

Summary of Questions, Comments & Responses from the Town of Apex Draft Affordable Housing Plan Public Presentation

The Town of Apex Draft Affordable Housing Plan (Draft Plan) was presented to the public during a virtual presentation on December 17, 2020 at 6:00 PM. A summary of questions asked and responses provided during the presentation follows. Additional comments may be received up to and through the public hearings for the Draft Plan. A summary of changes made in response to comments on the Draft Plan will be presented during the public hearings.

Question/Comment:

What will implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan cost in taxpayer dollars?

Response:

The total cost to fully implement the Affordable Housing Plan has not been quantified; however, the Town Council created an Affordable Housing Fund in Fiscal Year 2020 that is anticipated to generate approximately \$1 million per year. The sample allocation of funds included in the Action Plan is based on the assumption that \$1 million per year will be available to advance Plan recommendations.

Question/Comment:

Is the Town planning to hire a Housing Manager?

Response:

Staff will be requesting the Housing Manager position through the annual budget process. It will be Town Council's determination as part of the budget process whether and when a Housing Manager position will be created. The budget will not be approved until June 2021.

Question/Comment:

The staff positions working to implement the recommendations in the Draft Plan should be representative of the populations the Town of Apex is trying to attract and have the ability to address potential language barriers.

Response:

The comment is noted for further consideration. The Town of Apex is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Question/Comment:

Will there be clear construction density and design guidelines?

Response:

Construction density and design guidelines are not included in the Draft Plan. The Future Land Use Map establishes the vision for future land use in the Town's planning area. The Draft Plan does include recommendations to consider amending the Future Land Use Map to increase residential densities in areas adjacent to transit. This is an action that Town staff are actively working on per direction from the Planning Committee of Town Council. A workshop will be held on January 19th to review potential amendments. As transit services increase and improve, further amendments to the Future Land Use Map may be considered. Amendments to the Future Land Use Map are always presented through a

public hearing before the Planning Board and Town Council with opportunities for the public to provide comments.

Question/Comment:

What plans are you making for affordable units for very low income families?

Response:

Very low income households are typically those that earn 50% or less of the Area Median Income. While the Draft Plan makes it clear that it is important to address the housing needs of very low income households, the Draft Plan does not set quantitative targets for units for specific household income levels. Low Income Housing Tax Credit Gap Financing is the best tool to meet the needs of very low income households. The Draft Plan includes this tool as a recommendation for the Town and further stresses the importance of working with the County to address the needs of households at different income levels.

Question/Comment:

Would the Town of Apex have a role in determining who is eligible for affordable housing units or would the Town's main role be to subsidize the building of housing units? Would the Town operate similarly to the Durham Housing Authority?

Response:

The Town of Apex does not have a Housing Authority, so the Town's role would not be similar to Durham's. Generally, the Town would not have influence over who lives in affordable housing units. As part of providing funding, the Town could make requests regarding levels of affordability of the housing units. The Town may have more responsibility for determining eligibility for recommendations like the Down Payment Assistance Program and Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Assistance Program, depending on how those programs are implemented and structured.

Question/Comment:

How can the Town assure that the housing units are not only affordable but also accessible?

Response:

The Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Assistance Program includes measures to address needs to renovate homes to address accessibility needs. The Plan does not include specific benchmarks for Senior or Accessible housing units, but as the programs are designed, these measures could be put in place.

Question/Comment:

Can we obtain a copy of the slide set? If so, how?

Response:

The slides will be made available on the Affordable Housing Plan web page. An email will be sent to those who have signed up for updates when this material is available.

Question/Comment:

The recommendations, vision, and goal statements regarding diversity extend beyond the scope of the Affordable Housing Plan. They are not related to housing affordability and should not be included in the Draft Plan.

Response:

The Steering Committee felt it was important for the Town to be welcoming to diverse residents and established that as the first goal to inform recommendations. Housing and race have been tied to each other for a very long time in this country and the Town is making a bold step to address that in a direct way.

Question/Comment:

I'd like to see the Town targeting younger, first-time homebuyers.

Response:

This will be noted as a comment on the Draft Plan for consideration as we move toward Plan adoption and implementation.

Question/Comment:

Do you foresee an Affordable Housing Zoning Overlay covering specific areas in Apex, such as the Downtown or other areas?

Response:

This is not anticipated; however, the Town is looking at the Future Land Use Map and considering amendments to increase residential densities near transit routes. More information will be available during a workshop on January 19, 2021. Any amendments that move forward will also be presented during public hearings to the Planning Board and Town Council.

Question/Comment:

There need to be city guidelines around design density and construction material recommendations.

Response:

For single-family and duplexes, State law prohibits the Town from having requirements for architectural standards in terms of material and quality of development.

Question/Comment:

Consider amending the Town's Fair Housing Ordinance to include source of income, in other words Section 8 vouchers, or pass a law to prohibit property managers and landlords from refusing to accept Section 8 vouchers. Section 8 vouchers are the best way to eliminate homelessness. Other cities have done this, but not in North Carolina.

Response:

This is a recommendation the project team can look into and consider addressing in the Plan prior to the public hearings.

Question/Comment:

I agree this project needs to be all-inclusive and welcoming.

Response:

This comment is noted.

Question/Comment:

We've made good progress toward the stated goals. Low Income Housing Tax Credit Gap Financing via the Town's Affordable Housing Fund is the best opportunity to spur actual development. Other ideas thus far don't go far enough to provide incentive to developers. Rent at \$1,000 isn't feasible to spur development of 2-bedroom units as it is too far below market. Consider granting land and foregoing water and sewer capital fees and other significant cost reductions for the developer.

Response:

The recommendation for an Incentive Zoning Condition is intended to increase the feasibility for developers to build affordable units. The specific design of the Incentive Zoning Condition recommendation will create the structure for addressing these types of incentives.

Question/Comment:

Will there be any requirements for vegetation and landscaping for affordable housing developments?

Response:

Affordable housing developments have to meet all of the requirements of the Unified Development Ordinance for landscaping unless those requirements are reduced through a zoning condition. Such a condition would require approval by Town Council through a public hearing process with notification to surrounding property owners. At this point, the affordable housing that has moved forward for multi-family housing has met the requirements. There have been some reductions for single-family residential housing.