NEIGHBORHOOD DEFENDERS

PARTICIPATORY POLITICS AND AMERICA’S HOUSING CRISIS

Katherine Levine Einstein    David M. Glick    Maxwell Palmer

Boston University
www.housingpolitics.com

MAPC Inner Core Committee Meeting
September 18, 2019
PARTICIPATORY INEQUALITY

- Empower small, unrepresentative group to block, delay, or shrink housing proposals
• Empower small, unrepresentative group to block, delay, or shrink housing proposals
• Participatory housing processes biased in favor of opposition to new housing
MEETING MINUTES

- Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA
Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA

Collected data from all meetings discussing the construction of > 1 housing unit
• Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA
• Collected data from all meetings discussing the construction of > 1 housing unit
  • Accessory apartments
Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA

Collected data from all meetings discussing the construction of > 1 housing unit

- Accessory apartments
- Large apartment building
Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA

Collected data from all meetings discussing the construction of > 1 housing unit
  - Accessory apartments
  - Large apartment building

Meeting minutes for these towns featured: names, addresses, and positions on proposed housing developments
• Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA
• Collected data from all meetings discussing the construction of $>1$ housing unit
  • Accessory apartments
  • Large apartment building
• Meeting minutes for these towns featured: names, addresses, and positions on proposed housing developments
• In some cases, minutes also included reasons given for this positions
MEETING MINUTES

• Downloaded all Planning Board and Zoning Board meeting minutes from 2015-2017 for 97 cities/towns in MA
• Collected data from all meetings discussing the construction of >1 housing unit
  • Accessory apartments
  • Large apartment building
• Meeting minutes for these towns featured: names, addresses, and positions on proposed housing developments
• In some cases, minutes also included reasons given for this positions
• $N = 3,327$ commenters and $N = 4,268$ comments
Christine Gilbert of 56 Westminster Ave. thanked the board for their efforts and expressed hope for a compromise between the project and the neighbors. She also expressed concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety. Ed Temblay of 76 Wright Street expressed concern about parking and snow removal. Gary Kalajian of 24 Nourse Street is concerned about the height of the building. John Leonard, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 17, 26 Grove Street asked about Deed Restrictions for affordable housing, dumpster location and trash pick-up. Pam Hallett responded that there will be a deed restriction ensuring the units will be affordable to low and moderate income households in perpetuity. Lisa Heinz of Sunset Rd. expressed concern about curb elevation. Bob LeVane of 26 Lantern Ln. spoke in support of the project. Michael Vest shared his experience as a tenant with HCA and expressed his support. John Guist, Town Meeting Member, and Neal Mongold, 12 Brattle Place, shared their support for HCA and the project. Dave Berggren of 2 Reservoir Rd. expressed concern about shadow impacts and flooding. Chris Loreti of 56 Adams Street inquired about setbacks, the parking reduction zoning bylaw, and whether the project would go to the Conservation Commission. Jenny Raitt replied that it would. William Thorndike of 1165R Mass Ave spoke in support of the project. Kate Casa of 62 Wollaston Rd. and Patricia O’Connor Prindle of 13 Newport Street supported the project. Tami Kalajian expressed concern about flooding, pedestrian safety and the size of the project. Tom Nee of 76 River Street supported the project. Suzanne McLeod of 61 Mountain Ave. supported the project but preferred a more unique design. Linnea Berggren of 2 Reservoir Rd. expressed concern about parking overflow on adjacent streets. Tom Mansfield of 11 Lowell Street Place expressed concern about the project size and its shadow impact.

Atty. Nelson said it will be for speculation. It will be a high quality house for the neighborhood.

Frances Hanson, 42 Shannon Road asked, what type of house will be built there?

Atty. Nelson said he is not sure at this time.

Ms. Hanson asked, if they will be required to finish the road there?

Mr. Colantuoni said they will be required to comply with the Department of Public Works road requirements.

