

# The Town of Cape Elizabeth Housing Diversity Study Committee Community Forum #2 Summary Report

## **Community Forum #2 Summary**

Date: December 5, 2022

Time: 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Location: Town Council Chambers

## **Background:**

HDSC members hosted a Community Forum that included a presentation on the Housing Diversity Study's Goals for target populations and price ranges for housing. In addition, public comment and input were gathered via groups and also given by individuals. At the end of the session, participants complete an evaluation, and those responses get summarized into a report known as Community Forum #2 Evaluation Summary.

## **Community Input and Ideas Presented:**

1. **Housing Goals:** The committee discussed that the housing goal of 450 affordable homes over 10 years is flexible and up for debate.
2. **Community Support:** Community members supported a more diverse community and efforts to build housing for target groups. Community members expressed a desire to have a more diverse group of people living in Cape Elizabeth.
3. **Cost Burden:** Cost-burdened homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Consultants showed AMI slides to the public again to give a range of incomes for potential homeowners and renters based on family size.
4. **Survey:** The committee and community expressed a need for a comprehensive written survey to be sent to the community to weigh in on housing issues and strategies. The committee and community also desired to coordinate with other committees or council efforts.
5. **Data Collection Strategies:** Lumio systems, community forums, surveys, neighborhood meetings, focus groups, and public input in committee meetings.
6. **Seniors:** Creating housing ideal for seniors (low cost, low maintenance) also helps all populations that need affordable rentals and homes.
7. **Affordable Homes:** The Housing Diversity Study gave guidelines of \$100,000 to \$300,000 for the cost of homes to reach target populations of younger people, workers, and downsizing

seniors. And monthly rent guidelines were \$1,200 or less, with a maximum of \$2,000. Currently, it states that the median home price is \$700,000 in Cape Elizabeth.

8. How do you find the room? The community asked to explore where to put new housing for the target groups. The community members discussed that zoning must change to allow for development. Density must increase, and lot size must decrease.
9. Zoning: Density allowances must increase, and lot size requirements must decrease to allow for the building of affordable units. Currently, 10 acres are needed to build 3 units or more. A community member gave an example that if zoning changed, 1.4 acres could support 3 buildings with 9 units each with a total yield of 27 units. The above example is only possible with local zoning changes.
10. Buffer Zones: The community desires buffer zones between dense housing and existing homes to preserve the neighborhood's aesthetics.
11. Attracting Developers: Community members stated that developers would take an interest in Cape Elizabeth once the zoning is adjusted because their ability to provide affordable housing and turn a profit will become possible. Conversely, without zoning changes, there is no incentive to build affordable housing in Cape Elizabeth.
12. Parking: Community members expressed concern about street parking, particularly during winter. Community members prefer adequate parking for all residents to prevent street parking.
13. In-Fill Lots: Community members supported using in-fill lots to build starter, single-family homes. There is a desire for building standards and buffer zones to preserve the neighborhood's character and esthetic.
14. ADUs: ADUs garnered support with building standards that preserved the neighbors' privacy and looked of the neighborhood. ADU's are not expected to assist very much with creating a large number of affordable units but should be used to help supplement a diversified housing stock. The community and committee support the building of ADUs as soon as possible. The Governor's office hosted a webinar on ADUs, which was recommended for viewing.
15. Garden Apartments: There is mixed support for multi-family apartments. There is more support for three-story structures and some support for four-story structures. The committee and community understand that multi-family apartments will likely be needed to meet arbitrary goals.
16. Attracting Business: Some community members expressed a desire for a more robust business district in town.
17. Tax Incentives: State and federal tax incentives could be utilized by developers if Town Council adjusted the zoning of Cape Elizabeth. Local tax support is not likely needed if zoning is changed to allow for feasible projects eligible for state and federal affordable housing support.

18. History of Housing: Some members asked how housing got so segregated and unattainable for so many? Richard Rothstein's, *The Color Law* was recommended as a book to read. In addition, the community suggested a presentation on housing history.
19. Transportation: Community members in each group raised transportation as an issue for lower-income residents. The need for a car is a reality when living in Cape Elizabeth, as public transportation does not exist, and there is no commercial district to support the needs of residents.
20. Affordable Housing Goals vs. Reality: The Town has had a goal of creating affordable housing for a long time. However, the zoning became less and less conducive for affordable housing over the years. This trend must change to make room for more people to live in Cape Elizabeth.
21. Difficult Conversations: Community members expressed a need for misinformation about potential housing projects to be addressed with their neighbors. A willingness to have difficult conversations with those that are unsupportive was discussed as a need for this work to be successful.
22. Housing Crisis: During the forum, a recommendation is that the committee educates the public about the housing crisis, so that community members are more aware of the need to create affordable housing. A podcast on this topic was recommended and offered to be emailed to the committee.
23. Types of Housing: Small neighborhoods should be built around playgrounds and other amenities.
24. Open Land: Open land is desirable, so higher density in areas is needed.
25. Resident Needs: Past residents who moved just outside Cape Elizabeth need to be considered during these discussions. Seniors should be surveyed in written or verbal forms. Providing housing for people that work in Cape Elizabeth is supported. Provide options for rental and homeownership for target groups.