this process, but Judi also noted the need to determine an appropriate amount of affordable housing for families.

Strategies include developing and maintaining a database of information on affordable housing beyond what is provided in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) to establish a baseline understanding of who in Arlington is served by the Town's existing SHI (e.g., age restrictions, number of bedrooms, condition of units).

Additional strategies could include reducing local preference in affordable housing lotteries and special tax agreements, like tax incentive financing, for developers that build affordable housing in town. Barrett Planning Group has completed studies of the impacts of local preference in other communities and concluded, as others have done, that local preference policies in predominantly white communities do very little to increase diversity and often limit the ability of minority households from other communities to move to town.

- ***Goal 4: Create, maintain, and preserve permanent supportive housing that is affordable, accessible, and available to people with disabilities.***

Judi explained that during the interview process and in the Fair Housing Action Plan, disability status was the most reported basis for discrimination. Residents expressed concern about the lack of units that are accessible and affordable to individuals with disabilities. She noted Arlington's low number of group homes, which account for 6% of the Town's SHI, and shared that there are no sober homes in Arlington.

Regarding strategies, the Town could acquire and develop group homes for people with disabilities (Lincoln has done this successfully), and provide barrier removal grants for homeowners and landlords (e.g., making homes wheelchair accessible). The Town could also work with an organization like CASPAP to develop and manage affordable housing.

- ***Goal 5: Integrate affordable homes in all neighborhoods through reuse of existing structures and redevelopment of underutilized properties, particularly within walking distance of schools, public parks, services, amenities, and transit.***

Judi shared that this goal requires identifying the proximity of subsidized housing to other community amenities, such as schools and parks, and working to provide affordable housing throughout the town, including in neighborhoods where there is little if no existing affordable housing. Most

development in Arlington occurs through redevelopment of existing properties, and that existing distribution of affordable housing is not equitable.

Recommendations for strategies include allowing missing-middle housing to allow a mix of housing types (two-, three-, and four-plexes) to provide greater housing choice. The Town could also consider adopting a 100% affordable housing overlay with suitable bonuses to incent affordable housing development. The Town is encouraged to increase the range of housing choice within the community. The Town could also establish a community land trust (CLT), used commonly throughout the country and which was key to the development of affordable housing in Martha's Vineyard. CLTs own the land and develop housing that is deeply affordable, making it available to people who need affordable housing while retaining ownership over the land. This would be to supplement, not replace, the HCA.

- ***Goal 6: Review and update Arlington's zoning and other housing policies to encourage development that increases affordable housing and fair housing choice.***

Judi noted that the shape and size of our zoning districts make it difficult to develop more housing. Arlington's inclusionary zoning bylaw is weak, but the land zoned to allow multifamily development is significantly fragmented. It is difficult for a developer to come up with a site that makes sense for affordable housing development. She recommended that the Town review dimensional and density regulations, especially where they make it difficult to add multifamily housing.

Strategies for meeting this goal could include increasing the amount of land zoned for multi-family development, reducing fragmentation in Arlington's zoning for multi-family, and allowing two-family dwellings as of right in all residential districts. The latter is happening elsewhere in Massachusetts. The Town can also look at encouraging more missing middle homes—a mix of units in all neighborhoods—with or without an accompanying affordability component. This could include encouraging two to four-family developments throughout neighborhoods, which is a tool for communities that don't want to encourage greater density everywhere but do want to provide more housing choice. Additional education around fair housing is also recommended.

- ***Goal 7: Improve development opportunities along major corridors to include a greater mix of housing options.***

Judi noted that the town could improve development opportunities along the main corridors, which will require a challenging conversation about density. She again pointed to Arlington's fragmented zoning map and that the zoning bylaw's dimensional regulations are not conducive to constructing multi-family housing. Land ownership nearly entirely in private hands, and the Town does

not have a local entity that can acquire and assemble sites for multi-family developments.

