



Falmouth Housing Production Plan Update

NOVEMBER 8 2023 COMMUNITY MEETING SUMMARY

Background

On November 8, 2023, the Town of Falmouth Planning Department, Horsley Witten Group (HWG), and Barrett Planning Group (BPG) held the first community meeting to introduce the update to the Town's Housing Production Plan (HPP) and solicit input from the public. Nearly fifty community members attended the meeting, held at Falmouth High School, to engage in discussions related to housing in Falmouth.

The meeting began with the consultant team's presentation, which outlined the Housing Production Plan process, existing demographic and household information, and challenges to residential development. Attendees separated into smaller groups to participate in facilitated discussions during which they responded to a series of questions related to housing, all of which are listed below. In addition, participants were invited to fill out individual feedback sheets, which fifteen participants turned in. This summary includes a broad overview of common themes, as well as raw notes from discussion groups and individual feedback sheets.

The themes included in this summary represent concerns and viewpoints that the consultant team heard during these meetings. As such, this summary should not be taken as statements of fact, but rather an overview of impressions, concerns, and visions for the future of housing in Falmouth.

Discussion Summary

In six facilitated groups, participants answered the questions below. The bullets under each question summarize general themes; complete raw notes from each group begin on page 5 of this document.

QUESTION 1

Whose housing needs are not being met in Falmouth? What type of housing could best meet these needs? Consider affordability level, household types and sizes, housing type, location, rental versus ownership, etc.

- Participants generally agreed that current housing markets do not support the town's employment base, including lower wage workers, essential workers, institutional employees, and young professionals. As a result, many of these workers live and commute from outside of Falmouth and the Cape.
- In particular, some pointed out that young families and first-time homebuyers have difficulty finding homes for sale that fall within their budgets.
- Attendees described how the limited housing market ultimately affects residents of all ages and incomes, even those who are high-income earners.
- In general, there was consensus that a greater variety of housing types for both owning and year-round renting would create more housing opportunities for the diverse workforce. Options

identified include but are not limited to townhouses, conversion of existing structures, one-bedroom rentals, accessory dwelling units (ADU), multifamily homes, tiny homes, middle housing, and shared housing (perhaps starting with a pilot program).

QUESTION 2

The 2018 Housing Production Plan suggested that the target for new affordable units be across an 85% to 15% split of rental units versus ownership units. This target was based upon indicators including lack of rental units, low rental vacancy rates, high levels of cost burden among renters, long waitlists for subsidized rental housing, and more. Do you agree with this split? Why or why not?

- Many participants agreed that more development of rental units will sustain a healthy housing market in Falmouth, provide opportunities for many prospective residents struggling to find housing, and are less difficult to produce units on a large scale.
- Some also noted that rentals promote a diversity of housing, provide more choice, and can serve as a starting point for younger professionals and new residents to transition to home ownership in town.
- However, other participants also felt that rental units would not promote permanency in the way that owning a home would and that there should need to be opportunities to build wealth.

QUESTION 3

We have heard consistent agreement from stakeholders that both housing and natural resource protection (particularly water quality) are critical concerns. How can Falmouth balance these important and inseparable issues?

- Natural resources and open green spaces are immovable priorities of the town residents. Some groups expressed concern about how development might encroach into these areas and impact water quality.
- Some groups emphasized that in general, the Town should closely evaluate development impacts on sewer infrastructure and natural resources. Fixing deteriorating septic systems and improving the stormwater infrastructure can mitigate development impacts on water quality and nearby surface water.
- Participants strongly suggest redeveloping existing and underutilized developments into housing instead of cutting down forests or paving over green spaces to construct more buildings. These ideas include repurposing underutilized commercial spaces into housing, redeveloping empty parking lots and buildings, renovating existing multifamily housing.
- Some supported modifying zoning to support denser housing and to expand the Mixed Residential and Commercial Overlay District (MRCOD) near the town center; supporters noted that higher-density developments can produce more housing while preventing development into natural areas.
- Additionally, some suggested implementing design guidelines to simultaneously promote housing structures that aesthetically conform to surrounding homes and preserve green spaces.

QUESTION 4

Where, physically, can Falmouth best support new housing development or redevelopment? What types of housing are suitable for each identified area?

