

June 20, 2023

COMMENTS OF LINDA SACHS
lsachsnyc@earthlink.net

RE: South Hadley's Progress to Date on a Draft Housing Production Plan and its Interim Deliverables, Including "Housing Needs and Demand Assessment"

COMMUNITY FORUM #2, June 22, 2023

South Hadley has done considerable work to date on drafting a 2023 Housing Production Plan and the creation of interim deliverables. The work has serious deficiencies.

One of the most horrendous deficiencies is that there is no consideration of sustainable architecture. Sustainable architecture should be the linchpin of any new housing construction.

If this deficiency is not remedied in the final plan and significant housing construction occurs -- including multi-family, affordable and low-income -- South Hadley will start to look and feel like some of the ugliest, congested cities in America.

The Plan exists in a terrible, old-fashioned, mid-twentieth century silo that ignores the realities of:

1. The human need for nature and the numerous studies that show humans living in landscapes without trees and other greenery suffer social, psychological and physical harm.
2. The harmful effects of noise, light and traffic pollution.
3. The Climate Crisis and the important role of trees for carbon sequestration and temperature cooling.
4. Loss of biodiversity and species extinction.

As part of the planning process, a December 12, 2022 Community Forum asked participants about design elements they favored. Shockingly, sustainable architecture was not given to participants as a choice. This is an unconscionable oversight given the fact that high on the list of what participants said they love about their neighborhoods was: 1) Access to nature/greenery/open spaces/rural areas; and 2) Walkability.

To face the realities that go beyond the need for housing means that construction must: 1) preserve natural ecosystems; 2) limit negative environmental impacts; 3) use clean or renewable energy; and 4) utilize ecological landscaping. That means that 75% of plants and trees should be natives, with no wide expanses of turf grass that cause ecological dead zones, harm to pollinators and require vast amounts of water and dangerous chemicals to maintain.

Trees and nature are must-haves in every neighborhood including any new ones, no matter how small, that are developed in South Hadley. Otherwise we are creating more environmental injustice and more concrete jungles.

I am a South Hadley homeowner and I recognize the need for more housing. But construction needs be done in a way that reflects the fact that we are living in the 21st century, in a climate crisis. The 2023s Housing Production Plan must center around sustainable architecture and ecological landscaping.

RE: Housing Survey - Extended Responses Due Date 7/16

1 message

Jeff Labrecque <jlabrecque@thevillagecommons.com>
To: Anne Capra <acapra@southhadleyma.gov>

Wed, Jul 5, 2023 at 4:54 PM

Hi Anne,

I just responded to the housing survey, and just noticed I forgot to type in my Name or Email Address in the responses. I was so busy thinking about checking all the boxes that I slipped up on that part. I found the entire survey to be exceptional, especially the sections on the Housing Scenarios at 3 locations. Sketches can speak a thousand words for you. Spent a lot of time studying the hypothetical proposals, to best apply my answer. Well done regarding the vision and the 3 proposed options for each. Trust that I didn't race through this, I spent considerable time from both a residential and business view to look at the pro and con of each and every answer that I recommended as priority or back seat.

I wish I had more time to type in footnotes supporting the answers and adding comment to the potential housing strategies. Hope I can free up more time in the near future, and have no problem sharing my thoughts with you in person or via Zoom if you would like to discuss.

Again, hats off to you and to anyone that assisted you with this survey. I believe you really included a great menu of topics, which certainly speaks to the potential of every hypothetical scenario. Very well done!

Best,

Jeff

Jeffrey Labrecque

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jlabrecque@thevillagecommons.com

From: Anne Capra <acapra@southhadleyma.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 11:04 AM

MEMORANDUM

TO: Housing Plan Production Advisory Committee Members
June McCartin, Outwith Studio+Utile
Anne Capra, SH Planning Board

DATE: June 30, 2023

RE: Questions- SH Housing Plan Production Community Forum (June 22, 2023)

Thank you for the opportunity to present questions concerning the information and materials presented during the above-referenced community forum on South Hadley's HPP (draft dated 1/30/ 2023). I was unable to attend in person due to a scheduling conflict with another Town department's board meeting. However, I did watch SHCTV's Vimeo recording.

Please note when I use the term '*affordable units*' I'm referring to deed restricted housing units occupied by households paying less than 30% of their income for rent and/or households earning 80% or less of So Hadley's AMI, e.g., one person= \$1,196/ mo. and a family of 4 = \$1,708/mo. It is my understanding (and please do correct me if I'm wrong) that these are the type of housing units that satisfy the 10% affordability requirements in 40R and 40B. With that as a backdrop my questions are as follows.

