

Town of Bellingham

Residential Visioning Session: Outcomes



Prepared by Metropolitan Area Planning Council



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Meeting Summary

On June 18, 2009, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) facilitated a public meeting in the Town of Bellingham to create a vision for future residential development. The work would be a foundation for a Housing Production Plan for the Town. 75 people attended the meeting held at the Council on Aging/ Senior Center. Dinner was provided.

Between 5 to 7 individuals sat at round tables throughout the meeting room. Materials were distributed, including an agenda, note paper, and “voting” dots. A Zoning Map and Street Map were posted in the room. Students from Bellingham High School provided assistance distributing materials.

The meeting began with a presentation by Mary Chaves, Vice Chair of the Board of Selectmen. Jennifer Raitt, Chief Housing Planner with MAPC, introduced Mark Racicot, Manager of Government Services of MAPC and co-facilitator for the evening. She then explained Housing Production Plans, why communities adopt them and how they are implemented in communities across Massachusetts. The meeting agenda and outcomes were also explained.

The next part of the evening was a facilitated discussion to create a vision for future housing development in Bellingham. This discussion was divided into three distinct components. The first component was a discussion about Housing Assets. Second, the group discussed Housing Challenges. Finally, the group was asked to list Opportunities for new housing in the community. The discussion was recorded on flip chart paper.

Following this exercise, facilitators posted the flip chart paper with all responses. Meeting participants were asked to walk around the room and place three “voting” dots on what they believe should be the Town’s highest priorities for addressing the Town’s housing assets, challenges, and opportunities.

Participants listed the following assets votes are shown in parenthesis:

Assets

- Commuter Rail is in Franklin – could be extended to Bellingham could be funding available for developments near transit (22)
- Open Space – parks are tucked away (19)
- Pearl Street Mill is available for reuse (overlay district is in place) - (16)
- Bank foreclosed properties could be acquired and used for affordable units. (13)
- Housing Authority units (family and disabled – need improvement – elderly 677 units in program) - (13)
- Keep things the same – no growth (5)
- High Ridge cluster development (4)
- Tucked away neighborhoods primary and secondary roads – preserve neighborhoods (4)

- Zoning – (2)
- Jefferson at Bellingham 20% affordable – currently all occupied (1)

Participants listed the following challenges votes are shown in parenthesis:

Challenges

- Infrastructure would need to be upgraded to support additional density = need to address sewer needs of existing units (25)
- Traffic generated by developments roads/ bicycling/ walking (17)
- Need for useable open space, not just wetlands (13)
- Lack of surface transportation other than automobiles (10)
- Need 30+ units to meet 40B goal of 10%/ town should require payments for affordable housing by developers of market rate units (9)
- Concerns over changing demographics brought by affordable housing (6)
- How are we going to fund the affordable housing (6)
- How to provide the housing for young, single new graduates (4)
- Question of adequacy of water supply
 - already on Water Ban due to several wells being shut down temporarily
 - have adequate long term supply. (4)
- Much out of town traffic in town (3)
- Lack capacity in monitoring existing subsidized housing units (3)
- Want to keep Bellingham residents in Bellingham (2)
- Housing Authority units need to be improved to accommodate people with disabilities. (low wait list, need funding) – (2)
- Challenge of figuring out needs due to the uncertainty of future growth (2)
- Sewer limits DEP prefers groundwater recharge through septic systems will limit growth potential (2)
- Access to newer developments is already difficult (Dover Village infrastructure) – (1)
- North Bellingham has very limited sewer infrastructure (1)

Participants listed the following opportunities votes are shown in parenthesis:

Opportunities

- Create more housing opportunities for extremely low income individuals and families (elderly) – (16)
- Build small affordable homes not expensive condos (16)
- Make developers pay mitigation to help offset costs of transportation improvements associated with new developments (15)
- Open space acquisition (400-500 acres have been devoted to conservation) – (15)
- Accessory apartments for family and affordable (11)
- Partner with developers to generate the housing types that meet community goals (9)
- Promote market rate senior housing (7)

- Shops at Bellingham – space is available – need to build offices to produce higher income jobs (7)
- Accessibility (6)
- Consider cooperative housing – multigenerational housing with separate unit but shared space also (2)
- Calls to Housing Authority (moderate income individuals) in search of housing – 5 acres lot is available/ demolition or rebuild (1)

Jennifer Raitt concluded the meeting with a summary of the top three priorities from each component. These priorities will help inform the Housing Vision and related Housing Goals.

Preliminary Vision:

Bellingham believes that housing should be created to serve a wide-range of income needs, including individuals and families who are very low income. Housing will be created that serves a range of family sizes. The town places a high priority and encourages transit-oriented developments, capitalizing on its proximity to the Franklin Commuter Rail Station. Open space preservation and conservation is important to the community. New development should reflect this value by incorporation of open space into residential designs and consideration of reuse of existing properties. The town with developers will support existing and new development with infrastructure upgrades, traffic calming measures, and connect developments to opportunities that encourage healthy lifestyles, including bicycling, pedestrian, and passive and active open space opportunities.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

APPENDIX I
Meeting Agenda



WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR FUTURE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN BELLINGHAM?

Visioning Session

Thursday, June 18, 2009, 5:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. at the
Council on Aging / Senior Center, 40 Blackstone Street, Bellingham, MA

AGENDA

6:15-6:20

Opening and Introductions

- Mary Chaves, Vice Chairman, Board of Selectmen

6:20-6:45

Housing Production Plans/ Tonight's Visioning Process

- Jennifer Raitt, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

6:45-7:30

Developing the Bellingham Housing Vision

Join in an open discussion about Bellingham's housing assets, housing challenges, and housing opportunities to facilitate the development of a Housing Vision as part of the Bellingham Housing Plan.

7:30-7:50

Housing Priorities

7:50-8:00

Vision Wrap-up

8:00-8:15

Next Steps/ Adjourn

Sponsored by the Board of Selectmen and Master Plan Committee

This workshop will be facilitated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and is funded by District Local Technical Assistance funding provided through MAPC.

APPENDIX II
Meeting Attendance

Insert Meeting Attendance Logs