Recommended strategies include monitoring the outcomes of Arlington's existing mixed-use zoning, promote redevelopment and reuse of Industrial District sites, providing funding to create upper story and ground-floor units in small projects through AHTF, CPA, and HOME funds. A CLT is also a recommended strategy for this goal.

- ***Goal 8: Increase capacity to produce housing through leadership development, advocacy, staffing, funding, and relationships with nonprofit and for-profit developers.***

Judi noted that the needs assessment indicates there is local advocacy for housing, but capacity is limited. The Town's elected leaders need support and training and creative ways to address public misinformation and opposition to affordable housing. The town should also find ways to promote serving on housing committees and organizations.

The Town must address public misinformation, and the ever-present refrain of "I support affordable housing, BUT...." (but not here, but not that developer, but not that location, etc.). Leadership needs to be able to address mythology about affordable housing and address incorrect ideas people have about affordable housing, and distinguishing valid concerns vs. those based on mythology.

Strategies include building relationships with more non-profit developers and Community Development Corporations (CDCs) to supplement the work of the HCA. The Town could identify new CDCs that might be willing to work in Arlington. The Town could also commit ARPA funds to hiring additional staff and conducting training for board and committee members. Additionally, the Town could hold regular developer round tables to educate residents about what it costs to build and manage housing, from for-profit, non-profit, and Housing Authority perspectives.

- ***Goal 9: Build awareness of affordable and fair housing needs within Arlington and the larger region, as well as Arlington's role in addressing broader inequities.***

The consultants heard many misconceptions about housing, housing affordability, and developers throughout the planning process. It's not unique to Arlington, but when these aren't addressed and managed it can make it harder to address fair housing issues.

The Town will need to develop education and training programs to address these misconceptions and stereotypes. Judi noted that additional work needs

to be done to help people build the confidence necessary to testify at hearings and town meeting. The Town should also recruit affordable housing advocates to serve on boards and committees.

An additional strategy mentioned was to consider holding forums with regional panel of experts to demonstrate how other communities are experiencing and responding to the same issues Arlington is having. The Town should also support advocacy and tenant organizing efforts in AHA, HCA, and other affordable housing developments.

- ***Goal 10: Make equitable access to shared green spaces and a healthy living environment a priority for siting affordable homes.***

The consultants noted the need to site new homes so they have access to community benefits like parks and green space, while simultaneously conserving public open space and conservation land. The connection between open spaces and quality of life was regularly expressed by participants in the process, as well as in the update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, which is happening concurrently. As these public benefits are provided, the Town should ensure that access to those benefits is the available equally to residents in affordable housing.

Strategies include protecting parks and open spaces, while making sure affordable housing is developed within proximity of those spaces. The Town should also prioritize better sidewalks, trails, and bike paths to increase access to the nearest parks and open spaces. The Town should also audit the zoning bylaw's parking requirements and standards (e.g., to reduce the amount of impervious parking surface required) and add green infrastructure.

Discussion

The Housing Plan Implementation Committee members shared their initial reactions to the draft goals and suggested strategies. Len Diggins asked about drafting people to participate in housing committees, to which Judi responded that direct invitations and phone calls are critical to increasing participation. Steve Revilak asked for a map showing the locations of Arlington's subsidized housing inventory units are located, adding that while he knows where AHA and some of the Housing Corporation of Arlington's properties are, he would like to know whether the other homes are evenly disbursed throughout town, or concentrated in specific pockets. Judi shared that they are working on it and will provide a map in the final plan, although we cannot identify where group homes are located.

Karen Kelleher said this is a great start for developing a proactive strategy for increasing affordability and housing diversity in Town. She said that while the consultants have not yet shared numeric goals for housing production, they are important and the Town may want to consider a goal beyond reaching the 10%. If Arlington added 99 affordable homes per year, we'd get to 10% SHI in

approximately ten years. Karen asked about proactive strategies for marketing affordable homes to increase the diversity of residents in affordable housing in Arlington.

