

MEMORANDUM

To: Deborah Burke, Executive Director, Malden Redevelopment Authority (MRA) and Maria Luise, Special Assistant to the Mayor
From: Francis Goyes, Regional Housing + Land Use Planner, MAPC
On: 10/01/2018
Re: Malden Housing Production Plan, Focus Groups and Advisory Group Meeting, 09/10/2018

OVERVIEW

MAPC staff visited Malden on Monday, September 10th, 2018, from 9:00AM to 7:30PM to meet with various groups at the start of the Housing Production Plan (HPP) process. Over the course of the day, MAPC staff gained a greater understanding of the city's *current conditions*, including housing stock, recent development trends, and issues pertaining to affordability and development impacts. Focus groups were conducted to ensure MAPC had the chance to talk with a range of people with varying backgrounds, roles, and perspectives. Community-wide events to be held as part of this planning process will focus more on planning for the *future* of housing in Malden.

Along with Deborah Burke, Executive Director of the Malden Redevelopment Authority (MRA), and Maria Luise, Special Assistant to Mayor Gary Christenson, MAPC staff engaged in the following activities:

- Tour of Housing in Malden – 9AM-12PM
- Focus Groups – 12PM-5:30PM
- First Advisory Committee Meeting – 6PM-7:30PM

TOUR OF HOUSING IN MALDEN

The 3-hour tour of Malden was led by Kevin Duffy, the Mayor's Business Strategy Development Officer. In attendance were Michelle Romero, Malden City Planner; Cathy MacMullin, Malden Teen Center; Maria Luise, Mayor's Office; and Deborah Burke, MRA. The tour visited the city's eight wards to better understand the types of housing around Malden, including single- and multifamily housing options, new housing developments, and deed-restricted affordable housing. The tour also included visits to sites potentially suitable for redevelopment, such as the Malden Hospital Site, the Malden Department of Public Works site along the Malden River, and the Dartmouth Street Public Parking Lot.

FOCUS GROUPS

With the support of the City and MRA, MAPC staff conducted four hour-long focus groups with various housing stakeholders to understand concerns around housing and development constraints. The four focus groups were composed of those with local housing expertise, local developers, local business owners, and Malden residents. Focus groups were held at the Malden Public Library.

HOUSING EXPERTS

The focus group with those working in housing and housing-related areas consisted of eleven representatives from the City Council, Board of Health, Permits, Inspections and Planning Services, Malden Redevelopment Authority, Outreach Community and Reform Center, Bread of Life, and the Massachusetts Senior Action Council. Participants were asked to share their thoughts and experiences with key housing trends and issues in Malden, including changing community attitudes towards housing, housing challenges, and gaps in the housing supply. Focus group participants stressed that a range of household types are in need of appropriate housing in Malden, including

seniors, young families, and recent graduates. Other challenges in the city range from homelessness to renters and homeowners being priced out of Malden.

Participants shared that perceptions of new housing differ within the community. Some community members, especially lifelong residents, feel that the city has drastically changed and are less open to new development. On the other hand, newer residents seem to be attracted to the changes in the city, and would welcome additional housing opportunities. Participants also stated that landlords of smaller multifamily units have not been able to renovate their housing stock to match the newer units on the market because of high material and construction costs, but can charge more in rent anyway due to the high housing demand. Also of concern among participants is housing used for short-term rentals, and the impact this has on close-knit neighborhoods.

Some participants expressed interest in expanding the supply of affordable housing, especially for senior households; adopting an inclusionary zoning policy to increase deed-restricted affordable units; creating more housing options for homeless residents; and increasing affordable housing opportunities for moderate- and middle-income residents. Participants also mentioned that existing maximum occupancy limits for unrelated residents (no more than two) decreases opportunities for non-family households.

HOUSING DEVELOPERS

The housing developer focus group consisted of nine representatives from private and non-profit development groups, as well as City Council members. Participants were asked to share what they perceive to be the extent and characteristics of unmet housing demand in Malden, what housing types are needed to address this demand, and barriers to doing so.

Participants stated that they saw a need for moderate-income housing, as well as for housing with universal design features. Housing located in proximity to transit that lowers reliance on vehicular transportation was also highlighted. Developers also saw a need for homeownership opportunities, given the new high-priced rental units on the market. Finally, they spoke to the need for housing to support economic development and business in the downtown.

Participants mentioned the moratorium and a politicization of the regulatory process, which has made development more uncertain, as a barrier for additional housing. Another barrier is new zoning that increased parking requirements for multifamily housing and lowered maximum building heights. Other challenges mentioned included limited new sites for development; community concerns around new housing, especially if units have more than one bedroom; and traffic and a lack of dependable transit outside of downtown.