- Several suggestions for new housing focused on existing densely developed areas in town, particularly the downtown and the Davis Straits commercial corridor. Many of Falmouth's essential services and amenities are located here and placing new housing along these streets could create walkable, mixed-use communities that both alleviate housing needs and foster a vibrant public life.
- Some expressed that it would make sense to develop smaller units and buildings over underutilized parking lots or to convert existing buildings to housing.
- Others also cautioned that many residents strongly oppose large high-density residential complexes near the town center and prefer homes that look and feel similar to surrounding single-family homes.
- Other ideas include building smaller homes and condos in Woods Hole, utilizing Town-owned properties, redistricting/consolidating public schools to convert an existing school building into higher-density multifamily complexes, and considering access to transportation by building near the bike trail or looking into improved public transportation.

QUESTION 5

The 2018 Housing Production Plan described strategies to encourage the creation of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), including offering a tax abatement or establishing a loan fund to assist property owners interested in building an ADU. Do you agree or disagree with these strategies? Why or why not? What else could incentivize or encourage the creation of ADUs?

- Attendees generally expressed support for proposed tax incentives and other financial support for owners to build ADUs.
- Participants suggested amending current ADU regulations they deem too restrictive, including requirements for owner occupancy or residency. Removing this restriction could encourage the creation of more ADUs in Falmouth.
- Other suggestions included:
 - Establishing a program to provide education for interested and prospective homeowners to facilitate ADU conversions
 - Developing pre-approved ADU plans
 - Establishing a volunteer program to construct ADUs (similar to the Habitat for Humanity model)

QUESTION 6

The 2018 Housing Production Plan also recommended exploring financial incentives for providing year-round rentals (as opposed to seasonal rentals). Do you see this as a viable strategy for Falmouth? Why or why not? What else could encourage year-round rentals, if you consider that to be a priority?

- Participants tended to agree that short-term housing is over-saturated and would like to see more oversight of short-term rentals.
- Suggestions included:
 - Imposing deed restrictions and other regulatory means to limit seasonal housing and second homes
 - Preventing companies from monopolizing the industry
 - Implement taxing and other financial incentives towards year-round rentals, such as paying property owners the difference between STR revenue and year-round rental revenue
 - Raising taxes on short-term rentals and diverting the revenue towards year-round housing

Participant Feedback Sheet

Individual responses from participant feedback sheets begin on p.11 of this document. While many of the points were also emphasized in the group discussions (and are therefore not reiterated in the bullets below), some new ideas included:

- There is a broad need for more public education on housing and other aspects of development, policy, and planning. As the respondent noted, “This issue is more than just meeting Chapter 40B requirements.”
- Some inquired as to whether the area median income (AMI) could be recalculated to reflect the wealth of second homeowners.
- One attendee suggested having a minimum requirement/goal of affordable housing units in each of the villages.
- Multiple attendees pointed out that people chose Falmouth for a reason (“land, nature, and space to grow our families”) and do not wish to live in a city.
- One attendee expressed concern about the number of services and recovery programs in Falmouth and the impact on access to affordable housing.

Raw Group Notes

The following pages include each group's raw notes to the discussion questions.

Group 1

1. Minimum wage workers → rental housing (under \$1500/month)
Workforce housing missing → diversity in housing stock
Institutional workforce (science/research) → need lower rents, higher density
Adjacent communities' competition for housing → diversity
First time homebuyers → condo/townhouse (density), smaller single family homes
2. Rentals don't encourage permanency → 50/50 (R/O)
Rentals will meet the needs better → workforce, 100/0 (R/O)
Rentals provide options- progression to ownership → 100/0 (R/O)
Hard to produce for sale units in large #s → 75/25 (R/O)
3. Discover the actual limitation for dev → outfall= potential unlimited, ground discharge= limited
4. Expand sewer to other areas to help w/ development- not just current plan
Investigate deed restricted properties for future development → combine OS w/ AH (56 Benjamin Nye Rd example)
5. Tax abatements
Pre-approved plans
Owner occupied requirement = 0
Air BnBs more of an issue
6. Lead paint issues limit YRR → \$ or loan for abatement
Buy down program for different AMIs
Septic system \$ upgrades
Pay back program
Enforcement is key

Group 2

1. SF apts

Diverse types: beyond SF, ADUs, smaller unit for all income levels, multifamily
Pilot program for shared units

2. More rentals

Workforce
Close to services and amenities
More choice

3. Near bike trail

Septic issues
MRCOD district
Development
Zoning make sense here
Prog mgr to make development easier
ADUs