Judi responded Barrett Planning Group recently completed a study in Newton comparing a housing lottery with the eventual residents, providing an example of how marketing matters. Issues range from pricing of units, credit scores, and other impediments. Every community needs to ask whether local preference is necessary, and if they are going to have it how it can be used to increase participation by minority populations and individuals with disabilities. In the Newton case, most affordable housing tenants are white people from Newton, rather than people who lived outside the city. Local marketing tends to give preference to local residents. A critical factor beyond marketing, however, is the pricing of the homes and identifying ways to deepen affordability beyond what is affordable to a household earning 80% AMI. She noted that communities can use funding from resources like the AHTF or CPA to reduce costs, to more closely align available homes with what those who need them can afford.

Kelly asked Judi to explain why numerical goals are part of Housing Production Plans for anyone who might not understand it as a component of the plan. Judi shared that after the 2000 Census, some municipalities discovered that they had dipped below 10% SHI because they added housing but not affordable housing. The State allowed for communities who were reaching specified annual housing production goals to get a reprieve on the requirement to accept comprehensive permit applications. If a community is producing 0.5% or 1.0% affordable housing annually, they can postpone applications for one or two years. Right now, communities are asking for updated numbers from the 2020 Census, however Looking to our current numbers, due to delays in the 2020 Census, the Town's updated number of year-round housing units, which is used to calculate housing production goals, has not been finalized by the Census Bureau and likely will not be until late 2022. MAPC advised that since Arlington is not a seasonal or resort community, the Town could reasonably assume that the percentage of seasonal housing units is close to the percentage from the 2010 Census and calculate our 2020 year-round housing based on that calculation. The Town must decide if the Housing Plan will refer to 2010 Census numbers or calculate an estimate of its 2020 year-round housing units based on a percentage of the Town's total housing units.

Patricia Worden commented that public education should start with town leadership, claiming that town leaders oppose affordable housing. She recommends using Town funds to buy properties and renovate them.

Steve agreed with Karen about the importance of having numeric goals, but questioned whether 10% is the right number since Arlington's low- to moderate-income level is 29%. He recognizes that 10% is a goal under Chapter 40B since

that would make the Town eligible for safe harbor. He noted that the gap between the gap between 10% and 29% is large.

Karen pointed out that Arlington's housing production numbers in 2021 provide an example of how the Town can produce more than 100 affordable units in a year. HCA is completing a development of 48 units, a comprehensive permit for 1165R Mass Ave was approved, and although controversial, Thorndike Place is under review. This equates to more than 100 units of affordable housing in our pipeline. She added that to maintain production at this level the Town will need an aggressive long-term plan.

Regarding leadership, Karen asked if there is a plan to give this presentation to the other groups, like the Select Board, Redevelopment Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, the AHA, the HCA, Community Preservation Act Committee (CPC), and other groups to get leadership bodies in town to start having this conversation. Jennifer Raitt shared that we are overdue for a joint meeting between the Select Board and ARB and it would be a good time to have that discussion. Kelly added that she appreciated the suggestion to have a meeting with the CPC, AHA, and others. Jenny noted as well that the CPC is using this process to inform their Community Preservation Plan and will incorporate the Housing Plan into their updated Community Preservation Plan.

Patricia stated that the AHA has been shortchanged in terms of support in town for the past few years. She claimed that allowing two-family homes by right can happen now because Town Meeting passed the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) bylaw, which she believes will turn Arlington into a two-family town. Patricia added that the planning department does not support affordable housing because they did not support an affordability requirement on ADUs and did not support a citizen petition for teardown moratorium. Kelly responded that the Planning Department does not oppose affordable housing. Jenny added that we are trying to focus on the future and create a plan for the next five years to create and preserve affordable housing.

Len commented that he likes goal number nine, as it allows us to bring in ideas from the Fair Housing Action Plan and begins to get at deepening affordability. He asked if it would be helpful to consider transit needs and encourage more transit-oriented development.

