



# CITY OF WATERTOWN AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

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## Minutes of Watertown Affordable Housing Trust Meeting July 15, 2025 6:00 PM

### Attendance

Members present: Cliff Cook, David Leon, Jill Hyde, Zoe Weinrobe, George Proakis, Helen Oliver and Leo Patterson. Non-members present in person or remotely: Larry Field (staff), Alisa Gardner-Todres, Adam Schultz, Sam Gilardi, Jacky van Leeuwen, Jamie Gordon and Mark Krackiewicz.

### I. **Minutes of June 23, 2025 meeting**

Minutes of the June 23, 2025 meeting were unanimously accepted.

### II. **Continued discussion of Watertown Housing Plan 2026-2030**

Larry summarized last meeting's discussion of plan goals and strategies and how the discussion and public comment was incorporated in the draft document. Cliff asked for public comment and the comments included:

- Why isn't there a strategy that involves looking for additional money and particularly about obtaining an annual allocation of Community Preservation Act money? (Trust members said that Strategies 5B and 5D were intended to address this point. Cliff noted that there was discussion at the June 26 CPC meeting about the possibility of "pre-funding" and that, if the CPC was interested in this approach, it would be welcomed by the Trust.)
- Strategy 14 should include evaluating any zoning changes affecting housing.

Cliff then asked the trustees to discuss the three proposed goals. Cliff said that he likes the fact that the goals are compressed and focused, yet sufficiently general to cover the Trust's entire mission. Several trustees questioned the phrasing of Goal #3 and it was agreed the next iteration would emphasize Watertown as a "welcoming community" while continuing to note the importance of current residents.

With respect to the next category (the Trust's continuing regulatory role), Zoe asked that item #4 be expanded to include periodic re-evaluation of the local preference policy (i.e., not just collecting data).

On “foundational” principles or tools, there was consensus on the following changes: re-word #1 to “prioritize” transit-oriented development; combine #2 and #3; re-word #4 to include all developers of affordable housing; and use parallel, active verbs for each item.

Cliff suggested that the trustees go through each of the 14 draft strategies in order:

#1 Leo suggested that the text or the accompanying narrative include the Trust’s site identification work and use of on-call professionals.

#2 George suggested caution in the phrasing of 2B (Watertown Yard) and 2C (municipal parking lots) so that the potential for affordable housing on these sites is not oversold. He noted that tax increment financing was likely key to the infrastructure work necessary to develop these sites, and that would limit the scale of affordable housing. He suggested a word like “component” would convey the reality better. On the other hand, he thought that 2A (148 Waltham St) could drop the word “including” as a 100% affordable development there should be considered.

#3 Zoe suggested that this strategy should include the potential of expanding all existing affordable developments. Cliff and Larry noted that there are limited opportunities to expand those sites (St Joseph Hall, Coolidge Apartments, Brigham House, Marshall Place, and 1060 Belmont Street).

#4 This is a placeholder for the affordable housing incentives study.

#5 Larry said that 5C is based on an MAPC recommendation that a regional approach to oversight of inclusionary zoning units should be considered. Cliff noted that exactly how 5D (collaboration with the CPC) will be implemented depends on how the CPC’s new leadership would like to proceed.

#6 Cliff asked trustees if they had specific ideas to build out this strategy. David noted that the present wording doesn’t reflect the reality of supportive housing, i.e., that projects either come with a vision for supportive services because of their likely tenant population or they don’t. Zoe agreed. Helen suggested that Strategies 6, 9, and 10 could be combined. George said such a strategy could be under the umbrella of “housing types that meet the needs of underserved populations” and suggested that peer review could be a tool considered for all 3.

#7 Cliff noted that #7 and #14 sound similar and should either be distinguished more or combined.

#8 Zoe suggested that an asset management plan might be necessary for all Watertown’s affordable developments. George said that stronger words than “track” and “periodically” were needed.

#9-10-11 No further comments.

#12 Zoe suggested combining #12 and #13.

