

Community Meetings at Starr Library with CPC Subcommittees
October 2, 2022 1:00-3:00 pm

HOUSING SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING WITH THREE BREAKOUT GROUPS

(n=40 participants, plus 13 presenters and volunteers)

Presenters: Deidre Burns, Debi Duke
Facilitator: Donna Warner
Recorder: Roger Quon

Several recurring themes arose in the Question/Answer portion of the three breakouts, among them the issue of affordability and for whom came up most frequently. Participants raised questions about the definitions of affordability, the rising costs [of living in RBK], local codes and zoning. Discussed next most frequently were intermunicipal and business solutions, emphasizing a need for RBK and Red Hook Towns and Villages to collaborate to address and find affordable housing solutions. The presenters introduced two pending housing transformations as examples: The conversion of a two-family affordable rental into a large, single family home and the proposed conversion of the Brogan Center/6 Mulberry Street into a 9-apartment building and four single-family building lots. These examples served as the touch stone for Q/A related to changes in our RBK Village housing stock, housing needs, and various zoning issues.

Session I

The facilitator invited participants in this group to identify themselves by first name, street name, length of time in RBK, and a topic of interest.

- Participants in this group live on Arnett, Livingston, the Woods (formerly Chestnut and Town), and Seymour, with several undeclared.
- Many participants in this group are long-time residents, some 20 to 30 years.
- During introductions, topics or concerns mentioned by participants were: affordability / housing crisis; how to downsize; walkability; and economic sustainability.

The Housing subcommittee presenters provided an update, as follows:

The presenter described the Housing subcommittee make-up, which includes Executive Director of Hudson River Housing who grew up in Rhinebeck and lives in the Town current and past members of the Village planning board, a former school board member, a Village resident who is a member of the Town's Workforce Housing Committee

A key challenge faced by the Housing Subcommittee has been understanding the housing landscape, along with issues and factors that correlate to housing, including income and zoning. Gathering current data has been a significant challenge, piecing together information from the Census, Dutchess County (housing, rentals), RBK tax records and other sources. This work is still in progress.

The Housing Subcommittee is open-minded and open to discussion. The subject of housing intersects with many other aspects of the comprehensive plan (e.g., land use, transportation, historic preservation)

and recommendations will need to be reconciled with other subcommittees and with community interests. This means substantial conversation between the subcommittees and with the wider community before recommendations are finalized.

Presenters shared some housing data, as follows:

- According to Dutchess County tax parcels:
 - 81.3% of parcels classified as residential
 - 7.4% classified as business
 - 3.0% municipal
 - 8.3% vacant
- More residents in RBK rent than are homeowners, but in 1993 few renters provided input to survey for the comprehensive plan.
- 24% of children in RBK Village under 18 live in poverty
- It is hard to determine how many homes are 2nd homes; 14% of homes have tax bills sent to addresses outside Rhinebeck.
- Valuations: The 2020 census indicated no homes in RBK Village were valued over \$1M, but there have been recent real estate closings well over \$1M. Recently, median home value in the Town of Rhinebeck has jumped from \$450k (2020) to \$700k (today).
- Short term rentals remain an issue here.
- Living in Rhinebeck is harder - Affordability generally defined as Mortgage + Utilities < 30% of income

Presenters noted that it is hard to make recommendations until we have stronger confidence in data and more importantly until we have the results of the community survey and the various kitchen table conversations and visioning sessions. Also, Rhinebeck is not alone in housing issues: these are regional, state, national concerns. Housing issues are affecting our demographic mix. Assuring a diverse socio-economic mix may require us to live with some experimentation in zoning and housing solutions. Current zoning allows, for instance, the transformation of a duplex to become a single-family home, which in turn is reducing our housing stock. Zoning changes such as limiting home footprints, shrinking allowable lot sizes and reusing existing structures (e.g., 6 Mulberry) are options under discussion.

Discussion:

- **Q:** How hard is it to institute rules to mandate affordable housing?
Answer: It is doable, but sewer constraints and other issues need to be considered in the Village. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are currently feasible in the Village.
- **Q:** Why didn't Village or Town have a clause to buy the Father Brogan center at \$1 when it was initially "sold" to the church for \$1?
Answer: No answer, other than Church of Good Shephard was entitled to sell the property at market rate.
- **Q.** One participant commented on a perceived lack of renters *rights* in village. Is there a possibility to give renters more rights so they are not priced out of village?

Answer: Some discussion of recent Kingston rent control and renters' rights in other states or areas. Protecting renters and examining the feasibility of rent control is definitely something we are discussing.

