

Report from the Affordable Housing Trust to the Selectmen on Suggested Affordable Housing Sites

The following report has been put together by the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) and contains an endorsed list of potential sites for the location of affordable housing within the Town of Hamilton. This report was created following several public meetings, where public testimony was taken. One of these meetings was a working meeting between the Affordable Housing Trust and the Hamilton Planning Board. The Trust also obtained comments from Hargidon Architecture and Design, who were hired as consultants to evaluate the Senior Center/ Winthrop School/ Public Safety Building site. The consultants presented their findings at two of the Trust's meetings. The Trust also obtained comments from town staff, including the Conservation Agent and the Board of Health Agent.

The Affordable Housing Trust established a process for reviewing several sites within the Town. This process included the following steps:

Step 1: HAHT to identify possible locations for affordable housing:

- List and review town-owned properties;
- Review privately-owned properties that have been publicly identified to the Trust;
- Publicly identify sites under consideration and invite neighborhood input.

Step 2: Identify relevant macro issues on each town-owned site under consideration to be addressed by town staff, and/or developers, and/or consultants, and/or input from public. Same concepts for privately owned sites should be considered, however the HAHT does not serve a gating role and thus control of the sub issues by the HAHT may not be the same:

- Visual impact on neighbors/proximity to adjacent houses;
- Zoning & frontage;
- Adequate uplands for proposed concept;
- Assessment of Practical/Plausible/feasible;
- Adequacy of Access / traffic implications-study;
- Cost / price to town;
- Identify any significant risks;
- Traffic.

Step 3: Inform Selectmen, Planning Board, Community Preservation Committee and other relevant boards and solicit their conceptual input on the respective site/sites.

- Contact and work with Planning Board under its 40B policy, if appropriate ;
- Contact Selectmen under its land acquisition policy, if appropriate.

Step 4: HAHT to discuss macro issues per relevant site, to hold public meeting after input from boards and/or neighbors, to assess whether issues are likely addressable, and to vote whether site(s) qualifies for further consideration.

Step 5: HAHT to work with BOS-selected Host Community Partner (HCP) or other developer(s) to encourage them to consider property. If the HCP/developer chooses to pursue development – then it will begin process of developing site, including getting the site under control.

- HCP or developer starts long process of permitting & developing site
- HAHT to periodically meet with HCP/developer & assess progress during permit & development process so that it can stay informed as to how the potential development is proceeding vs. HAHT goals.

Step 6: HAHT to vote whether to recommend support for the project to the permitting authority, to the Selectmen, to the Community Preservation Committee (if project requires CPA funding), and/or to Town Meeting (if necessary because of public financing/sale of land/acquisition of land).

During this process several potential sites were considered including the sites listed below. In addition, other sites were considered, but were not placed on the final list due to various reasons.

The Affordable Housing Trust is presenting a list that was selected and endorsed at their meeting of November 9, 2016 consisting of the following parcels of land:

- Longmeadow Way Parcels near Bay Road;
- Gordon Conwell site at Bridge Street and Miles River Road;
- 13 Essex Street.

The following report summarizes the issues pertaining to each of these sites, including:

- visual impact on neighbors;
- zoning and frontage;
- natural resources issues;
- project feasibility;
- traffic and access issues;
- cost / price to Town.

Longmeadow Way Parcels



1. The easterly edge of the land has significant wetlands jurisdictional areas, including the Miles River, the riverfront area which is associated with it, the bordering vegetated wetland zone that also is present adjacent to the Miles River, and the FEMA flood zone. The size and complexity of a 40B project, including the siting of a water treatment area, the housing structures themselves, the drainage infrastructure and landscaping would all be constrained by the jurisdictional zones. That does not mean the zones prohibit a project. It does mean that an application review, with a copy to DEP, by the Hamilton Conservation Commission may be necessary.
2. This site is located outside of a Zone II to a public supply well. Soil tests would need to be completed to determine how many units could be located on the site.
3. There is direct visual and traffic impact to immediate abutters at Bay Road & Longmeadow Way, as well as along sections of Ortins Road.