#13 George said he was skeptical the City had the capacity to implement a rental assistance program unless it was targeted and short-term (i.e., like Watertown’s COVID rental assistance program). There was agreement that the city’s role should be helping households identify funding sources.

#14 It was agreed that the word “impact” was unclear and that this strategy should be focused on housing production (including types).

Zoe suggested that a strategy on sustainability/resiliency/healthy housing be added. Cliff said that this should be added to the section on “foundational” principles or tools and David added that there should be reference to the Climate Action Plan and Stretch Code.

### III. **Brainstorm: affordable housing incentives study**

Larry noted that the affordable housing incentives study was still in the procurement phase. Cliff asked for public comment on potential incentives. Sam Ghilardi summarized a document submitted by Housing for All Watertown (attached), which suggested: 1) testing a package of incentives, not just individual incentives; and 2) covering the potential for “missing middle” housing by looking at the “cliff effect” of the inclusionary zoning requirements (which start at 6 units). Larry summarized an email from Brian Ho which suggested several incentives to test (comments attached).

George expressed concern with HAW’s proposal for a city-wide affordable housing overlay. He said that the 2023 Comprehensive Plan identified a land use vision that distinguished between areas to preserve, enhance or transform. Later in the meeting, there was further discussion on this point, with Sam Ghilardi/Jacky van Leeuwen arguing that no neighborhood should be exempt from change, and George emphasizing the importance of consistency with a very recent community planning process.

Trustees suggested the following incentives be tested: buy-downs from 80% AMI, fee waivers, and real estate tax relief. Cliff asked the trustees about HAW’s suggestion that a package of incentives be tested. Zoe thought this would muddy the water and thought that it was better to test individual incentives and, possibly, a few in combination.

### IV. **Other Business**

Larry said the September meeting would be held on September 10 and that it was still unclear whether an August meeting would be needed. He also reported that the first ADU was approved (76 Hovey Street) and the first housing development in one of the new Watertown Square zones (75 Spring Street).

### VI. **Executive Session**

No executive session was necessary. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:17 PM.

# **DRAFT GOALS AND STRATEGIES 2026-2030 HOUSING PLAN**

## **Goals in Old Plan**

GOAL 1: Increase affordable housing opportunities for lower-income households (less than 80% AMI) affordable housing stock

GOAL 2: Increase affordable housing opportunities for those needing deeper affordability (less than 60% AMI)

GOAL 3: Increase affordable and supportive housing opportunities for seniors and individuals with disabilities

GOAL 4: Encourage the creation of a variety of housing types at different price points, with particular emphasis on providing options for residents and workers who wish to remain in Watertown

GOAL 5: Preserve existing housing affordability

GOAL 6: Increase community engagement around affordable housing

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## **PROPOSED GOALS**

GOAL 1: Increase, deepen affordability of, and preserve deed-restricted affordable housing

GOAL 2: Encourage the private market to create a variety of housing types at different price points

GOAL 3: Assist residents who want to continue living in Watertown while remaining a welcoming community for all

**Strategies in old plan that are part of continuing regulatory role**

STRATEGY 5A: Continue monitoring affordable housing stock on the Subsidized Housing Inventory

STRATEGY 5B: Prevent loss of any affordable units that have expiring deed-restrictions.

STRATEGY 6B: Evaluate using local preference in affordable housing lotteries. (note: with policy adopted, continuing activity is collecting data for next time policy needs to be evaluated)

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**PROPOSED SECTION TO CAPTURE THESE STRATEGIES ELSEWHERE IN PLAN**

The Trust and/or city staff have continuing responsibilities related to monitoring and planning that are not separately identified as “strategies.” These include the following:

1. Ensuring that proposed developments comply with the city’s inclusionary zoning requirements; this includes review of affordable housing plans, Trust recommendations to the permit-granting authority, and obtaining state approval of the inclusionary units.
2. Monitoring affordable housing stock on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.
3. Tracking affordable units that have expiring deed-restrictions.
4. Collecting data on affordable housing lotteries, including demographic information that sheds light on the impact of local preference.
5. Participation in the WestMetro HOME Consortium, including submission of annual action plans, annual CAPER report, and five-year plans and analysis of fair housing impediments studies when required
6. Participation in MAPC’s Metro Mayors Housing Task Force, including submission of building permit data and participation in working groups as needed

**Strategies to be restated as foundational principles or tools**

STRATEGY 1C: Leverage public funds such as those from the Community Preservation Act and Commonwealth sources.

