



ULI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

# SALEM TAP - Leveraging Public Land for Affordable Housing

SALEM, MA

SEPTEMBER 18-22, 2020



Boston/  
New England

## URBAN LAND INSTITUTE (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. The mission of ULI is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help sustain and create thriving communities. Founded in 1936, the institute has grown to over 45,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service. ULI membership includes developers, architects, planners, lawyers, bankers, and economic development professionals as well as other related disciplines.

The Boston/New England District Council of ULI serves the six New England states and has over 1,400 members. As a preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI Boston/New England facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local and regional leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANELS (TAPs)

The ULI Boston/New England Real Estate Advisory Committee convenes TAPs at the request of public officials and local stakeholders of communities and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use challenges, who benefit from the pro bono recommendations provided by the TAP members.

A TAP consists of a group of diverse professionals with expertise in the issues posed that are specially assembled to spend one to two days visiting and analyzing existing conditions, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a way consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

Learn more at: <https://boston.uli.org>

## MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (MHP)

MHP is a statewide public nonprofit affordable housing organization that works in concert with the Governor and the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to help increase the supply of affordable housing in Massachusetts.



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# Executive Summary

The Salem Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) is the first TAP under the direction of the Boston/New England Chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to have been largely conducted virtually. Following the September 18th in-person guided site tour of the Salem High School campus, the remainder of the working sessions and the subsequent public presentation took place over the internet, using integrated audio, video and display images. The purpose of the TAP was to provide guidance to the City of Salem on the redevelopment potential of the high school campus to include affordable housing, with a focus on assessing the feasibility of providing housing specifically for teachers.

On the morning of September 21st, six ULI members met virtually with local educators, school and City officials, affordable housing advocates, and residents from the City of Salem to gain deeper insights into the issues surrounding the potential redevelopment of the campus. Panelists then reconvened on September 22nd to assess the information and to develop recommendations. The panelists virtually presented their findings and recommendations to the board of the Salem Affordable Housing Trust Fund and to the public on the evening of September 22nd.

## Chapter 1: ULI and the TAP Process

Provides an overview of ULI's District Council and its Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) as well as a list of the panel members and stakeholders who took part. The chapter also highlights key elements of the study area for the TAP, and describes the process undertaken by the panelists and stakeholders to arrive at their recommendations.

## Chapter 2: Background and History

Gives a brief overview of the issues that the TAP was asked to assess and includes the questions that the City posed to the panel. Also provides key population and demographic information and a brief overview of the study area.

## Chapter 3: Assets and Opportunities

Identifies the positive aspects of the Salem High School site as well as the community conditions that are favorable to achieving the City's affordable housing goals. These include: an engaged community; City leadership dedicated to facilitating the development of affordable housing; community support for affordable housing geared specifically to teachers; and the City ownership of potentially developable land.

## Chapter 4: Challenges

Examines the obstacles the City may face with repurposing portions of the Salem High site. These challenges include: the potentially high development costs associated with ledge removal on the site; limited access to potential development sites on the campus; the overhead National Grid power lines on portions of the campus; a dearth of workable models for teacher-specific housing; and a lack of consensus among stakeholders on how to define 'affordable housing.'

## Chapter 5: Recommendations

Proposes a number of actions that the City can implement to achieve its goal of creating more affordable housing, some of which is specifically targeted for teachers. These include: creating a Master Plan for the Salem

