

Summary of Findings

Housing and the Future of Lebanon: What types of homes do we need in Lebanon to have a thriving community for all who live or work here?

Community Conversation held November 5, 2018

This brief report summarizes the topics most frequently discussed and resulting recommendations for action that emerged at Lebanon's community conversation on Housing and the Future of Lebanon held on November 5. More than 70 participants worked together in small groups. The discussion guide used by participants asked them to keep in mind the following questions:

- What type of home you would like to live in at different phases of your life? Consider owned, rented, large, small, single-family, multi-family, apartment, condominium, in town, in the woods?
- What makes a good neighbor, a good neighborhood?
- What do you want to be able to walk or bike to?
- What do you appreciate about living or working in Lebanon?
- In your life and work, do you see or feel impacts of our current Lebanon housing supply?
- What under-utilized resources might we use to address housing challenges – land, buildings, people, government, organizations?
- How might we invite and engage new families, new businesses, new workers to become active members of our community?
- How might we invite and engage short-term residents to contribute to our communities while they live here?

In small groups, participants focused especially on these questions:

- Do you have options in Lebanon for the types of home you would like to live in at different phases of your life - owned, rented, large, small, single-family, multi-family, apartment, condominium, in town, in the woods?
- In your life and work, do you see or feel impacts of our current Lebanon housing supply? Are there impediments to having the types of homes we need?
- What are our under-utilized resources that we might use to address housing challenges - land, buildings, people, government, organizations?
- More housing of various types may bring new people to Lebanon. How might we invite and engage new families, new businesses, new workers to become active members of our community?
- More housing of various types may bring more short term residents to Lebanon. How might we invite and engage short-term residents to contribute to our communities while they live here?

Common Themes

In the first portion of the conversation, participants in the five small groups identified common themes that emerged from their study of Lebanon data in the discussion guide, and the reflection and discussion that followed. Those themes were recorded for each group and are listed in Appendix A below.

Priority Actions

By the end of the conversation, the five small groups identified key areas for consideration relative to any efforts to expand housing availability and maintain the vitality of Lebanon. Action ideas centered on five overall topics:

1. Zoning and Regulation
2. Pilot Projects
3. Infrastructure
4. Public Communication
5. Other Ideas

Below, each of these topics is listed, with the “action items” identified around each one. These action items/ideas were part of at least one group’s final set of recommendations. In most cases, the ideas were mentioned in multiple groups. There seemed to be a high degree of agreement within and across groups about the most important considerations relative to housing and the future of Lebanon.

Zoning and Regulation

- Review zoning for building height, density, and mixed use.
- Minimize ADU barriers such as owner occupancy, sewage, size and requirements, and ease of financing.
- Streamline the approval and planning process for development of housing.
- Adjust the code to make redevelopment more flexible.
- Eliminate the overlap between planning and zoning.
- Reconsider parking requirements in the code.
- Change ordinances that limit or restrict density.
- Recruit diverse planning and zoning board members with a range of views.

Pilot Projects

- Create a housing incubator program, outside of normal regulations, with demonstrator projects.
- Encourage employer sponsored housing.
- Encourage public / private partnerships for more diversity in housing development. Consider possible city policies to encourage diversity.
- Consider employer subsidized low cost rent for new-comers, and new hire housing bonuses.

Infrastructure

- Support residents and attract new people with amenities and incentives. Follow the example of some White River Junction developers.
- Extend public transportation hours beyond 9 to 5 and add weekends.

- Research transportation needs and utilization.
- Upgrade infrastructure that is at capacity and acting as a barrier.

Public Communication

- Encourage ADU development where infrastructure is in place, for use as longer term rentals.
- Create a tour of existing ADUs to market their feasibility.
- Encourage communal living.
- Educate toward housing goals.
- Use neighborhood meetings to educate.
- Carry out a public information campaign regarding how vibrant it is to live here, our need for a mix of affordable housing, how big the issue is.
- Redefine “development” (not just sprawl) and invite people to planning board meetings.

Other Ideas

- Make development sustainable. Look at the land and listen. Review regulations for sustainability.
- Address redevelopment challenges to encourage integrated neighborhoods.
- Encourage regional collaboration that looks at the housing needs of the whole Upper Valley, including younger and senior residents, renters and first time buyers.

The action ideas as they were recorded for each group are attached in Appendix B.

The discussion is available at VitalCommunities.org/Housing

For questions, feedback, or to get engaged, please contact Mike Kiess, Workforce Housing Coordinator at Vital Communities. Mike@VitalCommunities.org or 802 299 5864.