Alfred Franca, 38 Shannon Road asked, if this house will have a basement, as he has drainage concerns regarding that property?
• We identify positions taken and reasons given from meeting minutes.
• We identify positions taken and reasons given from meeting minutes.
• Names and addresses allow for merge with MA voter file and CoreLogic Property Records
• We identify positions taken and reasons given from meeting minutes.
• Names and addresses allow for merge with MA voter file and CoreLogic Property Records
• Demographic variables
  • Homeownership
  • Age
  • Party ID
  • Length of registration at address (proxy for length of residence)
  • Vote history
  • Race (Name matching algorithm)
RESULTS: PARTICIPANTS COMPARED TO VOTER FILE

**Gender**
- % Female: Voters vs. Commenters
- Bar graph showing comparison.

**Race**
- % White: Voters vs. Commenters
- Bar graph showing comparison.

**Home Owners**
- % Home Owner: Voters vs. Commenters
- Bar graph showing comparison.

**Democrats**
- % Democrats: Voters vs. Commenters
- Bar graph showing comparison.
RESULTS: PARTICIPANTS COMPARED TO VOTER FILE BY RACE

- **White**: 100% Voters, 100% Commenters
- **Black**: 0% Voters, 0% Commenters
- **Hispanic**: 0% Voters, 0% Commenters
- **Asian**: 0% Voters, 0% Commenters
- **Other**: 0% Voters, 0% Commenters
• 3 of 313 commenters in towns that were >10% Latino had a Latino surname
LATINO SURNAMES

- 3 of 313 commenters in towns that were >10% Latino had a Latino surname
- 1 of 42 commenters in Lawrence, MA (75% Latino) had a Latino surname
RESULTS: PARTICIPANTS’ POSITIONS

14%  23%  63%
Support  Neutral  Oppose
RESULTS: PARTICIPANTS’ POSITIONS

- Predictors of opposition
  - White
  - Homeowner
  - Republican
  - Number of comments
  - Infrequent voting
MASS PUBLIC GENERALLY MORE SUPPORTIVE OF HOUSING

Vote for Affordable Housing in 40B Referendum

% Comments Supporting Multifamily Housing Developments vs.
Vote for Affordable Housing in 40B Referendum
TOP 10 REASONS GIVEN BY POSITION TAKEN

- Aesthetics
- Affordability
- Density
- Environment
- Flooding
- Height/Shadows
- Home Values/City Finances
- Neighborhood Character
- Non-Compliance
- Parking
- Pedestrian Impact
- Privacy
- Safety
- Septic/Water
- Traffic

% of Group Naming Reason
• High level of expertise (e.g., “He stated that as an engineer he knows what kinds of games can be played with numbers. He gives no credibility to these counts. He added that Merrimack College traffic is not de minimus....He asked for a written report from the DPW on the impacts of proceeding with the facility.”)
NEIGHBORHOOD DEFENSE STRATEGIES

- High level of expertise (e.g., “He stated that as an engineer he knows what kinds of games can be played with numbers. He gives no credibility to these counts. He added that Merrimack College traffic is not de minimus....He asked for a written report from the DPW on the impacts of proceeding with the facility.”)

- Importance of neighborhood associations (often empowered and encouraged by local government)
• Can we change the composition of meeting attendees?
• Can we change the composition of meeting attendees?
• Evidence from GOTV operations
• Can we change the composition of meeting attendees?
• Evidence from GOTV operations
  • Effect sizes usually fairly modest from very expensive interventions
POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

• Can we change the composition of meeting attendees?
• Evidence from GOTV operations
  • Effect sizes usually fairly modest from very expensive interventions
  • Mobilization efforts may exacerbate rather than address participatory disparities
• Can we change the composition of meeting attendees?
• Evidence from GOTV operations
  • Effect sizes usually fairly modest from very expensive interventions
  • Mobilization efforts may exacerbate rather than address participatory disparities
• Concentrated costs and diffuse benefits of housing developments make it difficult to attract more attitudinally and demographically representative commenters
• Waiting period on decision-making
• Waiting period on decision-making
• Pre-register clear guidelines
• Waiting period on decision-making
• Pre-register clear guidelines
• Encourage public input on zoning, but then allow developers to build up to the limits of city/town zoning
Thank you!

www.housingpolitics.com