

NEEDHAM HOUSING PLAN WORK PLAN

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 affordable units¹ and surpassing the state affordability goal of 10%. Despite reaching this threshold, the Town recognizes that significant unmet housing needs remain in the community, particularly in the context of unprecedented housing prices and the pandemic. Consequently, the Town has determined that it should revisit 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 preparation of this Housing Plan would use a similar process established for the 2007 Affordable Housing Plan. First, the Planning Board would appoint a Working Group of representatives from appropriate boards and committees to work with staff from the Planning and Community Development Department in overseeing community outreach and preparing the document. The composition of the Working Group for the 2007 Plan included 2 representatives of the Planning Board, 2 from the Needham Housing Authority, 2 from the Select Board, 2 at-large members, as well as a representative from the Board of Health, Council on Aging, Finance Committee and Parks and Recreation Commission. For the 2021 Plan the composition of the Working Group will include 2 representatives of the Planning Board, 2 from the Select Board, 2 at-large members, as well as a representative from the Housing Authority, Board of Health, School Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Council on Aging, Finance Committee and Parks and Recreation Commission.

Second, the planning process would incorporate an inclusive public process to engage local leaders and residents in the process of establishing local housing priorities. This process would include the following major components:

- Interviews with housing stakeholders including representatives of the Needham Housing Authority, Council on Aging, League of Women Voters, Equal Justice Needham, etc.
- Community workshops that include small breakout group activities that engage participants in a local visioning process on housing, allowing residents to weigh-in on key questions related to housing challenges, goals, and priority actions.
- A community housing survey to obtain input on local needs and key approaches to address these needs. This activity was not incorporated in the 2007 planning process, however, might be considered as part of this initiative with support from the Town's Public Information Officer and the Information Technology Department.
- A final community-wide meeting to present the Plan and obtain further input.

Key components of the Plan would include the following:

- An Executive Summary that highlights the key takeaways from the Plan.
- A list of community housing goals that would include the results of the visioning process as part of the first community housing workshop.

¹ A total of 894 units were added to the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) although 238 were actually affordable to those with incomes at or below 80% of area median income.

- A Housing Needs Assessment that provides documentation on key indicators of need.
- A Strategic Action Plan that includes the actions that the Town will pursue to promote greater housing diversity and affordability including the timeline for implementation and responsible entities.
- A list of local and regional housing organizations and entities.
- A glossary of housing terms.
- A summary of housing-related regulations and resources.

The following section lists the various tasks involved in the project accompanied by a projected timetable:

Task 1: Hold Initial Meeting

Conduct an initial meeting of the Working Group to discuss the planning process and timetable.

Timeframe for Completion: Within two (2) weeks of the appointment of the Working Group.

Task 2: Conduct Background Research and Information Gathering

Collect and analyze information from a wide variety of data sources, including but not limited to the following:

- Updated demographic, economic and housing data from the U.S. Census including the American Community Survey Five-Year estimates, 2015-2019 (hopefully the 2020 census figures might be available in time for this project).
- Updated population figures from Town Clerk records.
- Population projections from several sources.
- Information from the Town Assessor on the current value of residential property by type of property to analyze the range of housing values by housing type.
- Building permit information on the numbers of new dwellings by type.
- Updated school enrollment data and capacity issues.
- Current work force and wage information.
- Data regarding wait lists and wait times for affordable units in town.
- Types of housing inquiries and issues from the Council on Aging.
- Data on foreclosures.
- Multiple Listing Service data for properties that have sold within the last year and whether they involved teardown activity.
- More recent median house and condo prices.
- Home and apartment listings in local and regional papers and Internet (such as Craigslist, Zillow.com, trulia.com, apartments.com, etc.) as well as Chapter 40B market rents.
- Data on cost burdens by tenure, income, and type of household from HUD.

The task will also involve interviews with key local and regional stakeholders as well as a potential community housing survey.

Timeframe for Completion: Within two (2) months following the start date with another month or so required if a survey is conducted.

Task 3: Draft Housing Needs Assessment

Analyze and summarize key demographic, economic and housing trends and characteristics to identify priority housing needs. The Working Group will convene to discuss the draft. It will also be able to

review a draft PowerPoint presentation, agenda, and breakout group instructions for the upcoming community workshop.

Timeframe for Completion: Within three (3) months of the start date.

Task 4: Conduct Community Housing Workshop

Conduct a community workshop that highlights the key takeaways from the Housing Needs Assessment followed by breakout group discussions to engage participants in a local housing visioning process and enable local leaders, housing stakeholders, and residents to weigh-in on key questions related to housing challenges, goals, and priority actions. This input would provide important guidance in the preparation of the Strategic Action Plan.

Timeframe for Completion: Within four (4) months of the start date.

Task 5: Draft Strategic Action Plan

Prepare the Strategic Action Plan which summarizes the key short-term and longer-term strategies that the Town will consider implementing to promote greater housing diversity and affordability. Each strategy will include an estimated timeframe for implementation, next steps, required resources, and responsible entities. The Working Group will meet to discuss the draft as well as the PowerPoint presentation and other materials for the community-wide meeting under Task 6.

Timeframe for Completion: Within five (5) months of the start date.

Task 6: Conduct Community-wide Meeting

Conduct a community-wide meeting to present the draft Plan and obtain feedback. The Working Group will reconvene to discuss the results of the community meeting and determine what changes should be made in the final Plan.

Timeframe for Completion: Within six (6) months of the start date.

Task 7: Finalize Plan

Finalize the Housing Plan based on comments.

Timeframe for Completion: Changes to the draft will be made within two (2) weeks following the Task 6 community meeting.