1. I've struggled to figure out what problem the HPP Advisory Committee is attempting to fix. Perhaps the answer lies in an unanswered question from one of the community forum's in-person participants: "*What happens if we do nothing?*"
2. According to Zillow, the average monthly rent for the units listed as of 6/30/2023 in South Hadley is \$1,737. Has the Town considered offering deed restricted subsidies (from remaining ARPA funds, grants, and/or the proposed tax on short-term rentals) to support 'housing cost burdened renters'?
3. How many affordable units does the Town need to satisfy the 40R requirement? [The 2016 HPP stated 313 more were needed, but during the June 22, 2023 community forum one participant indicated the target number might be as high as 370.]
4. I couldn't locate certified copies of both Town 40R Districts, but the overlay for the SH Falls district seems to be comprised of mostly industrial and business zoning. How many affordable units can actually fit within that part of the district zoned for residential?
5. How do the Town's Consultant and/or the Advisory Committee intend to ensure that there is a broad statistically significant sample size for 'Community Survey 2'... upon which to make assertions about 'what the Town wants'? [SHELD's latest 2023 Customer Satisfaction Survey had 2,078 responses.]

6. The HPP states it is not a ‘fair housing plan’. How will goals related to equity and inclusion be achieved?
7. Is it possible to provide street name overlays on the maps included in the HPP? [Even if that requires more than one page.]
8. What is the purpose of the HPP’s “comparison communities” ... Why cite Blackstone and Fairhaven, MA instead of towns in Western Mass, which are closer to South Hadley?
9. Are the goals set out in the HPP consistent with the Town’s updated Master Plan?
10. How do ‘vacancy rates’ cited in the HPP relate to affordable housing generally? [The HPP states that the Town’s rental vacancy rate is 4.2% but should be 5-7%.]
11. What is the relationship between our 2016 HPP and this latest one? In other words, is the 2023 HPP an update or a re-write? Did the 2016 HPP meet any of its goals?
12. Shouldn’t Town Meeting weigh-in on the following:
 - a. Bylaws to ensure that environmental footprint expansions connected to affordable units are minimized.
 - b. Whether the Town wants to devote some of its most expensive real property to the construction of affordable units.
 - c. Are the 14 “test fit sites” (at p 86) on accepted roads- should they be?
 - d. What type of affordable units does the Town want, e.g., 60-110 unit buildings with amenities for residents, in-fill, or adaptive reuse of vacant buildings?
 - e. What’s the Town’s goal vis-à-vis relieving current and/or potential residents of being housing cost burdened?
 - f. Is the Town prepared to invest in the physical infrastructure (e.g., roads, water/sewer lines, admin staff, etc.) and ecological remediation (e.g., loss of tree canopies for de-carbonization and cooling, soil erosion, wildlife disturbance, etc.) needed to support 313-370 new affordable units? Equally important, has that \$\$ amount been determined?
 - g. Is the Town willing to add density and perhaps give up its small town quality to advance this housing initiative?

Lastly, I understand that South Hadley has been included in the State’s list of Opportunity Zone communities (No. 25015821100), which is presumably based on the finding that our Census Tract (8210-13) has a 4% higher poverty rate than the rest of State. Given that our median home values are 50% lower than other MA communities and our median age (43) is 8% higher would it be fair to say that the HPP is a form of gentrification?

Again, thank you for this opportunity to ask questions and I look forward to your responses.

Denise Presley
19 The Knolls
South Hadley

Re: Housing Survey - Extended Responses Due Date 7/16

1 message

Denise Presley <denise@presleylawpllc.com>
To: Anne Capra <acapra@southhadleyma.gov>

Tue, Jul 4, 2023 at 8:05 AM

Hello HPP Advisory Committee,

If there's a third community survey, and under the circumstances I hope there will be, please consider including an opt-out response for each question. HPP survey #2 is skewed to force respondents to acquiesce to all of the initiatives even if they completely disagree with one or more of them (the lowest rating available is "low priority").

Moreover, this invitation to complete the survey says its purpose is to provide feedback on strategies to increase low and moderate housing in town. How is the term "low and moderate income" defined? When the detached ADU bylaw was included in the Town Meeting Warrant members were led to believe they were voting for "affordable housing" as that nomenclature is commonly understood. However, detached ADUs- as provided for in the bylaw, aren't likely to be affordable or help the Town satisfy 40R requirements. Shouldn't citizens receive more information about the housing and land use strategies they're being asked to 'prioritize'?

Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Presley

Sent from my iPad

On Jul 3, 2023, at 10:44 AM, Anne Capra <acapra@southhadleyma.gov> wrote:

Dear Resident,

The update to the 2016 Housing Production Plan is well underway and we need your input!

As follow up to the June 22nd Community Forum, we are seeking feedback on a series of draft strategies for increasing housing opportunities for low- and middle-income households in South Hadley. Below are links to the survey, a recording of the community forum, the draft Housing Needs Assessment Report, and the project website.

Sign up on the project website to receive updates [HERE](#). Please contact me with any questions. Share this email with your networks!!

