



Bar Harbor Planning Board
93 Cottage Street • Suite 1 • Bar Harbor • Maine • 04609-1400

Planning Board Workshop

Wednesday, March 16, 2022 at 5:15 PM

Via Zoom Webinar

NOTES

Planning Board members present were Chairperson Tom St. Germain, Vice-chairperson Joe Cough, Secretary Millard Dority, and members Ruth Eveland, Elissa Chesler, Earl Brechlin, and Zach Soares.

Town staff members present were Planning Director Michele Gagnon, Assistant Planner Steve Fuller, Code Enforcement Officer Angela Chamberlain and Deputy Code Enforcement Officer Mike Gurtler.

Chairperson St. Germain opened the workshop at approximately 5:15PM.

Planning Director Gagnon highlighted some of the major takeaways from the January 25, 2022 and February 16, 2022 workshops and reviewed the main components of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) Outlying Area and Village, as well as the affordable housing provisions of the Land Use Ordinance.

Comments from this workshop were grouped into four general categories, as presented below:

Land Use Ordinance:

1. The PUD language in the Land Use Ordinance has little to do with affordable housing.
2. If affordable housing is the main goal then we should make sure it is stated as the first goal, not buried down somewhere in the mix such as it is right now in the PUD.
3. In general, the PUD incentives are not focused on creating affordable housing but aimed toward land conservation.
4. The PUD provisions are somewhat exclusionary. For example, the provisions of the PUD-V incentivize the protection of resources in the downtown that do not necessarily need protection as there is plenty of open space and parks in downtown.
5. The PUD is not a tool that has been used much.

6. How usable in the PUD?
7. Are there any elements of the PUD that are worth saving?
8. Consider going through the PUD line by line and decide what to keep and what to do away with.
9. It is easier to start with a blank page then trying to adapt the PUD provisions.
10. Do we keep the PUD section in the Land Use Ordinance and write new provisions focused on affordable housing?
11. Do we amend the PUD provisions to include two goals - one for conservation and one for the creation of affordable housing?
12. Do we amend the PUD to do away with the goal of conservation and the related provisions and only focus on the goal of the creation of affordable housing?
13. There are housing affordability provisions in Village I and Village II – needs to be looked at.
14. The Downtown Residential District has a floor area ratio provision for areas within 300 feet of a property. This needs to be looked at.
15. The provisions of the Land Use Ordinance encourage sprawl.

Housing:

1. There is a housing crisis and affordable housing needs to be a priority.
2. Living as close as possible to where you work should be a value mentioned in the goal.
3. In 2019, according to the town assessor, Bar Harbor experienced a 30% increase in housing value.
4. Is the focus affordable housing and/or workforce housing?
5. In addition to the creation of single-family dwelling units, we need to also focus on the creation of apartments as there is a need for this type of housing.
6. The bulk of the housing growth is likely to happen outside the village (off sewer).
7. What will make housing affordable?
8. There are many people that own land but do not want to develop subdivisions because of the regulatory hoops, the lack of confidence in the process, and too much NIMBYism.
9. There are ways to increase the height while retaining views and at the same time maintaining the character of the downtown.
10. The maximum height topic has generated a lot of conversation in the past.
11. Maintaining character is part of our brand, however “toy” village is not affordable for all and this makes it difficult to do things. We cannot have it all.

Incentives:

1. Consider a sunset clause - relaxing dimensional requirements for a certain amount of years or when we have met the demand, whatever comes first and then close it.
2. Consider having a minimum set aside greater than 20%; however, we need to make sure that from a developer’s perspective it financially works.
3. Inclusionary zoning needs to also apply to land subdivision.

4. Need to make sure we hit the right price point.
5. Focus on median home prices as target instead of on income.
6. Consider relaxing the setback off wetlands that are more stringent than those required by the MDEP.
7. The more flexibility we incorporate in the program the more dwelling units are likely to be created.
8. Priority for affordable housing should be first given to Bar Harbor residents.
9. Consider allowing density above and beyond what is in the PUD, even off sewer.
10. There are more upfront costs of building a green home (with energy saving features) but less operating costs.
11. Decreased maintenance costs speak to the affordability of the house.
12. Requiring solar ready buildings would further increase the construction costs which are already high in part due to the recent changes with the building code.
13. High upfront costs decrease the ability for people to get into a house [come up with the down payments and secure a mortgage].
14. We need to find ways to increase the housing stock and specify housing types through new construction and adaption.
15. The fees in-lieu (cash contribution) of housing is not worth as much as having the developer create the housing, and we are not set up to receive or use funds.
16. For inclusionary housing to work we need to come up with some real incentives so developers want to use it.
17. Consider adding the following districts: Hulls Cove Rural, Hulls Cove residential, and Ireson Hill, as they are served, in whole or in part, by sewer and there are relatively large lots.
18. Consider allowing for the modification of both height and lot coverage.
19. Allow for multi-family even if it is not allowed in the base district.
20. Rethink how we define affordability.
21. Provide the ability for developers to work with a partner to ensure the long-term affordability.

Outreach and Engagement:

1. Meet with developers to include land owners, engineers, architects, landscape architects, surveyors, real estate agents, and financial institutions early in the process to get feedback and buy-in.
2. Chamber board is looking to hold a roundtable to better understand the existing hurdles to development including in the Land Use Ordinance.

The workshop ended at 7:16 PM.

Prepared by Planning Director Michele Gagnon