Steve responded to Patricia regarding the ADU bylaw. He said he reviewed several drafts of the language and provided feedback to the petitioners. Some provisions in the bylaw were added specifically to give the HCA the opportunity to add ADUs to the two-family homes they currently own. ADUs are also related to missing middle homes in that they introduce variety. Single-family homes in Arlington are selling for approximately \$1 million each, and most people cannot afford that. He also stated he agreed with Len's suggestion for transit-oriented

development, stating that we should avoid imposing a "car tax" -- needing a car to live here -- wherever possible.

Open Comment

Attendees of the meeting were invited to comment. Rebecca Gruber thanked the group for this work and appreciated the goals that had been presented. She commented that achieving these goals will require warrant articles to come before town meeting. She's concerned that we'll miss the window for spring town meeting and asked if we could start crafting something now.

Jenny shared that at this point in the plan we are still working on goals, have some ideas about strategies, but knew at the beginning of the plan that we might not have the right timing to move directly into recommendations of the plan. She said that the Zoning Bylaw Working Group and Arlington Redevelopment Board are interested in meeting with residents who have ideas for zoning articles. She agreed that the timing is challenging. She noted that anyone who has specific suggestions is always welcome to talk to the department directly to see what we can do. Kelly added that the plan is scheduled to complete at the same time our current Housing Production Plan expires (November).

JoAnn Preston thanked Judi for incorporating the AHA in the goals and strategies. The AHA has the oldest low-income housing in Arlington. The family housing in Menotomy Manor is over 70 years old, and it will need renovations. There's been a retreat from public housing, starting with the Reagan administration, and since all resources have been turned to the private sector. The AHA makes special contributions: they have homes for adults with developmental disabilities and have purchased condos, one of which houses victims of domestic violence. The AHA has the capacity to add housing, and they'd like to add housing for those with developmental disabilities and would like to add more two-bedroom condos for victims of domestic violence, but they need funding to accomplish that. This could include ARPA funds. JoAnn added that buying existing units is cheaper than building. Regarding residents with disabilities, JoAnn noted that 18.5% of public housing has to be for people with disabilities, but that it is age-restricted to those under 60. The AHA houses these residents through their senior years, but this means that the need for housing for residents with disabilities continues to grow. She also added that Arlington has more public housing per capita than many of our surrounding communities.

Kristin Anderson applauded the group's concern for low- and moderate-income households. She also supports leveraging CDCs, to the extent that they're non-profit organizations. She asked Judi about the slide mentioning affordable housing in former industrial properties. Kelly responded that it would be subject to restrictions on housing in the industrial district, in other words, affordable live/work housing for artists. Judi added the underlying idea is to take advantage of opportunities where you have them. Kristin said she would be excited to participate in a committee working to establish affordable housing for artists.

Kristin believes that changing commercial uses to mixed use or residential will make the town less walkable. She noted that there aren't many jobs in Arlington, and she's opposed to changing zoning that reduces the opportunity to create jobs.

Steve provided an overview of Arlington's history of commercial zoning. Prior to the 1970's, Arlington had sizeable business districts, which ran along both sides of Mass Ave and Broadway. He pointed out that Arlington has a limited opportunity to create jobs because the Town changed the zoning on much of its commercial areas, but that we can reintroduce more commercial by changing zoning again if we want to.

Patricia commented that if we don't learn from the past, we'll just make the same mistakes. She thinks the town should have supported the moratorium on teardowns.

2. Community Engagement

Kelly reminded the HPIC that materials from the Meeting in a Box Round 2 are due back to DPCD by October 27. She also reminded the group of the November 9 public meeting for the Housing Plan. From 7:30 – 8:00pm, Barrett Planning Group and Horsley Witten will share an overview of the planning process and summarize prior public meetings. At 8:00pm the consultants will present an overview of the draft Housing Plan.

3. Announcements/Reminders

Kelly reminded the HPIC members that the committee's next meeting is scheduled for November 4 at 7:30pm.

Upcoming Meetings: October 7, November 4, December 2