Group 3

1. Need more affordable SFHs, starter homes, missing middle, both rental and ownership
Scientists (Woods Hole) have trouble finding housing- also, need rentals. Can Woods Hole develop housing for their employees?
Wants to see more open space conserved → can we reuse existing buildings for housing
2. 85/15 is generally still good but... let's find ways to build wealth
3. Redeveloping underutilized commercial
Mashpee Commons is a good example
Design guidelines are important
Address perceived massing as well as building height
Setbacks with green space
Renovate existing multi-family housing
4. Downtown - Davis Straights
Woods Hole
Condo communities made to look like smaller homes
Keep same look/feel as surrounding SFHs
Converted buildings
What gets people upset? Too big, too dense
Smaller mixed-use buildings
One-bedroom units walkable to town
Keep old buildings looking like they do
5. ADUS
How can we make building them easier? Residency requirement can be a barrier.
Permitting process is onerous.
6. Seasonal housing- how to incent to be year-round housing?
Maybe STR market is saturated
Is town impacted by taxes received by STRs? Would it hurt to give that up?
Tax incentives?
Lots of homeowners don't want to be landlords
Has to be lucrative as STR
But also saving money by not building new infrastructure
Repurposing existing buildings

Group 4

1. Year round
 - Less age restricted, more single bedroom units for younger generation
 - Need more forward thinking to keep and draw younger generation
 - Reusing existing building
 - Concerned about cost (homeownership/rentals) - who is that affordable for (Tax incentives for developer (wastewater/water))
2. Both ownership and rentals with more deed restrictions (moratorium on 2nd homes)
 - Develop uptown (MRCOD?)
 - Depending on location, capitalize on 40B (taller, more units)
3. So much nitrogen already - new development is drop in pond - what needs to happen is fix what's already there
 - Stop leaching
 - Use funding to invest in what we can protect while building
4. Redistrict school- close one and build housing on that site
 - B2 zoned area could be developed @ higher density (20 units)(not as restricted)
 - Consider all villages- there's so much in center of town "Falmouth"
 - Look at other villages- more spread out
 - More housing in Woods Hole
5. ADU- yes yes!
 - Coordinated effort between town, homeowner, EDIC etc
 - Town assist- tax incentive
 - Programs like volunteering to build ADUs (like Habitat for Humanity)
 - Maybe change the owner-occupied restriction
6. Need to address STR
 - Raise tax for STR
 - Tax incentive for renting year around
 - Pay the difference of year-round & STR
 - Water/sewer/taxes breaks

Group 5

What housing needs not being met

- Young families
- Young adults 18-30
- New families
- People who cross the bridge to work
- Income is not enough to buy a home (regardless of age)

What are the needs- housing types

- Year-round rentals
- Tiny homes
- Multifamily
- People who had seasonal decided to live full-time
- Supply limited
- Do we have the inventory but not available?
- Regulate Air b&b/short-term rentals

Balancing natural resource protecting & meeting housing needs

→ Land that can be used w/o clear cutting trees
Empty parking lots/buildings
Are we at build out?

→ Town should build affordable housing
Bond to voters
Taxes from 1 gr/high end sales and bank tax

→ Incentive ADUs & regulate

→ Dedicating homes for affordable housing

Employers help w/ housing
100% aff developments

Atlanta Law re: short-term rental, residency requirements
Town

Municipal capacity and heart to implement
How to balance summer rental/tourists w/ year-round residents

Group 6

1. Young small families
Seems to be worse
Essential workers
Housing market is biggest barrier for people who work in area to move
Limited inventory
Two family homes- in the past was a good model
Quadruplex ok- but large projects (100+) concerning
Traffic
Impact on neighboring property values
More concern about multiple larger projects coming in
Zoning would need to change to do smaller unit projects (such as 4-plex)
Rental→long-term rentals lacking
Young professionals may want to buy
2. People take pride in ownership & young people renting, wanted to buy, and had to move
Even advanced positions→can't find housing to purchase
How many STRs?
Owning lets you grow wealth
"Missing" middle
3. Urgency to address older septic
Not enough education about being a good steward- for existing residents and new -- e.g. educating community about fertilizer
300 committee- very strong advocates→spaces that should stay open, evaluate each parcel
4. Consider elementary schools' location (4 elementary schools)
Town owned properties →inventory, tax title properties
Pre 1980→can convert up to 4 units
6 units/acre
Multi-unit overlay- 20 units/acre
5. Financial incentives
Downsizing is a challenge
Year-round→tax breaks
Provincetown, Orleans→limiting # of flips
Golf courses
People opposed to density→education

Participant Feedback Sheets

All participants were given the opportunity to provide written input for the project team to review. Fifteen participants turned in their feedback sheets, which prompted them to answer the question:

“Do you have specific or more detailed ideas to share?”

