

Town of Needham, Massachusetts
Housing Needham Advisory Group (HONE)
Public Services Administration Bldg., 500 Dedham Ave.
Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2023

Place: Hybrid meeting in the Charles River Room and via Zoom
Present: Co-Chair, Heidi Frail; Michael Diener, Liz Kaponya, Kevin Keane, Joshua Levy, Jeanne McKnight, Ronald Ruth
Remote: William Lovett
Absent: Natasha Espada
Staff: Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement; Katie King, Deputy Town Manager; Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development; Alexandra Clee, Assistant Town Planner
Guests: Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

At 7:00 pm., H. Frail called the public meeting to order. The meeting is being video recorded.

I. Welcome and Meeting Goals - Heidi Frail, Co-Chair

II. Review Feedback from Community Meeting and Recap - Heidi Frail, Co-Chair; Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

H. Frail - Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. People were pleased to see the maps, levers, and learn about the MBTA Communities Act Law. One improvement would be to include Hersey Station. She noted a positive, concrete impression from residents toward an increase in density. The community meeting was about education and getting public feedback. We are accepting public comment throughout the process. **Residents may email questions to planning@needhamma.gov.**

J. McKnight manned Station, Apartment A-1. It was difficult to engage with such a large number of people. Residents asked why we are not looking at Hersey Station. The lever that increased from 3 to 4 stories was well supported. There was a lot of support for zoning at Hillside School.

J. Levy heard many comments about Hersey Station. Residents felt the Heights are overburdened; spread the units around Town. We don't want Needham to look like Brookline, Cambridge, or Somerville. Keep in mind why people want to live in Needham. People felt starter unit housing could look differently with a mix of unit types such as 3 standalone units on a parcel. E. Halvorsen said it would have to be 3 units in a single structure. People felt positively about more density.

L. Kaponya reported residents said Newton proposed twice as many units to be built as statutes require. Residents wondered if there were legal options to squelch the MBTA Communities Act.

W. Lovett noted the commentary was positive overall. Residents are still concerned whether this is a housing production plan or a zoning plan. We need to stay on point that this is a zoning plan.

With Business districts, people thought each district should not be treated the same. I might want this density in this district but not in that one.

M. Diener thought residents were confused about ways that total units authorized versus net units that could be built. People living in the General Residence area expressed this type of zoning could provide a higher resale value for their homes.

L. Newman said people were expressing concern that decisions may have already been made. This is a planning effort. The feedback we are getting is what will shape how we move forward. The Housing Plan is an informative document but is not the final plan.

III. Selection of Zoning Scenarios to Model for MBTA Communities Compliance - Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates; Emily Innes, Innes Associates

Meeting Stats and Public Feedback

One-hundred seven residents participated in-person; one-hundred thirty participated online.

MBTA Q&A

Station 3: Center Business District Station Station 5: A1 District Station
Station 4: General Residence District Station Station 7: Business Districts Station

E. Halvorsen shared Take Aways from public feedback for lot size, FAR, Height, and DU/AC.

Station 6: Industrial District Station. He shared Take Aways from public preferences for lot size between 5,000 and 20,000 SF, Height and DU/AC.

Consultants shared High Level Take Aways per district. A summary document, take-aways and public comments will be compiled and available online. The presentation is **available at:** <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

IV. Overview of the Schedule Moving Forward - Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates

<i>Tasks and Schedule</i>	<i>Nov 15</i>	<i>Nov16-Dec20</i>	<i>Dec 20</i>	<i>Jan 4</i>	<i>Jan 18</i>
HONE Meeting #5					
Run Scenarios					
Conduct Fiscal Impact					
Conduct EFA					
Conduct 3-D Modeling					
Plan for Public Meeting					
Execute Public Meeting					
Public Meeting #2					

Consultants stressed the urgency of determining two to three additional scenarios based on public feedback.

K. King suggested planning to the vision and what the community said, not to the compliance model.

E. Halvorsen presented questions for potential scenarios which are listed in the presentation.

Members discussed using the Housing Plan Scenario as a jumping off point. Members decided to include Hersey Station but revisit the conversation. Consultants will work with staff to determine what Hersey Station zoning will look like. Members decided not to add Hillside School to the Housing Plan Scenario. Members decided to leave out the Housing Authority property unless the Town would not comply with MBTA Communities Act and then consider adding it at that time.

Members discussed modeling a scenario that includes the Center Business District. E. Halvorsen explained the mixed-use rules. HONE could choose to model multifamily as of right, with no mandatory commercial on the ground floor in the Center. HONE could choose to keep the Center Business district out. We could create a donut or crescent shape where we have voluntary mixed use in the Center Business district on peripheral streets allowing multifamily on the edges but keep the core mandatory mixed use. There was consensus to model this last option. Where there are commercial store fronts, members prefer to avoid those streets and do a crescent shape if possible. Staff will investigate where the crescent shape would be.

One member felt one scenario should be the minimum to meet the 1,784 units required by law while not changing the layout of the Town affording the least disruption to residents' way of life.

Members discussed whether to model the Housing Plan with or without General Residence.

- Connect GR blocks to Apt. A-1 blocks.
- The community expressed some support for increasing density in the GR district.

Note the Housing Plan map with recommended changes.

- For the GR highlighted areas, do we include for contiguity alone with no zoning changes?
- Or do we want zoning changes to allow three or four families as of right in the GR area?

Members agreed General Residence would need to be changed or ~~get rid of it~~ not include it in the compliance analysis.

Members discussed how the number of parking spaces impact the number of units. The consultants will run a proposal for 1 parking space per unit and for 1.5 parking spaces per unit.

Members determined scenarios for the consultants to model.

Scenario 1 - Housing Plan

Scenario 2 - Modified Housing Plan plus Hersey area plus downtown Center crescent minus the General Residence district.

Scenario 3 –Modified Housing Plan plus Hersey area plus downtown Center crescent plus the General Residence district.

Scenario 4 - Minimally compliant district. The consultant will draw this.

Consultants will work with staff to use their discretion on any unanticipated decision points that come up during the modeling.

Informational - The Meeting Packet is available at <https://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx>

MOTION: K. Keane moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 pm.

SECONDED: L. Kaponya

ROLL-CALL VOTE: M. Diener, aye; H. Frail, aye; L. Kaponya, aye; K. Keane, aye; J. Levy, aye; W. Lovett, aye; J. McKnight, aye; R. Ruth, aye. Unanimous.

MOTION CARRIES: 8-0

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary