



PLANNING & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

Needham Housing Plan Working Group Meeting

Thursday April 14, 2022

7:15 p.m.

Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Meeting ID: 811 9113 9515

(Instructions for accessing below)

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Direct Link to meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81191139515>

- I. Welcome (Jeanne McKnight)
- II. Approval of Minutes from March 10, 2022 Working Group Meeting
- III. Feedback on Community Housing Workshop (Natasha Espada)
- IV. Report on Results from Workshop Poll (Cynthia Roy Gonzalez)
- V. Discussion of Draft Community Housing Survey (Jeanne McKnight)
- VI. Brief Status Reports from Subgroups (Natasha Espada)
- VII. Next Steps (Lee Newman)
- VIII. Other Business
- IX. Adjournment

Housing Plan Working Group Membership

Natasha Espada
Jeanne McKnight
Emily Cooper
Ed Cosgrove
Carol Fachetti
Helen Gregory

Planning Board, Co-Chair
Planning Board, Co-Chair
Citizen At Large
Board of Health
Finance Committee
Council on Aging

Oscar Mertz
Marcus Nelson
Michael O'Brien
Ed Scheideler
Rhonda Spector

Citizen At Large
Select Board
School Committee
Housing Authority
Citizen At Large

NEEDHAM HOUSING PLAN WORKING GROUP

* MINUTES *

March 10, 2022

7:04 p.m. A meeting of the Needham Housing Plan Working Group was convened by Jeanne McKnight, Co-Chair, as a virtual Zoom Meeting. Ms. McKnight announced this open meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020 due to the current state of emergency from the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. She said all supporting documents used at this meeting are available on a special section of the Town's website www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021. Present were Jeanne McKnight representing the Planning Board, Dan Matthews and Marcus Nelson from the Select Board, Laura Dorfman from the Community Preservation Committee, Michael O'Brien from the School Committee, Helen Gregory from the Council on Aging, Ed Cosgrove from the Board of Health, Ed Scheideler from the Needham Housing Authority as well as Emily Cooper and Oscar Mertz as Citizens At Large. Also present were Director of Planning and Community Development Lee Newman, Assistant Town Planner Alexandra Clee, Public Information Officer Cynthia Roy Gonzalez, Community Housing Specialist Karen Sunnarborg, and Director of Health and Human Services Timothy McDonald.

Welcome and Introductions – Ms. McKnight, Co-Chair of the Housing Plan Working Group, offered a welcome and asked for a roll call of Working Group members. She mentioned that additional members would be brought into the meeting as they became available. She also introduced staff and noted that the Town had a special website dedicated to the preparation of the Housing Plan at www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021.

While Ms. McKnight indicated that public comments will not be entertained as part of this meeting, there will be other opportunities for community input throughout the planning process. She emphasized that written comments were also encouraged.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. O'Brien moved that the Minutes from the February 10, 2022 meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cosgrove. **Approved: 9-0 with Ms. Fachetti abstaining as she was not present.**

Discussion of Subgroup Logistics – Ms. McKnight indicated that Ms. Espada had sent members a list of four subgroups with a preliminary list of members under each. Ms. Cooper offered that Ms. Espada had distributed a more recent list that included several changes. Ms. Fachetti asked to be added to the Capacity Building subgroup, and Mr. Scheideler requested the Zoning Subgroup.

Ms. Newman then stated that the subgroups will have to operate under the Open Meeting law that will require official posting of the meetings and minutes. She listed several options for holding the meetings in person, including the Public Services Administration Building (PSAB) during normal work hours, Town Hall when other boards are meeting, and, for virtual meetings, webinars that are initiated by staff and then passed on to the subgroup members to coordinate. Ms. McKnight added that it is not feasible to have staff attend these meetings and take notes.

Ms. Fachetti inquired whether it was necessary to prepare minutes if the meetings were recorded on Zoom. Ms. Newman said she would check but meetings have never been treated that way in the past. Ms. McKnight offered that subgroups do not need to be fussy about the meeting notes but they can be helpful in keeping track of comments and subgroup progress. She then asked if the Working Group should leave it up to the individual subgroups to identify a person to coordinate with staff to provide advance notices and schedule space.

Ms. Newman mentioned that the subgroups should plan to complete their work by the end of May and that Ms. Sunnarborg is preparing a framework to help subgroups plan their work products. A memo on this will be issued soon.

Mr. Matthews observed that the Working Group appeared to be pretty set on the path regarding the planning process and he further indicated that he has expressed concerns in the past. He suggested that the Working Group establish a Steering Committee that would be responsible for the primary work on the Plan. He added that the Working Group represents a wide range of experience but some members do not have as much time to get involved in the project as others. He further commented that there has not been an opportunity to address the changes to the first draft sections of the Plan.

Ms. McKnight indicated that the logistics of the planning process have been undertaken by the Working Group co-chairs as well as several staff members. Since the focus of this logistical work has been on administrative issues in planning Working Group meetings, the Open Meeting law has not been applicable. She asked the Group whether it should further discuss this suggestion tonight.

Ms. Cooper stated that she wanted to make sure that there was a conversation about what the subgroups should do. Ms. McKnight responded that she thought the zoning subgroup should follow-up on the work that is being done in response to the MBTA Communities Guidelines. Ms. Sunnarborg then briefly summarized a proposed framework that the subgroups can decide to follow in undertaking work which will be provided to Working Group members as part of a memo to be circulated very soon.

Ms. McKnight asked members whether they were prepared to further discuss the suggestion of a Steering Committee tonight. Ms. Dorfman questioned whether it was necessary to handle Working Group work in such a formal way, stating that

subgroups have not been involved in any of the other boards and committees in which she has been involved. Ms. McKnight suggested that staff will prepare a memo on a framework for the subgroups and moving the planning process forward. She then asked if there were any volunteers for serving on a proposed Steering Committee.

Ms. Cooper asked whether the subgroups have to touch on all topics that have been addressed thus far within each subgroup or have autonomy to more narrowly focus their work. Ms. McKnight suggested that it was up to the subgroup to determine the actions on which they will focus.

Mr. Matthews added that the Steering Committee would include the two Working Group co-chairs and other members who might want to serve. It would then report back to the full Working Group on recommendations.

Mr. Mertz said that he would like to take Ms. Sunnarborg up on her offer to be a resource for the subgroups and asked whether she might be interested in attending the first meeting of the zoning subgroup to help them get started. Ms. Sunnarborg replied that she had not planned to attend subgroup meetings but would try to be available. Ms. McKnight observed that the subgroups might need to reach out to Town staff on occasion for specific information during the course of their work.

Discussion of Plans for the Community Housing Workshop – Ms. Sunnarborg provided an overview of the agenda for the March 24th Community Housing Workshop, including instructions for the breakout groups. Ms. Cooper suggested that there be a specific end time to the Workshop, and Ms. Sunnarborg responded with 9:00 p.m. Ms. Cooper added that it may be useful to shorten some of the presentation on the Housing Needs Assessment as it is likely that participants from the January 27th Public Education and Listening Session, who already heard some of it, will attend the Workshop as well. She further suggested that there be a question for participants on what affordable housing means to them which Ms. Sunnarborg pointed out was included in the first question that will be tackled in the breakout groups.

There was also a discussion of the draft handout for the Workshop which Ms. Cooper suggested included a list of actions that made the Working Group look like it had done more work than has actually been accomplished, some of which were very specific and others of which were broad. She said that we do not want to lead participants down any specific path with respect to specific strategies at this point in the process. She further stated that she has not had the opportunity to provide her thoughts on priority actions.

Mr. Mertz offered that not everyone has had the time to digest the materials. The handout is largely a collection of past goals and strategies, and he acknowledged that these evolve over time. He suggested that it is helpful to have some reference of past recommendations, but further discussions on goals and actions are priorities.

Ms. McKnight responded that we can entertain comments to improve the handout, and staff will make the appropriate changes.

Ms. McKnight raised the issue of the role of the Facilitator in the breakout groups, and Ms. Newman replied that we will largely rely on Working Group members and that the number of Facilitators needed will depend on the number of participants. Mr. Matthews suggested that staff send a memo to Working Group members to gauge any interest in serving as a Facilitator.

Ms. McKnight mentioned that the role of the Recorder is also important as this person will be responsible for reporting back to the full group at the end of the meeting. This person can be a Working Group member or another participant in the breakout group. Ms. McKnight urged Working Group members to spread the word on the Workshop to their boards or committees to boost participation.

Ms. Gregory stressed the importance of keeping track of time during the Workshop, and Ms. Sunnarborg suggested that this is an important role of the Facilitators but that staff will also make announcements regarding the schedule. Ms. Newman indicated that staff will be testing the logistics of virtually holding this type of meeting next week.

Next Steps – Ms. Newman mentioned that in addition to the Community Housing Workshop scheduled for March 24th, the Working Group will meet on April 14th when it will do a debriefing of the Workshop and review a draft Community Housing Survey. This Survey will be conducted on a community-wide basis as opposed to the polling to occur right after the Workshop which will enable attendees to vote on their top priority actions.

Ms. McKnight expressed her appreciation for the work that has been done so far on the MBTA Communities Guidelines and asked if Mr. Matthews could say a few words on this issue. Mr. Matthews indicated that the Town will have to prepare an Action Plan for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in response to the Guidelines which will need to be addressed in the Housing Plan. He mentioned that, given comments from communities, the state Guidelines are unlikely to be formally adopted in the same form that is currently under review. He suggested that the Town has a significant concern about the length of time offered for community review in the draft Guidelines and some extension of the timeframe involved in adopting new zoning will hopefully be granted.

Mr. Mertz added that the Guidelines will change the way of doing business with respect to zoning as there will be a focus on by-right approvals instead of special permits in the designated districts. It also means that the Town will have to be proactive in engaging with school officials on capacity issues given future growth.

Ms. McKnight introduced Mr. McDonald, the Town's Director Health and Human Services, stating that he was very helpful in the preparations of the Accessory

Dwelling Units bylaw through the Council on Aging and Department of Public Health. Mr. McDonald expressed his interest in being involved in this housing work and thanked Ed Cosgrove and Helen Gregory for their participation in the Working Group.

8:48 p.m. **Motion: Mr. Matthews moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mertz. Unanimous: 11-0.**

NEEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY HOUSING SURVEY



Responses are due no later than **TBD**
Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated!

Needham Housing Plan Working Group

Natasha Espada, Co-Chair
Jeanne McKnight, Co-Chair
Ed Cosgrove
Carol Fachetti
Helen Gregory

Planning Board
Planning Board
Board of Health
Finance Committee
Council on Aging

Oscar Mertz
Marcus Nelson
Mike O'Brien
Ed Scheideler
Rhonda Spector
Emily Cooper

Citizen At Large
Select Board
School Committee
Housing Authority
Citizen At Large
Citizen At Large

Town of Needham Needham Housing Plan Community Housing Survey

The Needham Planning Board is sponsoring the preparation of a Housing Plan to obtain updated documentation on demographic shifts and housing conditions in order to identify priority local housing needs to guide decision-making on the Town's future housing agenda. To undertake this work, the Planning Board appointed a Working Group composed of representatives of various local boards and committees as well as at-large members of the community.

The Town of Needham has not had an approved Housing Plan in place since 2007, although it has made considerable progress in producing affordable housing since then, adding 894 new state-approved units (238 of which are restricted as affordable) to its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and surpassing the state affordability goal of 10% under Chapter 40B. Despite reaching this threshold, the Town recognizes that significant unmet housing needs remain, particularly in the context of unprecedented housing prices. Consequently, the Town is revisiting its housing agenda by obtaining updated documentation on the local housing dynamic and preparing a Housing Plan to strategically address identified priority housing needs.

The active engagement of the community is a key component of the planning process. The Working Group held a Public Education and Listening Session on January 27th to obtain early community input into this planning effort, and recently sponsored a Community Housing Workshop on March 24th to get more detailed local feedback on housing challenges, goals, and priority actions.

The Housing Plan Working Group is issuing this Community Housing Survey as another means of obtaining community input into the important issue of housing. The Survey is meant to be easy to complete and will only take a few minutes.

Responses to this survey are due no later than **(TBD)**. You can access the Survey at (insert link) and obtain a hard copy at the Planning and Community Development Department, 500 Dedham Avenue, Needham MA 02492.

Please submit your response electronically or return the completed survey to **(TBD)** by **(TBD?)**, 2022. For questions, you can contact **(insert contact info)**.

Please provide your perspectives on the following questions:

1. How would you rank the importance of affordable housing to the Needham community from a low of 1 (not important at all) to a high of 10 (of utmost importance)? _____

2. What does affordable housing mean to you? (Please respond in one sentence below.)

3. What do you think is a reasonable **housing goal** (something aspirational to strive for in the years ahead) for the Town to achieve? (Please respond in one sentence below.)

4. What do you think are the **greatest challenges** in producing and preserving housing affordability and diversity in Needham? (Choose your top three selections.)

- ☐ Availability of subsidies to make development financially feasible
- ☐ High costs of land and construction
- ☐ Lack of local support/political will
- ☐ Limited developable property
- ☐ Limited Town-owned property suitable for housing development
- ☐ School capacity issues
- ☐ Infrastructure capacity issues, including local roads
- ☐ Zoning restrictions
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

5. The **best locations** for new housing development include: (Choose your top three)

- ☐ Business areas (e.g., Mixed Use-128 (off Highland Avenue), Avery Square, Hillside Avenue Business, Neighborhood Business)
- ☐ Highland Avenue/Chestnut Street/Great Plain Avenue commercial corridor from Newton line to Needham Junction commuter rail station
- ☐ In proximity to commuter rail stations
- ☐ Industrial areas (e.g., Reservoir Street, Highland Avenue/Arbor Street, Crescent Road off West Street, Hillside Avenue Industrial, Gould Street, Mixed-Use 128, New England Business Center)
- ☐ Town Center
- ☐ General Residence District
- ☐ Single-family Residence Districts
- ☐ Undeveloped land at existing public housing locations
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

5. The Town should focus on promoting the following **types of housing units** in the community:
(Choose your top three):

- ☐ Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- ☐ Assisted living and Memory Care facilities
- ☐ Conversion of larger single-family homes into multi-family units
- ☐ Large multi-family rental development
- ☐ Large multi-family condominium development
- ☐ Mixed-use properties (housing and commercial in the same building)
- ☐ Public Housing redevelopment and expansion
- ☐ Small cottage-style homes or bungalows
- ☐ Small multi-family dwellings in more areas (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, quadraplexes)
- ☐ Special needs group homes
- ☐ Two-family, owner-occupied dwellings with a rental unit
- ☐ Units with some shared living space (congregate or co-housing units)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

6. What **target populations** do you believe have the greatest housing needs? (Choose your top five):

- ☐ Young adults who were raised in Needham
- ☐ Disabled individuals
- ☐ Municipal workers
- ☐ Seniors (over age 60)
- ☐ Those employed in Needham
- ☐ Very low-income households with incomes at or below 50% of area median income (see table below)
- ☐ Low-income households with incomes between 50% and 80% of area median income (see table below)
- ☐ Moderate-income households with incomes above 80% of area median income and up to 100% of area median income (see table below)
- ☐ Households with incomes above 100% of area median income and still shut out of the private housing market
- ☐ Young families
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

HUD INCOME LIMITS FOR THE BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE-QUINCY MA-NH METRO AREA, 2021

# Household	30% AMI	50% AMI	80% AMI	100% AMI
1	\$28,200	\$47,000	\$70,750	\$84,560
2	\$32,200	\$53,700	\$80,850	\$96,640
3	\$36,250	\$60,400	\$90,950	\$108,720
4	\$40,250	\$67,100	\$101,050	\$120,800
5	\$43,500	\$72,500	\$109,150	\$130,464
6	\$46,700	\$77,850	\$117,250	\$140,128

7. What do you think are the most important **development or redevelopment actions or strategies** for the Town to pursue to address priority housing needs? (Choose your top 5)?
- ☐ Allow two-family dwellings by-right in more areas.
 - ☐ Broaden Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADUs) zoning to allow occupancy for those who are not family members or caregivers.
 - ☐ Revise zoning and permitting requirements to promote greater energy efficiencies and environmentally sustainable housing development.
 - ☐ Encourage rental development by partnering with developers who can access state funding programs such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credits to provide housing for very low-income households.
 - ☐ Establish disincentives for knocking down homes through moratoriums or transfer fees.
 - ☐ Participate in the state MBTA Communities Initiative to promote the required by-right (not through a special permit) multi-family development in proximity to transit and change zoning accordingly.
 - ☐ Promote scattered-site, affordable single and two-family home development.
 - ☐ Require a minimum percent of affordable Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) units for development projects of six or more units on a Town-wide basis.
 - ☐ Restudy and amend downtown and neighborhood zoning to better facilitate multi-family housing construction and/or mixed-use development.
 - ☐ Support the Needham Housing Authority's plan to renovate, improve, and add to its existing low-income housing.
 - ☐ Waive permitting fees for affordable housing where appropriate.
 - ☐ None of the above
 - ☐ All of the above
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____
8. Provide any additional comments on housing issues in Needham in the space below.

Demographic Information

The following demographic questions are designed to help us understand what segments of the population we are reaching. The information will be kept confidential.

9. Do you own or rent?
- ☐ Own
Condominium unit ____ Single family home ____ 2-family home ____
 - ☐ Rent
Condominium unit ____ Single-family home ____ Unit in 2-family home or ADU ____
Multi-family development ____

10. How long have you lived in Needham?

- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 5 to 10 years
- ☐ 11 to 15 years
- ☐ 16 to 20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

11. Do you think that you might move out of Needham at some point in the future?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

12. Why might you move out of Needham If you answered yes to question #11 above?

- ☐ Housing/living costs too high
- ☐ Prefer a smaller house or unit
- ☐ Prefer a handicapped accessible house or unit
- ☐ Prefer elevator-accessible unit (one-floor single-family homes are scarce in Needham)
- ☐ Prefer to live in a more urban community
- ☐ Prefer to live in a more rural community
- ☐ Prefer to live in a warmer climate
- ☐ Prefer to live closer to my job
- ☐ Prefer to live closer to family and friends
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

13. Which category best describes your age?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Under 18 | ☐ 45 to 54 |
| ☐ 18 to 24 | ☐ 55 to 64 |
| ☐ 25 to 34 | ☐ 65 and older |
| ☐ 35 to 44 | ☐ Prefer not to answer |

14. Which of the following best describes your household?

- ☐ Family with child(ren) living at home (includes single parent)
- ☐ Couple with no child(ren)
- ☐ Empty nest couple/single with adult children no longer living at home
- ☐ Single, living alone, less than 65 years
- ☐ Single, living alone, 65+ years
- ☐ Single, living with housemate(s)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

15. Which category best describes your annual household income?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Under \$10,000 | ☐ \$75,000 - \$99,999 |
| ☐ \$10,000 - \$24,999 | ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999 |
| ☐ \$25,000 - \$34,999 | ☐ \$150,000+ |
| ☐ \$35,000 - \$49,999 | ☐ Prefer not to answer |
| ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999 | |

If you have any questions, please address them to (insert contact info)

All responses are due by noon on (TBD), 2022

Thank you for your time and important input!
For more information on the Needham Housing Plan go to
www.needhamma.gov/housingplan2021

WestMetro HOME Consortium's **FAIR HOUSING MONTH**

For the month of April, the WestMetro HOME Consortium* (WMHC) invites you to celebrate Fair Housing Month to increase efforts to end housing discrimination and raise awareness of fair housing rights

WMHC Fair Housing Workshop: *Fair Housing Past to Present - Insights from the Field*

Tuesday, April 26, 3-5pm

Attorneys from the Suffolk School of Law Housing Discrimination Testing Program will examine the history of the real estate industry and government's roles in racial discrimination, current trends in housing discrimination, and ways to mitigate implicit biases to ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing. The workshop will begin with remarks by Newton's Mayor Ruthanne Fuller.

Register at <https://tinyurl.com/FHM2022>

Questions? Please contact Amanda Berman, City of Newton Director of Housing & Community Development, at aberman@newtonma.gov



Fair Housing Month (FHM)

Resources 2022

What is Fair Housing? The Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 establishes that all Americans, regardless of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, familial status, or disability, deserve to live in homes and neighborhoods of their choosing. It also directs recipients of federal funds, such as the thirteen WMHC communities, to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH).

***WestMetro HOME Consortium (WMHC)** is made up of thirteen communities including the Cities of Newton, Framingham, Waltham, and Watertown, and the Towns of Bedford, Belmont, Brookline, Concord, Lexington, Natick, Needham, Sudbury, and Wayland. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/WestMetroHOME> to learn more about WMHC.

Go to www.newtonma.gov/FHMonth for:

FHM Events & Workshops

Community Power & Direct Action

Current Affordable Housing Resources

Creative Housing Models

Zoning & MBTA Communities in Context of FHM

Questions? Please contact Amanda Berman, City of Newton Director of Housing & Community Development, at aberman@newtonma.gov

Illustration by Nevena Pilipović-Wengler

From: [Deanna](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Housing Plan Working Group
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2022 11:37:23 PM

March 16, 2022

Dear Housing Planning Working Group,

I learned about the Housing Planning Working Group after attending a virtual meeting regarding the former Hillcrest Gardens property. This property was purchased by a developer. His proposal for the site is to build 3 commercial shops on the ground floor, a garage underneath, and 24 units for sale above the shops with one unit for sale at an "affordable" price, a misnomer. As I shared with you in your January public listening session, housing for disabled adults is provided by the state's Department of Developmental Services for residents with priority 1 status. Statistics indicate 7 out of 10 disabled adults live at home with their aging parents.

Needham Public Schools do a great job of including children with disabilities, as well as teaching non-disabled students the value of inclusion. As a 4- and 5-year-old, my son ran and played games with his typical peers at Needham Track Club. He learned to "spin" and still swims at our local Y. He has attended plays and musicals at Needham Community Theatre, helping "to load in the set" for two of the shows. He walks into town and checks out books and movies from the library in all seasons. His name is etched in glass on the second floor as one of the original "re-build the library" supporters. There are many others like my son, but where are they after they graduate? When the time comes for my son to move out, where will he go? I hope you will make housing for the disabled a key priority.

Parents are asked to envision a future for their disabled child: what work will they do? What supports will they need? Where will they live? I and many other families in our town have disabled children reaching the age of majority and are facing the enormous challenges detailed on pages 83-89 in the ***West Metro HOME Consortium Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice 2021-2025***. Briefly, "affordable" housing is not affordable for those who need it. Based on their survey respondents, very low income people, people with cognitive or mental impairments are the two highest groups not able to find affordable housing, at 85 and 60% respectively. Many disabled people are very low income, on SSI and earn less than 30-50% AMI. Survey respondents identified 35% of people with mobility or self-help impairments as not being able to find safe, decent, affordable housing. Our children will soon increase these percentages.

Needham is blessed with a compact town center with essential amenities. I imagine my son, unable to drive, but living within walking distance to Needham, so he can walk and his friend with CP can roll his powerchair to the grocery or to the CVS or Walgreen's when they run out of milk. They could go and pick up a pizza. They could get an ice-cream. They could attend a church service regularly. All this without having to schedule a ride or having to forgo because they couldn't get a ride. They could get to Memorial Field for the fireworks show on the 4th of July and watch the parade, something my son has enjoyed 15 out of the last 21 years.

I hope you can appreciate how this proximity increases independence and interaction for disabled people. Transportation is not solely a mechanism to commute to a job. Without transportation, disabled people are confined and isolated. We, as a society, disable people when we don't or won't meet the needs of a person's physical and social environment.

These same concerns are articulated clearly by residents of the Needham Housing Authority in the "Assessment of Needham Housing Authority Residents" January 2020, page 23. In Needham, housing opportunities for disabled people within walking distance to our town center is not only integrative, it's also fundamental for meeting basic, human, functional needs. We should seize opportunities such as Hillcrest Gardens. How can parents or non-profit agencies who build these sorts of homes learn about the availability of such properties? How can zoning, or variances to current zoning, enable more inclusionary home building for disabled groups near town center? How can Needham expand its affordable housing stock to include low income and Section 8 vouchers?

Thank you for forming this committee and doing this work. Thank you for considering these needs and how the current description of affordable is inaccessible for these disabled people. Community is their life-line and they need to be close to it.