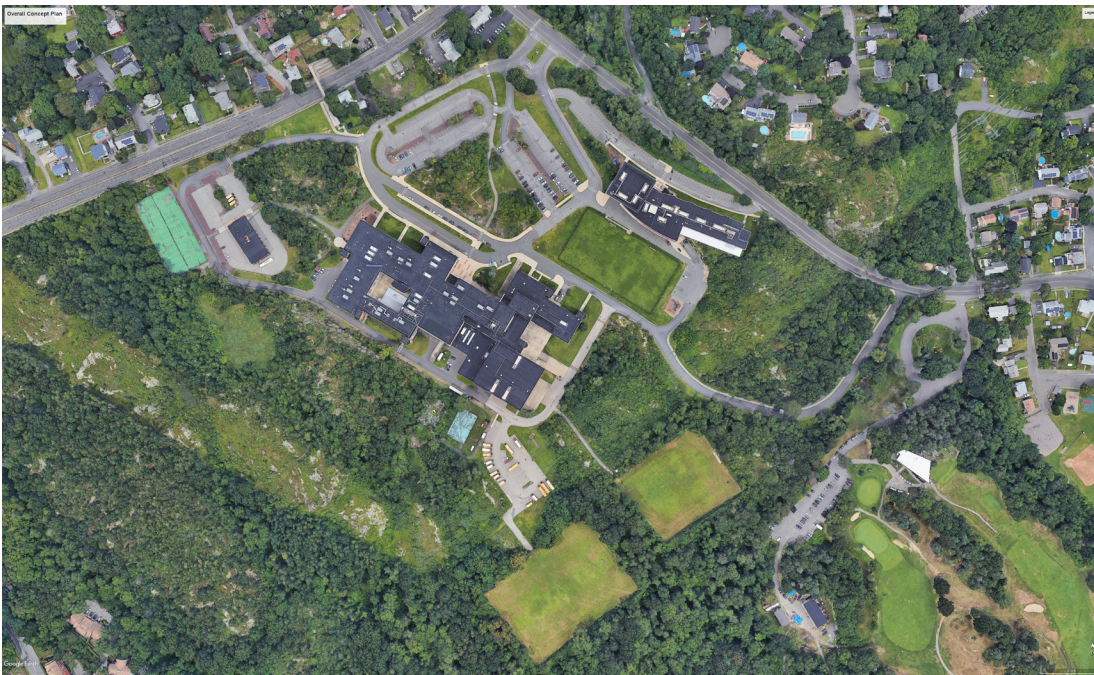
High campus; analyzing the feasibility of site development; and creating a process to select a private housing developer.

## Chapter 6: Funding Sources/Resources

Provides a list of potential funding sources through federal and state agencies, as well as an appendix of articles and papers that could be used for modeling some of the recommended actions.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Offers a final assessment of the redevelopment potential of the Salem High campus as well as some proposed alternatives.



Aerial view of the TAP study area.

# The TAP Panel and Process

ULI Boston/New England convened a volunteer panel of experts whose members represent the range of disciplines necessary to analyze the challenges and opportunities to further the goals of the City of Salem in increasing its affordable housing stock, with an emphasis on creating more housing for educators and support personnel. Practice areas included architects, developers, engineers, grant managers, and planners. The following is a list of panelists:

## The Panel

Alma Balonon-Rosen, senior relationship manager, Massachusetts Housing Partnership

Juwanna Brown, development project associate/Kuehn Fellow, The Community Builders, Inc.

Gregory Minott AIA, LEED AP, managing principal, DREAM Collaborative, LLC

Mark Wixted, P.E., senior project manager, Bohler Engineering

### Co-Chairs:

Richard Lampman, director, Berkeley Building Company

Marty Jones, principal, MLJ Insights

These panelists donated their time.

## ULI Staff

Michelle Landers, executive director

Manikka Bowman, director of policy and outreach

Sara Marsh, manager

John Wilson, associate

TAP Writer: Mike Hoban, principal, Hoban Communications

## Stakeholders

The TAP also benefited from the participation of the diverse group of stakeholders – local educators, City officials, and Salem residents.

The following is a list of stakeholders:

Ben Anderson, chair of the Planning Board and board member of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Joseph Cambone, dean of education, Salem State University

Andre Fonseca, assistant principal, Bates Elementary School

Nicole Giambusso, resident

Arabelis Luciano, family liaison, Salem Public Schools

Lori Marendia, vice president, Salem Teachers Union

Cynthia Nina-Soto, realtor; board member,



The TAP Panel.

Salem Redevelopment Authority and Scholarship and Education Committee  
Rosa Ordaz, board member, Salem Zoning Board of Appeals

Lori Stewart, affordable housing chair, Salem League of Women Voters, resident

Emily Ullman, director of extended learning, Salem Public Schools

Dr. Stephen Zrike, superintendent, Salem Public Schools

In addition to the scheduled sessions, panelists also interviewed Scott Connolly, athletic director, Salem High School; Alvi Ibanez, member, NOT FOR SALE.M Coalition; Jenna Ide, director of capital projects & municipal operations, City of Salem; Steve Kapantais, member, NOT FOR SALE.M Coalition.

## The TAP Process

The Salem TAP was held over the course of three days, September 18, 21 and 22, 2020. Panelists from the ULI Boston/New England District Council were greeted on the 18th at the Salem High School upper parking lot A by Amanda Chiancola, senior planner, and Tom Daniel, director, of the Department of Planning and Community Development for the City of Salem; Ward 3 councilor Patricia Morsillo; Salem High School principal Dr. Samantha Meier; and City of Salem director of buildings and grounds, Ryan Monks.

