



FYI SALEM

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 4

FEBRUARY 21, 2019

CONTACT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE:

Phone:
(978) 619-5600

Fax:
(978) 744-9327

Email:
mayor@salem.com

Web:
salem.com/mayor

Facebook:
Kim Driscoll

Twitter:
@MayorDriscoll



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Salem Senior Tax Exemptions	2
Housing Forum	2
Reusing Vacant Buildings	3
Heart Disease Presentation	4

From the Mayor's Desk



Dear Salem resident,

Housing is perhaps the leading challenge facing our community today. Currently, almost half of our residents pay one-third or more of their monthly income on housing, be it rent or mortgage payments. And home supply has not kept up with demand, resulting in a rapid growth in home prices, rents, and values, which effect tax bills.

Who needs housing in Salem? Working families looking to grow, long-time Salem seniors who want to downsize, and, yes, people who are attracted to our community because of our quality of life. We need housing

across the range of prices—from transitional and supportive housing for the formerly homeless, to affordable units for middle income residents, to market rate units for those who have the economic capacity to support our vibrant small business and restaurant sectors all year long.

Housing is a complicated issue, but the tools that are available to use to address it are straightforward. We need a balanced approach that doesn't put an artificial stranglehold on housing production, while sensibly recognizing the impacts of housing. Read more in this issue of FYI Salem about three important ways we're trying to keep Salem affordable and livable for all who wish to call our city home.

First, strengthening and expanding property tax breaks for those on fixed incomes. Second, developing an "inclusionary zoning" ordinance to require home builders to include affordable units in their buildings. And third a

path to reuse and preserve vacant historic schools and municipal buildings.

Salem should be home to anyone who wants to live here. Our neighborhoods have held merchants' mansions around the corner from the tenements that housed the sailors who worked on their ships, and the homes of factory owners, down the street from the triple-deckers where generations of immigrant laborers raised their families.

It's part of what makes Salem so special and without intentional action on the issue of housing, we are at risk of losing it.

Thank you again for taking the time to read the FYI Salem newsletter! If you have a friend or neighbor who might be interested in this newsletter, please feel free to forward it along or encourage them to subscribe themselves by visiting www.salem.com/subscribe.

Kim Driscoll
Mayor
City of Salem

Salem Senior Tax Exemption



Mayor Kim Driscoll has proposed that the City modify its property tax relief program for seniors to increase the number of residents who can apply and receive a break on their taxes. Mayor Driscoll's proposal lowers the qualifying age from 65 and increases the asset threshold for married seniors to \$55,000. These changes would expand the program's availability to even more Salem seniors and set the eligibility standards at the most allowed under state law. Mayor Driscoll also indicated that she will shortly be filing a proposal to create an even more substantive property tax discount program for Salem seniors, based on the state's Circuit Breaker program.

"Ultimately, I am hoping to raise the income requirements equal to that of the state's Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Program and provide Salem seniors with an even greater opportunity to offset annual property tax increases," said Mayor Driscoll. "We have worked hard to improve the financial position of the city over the last dozen years

and, as a result of those efforts, I believe we are in a better position to expand exemptions, particularly for senior property owners who have experienced increases in the value of their homes, but not necessarily in their incomes."

The larger program would require approval from the City Council and the state legislature. In the meantime, Mayor Driscoll is proposing to expand the existing program to include as many senior residents as allowed under state law.

"This change would bring an added degree of fairness to the otherwise rigid property tax structure, by allowing reductions for even more of our most needy residents on their property tax bills," added Mayor Driscoll. "Over the last few years we have worked to expand the amount available for these exemptions. This measure will take that even further by expanding the number of Salem seniors who might qualify. I believe this is a fair approach to help older adults in Salem, many of whom are living on fixed incomes. It is a reflection of our dedication to being an age-friendly community – a goal best demonstrated through the Salem for All Ages initiative and many others."

