

# APPENDIX III

## STAKEHOLDER SESSION 3: Affordable Housing Group

DATE: July 6, 2023

TIME: 6-7:30 PM

LOCATION: Microsoft Teams

ADDITIONAL INFO: [Montague Housing Authority](#) provides affordable housing for elderly, disabled, and family tenants of moderate to low income. Programs include Public Housing, Rental Assistance, Homeownership and Resident Service programs.

[Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority](#) (HRA) serves the housing and community development needs of the 26 towns of Franklin County. They work with residents to successfully access a wide variety of housing resources and also work with the municipalities to apply for and administer grant funding for various infrastructure and community development projects.

[Rural Development, Inc.](#) (RDI) is a non-profit corporation launched by HRA. RDI is an affordable housing developer for the Franklin County region.

### QUESTIONS

1. Is housing affordable in Montague?
2. How does the coalition address issues of housing affordability, including rental rates, homeownership, and accessibility?
3. Are there any specific target populations or demographics that the coalition focuses on when it comes to affordable housing? If so, which ones and why?
4. Can you provide examples of successful affordable housing projects or initiatives that the coalition has undertaken in the past?
  - a. [Montague Selects Developer for \\$2M Affordable Housing Project - Town of Montague, MA \(montague-ma.gov\)](#) – “The \$2 million project [on First Street] will include 6 detached single family homes on individual parcels. All homes will be deeded Affordable, in perpetuity; and they will be required to be owner-occupied.”
5. Are the current senior housing facilities in Montague sufficient? If not, what are the gaps?
6. Between senior housing, affordable housing, market-rate housing, and other models, what would be the best fit for the site in Montague Village?
7. The project site in Montague Village is large enough to accommodate a wide variety of housing types such as single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and apartment buildings. Any comments on this?

## ATTENDEES

**VHB** Luke Mitchell  
Jennifer Nelson

**MPH** Christine Madore

**Montague** Maureen Pollock, Town Planner  
Megan Rhodes, FRCOG  
Gina Giovini, HRA/RDI  
Alyssa Larose, HRA/RDI  
Angela Wheeler, resident  
Jen Audley, resident  
Ian Tapscott, resident  
Janel Nockleby, resident  
Mary Kay Mattiace, resident  
Dorinda Bell-Upp, resident  
Leonore Alaniz, resident

## MEETING NOTES

### Montague Planning Updates (Maureen Pollock, Town Planner)

- Won MHP "Housing Hero" award for implementing 40R (Smart Growth) zoning
- Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity just received [\\$1.2M from MassHousing](#) for development of six homes in the village of Turners Falls
- Montague now updating their Comprehensive Plan (FRCOG; Megan Rhodes on the call)

### Introductions and Initial Thoughts

- Megan Rhodes: Need more housing for all incomes, but particularly moderate- to low-income. Megan Rhodes is assisting the town in drafting the Comprehensive Plan, including the housing chapter. Megan Rhodes is also drafting Franklin County's Housing Plan.
- Gina Govoni: Need more housing with 1-bedroom units; units with voucher have a much shorter waitlists (13 of the 43)
- Alyssa Larose: When doing marketing for Sanderson Place in Sunderland, a lot of people were over the income-limits (falling between 60-80% AMI)
- Angela Wheeler: For this site, I would love to see a higher density approach with affordable or senior housing and maybe mixed-use to incorporate a few businesses. Knows many people with vouchers, but the older units they live in aren't age-friendly (stairs, in need of repairs, etc.)
- Ian Tapscott: All of Western MA is in a housing crisis – I would also love to see a high-density approach. Historically there's been a lot of failures of higher density residential

development. So-called “naturally occurring” affordable housing is not safe or accessible. And I support multi-generational housing. And a swimming pool.

- Any Toomajian: Interested in smart and sustainable housing.
- Janel Nockleby: Housing is a national and state crisis. There’s no beds for homeless populations; no houses on the market that aren’t complete fixer-uppers. I love the idea of honoring the history of the site. Or incorporating senior housing, mixed-income, mixed-use, and an economic engine (FAMILIES).
- Mary Kay Mattiace: I have a curiosity and desire for affordable housing for all.

#### Rental Prices / Management

- With inflation, landlords are raising rent and people cannot afford it. I’d like to learn how the rates of rent increase will be managed or overseen in Montague? (Keith Apartments cost 30% of social security (federal rule), will this change with inflation? Answer: No, because Keith Apartments is public housing, monthly rent cannot be more than 30% of the household’s income)
- Gina Govoni: The site could be difficult to market because of lack of walkability and it is a fine line between affordability and market rate rent
  - One issue for us is that the LIHTC rent is very close to market (see 3<sup>rd</sup> street, 38 units). There are some landlords that would jump up 20% per year.
  - I see LIHTC as the best funding option

#### Existing Affordable Senior Housing

- Sunrise Terrace (40 affordable units for seniors) - 50 years old
- Highland School (9 units) - 100 years old
- Winslow Wentworth (17 units) – congregate housing
- Keith Apartments (31 units) - 100 years old
  - Apartments refurbished in 1980’s; building is in very good shape (All managed by Montague Housing Authority)

#### Top Desires for a Village Center

- **Sidewalks** are in poor condition, we need more pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure. Definitely prioritize pedestrians over car traffic.
- The DCR Discover Center is a big draw in Turners Falls. We need to create something like that on the Farren site. A **community garden** could provide food to food-insecure people and it draws in people of all ages for social activities. It could be a destination just for that.
- We need a **bike path** there, too.
- **Community / recreation center** – someplace for people to go in the winter that allows for recreation. The community has expressed interest in an indoor community **pool**.
- **Housing** is needed in Montague.
- Maybe **public bathrooms**, to encourage use of outdoor space?
- Montague City used to have its own library, post office, businesses, manufacturing, zip code, etc. Turners Falls got the investment and Montague City did not – but I think Montague City has the potential to be vibrant again.

- **Parking** is a necessity – we are kidding ourselves if we think we don't need it.
- **Noise buffering** from power station – could pose safety concerns in terms of emissions, contamination

#### Business Opportunity(ies)

- Workshop and / or **maker space** (see Northampton for precedent) – Turners Falls already has a maker's space that is very successful, I could see this being another opportunity for a makers space
- There may be some tension around "belonging" – does the housing, businesses, community spaces "belong" to the neighborhood? Regionally we need
  - **lodging** for visitors (tourists and family visitors, alike)
    - Franklin County Chamber of Commerce looking at hotels (big demand here since only other available lodging options is Airbnb)
  - **daycare and childcare** facilities
  - **medical office** already exists (house)
  - be sure to look at what's already cooking in area (Montague City, Turners Falls)
    - Rod Shop Road – Interest in redevelopment of the brick buildings on the east side
    - Masonic Ave – Masonic Lodge was bought by Greenfield man who's transforming it to a dance studio
    - Rail Trail - note the sewer easement where the bike path could go; boy scout making a kiosk with signage and map

See [Devens Common Center](#) (the complex hosted MHP Housing Institute in June 2023)