

CITY OF SALEM  
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AND PLANNING BOARD  
July 14, 2022, at 6:00 PM

The City Council Committee of the Whole and the Planning Board met on Thursday July 14, at 6:05 P.M. for the purpose of discussing Salem Housing Roadmap; Housing Plan for All. This meeting was held as a hybrid meeting. Councilors met in person while members of the Planning Board were remote in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, and as amended by Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022. The sub-committee meetings are held to take action for the purpose of making recommendations to the full council.

Meeting opens at 6:16 PM

City Council:

*Present:* Robert McCarthy, Jeff Cohen, Andrew Varela, Megan Riccardi, Patricia Morsillo, Ty Hapworth, Conrad Prosniewski, Domingo Dominguez (8)

*Remote:* Leveille McClain, Caroline Watson-Felt (2)

*Absent:* Alice Merkl (1)

Planning Board:

*Present:* Bill Griset, Kirt Rieder, Tom Furey, Zach Caunter, Carole Hamilton (5)

*Absent:* Sarah Tabet, Helen Sides (2)

*Also in attendance:* Cassie Moskos (Senior Planner), Amanda Chiancola (Deputy Director Planning and Community Development), Elena Eimert (Staff Planner), Beth Forrestal (Planning Assistant), Filipe Zamborlini (Vice Chair, Affordable Housing Trust Fund), Jenn Goldson (Consultant, JM Goldson)

AGENDA:

**A. Salem Housing Roadmap; Housing Plan for All**

*There are significant sound issues in City Council chambers. Amanda Chiancola starts the meeting off but is inaudible. \*\*These issues continue throughout the meeting\*\**

- Jenn Goldson, Planning Consultant, JM Goldson
  - Slide show presentation begins with a list of members of the Steering Committee. Will be presenting a high-level version of the draft report. The executive summary is also provided.
  - Housing need indicators
    - The increase in the average family income is 8% while the increase in average sale price for a home is 49%.
    - The average Salem renter can afford \$1013; the average Salem rent is \$2014. Many Salem residents are spending more than they can afford to stay in the community. 48% of Salem families are low to moderate income; 42% of those households spend more than half of their gross income on housing.
    - Looked at distribution of income and race/ethnicity across Salem – areas like the Point neighborhood show concentration of BIPOC population and the lowest average incomes in the city.

- Area also has a larger amount of older, more affordable rental housing, and is particularly vulnerable to rising housing costs and gentrification.
    - City is becoming more racially diverse though there are concerns about displacement through gentrification.
  - Housing availability and affordability is critical to maintaining and fostering diverse communities.
- Cassie Moskos
  - We went beyond the usual methods of community outreach to reach a large portion of people not usually heard from in planning efforts.
    - Community forums, focus groups of specific demographics. We had a survey with 365 takers; Meeting in a Box sets for at home meetings; Steering committee meetings; workshops with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) board; paper surveys for those without access to technology; a short version of the survey for when volunteers were out doing outreach; postcards with 1 question for those too busy to take a full survey; social media graphics; a flyer in 3 languages (English, Spanish, and Portuguese); an email list constructed from visitors to the project website and emailed to let them know how to participate further; business cards dispersed to the Steering Committee to hand out during trick-or-treating; visiting a Council on Aging breakfast; door to door outreach to members of the service industry; featured in 2 bilingual Salem Public Schools newsletters; interfaced with workers coming in and out of Salem at the MBTA train station during rush hour commutes; put flyers in the meal bags at the Salem Meet and Eat events; reached out to policy makers (US and State representatives, city board members, local affordable housing developers).
- Filipe Zamborlini: The Steering Committee was interested in creating equity in who participated.
  - We talked to people who talk to people (the Latino Leadership Council; The Salem Pantry; everything translated into Spanish and Portuguese), who are already well enmeshed in their communities.
  - There was a lot of work put into hearing from people who might not participate in traditional methods (public meeting, etc.).
- Jenn Goldson: We provided the information and materials, but it was up to the community to get the word out and distribute information. You will see those efforts pay off in how the plan was customized.
  - Vision: The Salem community sees housing as a human right and a fundamental aspect of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
    - We envision that our city will be an equitable place where:
      - People of all backgrounds, means, genders, and ages are welcome;
      - People who work here, longtime residents, and newcomers can live here and thrive throughout the stages of their lives;
      - We celebrate our diverse stories and histories;
      - We protect the availability of affordable secure and stable homes.
    - Overarching goals:
      - Preservation and Stability: Preserve our naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) and protect low- and moderate-income renters and other vulnerable populations, including BIPOC residents, from substandard housing, discrimination, and displacement. These are units that are below market rate because of location/conditions/etc. Salem still has a fair amount of naturally occurring affordable housing.