The table below includes all fifteen responses.

<p>Establish a dedicated program to facilitate ADU conversions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer assistance and guidance • Walk w/ owner to go thru process, to speed it up • Lease training • Help w/ financing
<p>→Have more regulations (evaluations?) for landlords to make sure they are renting a property that meets basic habitability needs</p> <p>→We do definitely need accessible transport and access to shops and amenities but I worry about making dense downtown the only place that’s affordable. The places people want to live, the beautiful places, shouldn’t just be for people’s second home.</p>
<p>Affordable housing is an urgent issue. We don’t have 3-5 years to hem and how about what structures to build. We need it now.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It seems that the calculation of area median income is flawed in a community comprised of 55+ and many 2nd homes, as the wealth of these community members isn’t accounted for. • Regulate short term rentals through incentives for landowners to convert to year-round rentals- for example deed restrict for 5-10 years to be year-round- or use transfer tax \$ to give to landlords to compensate for loss between year-round and seasonal
<p>Consider making an adjustment to the way the area median income is calculated in Falmouth→ People who own 2nd homes here but whose primary residence is not in town are not included. This prevents people who should qualify for affordable housing from being eligible.</p> <p>I agree that Falmouth’s current housing stock should be evaluated for conversion into affordable, year-round units through tax incentives.</p> <p>Would it be possible to have a minimum requirement/goal of affordable housing units in each of the villages?</p> <p>Evaluate wastewater impact (assessment) before asking for public feedback</p>
<p>We need to include tiny houses, thinking about the areas where they make most sense- dependent on who needs them/would use them.</p>

<p>(1) Expand 20 units/acre zoning to all B-2/B-3 zoned land (2) Teaticket School Conversion → redistrict the schools</p>
<p>Housing Needs- starter</p>
<p>Falmouth currently 8.11% of 10% goal What about infrastructure needs- roads, schools, first responders Why would people travel across bridge</p>
<p>I believe instead of more building which is destroying the culture of the cape, wildlife, etc. Not to mention a strain on sewer and other resources... I believe the solution is in short-term rental regulation. If Falmouth had regulations, as many towns and cities have implemented, teachers, scientists, and local families would have a chance in the market.</p> <p>The Atlanta Law (implemented in Atlanta, GA) states a short-term rental must be owned by a year-round resident and that resident can only own 2- 1 in home and 1 outside their home. This would move out large corporations and allow for locals to find housing (to help in employment and school enrollment) as well as keeping the money in the community as only year-round residents can be earning in this market.</p>
<p>I think it's important to note that the uniqueness of the cape is surrounded by nature, biodiversity, and small-town vibe. We need less new development, "clear cutting" and repurposing land, housing exists. We need stricter short-term rental regulations to reopen up rentals, push companies out of monopolizing the industry. We have more and more year-round residents that is already constricting access to medical, dental, and road/construction backups, unsafe roads, and huge impact on water, biodiversity and environmental impact. We don't want to live in a city, we chose land, nature and space to grow our families. We need land to grow food, live in harmony w/ nature and preserve this wonderful land. Things have massively changed since the 2020 census.</p>
<p>Town built 100% affordable housing. Bond to raise funds!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit number of short-term rentals allowed in town. • Incentivize ADUs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is key! • Need to be sure town at large understands this is not just about 40B • Focus on overlay district and its expansion along route 28 for multiple housing types

Falmouth Housing Production Plan

Nov 8 2023 Community Meeting

Participant Feedback Sheets

Small group interviews – who besides Town

Senior population – homelessness?

Why can't WHOI develop their land for their housing needs?

What about public safety (fire and police)?

40B laws not conducive to Cape Cod demographic

We have a lot of recovery programs that bring in people from all over Massachusetts. They often end up in sober houses of which Falmouth has over 100, many of those people stay and get jobs here and are pipelined to affordable housing that bumps our firefighters, teachers, etc. out of rentals and/or federally funded affordable housing. The town needs to be cautious about accepting federal funds.

Mass laws not friendly to landlords.