

Meeting Notes

5/30/2019

DCTA Housing Gap Forum

Verona Town Hall

Olivia Parry and Brian Standing from Dane County Planning and Development spoke about the housing crisis in Dane County. The presentation started with a video that focused on individuals that “don’t earn enough to have a decent place to live.”

Olivia Parry then gave a presentation on the housing gap focusing on the need for workforce housing and issues facing seniors. She discussed the wealth gap and the low to zero percent vacancy rates in some areas of Dane County. Overall housing cost have gone up and median income has gone down. Cost burdened households spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

Q: How is promoting housing to be a good thing for rural townships? There is a long commute to jobs, our elderly are already isolated. Why are you encouraging low income housing in rural townships where there is no transportation and no services? We are trying to keep farmland affordable for farmers. If they can build more and have rental properties the land value goes up and that makes it harder for farmers to afford the land.

A: We aren’t proposing anything. These are just opportunities should you want to take them or explore them. The low income people are already in the towns. There are many programs applicable to towns. WHEDA provides funding for multifamily scattered site development - small scale projects partially subsidized by tax credits.

Q: What can existing homeowners do in difficult situations?

A: There are programs. Olivia has information on options but didn’t bring it. Contact her for information.

Brian Standing spoke about new options in the zoning code.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Under the old ordinance dependency living units were allowed but they create a problem of what to do with the structure when there is no longer a dependent. Removing the structure doesn’t make sense. The impacts on traffic and property are the same whether or not the person is a dependent. An ADU is intended to be a replacement of the dependency unit without the relationship restriction. There is an 800 sq foot limit. Also, the unit cannot be sold separately or made into a condo. Detached ADUs are also allowed in the zoning code. The only place they can be used in are zoning districts that allows for duplexes.

Q: Does an ADU count as a split?

A: Whether or not it counts as a split depends on your town. This should be address in a town Comp Plan.

Incidental Room Rental was reviewed. If you live in the residence, you can rent up to two bedrooms in your home as a permitted use. If you go beyond that you are a B&B which is a conditional use in some districts.

Q: Can an ADU be a short term rental?

A: Brian will check on that and let Renée know.

Q: Is there a distance restriction for a detached ADU from the primary distance?

A: No, but towns can set one.

Q: Is there a minimum sq footage for a detached ADU?

A: 800 sq feet.

Q: Rental disputes – how is that handled?

A: It is private, not a zoning concern.

Q: Will banks give loans if you can't legally separate the ADU from the house?

A: Olivia knows of banks that are more friendly to this and is happy to share that information.

Q: Lot coverage requirements. Usually 30-35% of the lot can be covered by buildings. What happens with an ADU?

A: That requirements still holds.

Q: What is the criteria for attached – is it covered walkway?

A: There is a standard out there – Brian will get that information to Renee.

Q: What are towns doing with ADUs, what types of restrictions are they writing into their Comprehensive Plans? Can you let towns know what the trends are?

A: We have not seen anything written into plans yet. Yes, we can.

Hamlets, unincorporated areas, were discussed. Brian showed a map of hamlets in Dane County and noted that the previous zoning ordinance didn't do a good job of dealing with hamlets. In the new code there are two types of districts for these historic communities: Hamlet Residential and Hamlet Mixed Use.

Q: One rationale regarding hamlets is that we didn't want to perpetuate their grandfathered status. What if someone has a lot and can take it down and building something else there?

A: We tried to keep the permitted uses relatively narrow to avoid that.

Brian suggested that towns review their Comprehensive Plans. Now that the new county zoning is in effect, take a look at your plan and see if you need to make changes to it. Most town plans refer to specific zoning districts and all the names have changed. So at a minimum that needs to be addressed. Setting policy on other areas, like ADUs, should also be considered. Dane County can assist with Comp Plan updates.

Q: What power does the county have regarding development? Can they require inclusionary zoning?

A: The county doesn't require anything – our work is educational.

Brian asked about senior housing noting that it was something that the DCTA asked for several years ago. What does that look like in a rural town? Where would that occur and are things like ADUs a help toward that goal?

Q: People want to stay in their homes as long as they can and then the trend is to move to a nursing home. In that in between stage people struggle. Funding for improvement in a home would be a good idea.

A: Olivia would be happy to put together a list of resources.