- Households in Need: Protect and create affordable homes to support the needs of Salem's most vulnerable populations including unhoused residents and those at risk of being unhoused, extremely and very low-income residents, older adults, the workforce, and households with disabilities. Many people cannot afford the affordable units. Focus on those really in need.
- Supply: Strive to create opportunity to sensitively expand the supply of market rate, mixed-income, and affordable housing of various sizes, including accessible units, and ensure that redevelopment minimizes displacement of existing Low and Moderate-Income (LMI) Households.
- Location Goals
  - Complete neighborhoods: Focus housing development and redevelopment in areas of Salem that have access to transportation, jobs, and commercial hubs, while ensuring that development includes strategies that minimize displacement.
  - Transformative Areas: Consider opportunities for redevelopment of transformative areas such as the SSU South Campus, Jefferson Avenue area, Shetland Park, and areas along Highland Avenue, while ensuring accessibility from these areas to employment centers and/or mixed-use projects.
  - Middle Housing: Encourage strategic infill in existing residential neighborhoods that maintains historic character design standards and neighborhood characteristics.
- Sustainability & Design Goals
  - Sustainability and Resiliency: Work towards a more sustainable and resilient housing stock in Salem through innovative design and sustainably sourced materials and renewable energy sources, with particular attention to flood resilient construction and strategic location and design given Salem's coastal location and potential for future sea level rise.
  - Rehabilitation of building stock: Encourage rehabilitation of existing buildings, including historic buildings, to improve energy efficiency and safety to preserve the historic character of Salem while improving quality of life for residents. 80% of units are pre-1979. Older than other areas, which is great, but means lots of rehab needs and impacts on low-income renters and homeowners. Encouraging rehabilitation of existing building to improve quality of life and energy efficiency.
- Strategies grouped into 4 categories
  - Stability: Series of strategies on how to stabilize renters and protect NOAH units. How can we convert NOAH units into permanently restricted units. Seek to protect tenants and existing neighborhoods and minimizing displacement.
  - Supply: Rising housing costs because we haven't produced housing to keep up with demand. This group of strategies focuses on how to create more housing with sensitivity to impacts on vulnerable or historically oppressed populations. Strategically increase supply in transformative areas and areas with good access to existing services.

- Encouraging supply that addresses Salem’s housing needs (lower than regional incomes).
- Municipal Subsidy: This group of strategies focuses on generating and investing local funding as a tool to apply where subsidy and stability measures alone fall short.
  - Implementation Capacity & Outreach: To support the strategies in the three categories above, it is essential to have the local capacity including staff and other resources as well as an informed voting public to support initiatives. Could involve a Housing Stabilization Office; database to track “Rental Registry”; increasing public awareness of rental rights and landlord benefits for lower rent.
- We are working on revisions including one that came in recently. But mindful of time. Don’t think there is a rush to vote tonight.
- Cassie Moskos: The Planning Board and City Council can vote if they want, or vote conditionally, or take time to review and vote in independent meetings.
  - Filipe Zamborlini: Looks at plans and ideas of communities creating plans in professional life. This planning process was phenomenal. Not a single member of the steering committee that didn’t pull significant weight to get this to where it is. We were able to gather useful information from key players.
  - Councilor Morsillo: This was a long and thoughtful process – over a year’s worth of work.

**Questions from the City Council:**

- Councilor Riccardi: Appreciates all the outreach done, hadn’t realized effort put forth. Was able to read the plan and supports the items drafted in there. Is the plan matrix adjustable? We can tackle some issues quicker than others.
  - Jenn Goldson: Yes, the action matrix is flexible. We want feedback on this in terms of sequencing, and we need the right supporting entities.
- Councilor McCarthy: What is the substantive change we are anticipating?
  - Jenn Goldson: It is to change strategy – transformative areas – the idea is to include rezoning options citywide, not just within the transformative areas; and how we can achieve sensitive and appropriate housing production. It is saying, “let’s look at this”.
  - Filipe Zamborlini: There were lots of conversations about where to build housing in Salem and the challenges the current zoning laws create. This summarizes a plethora of comments that ranged from nuanced to broader sentiments. Ensuring that there is opportunity to build properties in Salem.

**Questions from the Planning Board:**

- Kirt Rieder: Is precedent for a vote to be taken if Planning Board hasn’t deliberated on their own?
  - Bill Griset: I haven’t seen it but defer to the City Council. We meet next Thursday.
  - Councilor Morsillo: As I understand, you can continue and vote next week at the Planning Board meeting.

- Zach Caunter: Great plan but would like to research and deliberate.
- Bill Griset: Planning Board just needs opportunity to discuss in our own forum.
- Kirt Rieder: Will anybody from City Planning or Ms. Goldson be at the Planning Board meeting next week for questions?
  - Cassie Moskos: Amanda or I can be in attendance.
  - Jenn Goldson: I am happy to answer questions in advance of the meeting. Has a conflict next Thursday.
    - Bill Griset: We should be fine with discussion next week with Amanda Chiancola or Cassie Moskos.
- Councilor Morsillo: Want to take a minute to apologize for sound problems. Stated for the record that Councilor McClain joined the meeting late and remotely.

*A motion to refer the matter to the Committee of the Whole is made by Councilor McCarthy, seconded by Councilor Riccardi, and passes 10-0 in a roll call vote.*

Councilor Cohen	Y
Councilor Dominguez	Y
Councilor Hapworth	Y
Councilor McCarthy	Y
Councilor McClain	Y
Councilor Merkl	absent
Councilor Prosniewski	Y
Councilor Riccardi	Y
Councilor Varela	Y
Councilor Watson-Felt	Y
Councilor Morsillo	Y

*On a motion from Councilor McCarthy, the meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM*

Cassie Moskos: It was difficult to hear Amanda, but want to underscore that this is a public documents and we welcome public comment on this presentation.

***Approved by the Planning Board on 09/01/2022.***