- **Q:** What can businesses do to pay workers so they can afford to live in the area?
Answer: General discussion of lack of workforce housing; inability of people who work in the Village to live here. There are things that can be done but unfortunately, they are beyond the scope of our subcommittee.
- **Q:** What is the hospital position in helping create affordable housing?
Answer: Northern Dutchess Hospital is concerned about housing as they cannot fill positions because of housing needs; lack of housing options here for their employees. NDH is very interested and supportive of housing issues. Rhinebeck Town is working with Kearney to develop workforce housing (80 units) at the edge of the Village. A key challenge is to consider how to use vacant parcels.
- **Q:** When we talk about affordability, we need to consider not only the rent or mortgage, but also utilities. Is there a public solution for utilities that become unaffordable (e.g., heating, electricity)
Answer: Our committee has discussed the viability of creating a support fund one way to pay for such a fund is a transfer tax on property sales above a certain threshold.

Session 2

Housing Committee Update/Presentation was the same as above in Session 1.

This breakout session included 15 participants, among them two elected officials. About half lived on Stortini, Somers, Livingston, Hilee, and in the Gardens and the Woods, and 7 remained undeclared. More than half have lived in RBK 10 years or longer.

Discussion:

- **Q:** What is the definition of residency?
Answer. This is determined by state law.
- **Q:** Will NY State get involved in zoning?
Answer: This is not known, but there is chatter that that is a possibility. Many propose some experimentation. Housing is a national problem with no clear solutions/models and that, consequently we may need to tolerate some experimentation to reach workable solutions.
- **Q:** Is there resistance [in the Village?] to having new rentals? Should we be working with the Town?
Answer: Discussion of joining with Red Hook and other jurisdictions to get more support from the County. Because affordable housing is a regional problem and because sewer capacity and public transit affect or even determine where affordable housing can be built, we might need an intermunicipal council including Town of Rhinebeck and Town and Village of Red Hook. And we will need to work with the county.
- **Q:** Is there a focus for people who work here to be able to live here?
Answer: It's an area of interest. We need to consider what support there is for this and other factors.
- **Q:** Is survey open to people who work here, but don't live here?
Answer: Yes, the survey is online, and will have questions to help indicate who is participating—live or work in RBK Village, Town etc.

- **Q:** How do we define affordability?
Answer: According to the federal government, anyone who pays more than 30% of their income on housing related expenses is cost burdened.

Additional discussion and questions

- Density in housing has decreased over years. Several large houses are occupied by single, often elderly, people compared to years ago.
- **Q:** Is there interest in having more affordable housing in the center of the village?
- **Q:** Will more affordable housing actually bring housing costs down? Not necessarily. Creating more housing is just one piece of the puzzle.
- **Q:** Will Rhinebeck need to consider a Telluride model where tax advantages are given to those who live and work in the community a certain percentage of the year? Perhaps a transfer tax? The person who asked this question sent us the Telluride info and our subcommittee will certainly discuss.

Session 3

Housing Committee Update/Presentation was the same as above in Session 1.

Introductions: There were 10 participants in this group, including one elected official. Participants reside on Beech, Seymour, Mulberry, Chestnut, and in the Woods, but formerly Knollwood, with 3 undeclared and 1 business owner. Six have lived in Rhinebeck for 20 or more years.

Discussion:

- **Q:** Can you comment on Bulkeley School Development.
Answer: There are challenges to changing the zoning which reflects a preference for single family homes. A change has been requested to develop four single family home lots and one 9-unit rental apartment building.
- **Q:** Can you convert from single family to Multi-Family Home (MFH)?
Answer. Today, a new build or conversion in the residential district is allowed only from 1 dwelling to a 2 dwelling property, with a special permit. We are considering whether it should be “by right.”
- **Q:** Are current rents still affordable?
Answer. The only data available are pre-pandemic and suggests that a 1-bedroom rent was \$1,300. Another complication in getting good data is that the county doesn't collect all rental data (just for certain apartment complexes) nor does it keep current data. This subcommittee has discussed creating more mixed-use housing solutions.
 - comment: 1 bedroom rent has gone up substantially
 - comment: more housing doesn't necessarily make housing more affordable
- **Q:** What cross-pollination discussion exists between village and town regarding housing?
Answer: [Our subcommittee] MAY recommends that Rhinebeck & Red Hook work together in creating intermunicipal housing solutions
- **Q:** Will the Town's new workforce development activity alleviate the rental burden?

Answer: The Town's workforce housing program uses a point system for eligibility. Considerations include income but also whether someone holds a public service job (teacher, police officer, hospital worker, etc.), how long someone has lived or worked in the Town, etc.