

2018-1-31

Housing Working Group #4 cont.

Working Group Attendees:

Kathryn Carlson, Lauren Curry, Leonardi Aray, Lee Farris, Margaret Moran, Robert Winters, Esther Hanig, Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli

Staff Present:

Chris Cotter, Cassie Arnaud, Cliff Cook, Melissa Peters

Working Group Members Absent:

4 members of the public, including Councilor Denise Simmons

Meeting Overview

The working group discussed draft indicators to track progress towards achieving the city's housing goals as well as confirmed prioritization of the actions determined at the previous Housing Working Group meetings.

Indicator Discussion

- Staff proposed five indicators:
 - Share of dedicated affordable units as part of housing supply
 - Total new housing units produced annually
 - Total investments in affordable housing production and preservation
 - Share of households with children in Cambridge
 - Income distribution of households in Cambridge
- A working group member asked what data was included in share of dedicated affordable units indicator.
 - Staff answered that it includes any regulated affordable units, whether inclusionary, 100% affordable housing development, public housing, or other.
- A working group member suggested an indicator on either income relative to the housing market or the gap between median income and what is affordable.
- A working group member suggested looking at the span between affordable price based on median income and the actual median price in the market. The City currently tracks this and will continue to.
- A working group member asked if income distribution of inclusionary units is available.
 - Yes, CDD conducts this analysis periodically.
- A working group member suggested including an indicator on percent land coverage for total new housing stock, including affordable production.
 - Staff and other members felt that total new unit production captured the goal of new housing supply more comprehensively.
- A working group member suggested including an indicator on demographic changes by race and ethnicity over time. Many members supported this.
 - This is a great indicator and will be used to track goals related to community wellbeing.

- A working group member suggested including indicator on length of tenure to assess how long people are staying in their homes.
 - This is a great indicator and will be used to track goals related to community wellbeing.
- Working group members asked about including an indicator on displacement.
 - Staff responded that there is currently no good available data. Staff are currently working to get better data on number of evictions. There is incomplete school data available to track housing instability. We could conditionally recommend if we get good data sources. Staff will work to identify or create good sources of this data.
- The share of cost burdened households indicator was not recommended. While it is important measure, the ACS data is a sample and therefore results in large fluctuations from year to year that may not be meaningful. It also includes students who may be cost-burdened temporarily by choice. While not recommended as an indicator, this data will continue to be tracked by CDD.
- The indicator on share of dedicated units available to low- and moderate-income residents was not recommended. This can be difficult to track, and income distribution is a better indicator to track housing diversity.
- Indicator on percent of resident households experiencing annual turnover is not recommended good as an indicator because data does not indicate reason for turnover, may not reflect involuntary displacement, and does not reflect the actions of the City.
- A working group member asked if we could track housing units by bedroom sizes.
 - Staff explained that there is not good data for older stock but it is easier to track this for new housing built.
- A working group member suggested we could track distribution of market rents and assess which are affordability to low-and moderate-income households. Another member noted that there is no low end in the market and, therefore this indicator would not reveal new information that another indicator could tell us.

Summary: The group agreed to include the five proposed targets and recommended adding the following:

- Change of racial/ethnic composition over time (track under Community Wellbeing focus area)
- Median length of tenure by head of household (track under Community Wellbeing focus area)
- Number of evictions. Staff will include if we can get reliable data.

Action Discussion

- Action B, *require the creation of significant new housing in areas that are being rezoned*, can be strengthened. A working group member suggested editing to say “rezone to increase housing”. Others were uncomfortable with a general upzoning and preferred a strategic unzoning to advantage affordable housing development. The group decided to keep the language as is.
- Action M, *identify opportunities to encourage local academic institutions to use their assets to build more student housing*. Change “encourage” to “require.”
- Action N, *play an active role in regional and state advocacy efforts to facilitate increased affordable housing production*, should be high priority. It’s an existing action but staff should continue to advocate strongly.

- Action P should change “support” to “prioritize” the *production of quality permanent housing*. The group discussed whether this is a high or medium priority. Group decided to make it a high priority. It should mention housing for homelessness specifically.
- Action J, *establish or expand the use of taxes that provide dedicated revenue for affordable housing including a local real estate transfer tax (supplemental to state stamp tax), a speculative owner tax, and lodging tax on short-term rentals*.
 - A working group member suggested making this a high priority action. Others noted that this is underway.
 - A working group mentioned that the city should consider increasing property tax rates to fund affordable housing. The group felt that level of detail on how revenue was generated was not necessary and would require greater public discussion beyond this group.
- The new action on educating the public on benefits of higher density development should include discussion on sustainability and other community benefits as well as housing affordability. This should be high priority action. This is an existing action.
- Action A, *change zoning to enable more housing, including affordable housing, to be built along major corridors and in other transforming areas that have the capacity to accommodate growth and are well-served by transit*, should not require 100% housing since there is a desire for ground floor active space. A working group member suggested expanding to additional districts.
 - Envision Cambridge will be looking at additional growth areas beyond the corridors and considering zoning changes.
- A working group member recommended a new action to upzone to reflect what is existing, noting that what is already built in many neighborhoods is no longer possible under current zoning. Others felt such an upzoning should be specific to affordable housing, and the affordable housing overlay action would address this
- A working group member said there are opportunities for existing triple-deckers to expand to accommodate larger families.
- The working group was okay with the categorization of the low priority actions.

Public comment

Homeless initiatives should be high priority among the housing initiatives.