Following introductions, panelists were led on a walking tour of the study area, which began on the path running parallel to Highland Avenue, passing a pedestrian overpass and a pump station along the way. Panelists observed a large wooded area between Highland Ave. and the school, which contains a significant amount of observable rock ledge outcroppings. The first stop was at the Salem High Automotive Technology building, a state-of-the-art facility used for teaching Salem students automotive repair and maintenance skills, and

continued south to the high school tennis courts. The tour proceeded past the tennis courts and up a moderately steep incline, also with some visible ledge, that had been cleared of trees and was previously used as a staging area for the renovation work done at the high school.

Panelists were then led to the road behind the high school, which is fronted by steep ledge on the south side. To the south lies a basketball court in a state of disrepair, which is currently scheduled for renovation by alternative school program students. Just past the school building, panelists observed a large parking lot where buses from the entire Salem Public school system are housed when not in use, and noted the National Grid powerlines that run above the entirety of the parking lot. Just beyond the lot is the lower playing field (bordered by wetlands). Behind the bus parking is a trail area that is used as an outdoor classroom, and had been used as such prior to COVID.

The tour proceeded to the upper playing field, which is utilized primarily used as a football practice field. There is an additional field located between the Horace Mann School and the high school that serves a practice area for the high school marching band. The tour then returned to the upper parking lot, where panelists and tour guides conducted a debriefing of the tour.

On Monday, September 21, panelists remotely interviewed stakeholders, listed in the previous sub-section, in two separate panel discussions. The following day, panelists engaged in an intensive virtual charrette to develop recommendations based on the input from the stakeholders as well as research conducted prior to the discussions. Later that evening, panelists presented their observations and recommendations in a virtual open public forum to the Salem Affordable Housing Trust.



From top: Incline down to the school tennis courts. Middle: School bus parking lot and overhead power lines. Bottom: The school's upper athletic field.

# Background and History

Like many Greater Boston municipalities, housing production in the City of Salem has slowed considerably from historic peaks in the 1970s and 1980s, creating a shortage of affordable housing for low and moderate income residents – who comprise over half of the population of Salem. By 2030, it is estimated that Salem will need to produce a total of 2,725 housing units to meet demand brought on by population growth according to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's "stronger region scenario" in their Housing Needs and Demand Analysis of 2015. The City would also like to develop an affordable housing strategy to attract and retain teachers to its public school system. Currently, the starting salary for teachers of approximately \$48,000 would leave most paying an outsized portion of their salaries towards housing costs if they choose to live within the City.

In addition, the demographics of Salem have become more diverse over the last decade, a change that is reflected in its public school system. Hispanic students now make up nearly 40% of the student population, many of whom have English as a second language, and Black and Asian students constitute an additional 10% of students. The demographics of the teachers do not reflect that diversity, as 95% of the teachers are white.

In order to facilitate the production of affordable housing for all, as well as housing targeted for teachers, the City is evaluating opportunities to leverage publicly owned land, including the Salem High School campus. The 61-acre property has a considerable amount of unused or underutilized space on the campus, but presents topographical and logistical challenges. The City enlisted the help of the TAP to evaluate the development potential of the property to add housing units.

The panelists were asked to address the following questions:

**1. Programming.** How does the City of Salem balance school use and new housing? What are the options for mixing rental housing targeted for educators within the school use, such as live-in teacher residency programs, or discounted rents for teachers? Are there programs that could blend educational use with residential use?

**2. Location.** Where on the site does it make sense for housing to go? What locations appear to have the best potential for housing, e.g., should housing be placed along the edges or should it be incorporated throughout the site? What is the optimal access from Highland Ave. and Willson St.?

**3. Number of Homes.** How many homes could be added, and what type of homes make the most sense? What levels of affordability and percentages of total affordable units could pencil out? Is tiered affordability an option?

## City of Salem

The City of Salem is an historic waterfront community located north of Boston. Surrounded by Beverly, Danvers, Peabody, Marblehead, Swampscott, and Lynn, the City is considered to be the commercial, educational and medical center of the region, attracting nearly 15,000 workers and students (pre-COVID) each day. Originally settled by Europeans in 1626, the City is known throughout the world for the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692. The City attracts over one million visitors per year to its multiple historic attractions, but the largest employment sector in Salem is Education and Health Care

Services, employing nearly 30% of workers and representing 40% of the jobs within the City. The largest employers are North Shore Medical Center (nearly 3,000 employees), the City of Salem, and Salem State University.

The MBTA Commuter Rail connects Salem to Boston's North Station via both the Newburyport and Rockport lines, and there is commuter bus service available between Salem and Boston (Bus #459 from Logan Airport; Bus #450 from Wonderland.) Locally, the #450 bus line services Highland Ave. and the high school.