4. The project would require a comprehensive permit under Chapter 40B MGL to achieve multiple units on the site since Hamilton does not permit multi-family housing in this zoning district. The developer has indicated they would comply with zoning district setbacks.
5. The site is complicated by three properties which are owned by two neighbors along a private way. The properties have interconnected easements and Planning Board restrictions from when the land was initially subdivided which frames the nature of land ownership and the possible sequence of any development. The properties are already under site control by an affordable housing developer. There are specific time restraints related to the site control agreements. There are strong and organized neighbor objections to a project on this site.
6. There are safety concerns due to traffic at the intersection of Longmeadow Way and Bay Road. There may be a need for a full traffic impact analysis as part of the 40B permitting process. The traffic study that was conducted for the nearby Pirie property in 2013 offers guidance that Bay Road has adequate capacity. The right of way and easements likely have adequate width.
7. There are few direct financial risks to the Town since it is a potential transaction between private landowners and a developer. If the Town dedicates housing specific CPA funding, the goal would be to obtain an appropriate number of units and local preference for the level of contribution. Non-financial risks have not yet been identified. Town Meeting would be involved if CPA funding is required.
8. The sponsorship of the proposed project is known. The properties are already under contract to Harborlight Community Partners and a project is ready to go through Chapter 40B permitting. The timing relative to senior affordable housing is uncertain and likely many years out.
9. There is a claim by neighbors of a negative impact on schools during the construction of the project. This is a topic to be discussed with the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District.
10. There is an issue related to the number of units to be constructed relative to capacity of the site and whether the purchase price allows the project to work financially for the developer at a lower number of units.
11. The project has the capability to significantly move toward the Town's goal of creating more affordable housing, if it contains at least 24 units.

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary site (above on following map)

1. There are some wetlands in the northeast corner of this site. The land slopes up from there. Development could be done outside of Conservation Commission jurisdiction depending on the specific plan.
2. This site is located within a Zone II to a public supply well. However, this well is no longer operating, and is unlikely to come back on line since it does not produce enough water. Until the well is eliminated from DEP's list of public supply wells, a developer would be limited to one bedroom for every 10,000 square feet of land area.
3. The visual impact would be very moderate. There may be visual and traffic impacts to Bridge Street. The location of a project on the property is still critical and needs to be determined.
4. A project would require a comprehensive permit under Chapter 40B MGL to achieve multiple units on the site since Hamilton does not permit multi-family housing in this zoning district. The site is large enough to comply with zoning district setbacks.
5. The site is owned by a non-profit organization. Any new development should be organized so that it pays real estate taxes, due to the history of previous development of married housing at the seminary. As a private transaction it is not very complex vis-a-vis traditional developments. A project would need to meet both Town and seminary goals.

13 Essex Street site (below on prior map)

1. This site has a Conservation Restriction (CR) on a portion of it which prohibits most types of development within the CR envelope. It would certainly prohibit, within the CR area, the construction of housing. The entire parcel is approximately 31 acres, of which more than half is under the CR. However, that leaves a fair amount of land available for development, and the development could be designed to stay out of Hamilton Conservation Commission jurisdiction since the wetlands are within the CR portion. Developing a multi-unit project adjacent to a CR will raise concerns within the Open Space community.
2. This site is located outside of a Zone II to a public supply well. Soil tests would need to be completed to determine how many units could be located on the site.
3. The visual impact on the site would be moderate. There may be limited visual and traffic impacts to Essex Street and adjacent properties. Where a project would be located on the site is still to be determined.
4. A project on this site would require a comprehensive permit under Chapter 40B MGL since Hamilton does not allow for multi-family housing in this zoning district. The site is large enough to comply with zoning district setbacks.
5. The site is privately owned. Therefore, as a private transaction, it would not be complex.
6. Traffic speed is an issue along this stretch of Essex Street. Neighbors have expressed concern over safety due to these vehicular speeds. There may need to be a traffic impact review during the permitting process.
7. The project has the capability to significantly move toward the Town's goals of creating affordable housing, if it contains at least 24 units.
8. There are few financial risks to the Town since it is a potential transaction between a private landowner and a developer. If the Town dedicates housing specific CPA funding, the goal would be to obtain an appropriate number of units and local preference in relation to the level of contribution.
9. Sponsorship of the project is unknown since the site is not under contract and a developer has not been identified.
10. Neighbors expressed concerns about the use of easements than run through their adjoining properties.
11. The neighbors immediately adjacent to 13 Essex Street have expressed opposition to development of the site due to high visual impact of the driveway/entrance on the site to their residence and the visual impact of additional housing. They also questioned the adequacy of frontage for the site. Any development on the site will need to address neighborhood concerns.