Sincerely,
Deanna Springer
820 Webster St.
Needham

From: [Mira Tamir Spiegel](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Jennifer Kaddy](#); [Jill Yanofsky](#); [Matthew Spengler](#)
Subject: Housing Plan Working Group (Input from Needham SEPAC)
Date: Thursday, March 17, 2022 11:08:45 AM
Attachments: [SEPAC Housing Demand Summary For Town Working Group March 2022.pdf](#)

Thank you all for your work on this Town Housing Plan Working Group - and for your open call for input.

I'm contacting you today on behalf of [SEPAC](#) - Needham's Special Education Parent Advisory Council. We are a state-mandated organization established by the School Committee whose role is to advise the district on the planning, development and evaluation of special education programming. SEPAC's membership, by definition, includes the families of the approximately one thousand Needham students (18%), ages 3-22, who receive any special education services.

We understand that this Working Group has to factor in the needs of many different constituent groups during your listening process. To aid you in that endeavor, we thought it might be helpful to summarize some of the topics & concerns that are on the minds of families whose children will ultimately be adults in need of some sort of supported living arrangement. We estimate that each year approximately 3 to 5 Needham residents who fall into that category will turn 22 - the age at which they lose access to most services.

Our goal for this summary is purely to help you as this Working Group to identify the critical data points so that when you design your own data collection instruments you will hopefully be able to include the topics that are critical for our children when they reach adulthood. Our intention is to be helpful and collaborative, not prescriptive. We were able to capture input from about 45-50% of the target population

We've tried to structure this document so that it can stand alone, but if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at this email address or postgrad@needhamsepac.org or at my cell number listed below.

I've copied the current SEPAC co-chairs, Jennifer Kaddy and Jill Yanofsky, and Matt Spengler, the current School Committee liaison for SEPAC.

Thank you.
--Mira

Mira Tamir Spiegel
70 Lindbergh Ave
SEPAC Co-Chair 2017-2019
SEPAC Parent Liaison 2019-2022 (currently Needham High School & Post-Graduate Program Parent Liaison)

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Mira Tamir Spiegel

mtspiegel@gmail.com

781 704 4976



Needham Special Education
Parent Advisory Council

Input for Town Housing Plan Working Group

March 2022

SEPAC Objectives for this Summary

- Adult housing options for rising adults with disabilities are an important topic for many SEPAC families and parents express concerns about the current availability and affordability of appropriate options in Needham
- In light of Needham Town Housing Plan Working Group's open call for input, SEPAC sought to conduct some basic discovery among its own membership on the topic of affordable/supported housing needs for our children when they reach adulthood in hopes of keeping this population's needs on the Working Group's radar screen knowing that the Working Group has many deserving groups with needs to consider
- SEPAC's intention to help inform the Working Group in advance of the Working Group's own data collection initiative to enable them to design a data collection instrument that would address the pertinent issues
 - Several parents had participated in recent surveys run by various organizations on the topic and had felt that those surveys did not allow them to provide the input that was most relevant for their family
- SEPAC encourages the Working Group to validate/supplement these findings through their own data collection
- Any follow-up questions can be directed to SEPAC by contacting Mira Tamir Spiegel via postgrad@needhamsepac.org

Method & Execution

- SEPAC developed a Google Form ([see topics here](#)) and made it available via the closed SEPAC Parent Group on Facebook, on the SEPAC website, through the SEPAC newsletter and several Special Education distribution lists with the help of the district's Special Education administrators
- SEPAC membership includes those with students ages 3-22 under the umbrella of the Needham Public Schools - including out of district students. Reach for SEPAC's communication vehicles also extends to some who have recently aged out of the system (turned 22)
- The invitation to participate left it up to parent to determine eligibility but it was framed as only for those who expected their children to need some formal support in their living situations when they reach adulthood.
 - Parents were encouraged to include direct input from their children when feasible

Responding Sample and Overall Housing Demand Estimate

- Ultimately **26 families** completed the form, representing the needs of **27 students** (see [sample characterization here](#))
 - A few more families also provided informal feedback outside of the form
- Based on the breakdown of students in the district, SEPAC estimates that this response represents about 45-50% of the eligible population currently in the school system (ages 3-22)
- Said another way, SEPAC estimates that, on average, approximately 3-5 current Needham residents in need of some sort of adult housing support will turn 22 each year
 - **While this is not a huge number, it is important to consider that there is also pent-up demand from individuals who have already turned 22**
 - **Further, we would not expect as many individuals looking to move out each year as looking to move in**
- About half of our sample would be looking for their children to move into adult housing upon turning 22; the remainder expect them to need housing in their mid to late 20's/early 30's

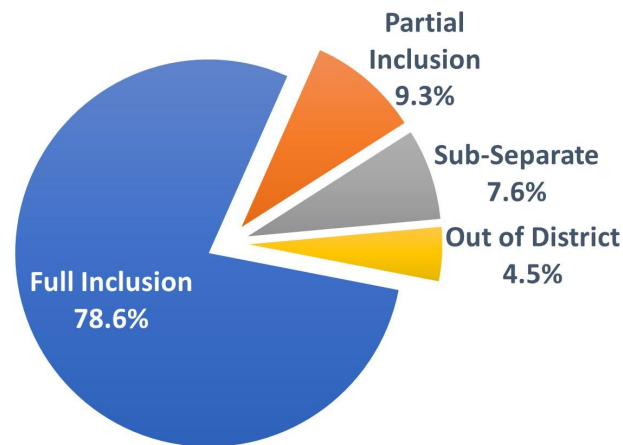
5,483

Total Students in District

1,003 (18.3%)

Total Students in Special Education

Breakdown of NPS Special Education Placements



Source: Student Support Services Presentation to Needham School Committee, 2021

Model for estimating demand = (5% of Partial Inclusion) + (55% of Sub-Separate) + (40% of OOD)

High Level Summary of Findings

- Needham is a highly preferred location for adult living - for both the individuals and their families
- A meaningful share of this group are individuals who fall into the grey space of being unlikely to qualify for and/or not a fit for traditional group homes - but also unlikely to be able to live and support themselves independently
 - Needs vary significantly - definitely not one size fits all - and there are a variety of potential housing models to explore
 - The largest subgroup appear to individuals with Autism (ASD), Down Syndrome & Intellectual Disability - some who could live independently, some who would need more consistent supervision
- There is also a subgroup with more complex medical needs who would require accessibility accommodations and 24-7 trained medical staff
 - SEPAC recommends the Working Group do more probing on this topic to better understand specifics
- Parents have considerable concern around availability and affordability of options within Needham - in addition to other concerns
- Nearly all of these individuals will not have the ability to drive so walkability for daily life and access to public/other forms of transportation is critical
- Meaningful work and social opportunities are also highly sought for these individuals
- Safety is a universal and paramount concern