## Population/Demographics

The population of the City of Salem was most recently estimated at 43,226 (July 2019, U.S. Census Bureau), increasing from 41,340 in April of 2010, a 4.5% increase. The population has also become increasingly diverse in the last decade (White 77.2%; Hispanic 19.4%; Black 5.9%; Asian 2.0; Mixed Race 2.0). The median household income in 2018 was \$65,565, well below the Massachusetts median household income of \$77,378, with 15.1% of the population designated as living in poverty. On October 1, 2020, the median home value of single family homes and condos in Salem was \$437,914 according to Zillow, an increase of 8.2% over the past year, and up from \$311,000 in 2015. For apartments, the average rent for a studio apartment in Salem is \$1300. The average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment increased by 11% in 2020 to \$1,775, and the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment remained steady at \$2,095, according to Zumper.

## Study Area

Salem High School is located on a 61-acre site at 77 Willson Street, at the intersection of Highland Avenue (Route 107) and Willson Street. The campus is home to both Salem High (grades 9-12), and the Horace Mann elementary laboratory school (grades K-5), formerly the Nathaniel Bowditch Elementary School until it closed in 2018. The 465,000 square foot high school opened in 1974 and was partially renovated in 2008. Originally built for a student capacity of 2000, current



Salem High School Facebook page.

enrollment is approximately 980. The 96,000 square foot Horace Mann building opened in 2001 and has a capacity of approximately 500. There is also the Salem High Automotive Technology building, a state-of-the-art facility used for teaching Salem students automotive repair and maintenance skills. There are six athletic facilities, including tennis and basketball courts, sports practice fields, and 435 parking spaces on the site, as well as an area for overnight bus parking for all of the Salem Public School buses. There is only one entrance and two exits on Willson St. for the entire campus. Prior to COVID, the school day ran from approximately 7:25 AM to 2:05 PM.

There is a great deal of unused or underutilized space on the property that could potentially be used for affordable housing. However, the site contains significant wetlands and ledge in some locations, portions of the topography have steep inclines, and there are National Grid powerlines overhead on some sections of the site.

The campus is located in close proximity to the North Shore Medical Center, a grocery-anchored shopping center featuring a Market Basket, Home Depot and a Target as well other retailers. A Walmart is located further down Highland Ave. It is also a five minute drive (1.5. miles) to downtown Salem and the commuter rail to Boston.



There are also nearly 500 units of housing that are either being constructed or are under review near the school along Highland Ave., with 10% of the total units being restricted to renters who earn 80% or less of area median income (AMI). Traders Village, now being built, will deliver 212 units, and Overlook Acres, currently under review, will potentially add 282 additional apartments.

The topography of the study area presents challenges.

# Assets and Opportunities

## **Solid Consensus on Need for Affordable Housing in Salem**

– There is a strong demand for housing in the City, particularly affordable housing for low to moderate income residents. City leader, residents and local stakeholders acknowledge this and appear willing to address the issue, as evidenced by the reestablishment of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board, the expansion of its Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP), and the adoption of an ordinance that enables former religious and municipal buildings to be reused as multifamily housing.

## **Support for Affordable Housing for Teachers**

– There also appears to be widespread support for developing a strategy to create affordable housing options for teachers. It is hoped that this would attract and retain a more diverse group of educators in the Salem public school system.

## **High School Campus Capable of Absorbing Additional Students**

– Current enrollment is less than half of when school was built in 1974. This allows for the high school facilities to potentially absorb additional students if population growth in City continues at the rate projected by MAPC.

## **Ownership of Developable Land by City**

– Land costs in Eastern Massachusetts have increased dramatically in recent years. Eliminating land acquisition costs by leveraging City-owned land to construct affordable housing at the school or other developable sites could significantly reduce development costs for potential developers.

**Plentiful Land at High School** – The sheer size of the 61-acre site, despite topographical, wetland and ledge challenges, creates a wide range of development options.

**Proximity to Amenities** – The high school site is located within one mile of shopping centers and the North Shore Medical Center. It is also only 1.5 miles to the revitalized Downtown, which includes access to the commuter rail into Boston. The campus also abuts the Olde Salem Greens Golf Course, and there are walking trails on adjacent parkland, all of which are attractive to both developers and residents.

# Challenges

## **Potentially High Development Costs**

**Associated With Ledge Removal** – There is extensive ledge throughout the site, which could limit the number of development options, depending on the cost of removal. If financially feasible to remove ledge in development areas, and blasting is required to remove the ledge, the impact on neighbors must be considered.

**Powerline Constraints** – The presence of the National Grid powerlines spanning portions of the property may limit development options as building under the power lines is not an option.

