

TO: Anne Capra, Director of Planning and Conservation
Lisa Wong, Town Administrator
Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator

FROM: Sara Harper, South Hadley Resident

DATE: October 22, 2023

RE: The South Hadley Housing Production Plan Draft plan August 28, 2023
open comment period

I want to thank the Town of South Hadley staff, Anne Capra, Director of Planning and Conservation, Lisa Wong, Town Administer, Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator, the Advisory Committee, consultants, and many others for their extensive, well-researched, and thoughtful plan for helping the Town of South Hadley move forward with their House Protection Plan.

I have spent time reading the South Hadley HPP Draft Plan. The HPP is a planning process and document to guide the next five years of housing policy and development in South Hadley. This plan is in response to the lack of Designated Affordable Housing and affordable housing for around 70% of the population due to low incomes. South Hadley also isn't in compliance with the 10% Designated Affordable Housing rule.

I am an architect and have researched many housing models both in Massachusetts and nationally that support the direction the South Hadley HPP Draft plan is headed. It's encouraging that there is a significant move today to reconsider the Missing Middle Housing model along with the need for affordable smaller housing types for a variety of diverse residents' needs. Currently, I am developing, along with a partner, a model which directly addresses the goals and strategies set forth in the HPP plan.

What's encouraging to me is the result from the first survey below from residents identifying strong community-driven values about what their neighborhood communities in South Hadley can embody.

“● People and networks of care and support are key for good neighborhoods and foundational for communities.

- Walkability and access to amenities were important neighborhood features.
- Community could be geographic or based on shared interests/goals.
- Participation and commitment to making things better are important aspects of community.
- A welcoming, diverse environment that allows for differences of people and perspectives was seen as important.
- Having open space, natural areas, and agricultural areas nearby or interwoven with neighborhoods was important.
- Quality of life issues—including lack of noise, maintenance of buildings and the public realm, or similar—are important.
- Concerning housing specifically
 - Affordability and increasing affordable options was an important concern.

- There is a desire for alternative housing types, including desires for specific housing types such as ADUs and mixed-use development.
- Many respondents, including those that want housing change generally, do not want anything to change about housing in their neighborhood.”

I’ve included this statistic below as it quantifies the population breakdown and how it can affect a new approach to housing models.

1. Household Structure and size

- 15% - Couples with children
- 03% - Adults/singles with children
- 40% - Couples without children
- 33% - Singles without children
- 1.6% - Single senior

The population breakdown showing percentages of the makeup of the household groups in South Hadley supports the need for the creation of smaller and more varied housing that can be built for new families, couples, singles, and diverse residents. By doing so, this can then provide affordable housing for low-income residents. Nationally, there are movements toward housing solutions similar to the HPP plan.

Next, participants at Community Forum #1 supported the need for “housing for young people, housing for low-income households, and housing for moderate-income households as three of the most important issues to address. Home rental choices, home purchase choices, homes accessible to people with disabilities, homes for families, and multigenerational living options were also broadly prioritized (though not always with the highest priority).

- Connections to others/neighbors and friendship
- Diversity (by demographics, income, ideas, etc.)
- Access to amenities

Other themes identified in these discussions were participation, respect, culture, public life, care and support of others/neighbors, shared values/goals, and working for the good of all.”

These are all so important, and ideas and values I fully support.

The results of these surveys strongly support neighborhoods for residents that could benefit from HPP; it seems the majority of the residents of South Hadley support the HPP plan. I support the HPP plan.

The goals and strategies for the HPP plan support forward thinking about the development of housing for the future. I, as a resident, agree with all the goals and strategies. These strategies below especially resonate with my belief in a new neighborhood model that supports multi-generational residents, neurodiverse residents, sustainable and universal design, and neighborhood community.

- “Strategy 1: ARPA for Housing;
- Strategy 2: Adopt CPA;
- Strategy 4: Affordable Housing Fund;
- Strategy 8: Missing Middle Zoning: Allow more “missing middle” housing types by right in more zoning districts;

Strategy 9: Align residential dimensions; requirements (e.g., minimum lot size, setbacks, etc. with the historic pattern of development. Strategy;
Strategy 10: Facilitate the Implementation of ADU Zoning;
Strategy 11: Pre-Permit Designs;
Strategy 12: Adopt zoning-based incentives for deed-restricted Affordable Housing(e.g. density bonuses, dimensional relief, parking relief;
Strategy 13: Friendly 40B Permitting. Use the Friendly 40B process and Local Initiative Program to strategically permit mixed-income development;
Strategy 14: Consider the Specialized Energy Code. Consider adopting the Specialized Energy code for New Development;
Strategy 15: Zoning for Sustainability. Allow zoning-based incentives for development that meets specific sustainability standards beyond what is required in the building code;
Strategy 16: Encourage Universal Design. Encourage Universal Design in new housing development (through consultations with developers, pre-permitted designs, or the means);
Strategy 17: House Ecosystems Relationships: Build relationships with a variety of organizations in the 17 ecosystems, including nonprofit developers, for-profit developers, commercial real estate brokers, lenders, and others, whose interest could benefit housing in South Hadley;
Strategy 18: Development Opportunity Catalog. Create and maintain a catalog of development opportunities.”

In conclusion, going forward I would welcome the opportunity to discuss various neighborhood models that can be considered for the implementation of the South Hadley HPP Draft plan, August 28, 2023. An added note, Governor Healey has proposed a 5 year \$4.1 billion funding plan for affordable housing and bears investigation on how South Hadley could apply for funding for its HPP.

Thank you.