Needham is a highly preferred location for most individuals

- Foremost among the reasons provided for Needham being highly preferred was the fact that many of these individuals have had a positive, inclusive experience in the Needham Public Schools - and in the community up until this point
 - Various inclusive community experiences such as Unified Sports, adaptive programs at the YMCA, TOPSoccer, Best Buddies, Needham Track Club, various houses of worship, etc. were frequently mentioned.
 - These relationships will be critically important to these individuals' success as adults.
 - Further, many of these individuals present with meaningful levels of anxiety and familiarity is one of the more powerful mitigators.
 - On a related note, Needham is also convenient to many of these individuals' established healthcare and other critical - and familiar - providers.
- Needham is also seen as highly desirable due to its level of safety - a universal concern cited by parents.
 - There is considerable benefit to them being recognizable in the community and by law enforcement as they are at high risk for many forms of exploitation - or for their presentations being seen as suspicious by people who do not know them.
 - Needham's low crime rate is also reassuring.

Note: *Italics* indicate verbatim comment.

"They say it takes a village to raise a child, and in many cases, Needham has been that village - and for our kids the need for that village extends their whole lives."

"So many of our kids have grown up supported by this town that sees itself as an inclusive community, but when it's time for them to move out of their parents' houses, there needs to be somewhere in town for them to live."

"It might not seem like a big deal to most people but the fact that they know my son and his challenges at various stores in town is huge. It helps his anxiety - and mine!"

"He's lived in Needham almost all of his life. He's happy and comfortable here."

"My biggest concern is safety, whether it be public transportation, working environment or staffing at a day program"

"We've spent years trying to build a roster of the types of supports our child needs. So much of that already disappears at 22, but the idea of having to start completely from scratch in a new location is beyond daunting."

Needham is also a highly preferred location for most families.

- Another important factor is the need for these individuals to be physically close to Needham-based family because of the extremely high need for continued family involvement in their lives throughout adulthood
- Some families will need to be involved due to significant medical needs, others for help with day to day activities and still others will need to provide more general oversight
 - In particular, many cite the need to help with transportation - possibly multiple times per day - because nearly all of these individuals will not have driver's licenses and only a limited number will be able to take public transportation independently.
- Some families currently feel like their only choices are to have their child live with them forever (without a permanent solution) or for the rest of the family to move out of Needham to be close enough to where their adult children end up for practicality purposes

"Level of impairment (i.e. the amount of staff support he would require) would require that our son live with us. It doesn't seem right that he would have no options for living outside our home due to his level of impairment. The house would have to be in Needham given the level of involvement that would be required from his parents."

"We (parents, siblings) will always need to be part of their lives - sometimes daily, sometimes weekly, sometimes monthly, etc. but all the research suggests that the best outcomes happen when they live more independently as adults sooner rather than later - and the reality is that most of these individuals will outlive their parents. Ideally, our family doesn't have to give up our home in Needham in order to be close enough."

"Realistically, we are going to need to be involved - whether it be for transportation or to help them figure out some of the nuances of everyday life. It would be great if that meant we could pop over quickly as needed, rather than have to carve out large chunks of time."

Note: *Italics* indicate verbatim comment.

Types of Needs

- The type of needs ran the gamut from completely independent living to a setting that would require around the clock medically-trained caregiving.
- In our sample, **about 25% indicated a need requiring some sort of structural accommodation related to mobility, vision, hearing, etc.** - and most of this population would also require 24-7 medically-trained caregiving.
- However, the majority in our sample - **primarily falling in the Autism, Down Syndrome and Intellectual Disability populations** - would not require any structural accommodations. **About half of this group would require full-time/overnight staffing (though not necessarily awake overnight staffing) while the other half would require more ad hoc support.**
 - Much of the support required related to financial management, assistance with decision-making, etc. for more independent. For others, it means help with shopping, getting to work, cooking safely, other day to day activities but not necessarily personal care - and not necessarily the need for 1;1 staffing in the living arrangement
 - A location that is easily walkable to Needham Center and Needham Heights is particularly important for the more independent subgroup to be able to walk to work and for their day to day needs (shopping, recreation ,etc.) no matter the weather/time of year
 - This group also has the catch-22 of being capable of working - often with a job coach - but being capped in terms of earnings/assets in order to maintain eligibility for critical government benefits which, in turn, impacts their ability to support themselves

"I am concerned that the cost of living in Needham will just be too high to support an accessible modern home that her physical disabilities would require. With the staffing shortages we are currently experiences, I am also concerned about managing/hiring the right folks to support her in her living situation."

"I envision my child living together with multiple peers, in order to give her a larger pool of friends, and will also need live-in help. So a place that allows for multiple unrelated adults is important. Transportation and accessibility of town amenities (grocery, bank, fitness, shopping, employment) will be crucial."

"Major concerns are: our son having an opportunity to live with peers he connects with and enjoys being around and finding staffing to meet his need for increased independence and socialization."

"Finding suitable female roommates."

"Really, really important that he be close enough that he able to walk to everything in town all year round without being dependent on transportation like The Ride which isn't always reliable or family who might not always be available."

Note: *Italics* indicate verbatim comment.

Summary of Parent Concerns: Beyond Affordability & Availability

SAFETY

Many of these individuals are at risk of being exploited across settings, appearing suspicious to those who do not know them and can also get into potentially unsafe situations in day to day scenarios (e.g. not locking doors, crossing streets, cooking, etc.)

WALKABILITY

Very few of these individuals will be able to drive - and many will not be able to take public transportation independently. Walkability is critical for employment and day to day needs - and will enable these individuals no matter the weather.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Others will be heavily dependent on public transportation to get where they need/want to go. It is also critical that public transportation be accessible to enable staff who would work with these individuals to get here.

STRUCTURAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Based on this sample, about 25% of this population would need accommodations for challenges related to mobility, hearing, eyesight, medical equipment, etc.

STAFFING/SUPERVISION

Staffing needs range from fully trained medical personnel to social workers to various types of therapists. Some individuals would only require occasional check-ins while others need 24-7 staffing.

EMPLOYMENT

Parents are hopeful that their children can find employment as adults in Needham - or someplace easily accessible to living in Needham. Some will be able to work independently while others would require job coaches.

SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

A major concern is finding a sustainable and appropriate peer group, roommates and overall social life. Parents want to make sure this is considered in housing decisions.

HAPPINESS & SECURITY

Parents want their children to like living where and with whom they do and to feel secure in their homes. They also want the peace of mind for when they are no longer able to be caregivers.

Types of Housing Models Parents Suggest Exploring

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

For individuals who are physically and cognitively capable of living independently but are unlikely to be able to sustain sufficient employment to afford living in Needham or to support themselves overall.

MULTI-FAMILY DWELLING

For some, there is interest in the ability for the individual to live in a separate unit of a multi-family dwelling with parents/family occupying a different unit - either as an interim step or for a longer term. In some cases, this would include the need for a live-in caregiver in the individual's unit but in other cases, it would not.

"Preferred solution at this early stage is a 2 family house. Will require room for (1) overnight staff but does not need to be overnight awake staff. No medical needs at this time."

"Some way to live with parents but with more independence"

MIXED USE HOUSING/CO-HOUSING

Some parents mentioned the idea of settings where Individuals with and without disabilities could live - be in mixed-use housing or [co-housing](#).

Note: *Italics* indicate verbatim comment.

OWNERSHIP MODELS

Some parents expressed interest in models like [Specialized Housing](#). For many, they have expected that they will need to create their own "group" home

"I like the living arrangement of homes run by Specialized Housing. Individuals own their own space and contribute to the running of the home overall-kind of a condo arrangement"

MEDICALLY STAFFED SHARED HOME

"There are a few of us families in Needham that are very close and we have talked about how our children could live in some type of supportive housing with staff possibly hired by families or run by some type of board but not having to use nursing agencies."

COMPLEX/COMMUNITY

Families of autistic individuals, in particular, expressed interest in an small community setting something like an Assisted Living community that allows for various levels of support. [Autism Communities](#) was among those cited as an example.

"We envision a small village like complex with community structures to work in and socialize".

WHAT CAN WE DO TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN'S ADULT HOUSING NEEDS IN CONSIDERATION ON AN ONGOING BASIS?

They vary considerably and some may change over time, but what is the best way for us to keep their needs in front of the town's decision-makers?

HOW DOES THE TOWN DECIDE HOW TO REPURPOSE BUILDINGS?

Over the years, Needham has converted various buildings (e.g. former school buildings) into various types of housing. Are there any further plans in this regard?

WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT OF THE NEW MBTA ZONING REQUIREMENTS?

Does this provide an opportunity to create some housing options that would be desirable for this population?

HOW DO WE STAY AHEAD OF DESIRABLE PROPERTIES COME UP?

Given the importance of walkability and proximity to Needham Center and Needham Heights for some of this population, is there any way for families to be more in the loop when properties go on the market? For example, a few parents noted that the former Hillcrest Gardens property would have been an ideal location for some sort of supported housing or for private group home development. There was also interest in the former Avita site (Carter Mills).

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO TO MAKE/KEEP NEEDHAM AN INCLUSIVE & SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY FOR OUR CHILDREN AS ADULTS?

Beyond the scope of this Working Group, of course, but SEPAC's membership is eager to keep this goal in the forefront for Needham alongside other sub-populations (e.g. elderly, English as second language, etc.)



Needham Special Education
Parent Advisory Council

Appendix

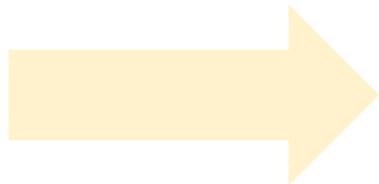
Needham Student Population Breakdown

5,483

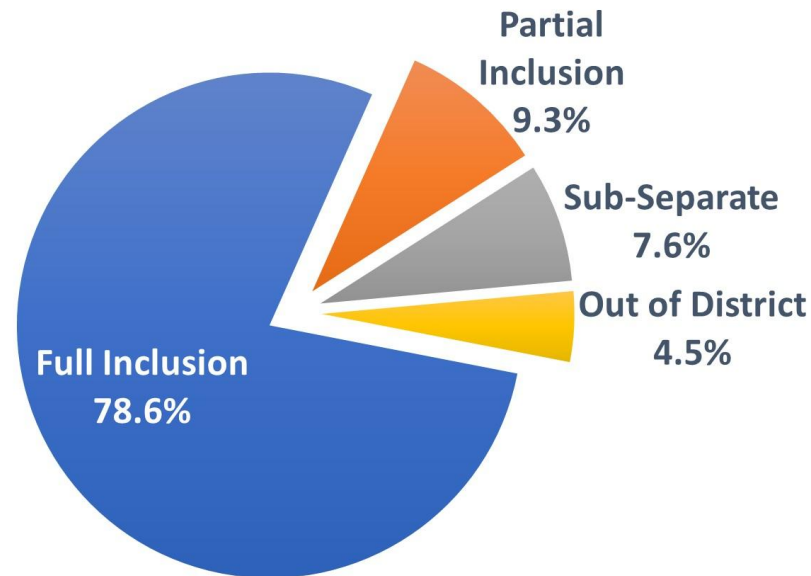
Total Students in
District

1,003

Total Students in
Special Education
(18.3%)