**Traffic Flow on Site** – With just one entryway and two exits – all located on Wilson St. – for the entire campus, there is already excessive traffic congestion at the beginning and end of the school day. Further development could potentially exacerbate the problem.

**Limited Access to Potential Development Sites** – The existing pathways that connect to the auto center/Highland Ave. location and the recreational fields are not adequate to support traffic flow for anticipated development.

**Lack of Dependable Public Transit** – According to stakeholders, the MBTA bus service along the Highland Ave. route has long wait times and is inconsistent. The campus itself is also large and spread out, making the site somewhat auto dependent.

## **Varying Perceptions of ‘Affordable Housing’ Among Stakeholders**

– There is no clear definition of what constitutes truly affordable housing among the various stakeholders with regards to percentage of AMI (60% versus 80 %) and number of units designated as affordable (10% versus up to 25%) to achieve affordable housing goals.

## **Lack of teacher-specific housing models**

– Although the State of California passed the Teacher Housing Act of 2016, which allows school districts to provide affordable housing specifically for district employees and their families, other districts across the country have offered housing incentives that have met with varying degrees of success due to legal and logistical hurdles.

## **Current Zoning Limits Development Options**

– The current zoning does not support a meaningful supply of housing. The property is zoned Residential Conservation (RC), which is very low-density zoning. The surrounding zoning is Residential One-Family (R1), which is also low-density.

# Observations on Teacher Preference Housing

**Consider Broadening the Scope** – Panelists considered that in order to accomplish the City's affordable housing goals, perhaps the model could be broadened from 'teacher housing' to 'educator housing'. Doing so would expand the tenancy to include paraprofessionals and support staff that also require housing, such as guidance counselors, administrators, etc.

**Teacher Starting Salary in Salem Limits Housing Options** – The starting salary for a teacher in Salem in 2020 is approximately \$48,169. Additionally, many of the young teachers are saddled with student loan debt. HUD defines "cost-burdened" families as those who pay more than 30% of their income for housing (rent and utilities), which can lead to difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. Those paying more than 50% of their income on rent are considered "severely cost burdened". The median priced 1-bedroom apartment in Salem is \$1,775 (approximately \$21,300 annually – not including utilities), which would require an income of over \$70,000, far above the starting salary for teachers.

**Need for Diversity on Teaching Staff** – The latest figures on the makeup of the Salem Public School District indicate that over 38% of the students are Hispanic, with Black and Asian students constituting an additional 10%. However, over 95% of the teachers are white. One of the stated aims of the Salem Public School Strategic Plan is to "intentionally recruit, select, onboard, develop, and support new and existing staff as well as increase the diversity of our staff to drive positive student outcomes and achievement."

**Teachers Have Varied Housing Needs** – There is no "one size fits all" solution for housing educators. The housing needs of recent graduates of a master's program

typically differs from the housing needs of educators who are either mid-level or more senior in their career. This translates not just into housing types (rental versus homeownership, number of bedrooms) but the onsite amenities needed to attract and retain educators to housing.

**Rental Units May Be Optimal** – Beyond the income issues that make renting the preferred financial option (particularly for young teachers), there is a 22-25 percent annual turnover rate in teaching staffs in Salem.

**Amenity Considerations** – When building multifamily housing designed to attract and retain a diverse group of teachers, design considerations should be mindful of the types of amenities that should be included, such as multipurpose community areas that include spaces for professional learning, as well as amenities (such as fitness space, Wi-Fi connectivity, and pet accommodations) seen in similar mixed-income rental housing.

**Consider Challenges of Teachers Living in Close Proximity to High School** – Having 'teachers only' housing or a large concentration of educators presents a number of unique challenges. One would be the culture that would be created by having a homogenous group of individuals living in one development, with no separation between work and home life. Compounding the issue is the relatively insulated environment that would be created on the campus.

**Fair Housing Regulations Need to Be Considered** – Having housing restricted specifically to teachers or educators may trigger fair housing law violations. The housing may have to be marketed to attract teachers, but not be restricted to teachers/educators.