Sincerely,
Anne Capra

SURVEY on Housing Strategies: links.shhousingplan.org/survey2
Due date extended to July 16th

June 22nd **Housing Community Forum** recording: <https://vimeo.com/839763093>

MEMORANDUM

TO: HPP Advisory Committee Members
June McCartin, Outwith Studio + Utile
Anne Capra, SH Planning Board

DATE: July 10, 2023

RE: Supplemental Questions- SH Housing Plan Production Community Forum (June 22, 2023)

I understand the 6/22/23 Community Forum Public Comment period has been extended to July 16, 2023. Therefore, I'd like to supplement my 6/30/23 submission (question no. 9) regarding the HPP's compatibility with other Town land use studies and plans commissioned over the years.

Historical Sites

In addition to the Master Plan, South Hadley's Open Space and Recreation Plan (2019- 2026) (at p 4-20 and 4-22) states:

"Also significant to the Town's historical and cultural resources is the Woodbridge Street Historic District which was established and added to the list of properties of the Massachusetts Historical Commission on November 14, 1983, and includes 28 Woodbridge Street - The Sycamores."

"In addition to the two districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places, three properties in South Hadley are individually listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places, and a third has a Preservation Restriction:

- *South Hadley Canal (in 1978)*
- *U. S. Post Office Main Branch at 1 Hadley Street (in 1986)*
- *The Sycamores at 28 Woodbridge Street (Preservation Restriction in 1999)*
- *First Congregation Church (in 2019)"*

In light of the foregoing, why is 28 Woodbridge one of the "Potential Opportunity Sites" in the June 22, 2023 HPP Presentation slides (at p 57)?

Watersheds

Further, the Conway School, which offers a graduate level educational program in land design that's ecologically and socially sustainable, produced a Watershed Assessment (2018) for South Hadley. The Executive Summary states, in pertinent part:

"In the 2010 Master Plan, residents of South Hadley expressed their appreciation for the Town's open space, agricultural history, and scenic views of the Connecticut River and Mount Holyoke Range. The Town's sustainability goals expressed in the plan include preserving open space and maintaining its legacy of farmland. However, continued residential development throughout South Hadley threatens its ecological integrity and rural character. Currently, the spread of low density, rural, residential development and related infrastructure has a negative impact on stream health, which in turn impairs water quality. Encroaching development is visible throughout South Hadley in the form of active construction of new housing units."

Remarkably, in addition to 28 Woodbridge, the HPP includes as 'Potential Opportunity Sites' land on East Cottage and Amherst Rd (at 59-60). It seems all three would require deforestation and diminishment of open space in Town.

Landscape

Sometime in 2012, the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife produced a bio map showing critical core and natural landscape. The map is dated but presumably the terra firma and water boundaries are still there. This map coupled with FEMA's flood boundary zones (for So Hadley Falls) makes one wonder if the Haas Electric or 56 School St sites are 'Potential Opportunities'? That's not to say that flood risks can't be mitigated but the very nice residential housing design plans- included in HPP Survey #2, which citizens are currently voting on, might need altering.

Lastly, I don't have time, access or the expertise to perform an analysis of all of the Town's land use and environmental studies vis-à-vis the HPP's impact. However, I think we can all agree that such studies should complement each other.

For your convenience, I attach copies of my June 30th Memo along with the documents referenced herein. And once again, thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the HPP.

Best,

Denise Presley
19 The Knolls

Marc & Linda Desrosiers



310 Amherst Road
South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075

June 28, 2023

Lisa Wong
Town Administrator
116 Main Street
South Hadley, Mass 01075

Anne Capra
Director, Planning and Conversation
116 Main Street
South Hadley, Mass. 01075

Dear Ms Wong and Ms Capra,

I am writing this letter after hearing of a meeting held in the Senior Center of the Master Plan Implementation Committee. First of all I had no knowledge of this meeting and second I was informed that the proposed changes were not well elucidated. The impression I received was that the intention of the proposed changes were to implement increased housing opportunities by altering the existing zoning. Having just seeing the Planning Board pass the recent ADU bylaw I am disappointed.

My biggest reservation in both of these proposed changes is that the taxpayers do not get adequate input. The ADU meeting was via zoom which I found hard to get the opportunity to express my opinion. Changes of this magnitude require the electorate to have every opportunity to be notified and have the opportunity to participate in a verbal forum. I feel that if the Planning Board wants to make changes to the bylaws that they should mail each taxpayer via their utility bills the text of the changes along with a return post card soliciting their approval or disapproval of the proposed changes. It is the job of you the extension of our elected representatives to be sure that what you are proposing is something that is desired.

People move to South Hadley and buy their homes with the impression that what they are buying, i.e., existing surroundings will not change significantly. The Planning Board's responsibility is to honor the contractual obligations that the citizens bought their property under.

Sincerely,

Marc Desrosiers