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Appendix A
Lebanon Housing Conversation Nov 5 2018
Common Themes – transcribed from flip charts

Group A

- Affordability
- Property Taxes
- Short Term Occupancy
- Reality of Environment
- Develop Upper Valley as a whole
- Planning for Equity
- Traffic/highway and artery infrastructure / water and sewer
- Preserve Quality of Life
- Correct level of growth
- Trickle out
- Balancing voices
- Zoning as a positive, negative tool, commercial vs residential

Group B

- Impediments- we need housing, but not in my community. Services, data. Zoning leads to driving. Transit. Financing for ADUs. Special financing, banks become partners.
- Regulatory Framework – can create barriers. Example sewer connections, dimensional requirements.
- Cost of living – expensive, especially for seniors. Concern about lack of young people. Lack of labor, cost of materials. Example: the South is much cheaper. Housing disproportionately expensive compared to incomes. If circumstances around housing are improved, it will take pressure off other services.
- Barriers – for people who have felonies or are recovering addicts – difficult to get housing. Need transitional housing, affordable housing, safe environment to re-establish life.
- Available resources – there is land available for housing that people may not have thought of – DHMC and the College have land. Multifamily mobile homes, affordable homes, density and building types are the barriers. Vermod – good example of modular home.
- Developers need to get in and out of single family developments, eats profits and holds on to lots for too long.
- There was a lot of talk about adding rental units. Want to make sure that that ideas are created to encourage homeowners. Make sure it is affordable for seniors to remain in their homes.

Group C

- Attracting post college kids, young people to settle here
- Housing out of date for all age groups and income levels
- Lebanon challenging to do development and redevelopment, especially the ‘new construction’ standard, building code is the problem
- Sustaining integrated neighborhoods, making them work as a village as opposed to Kendall.
- Partner with businesses as part of a strategy of developing an area like Hanover Street

Group E

- Housing Costs – education for developers: Community Development Finance Authority, median rental rate is above fair market rate, home purchase not affordable for many,
- Incentives – for builders, tax credits for some lower cost, can be used for landlords with rental properties, Claremont may be doing this.
- Publicize resources – NH Housing Authority to residents
- Wages – Burden of student debt, incentive forgiveness to keep young population
- Population turnover – culture of area, medical residents and interns. More incentive for landlords to do short term (Air B&B) than to work on subsidized model.
- Traffic – gridlock, inadequate transit, not on weekends
- Lack of social options in town, lack of vibe, do we tell our story well?
- Housing inventory – good mix but not enough. Existing stock needs renovation to qualify for incentive plans.
- Infrastructure – existing sewer will not support higher density. Average person using too many square feet.
- Encourage maximum density. Zoning issues?

Group F

- Everyone is experiencing this
- Affordability -> Need
- Can't afford to take a job here
- Developers building mega houses/ higher end houses, prioritize profit over need
- Neighborhoods don't have housing diversity, types of housing
- Lack of availability
- Transportation – want better. People with low wages need to commute longer
- How to grow so we don't age out? Age diversity
- Not meeting social obligation regarding poverty. Not meeting community need for affordable housing.
- Mixed use housing versus commercial.
- Group housing / co-housing
- Cost of process for building (permits, etc)
Concentration of low-income subsidized housing -> need regional approach, not city. Want smaller towns to have projects. Social services concentrated here.

Appendix B
Lebanon Housing Conversation Nov 5 2018
Priority Actions – transcribed from flip charts

Group A

- Retain more affordable housing. Grant money for landowners for safety improvements. Adjust market incentives to reflect reality. Community Financing, REIT, Public Private partnership. Increase available income. Encourage communal living.
- Make development sustainable. Look at the land and listen. Review regulations.
- Educate to goals. Neighborhood meetings.

Group B

- Overall comment: We love the character of current Lebanon and don't want to lose the qualities we love – sense of neighborhood, small town feel, don't want to be so dense it feels like a city.
- Review Zoning – building height, density, mixed use
- ADUs “The Action Package” pilot project. Minimize barriers – owner occupancy, sewage, size and requirements, ease of financing. Tour of ADUs – marketing push.
- Pilot Projects – housing incubator, outside of normal regulations, demonstrator projects

Group C

- Fix the code to make redevelopment more flexible. Eliminate the overlap between planning and zoning.
- Address redevelopment challenges – key to integrated neighborhoods. Parking requirements (code), problems with volunteer boards, small problems stop the process, example: vent at Lucky's restaurant. Importance of amenities, need for incentives. Help people come in – Matt Bucy in White River Junction. Lack of common sense. How do we make a project happen
- Need economic development to make housing affordable and the area vibrant. How to make people more invested in Lebanon.

Group E

- Zoning – Change ordinances that limit or restrict density. Recruit diverse board members with a range of views.
- Infrastructure – Upgrade what is at capacity, acting as a barrier. Encourage ADU development where infrastructure is in place. (But beware of Air B&B issue). Public Transportation – extend hours beyond 9 to 5 and add weekends. Research needs and use.
- Encourage Regional Collaboration. Think whole Upper Valley. Encompass younger and senior residents: rental and first time buyer.

Group F

- Streamlined approval and planning process for development of housing
- Employer sponsored housing. Encourage public / private partnerships for more diversity in housing development. Possible city policy? Low cost rent for new-comers (Subsidized by employers?) New hire housing bonuses.
- Public information campaign regarding – how vibrant it is to live here, need for a mix of affordable housing, how big the issue is. Redefine “development” (not just sprawl) and invite people to planning board meetings.