# Recommendations

**Create a Long-Range Master Plan** – Given the size and complexity of the site, and the amount of information communicated by stakeholders, devising specific actions in a compressed time frame for constructing affordable housing on the Salem High campus was a daunting challenge. Because there are a number of questions that still need to be answered regarding the site, panelists agreed that the affordable housing goals of the City would be best served by first taking a step back to further examine the various subcomponents before creating a master site plan that considers the following:

- **What Improvements Need to Be Made to Site Circulation and Parking?** – There are currently only two exits and one entrance to the entire site (all on Willson St.), and limited auto access to many of the potential development areas. The High School entrance is not visible upon entering the site and circulation is confusing. A comprehensive parking analysis (including the overnight bus parking) for the campus should be considered, as the upper parking lot may offer another possible development alternative. In fact, a well thought out parking and circulation plan might yield additional development site options.
- **What Are the Future Programmatic Needs of School and Students?** – While the building's current student usage is below its design capacity, Phase 2 of the high school renovation has not been completed. As Phase 2 is designed, the relationship of the indoor and outdoor athletic facilities should be examined. If there are underutilized spaces in the high school building, consider whether

there might be new uses required by the high school curriculum or that could be compatible with housing development on the site

- **What Are the Current and Future Recreation Facility Needs for the School and the Salem Community?** – Could the recreational activities currently occurring at one of the fields be done elsewhere to free up development space, either on campus or on another municipal property? Could the two existing fields be consolidated by improving one field and having it serve many purposes?

## **Engage the Community in the Process**

Affordable housing efforts are often hampered by vocal opposition that does not necessarily represent the majority of the residents or goals of municipalities. Engaging the community via a coordinated plan or utilizing a community engagement platform helps to dispel misinformation that is sometimes used to reinforce common themes that obstruct the development of affordable housing. A comprehensive community engagement process allows all constituencies to be heard, especially since the high school and its facilities are used by so many in the community.

## **Align the Master Site Plan with Imagine**

**Salem Goals** – Imagine Salem lays out clear goals for the City: “Market rate housing should be affordable to people earning average wages. Housing for lower income households requires special accommodation to produce.”

## **Analyze Feasibility of Site Development**

– In order to determine the practicality of developing housing on the campus, a

number of additional questions must be answered, including the extent and the cost of removal of the ledge from the targeted development areas; review of wetland limits; a determination of the demand for market rate and affordable housing units, including unit types; and an inquiry into whether easement/ access through golf course or other abutting properties is feasible. There also needs to be an evaluation of what uses could be allowed under power lines.

**Continue to Research Affordable Housing Models for Teachers** – Existing case studies of teacher-targeted housing do not appear to be applicable to the conditions of the Salem market. Most models seemed to focus primarily on offering discounts to teachers rather than targeting housing specifically for educators. As an alternative that is consistent with the limited number of developments across the country that market to attract teachers, the City of Salem should consider a teacher preference vs. teacher restricted model. However, it is important to identify the best practices and models from these studies to create a workable model for Salem. The City should also consider partnering with Salem State University to exchange ideas regarding common solutions to teacher/ graduate student housing options.

**Create a Process to Select a Private Housing Developer** – A number of the stakeholders were under the impression that the Salem Public Schools would be involved in the development and operation of the on-campus housing. The TAP strongly suggests that the housing should be built and operated by a private developer – either a non- or for-profit entity. Once the areas for potential development on the site have been identified, The City should develop and engage in a competitive RFP process to select a developer with clear goals in mind.

**Create a Housing Resource Service for Teachers** – A housing resource service specifically for educators that helps to identify state and local homeownership funding programs and other housing-related information could be helpful in attracting and

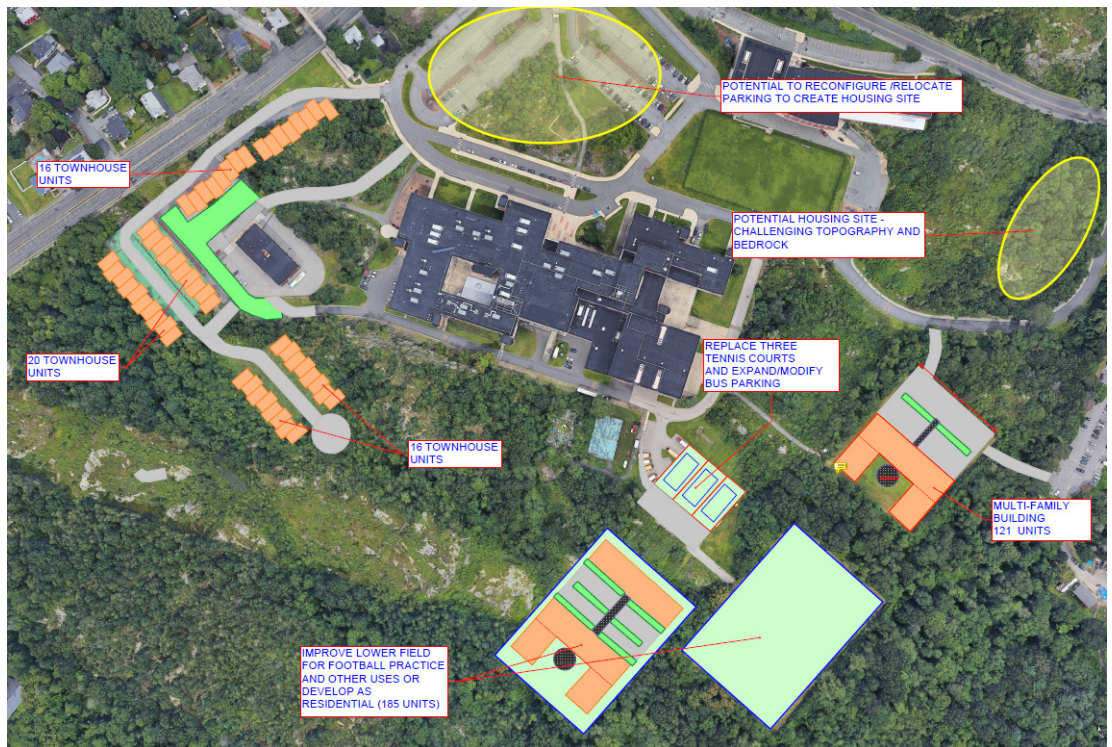
retaining teachers in Salem. This could be accomplished by either partnering with a local housing counseling entity or bank or simply designating an ambassador within Salem Public Schools to help teachers navigate the housing landscape in the City.