Participants were interested in inclusionary zoning if the City were to offer compensation in return for the affordable set-aside, such as increased density. Suggested strategies to increase housing affordability included more flexible zoning, FAR bonuses, and reduced parking requirements around transit.

BUSINESS OWNERS

MAPC also met with one restaurant owner and the City's Business Development Officer. They were asked to share their experience with hiring employees that live in Malden, thoughts on challenges facing retail businesses, and how the City supports its businesses.

The restaurant owner cited low turnover of staff due in part to higher wages for culinary positions. Discussion focused on how traditional retail businesses in Malden face difficult competition from online marketplaces, especially those located outside of downtown. Newer businesses coming into the city appear to cater to young professionals, especially businesses located in mixed-use developments around Malden Center. It has been challenging for businesses to afford newer retail

spaces in these buildings due to their larger size and associated costs. However, some developers have created smaller retail spaces and provided financial incentives for occupying them.

Discussion also included that new housing development in the downtown has helped businesses, as it's brought more customers. Younger consumers also use alternative forms of transportation, such as walking, shared bicycles, or transportation network companies, which lowers parking need. Nonetheless, parking and traffic were mentioned as obstacles for business development, as was zoning that limits retail opportunities outside of downtown.

MALDEN RESIDENTS

The resident focus group consisted of twelve Malden residents from the eight city wards. Renters and homeowners, varied household compositions, and varied lengths of residency in the city were represented by attendees. They were invited to share what kind of housing they live in, their household composition, length of residency, and future housing plans. Participants also shared what they perceive to be the primary themes of housing discussion in Malden right now, and their personal experiences finding and securing housing.

Participants strongly agreed that rising housing prices are a challenge for many in Malden. Renters have experienced higher monthly rents and are unable to afford rising home sale prices. Homeowners interested in downsizing or upgrading are also unable to do so in the current market. Residents repeatedly stated their appreciation for the city and its diversity, but many of them were doubtful that they would be able to continue living here due to rising housing prices. In addition, participants expressed concern about older and poorly maintained but high cost housing in Malden.

Newer residents indicated they feel other residents perceive them as outsiders, and that their opinions are discounted. Renters also stated that their voices and concerns appear to be of less value than those of homeowners.

Participants indicated that existing housing types are not fully meeting the varied needs of residents. There was support for allowing single-to-multifamily housing conversions to increase the number of units in a structure, as well as for legalizing accessory dwelling units. Residents also saw a need for more 3-bedroom apartments for larger households.

Residents also expressed concerned about the number of short-term rentals in the city, and the impacts they have on neighborhoods. New development also raised concerns, mainly about how it impacts public infrastructure, including increased traffic and school children. Another concern was the number of transient international students living in the city, and their impact on the housing market and neighborhoods. Residents also stated that the City should do more to leverage new development, including adding inclusionary zoning or impact fees to support increases in public infrastructure provision.

ADVISORY GROUP

Members of the HPP Advisory Group (AG) guide the HPP process by sharing local knowledge of housing need and demand, reviewing and providing input on plan elements, identifying stakeholders, promoting and facilitating public forums, and building support for the plan. The first advisory group meeting was held at John & Christina Markey Community Center. In attendance were the eight Advisory Group (AG) members, two ex-officio members, and MAPC staff. The meeting included an introduction to the Housing Production Plan process led by MAPC staff, a conversation of the housing context in Malden (including issues and stakeholders), potential comparison/contrast communities for the HPP analysis, and an overview of next steps.

AG members perceive that the housing issues facing the city are lack of housing affordability for a variety of household types, increasing gentrification and displacement, concerns around new residents (including how

to engage them as part of the Malden community), impacts of new housing development (such as traffic, loss of open space, and school capacity), homelessness, misinformation and misconceptions around housing, and the lack of a clear housing strategy going forward. Members stated that Malden's ethnic and racial diversity is a positive quality, but that the community should be more welcoming towards newer residents. There was a perception that better engagement strategies were necessary so that a variety of residents could participate in various planning and development processes.

Regarding communities that will provide important context for the Malden housing need and demand assessment, AG members stated that Malden was similar to Quincy, Everett, Melrose, Cambridge, and Somerville. Other communities that they think Malden could aspire to be like include Newton, Brookline, Cambridge, Lowell, and Salem. MAPC staff will analyze how these and other communities compare to Malden, and present a finalized list of context communities for the HPP at the following AG meeting.