More details about applying for the City's existing property tax relief options can be found at <https://www.salem.com/assessor/files/property-tax-relief-fy19> or by calling the Assessor's Office at (978) 619-5608.

Join us for a

Salem Housing Forum!

Sign up for updates!
bit.ly/salemhousing

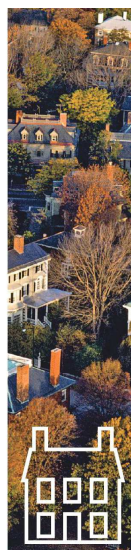
Come learn about housing need in Salem, tools to create more Affordable Housing, and Inclusionary Zoning

March 5, 2019

7:00PM - 8:30PM

Community Life Center
401 Bridge Street

Homes for Salem!



¡Acompáñenos para un

Foro de Vivienda en Salem!

¡Manténgase informado!
bit.ly/salemhousing

Venga y aprenda sobre la necesidad de vivienda en Salem, herramientas para crear más vivienda asequible, y Zonificación Inclusiva

Marzo 5, 2019

7:00PM - 8:30PM

Community Life Center
401 Bridge Street

Homes for Salem!



Reusing Vacant Buildings

Since last summer, the City has held eight public meetings before City boards, the City Council, and just general informational presentations, all aimed at crafting an ordinance that would preserve historic, vacant religious and municipal buildings in Salem, and create a legal path for these properties to be reused for much needed housing.

Right now, three of these buildings – the former St. James (1906) and St. Mary's (1941) Catholic schools and the former Senior Center (1855) – are empty, deteriorating, and creating a nuisance in residential neighborhoods. Because they were institutional uses in residential neighborhoods, there is currently no legal permitting path for their reuse.

Working with a wide diversity of community stakeholders and incorporating extensive public feedback, the City developed an ordinance that would create that path. It creates standards for the permitting of housing, requires a full and public site-plan review by the Planning Board, requires a minimum portion of the housing be designated for affordable housing, sets any new construction to match the characteristics of the residential neighborhood, and requires builders get input from our Design Review Board and Historic Commission. We're especially excited that two of these properties are nearly under agreement with the North Shore CDC and will be almost entirely affordable housing.

Without this ordinance, there is no real path forward to preserve and reuse these buildings. While the number of police and fire calls for service will grow, they will sit idle and empty, contributing nothing to our housing need, nothing to our tax base, and nothing to the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Ultimately, a lack of viable permitting path is tantamount to a death sentence for these historic properties, two of which are located in the McIntire Historic District and the other of which sits on the edge of the Salem Common Historic District. Time is not our friend. Some of these buildings have been vacant for five or six years already; the process at arriving at this ordinance alone has taken almost eight months, thus far, and, by the 28th, ten meetings.

I am hopeful that voices of reason will be heard when the City Council takes up this ordinance, first in a committee meeting on February 26th at 6:30pm at City Hall and then, hopefully, before the full City Council on February 28th at 7pm.

Whether you are passionate about historic preservation, believe we need to increase access to affordable homes, or just care about the fabric of our community, I encourage you to either attend and speak up at these meetings or reach out to City Councillors by email at CityCouncilors@salem.com to express your support for the ordinance. None of us benefit by having these buildings lay fallow and vacant in our neighborhoods. Thank you!



Kim Driscoll
Mayor
City of Salem



Salem for All Ages Hosts North Shore Physicians Group Lecture Series

His and Hers - How Heart Disease Differs by Gender

Tuesday, March 12th, 2019
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Heart disease is the most common cause of death for both women and men in the United States, but it doesn't affect women and men alike. Join North Shore Physicians Group cardiologist Lola Ojutalayo, M.D. , to learn the symptoms and risk factors for heart disease and how they vary by gender.



To register, please call Rosanna Donahue
978-744-0924 x 43006



rdonahue@salem.com



401 Bridge Street
Salem, MA 01970