## Potential Development Sites Within Study Area

Although much will depend on the outcome of the feasibility studies, the TAP identified several potential sites on the campus that could accommodate housing. The TAP design and engineering professionals offered a number of possibilities that could be developed. Please be advised that these thumbnail sketches are meant to be speculative, and any actual plan with regards to design and number of units would be up to the developer.

**Townhouses Along Highland Ave., Tennis Courts** – Despite some hilly topography in spots and the presence of rock ledge in much of this section of the campus, it may be possible to construct a ‘neighborhood’ of approximately 52 townhouses spread throughout this area (see rendering). The first proposed development is for 16 townhouses to be constructed between the access path and Highland Ave. The area along the path is largely flat, and the amount of ledge that would need to be removed to construct the townhouses may be minimal. The second grouping would be in the area now occupied by the tennis courts, which could be relocated. The tennis court site is already cleared and flat, and could accommodate up to 20 units. Beyond the tennis courts, 16 more townhouses could be constructed on the incline that was cleared and used as a staging area during the high school renovation.

In terms of improved traffic circulation to support this development, the existing roadway that runs parallel to Highland Ave. could be extended to traverse the two rows of townhouses at both the tennis court site and the incline. A second roadway from parking lot A could be constructed to run to the Auto Tech Center and back to the rear of the high



The existing high school campus with the potential development sites noted.

school. The creation of this neighborhood also allows residents to retain a certain degree of separation from the main campus while offering a housing option other than apartments.

**Bus Storage Area** – Because the bus parking is located directly beneath the power lines, it is not a viable housing development site. However, it may be an option for relocating the tennis courts or another use. Moving the tennis courts would also put them in closer proximity to the other outdoor recreational facilities (basketball court, practice fields).

**The Recreational Fields** – The lower field to the north is the smaller of the two. The upper field to the south is used for a wider range of activities by the school and City, as well as some private groups such as a rugby team. Because the fields don't drain particularly well and have no service facilities (bathrooms, locker rooms), they are considered "low value" athletic fields in comparison to similar sports facilities.

If it were to be retained as a recreational asset, the upper field is larger, and with some structural improvements (such as re-doing the turf) could continue to operate in that

capacity. Because of its size, it could function as a practice field while accommodating other uses as well. A second option for the upper field would be to construct a multifamily residential building that could accommodate approximately two buildings totaling 185 apartments plus parking. The drawback to the site is that it lacks roadway access and is the most remote of the potential development sites.

The lower field may present a better development opportunity, with the upper field being retained for the aforementioned recreational purposes. The lower field is located close to the exit driveway, which would lower infrastructure investment, and is also located very close to the golf course parking lot, which would allow for greater circulation. A single building with first floor parking and 121 units could be constructed on the site, which also offers a more secluded setting for potential residents.

**Other Potential Sites** – North of the lower field, towards the west corner of the campus, is a wooded area (see rendering) that stakeholders inquired about regarding its potential. There is approximately 40 feet of grade change from the closest roadway to the

west of the area. While it is close to Willson St. and other access ways, the steep topography combined with the significant amount of ledge may make the site impractical, but it merits further study.