Breakdown of NPS Special Education Placements



Topics Included in SEPAC's Form

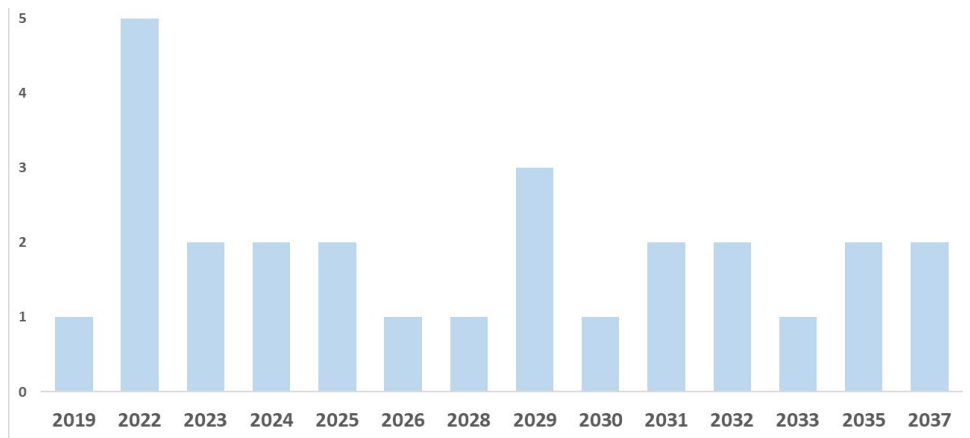
- Timing (year) child will turn 22 (age out of school system and many services)
- Expected timeframe for housing need (5 year ranges)
- Where Needham falls in consideration set for their child to live as an adult
- Expectation around the need for a setting with overnight staffing
- Expectation around the need for a setting with any structural accommodations for physical disabilities
- Open ended opportunity to share desires around housing options
- Open ended opportunity to share concerns around housing options
- Opportunity to include diagnosis if relevant
- Invitation to include any other thoughts related to housing needs

Parents could answer as many or as few of the questions as they felt comfortable - and could choose to respond anonymously if they wanted

Characterization of Participating Sample

The following data is provided to characterize the sample of 27 students whose families provided the feedback for which this summary is based. All questions were optional.

Year Turning 22



Anticipated Age of Entering Adult Housing



Diagnoses Mentioned

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	8
ASD, Communication Disorder	1
ASD, ID, Generalized Anxiety Disorder	3
ASD, Multiple Learning Disabilities	1
ASD, Non-Verbal	1
Brain malformation with global developmental delays, uncontrolled seizures	1
Cerebral Palsy	1
Deafness, Right side hemiplegia, Non-Verbal	1
Down Syndrome, ID, Trisomy 21	2
Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome, Developmental Delay, Hearing Loss, Scoliosis/Kyphoscoliosis,	1
Intractable Epilepsy, Blind	1
Seizure Disorder, ID, Non-Verbal	1

From: [Dianna Barnett](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Housing Plan Working Group
Date: Thursday, March 24, 2022 4:07:17 PM

Hello,

Thank you for considering this feedback.

We have lived in Needham for 14 years, having bought a "starter" house for \$585,000. in 2008. It was a jaw-dropping price that drained our bank account. Over time, we've been able to make improvements and expand our home; we love our neighborhood and view our neighbors as an extended family. Both my husband and I come from solid middle-class backgrounds and now find ourselves living in a decidedly upper-class priced town. My husband expressed concern in the beginning of our time in Needham about the socio-economic limitations of the town; namely, that it was pricey and therefore would be less diverse and wondered about the negative impact it would have on our children.

Living in a million dollar house (with no garage!) is not normal. 14 years later, I don't know who of my co-workers (good paying tech jobs!) could afford to move to a town where the starter home price is \$1MM. My blue-collar family (sister is a nurse, brother in law is a superintendent for UPS) love Needham, but could never afford to live here despite having well-paying jobs. We are also the sandwich generation, looking to move our aging parents closer, but they are simply priced out -- even of apartments.

The planning board should consider

1. How to support a variety of housing options at different price points so that we can foster diversity? Diversity includes different income levels, different ages, different racial/ethnic backgrounds.
2. How to change zoning/development/planned use to foster communities in more densely packed housing?
3. How to preserve OPEN space (even more necessary near densely packed housing) -- if you're going to live in a smaller home or apartment, easy access to open, green space right outside your door is key. Having easy access to everyday conveniences on foot also benefits more densely-developed areas. Green space is a premium in Needham (my home has exactly 1 tree in our small yard)
4. How to develop smaller standalone homes or townhouses that a retiree could afford or someone on a middle class budget? How to get single-floor living retirement options?
5. How to attract more racial diversity -- how to be more welcoming and recruiting of people from a variety of backgrounds? It's better for our kids to have more diversity!

Housing in Needham has become about maximizing developer profit and tax revenue. We need to look at options and partner with developers that entertain a variety of housing options that would benefit the overall strength of our community, not just the bottom line.

Thank you,
Dianna Barnett

From: efrosell@aol.com
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Housing Plan Working Group
Date: Thursday, March 24, 2022 5:52:47 PM

Hello,

I am unable to attend tonight's meeting (March 24) but wanted to voice two thoughts and concerns about affordable housing in Needham.

1. Teardowns! Is there anything that can be done to stop this trend? It is heartbreaking to see smaller, relatively affordable homes in Needham being torn down one by one, turning a \$700,000 home into a house costing sometimes over 2 million dollars. In my neighborhood near Greendale/Fairfield/Great Plain there are currently 5 new oversized houses being built to replace small homes. This practice is turning Needham into a place that only the wealthy can afford and keeps out families that are not two-income highly paid professionals. The environment also suffers by tearing down habitable homes, with all their embedded energy, and building enormous homes that use more materials to build and, even when efficient, have huge spaces (sometimes up to 6,000 sq. feet) to heat and cool. When new housing is built, there should at least be strong incentives to build duplexes with modestly sized units.

A few weeks ago my husband and I received a letter from HomeVestors offer to buy our 2180-square-foot home. "If you'd like to sell your house for cash, I can buy it no matter what shape it's in. No painting, no clean up, no nothing. You don't need to spend a penny fixing it up. I'll pay cash and most normal closing costs. And you won't have to pay any commissions like you would to a realtor." It seems to me that these kinds of offers are driving up house prices in Needham and shutting out families who are looking for a place to live, all so developers can make large profits. There must be some way to limit or stop this.

2. My second thought is the importance of building affordable housing to a zero net energy standard, which is a win-win, helping Needham reach climate goals and at the same time greatly reducing the operating cost of a housing unit for someone with a lower income. Given the climate emergency we are in, and our concern about providing affordable housing, I think this goal should be included in a housing plan.

Thank you,
Eleanor Rosellini
1091 Greendale Ave.
Needham MA 02492