Another area worth considering for redevelopment would be the main high school parking area. Although parking utilization is high, as part of a Master Plan looking at site wide circulation, it is worth examining whether this lot could be more efficiently laid out and brought closer to the school to create another multifamily site.

## Potential Architectural Styles for Housing

Stakeholders indicated to panelists that it was important to have a diversity of housing types. For the townhouse neighborhood along Highland Ave. that was suggested as a development option, there are the traditional two-story, three-plus bedroom homes with wood frame construction and pitched roofs (see photo example), which are best suited for families. It is important that the design of these units fit in well within the context of the existing neighborhood along Highland Ave. and Willson St.

The second style would be a four or five-story, low-rise apartment building, which is typically a structure with a steel podium slab with wood frame construction, with the first floor reserved for parking. The building would be comprised of single-story apartments, with a mix of studio, one- two- and three-bedroom units. This type is best suited for one of the setback recreation field sites. It is important to note that given the remote nature of the site, any design should include open space available to all residents, and the entire site be walkable and accessible to all.



Examples of architectural styles that might work well for the contemplated development sites.

# Funding and Resources

## State Grants

**MassDevelopment** – Helps to incentivize private investment by providing help with site readiness and technical assistance for a variety of projects.

**MassWorks** – Provides grants to prepare communities for success with a particular emphasis on projects that support the production of multi-family housing in appropriately located walkable mixed-use districts, resulting in direct and immediate job creation, and/or supporting economic development in weak or distressed areas.

**Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD)** – Offers a range of services and assistance to communities

## Financing

**MassDevelopment (also provides tax-exempt bonds, bridge financing, loans, etc.)**

### **Mass Housing Workforce Housing Initiative**

– Supports the creation of rental housing that is affordable for households whose incomes are too high for subsidized housing but are priced out by market rents.

### **Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)**

– Provides long-term financing for affordable housing projects where at least 20% of the units are affordable to households earning less than 50% of AMI.

## **City Funding Sources**

### **Conventional Banks**

**CPA (Community Preservation Act)** – Helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.

**Housing Tax Credit Program (Federal & State)** – Developers must apply through the Department of Community and Housing Development.

**Opportunity Zones** – Although the program is relatively new and there are few examples to point to with regards to affordable housing initiatives, it is designed to help attract private financing to projects that will stimulate economic development.

# Conclusion

The size of the Salem High School campus and its proximity to a number of community amenities, i.e. healthcare and retail, offers great potential for additional development. However, any development must be creatively balanced against the site's challenges and thoughtfully integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods.

In order to determine the practicality of redeveloping portions of the Salem High campus into affordable housing targeted for educators, there is a clear need to step back and take a comprehensive look at the campus site in its entirety and its potential. While the team identified potential housing development sites, more detailed site planning needs to be undertaken to evaluate feasibility and to determine how these sites might fit into a new concept for the high school site as a whole. A comprehensive planning process that considers parking, traffic circulation, high school capital and programmatic needs must also engage the community and more clearly define affordability, the mix of market rate and affordable housing, avenues for providing teacher-targeted housing, etc.

In terms of developing Highland Avenue and the lower field, the two sites on campus that seem to be most appropriate, both have questions that need to be examined further. At the proposed site along Highland Ave., a study needs to be conducted to determine the extent of ledge as well as the cost of removal or mitigation. While there is the possibility that the ledge can be incorporated into the foundation, the logistics of installing water and electricity into the development may also present challenges, and merits a conversation with those utilities. The second site, the lower athletic field, is more shovel-ready,

but conversations with Salem High Building & Grounds and Salem Park, Recreation and Community Services need to take place to determine if this is possible, given the stated need for open space in Imagine Salem.

There also needs to be improved access and exits to the campus from Route 107 (Highland Ave.) and Willson St., which would require a conversation with MassDOT. In addition, if the lower field site is redeveloped into housing, there needs to be better access to Willson St. and there should be a conversation with the adjacent Olde Salem Greens Golf Course to explore the possibility of shared parking and access. If development plans or relocation of uses involve any of the portions of the campus with powerlines overhead, there also needs to be a conversation with National Grid on what type of uses would be allowable under the power lines or if relocation/rerouting is possible.

In addition to the aforementioned studies and development of a comprehensive plan, the City of Salem is strongly encouraged to broaden the scope of the on-campus affordable housing. Expanding the pool of potential tenants to include other employees within the educational system and beyond is one idea that may have merit. Also, combining teacher housing with other uses such as affordable housing for seniors would create a diversity among the tenancy and potentially open the door for additional funding sources. Consideration of senior housing might reveal creative opportunities for collaboration/engagement between the housing residents and the high school that could be beneficial to both.



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