STRATEGY 1D: Leverage opportunities on public land.

STRATEGY 1E: Maximize Transit-Oriented Development opportunities.

STRATEGY 2A: Prioritize the use of public funds, public land, and TOD locations to create more deeply affordable units.

STRATEGY 2C: Partner with community development corporations and others to explore new ways to create/support more deeply affordable units.

STRATEGY 4B: Leverage public funds such as CPA (up to 100%) and State sources (up to 120%).

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**PROPOSED SECTION TO CAPTURE THESE STRATEGIES ELSEWHERE IN PLAN**

The Trust and city staff operate with certain assumptions about how best to achieve the Plan’s goals. While not separately identified as “strategies,” it is useful to articulate them. They include the following:

1. Maximizing opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development is good for tenants and homeowners and serves the City’s Climate Plan goals.
2. Use of public land can lower development costs and make affordable development more feasible.
3. Use of local resources (land and/or funding) are a key lever to obtain substantial federal and state affordable housing awards.
4. Community development corporations and other affordable housing developers are important partners on specific projects and other shared initiatives.
5. The Trust and Community Preservation Committee are partners in the production and preservation of affordable housing; a strong working relationship is important.

**PROPOSED Strategies in (hopefully) logical order**

**STRATEGY 1:** Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

1A Continue current efforts to identify sites through locational metrics and through encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown

1B Explore additional methods to find suitable sites, such as using a real estate agent and/or publicly highlighting the site search

**STRATEGY 2:** Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development

A: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s 148 Waltham Street site

B: Work with the MBTA to consider an affordable housing development on its Watertown Yard site

C: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s parking lots in Watertown Square

[Note: text would make clear that affordable housing development is defined as more than 50% affordable, so would include mixed-income]

**STRATEGY 3:** Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

A: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating the potential for redevelopment of existing properties

B: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project

C: Consider financial assistance for other WHA redevelopment and/or modernization projects

**STRATEGY 4:** Implement recommendations of affordable housing incentives study

[This is a placeholder. Wording of strategy and the list of actions to be proposed when the study is substantially complete.]

**STRATEGY 5:** Increase the City’s capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan

A: Employ a full-time housing planner within three years

B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the linkage fees

C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units and review requested rent increases for the city

D. Increase collaboration between the Affordable Housing Trust and Community Preservation Committee, while recognizing each body’s particular statutory goals and process

**STRATEGY 6:** When evaluating new affordable housing developments, consider opportunities to include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

**STRATEGY 7:** As part of the City’s general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development and consider amendments, as needed

**STRATEGY 8:** Track and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments

A: Periodically discuss capital needs and funding sources with existing affordable housing developments

B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs

**STRATEGY 9:** Encourage higher universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects.

A: Consider adding universal design and visitability elements to the city’s design guidelines

B: Consider peer review of development plans for inclusive design

**STRATEGY 10:** Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments

**STRATEGY 11:** Promote fair housing

1A Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results

1B Continue to work with the Human Rights Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents, tenants and the public on fair housing

1C Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers

**STRATEGY 12:** Help educate cost-burdened tenants and homeowners about available housing resources

A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city’s website

B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing technical assistance to cost-burdened tenants and homeowners

**STRATEGY 13:** Consider short-term rental assistance in the event of an emergency need affecting Watertown

**STRATEGY 14:** Evaluate impact of city’s new zoning at appropriate intervals

A: Watertown Square zoning after five years (during 2029)

B: New accessory dwelling unit ordinance after three years (during 2028)

**PROPOSED Strategies in the buckets discussed at June 23 meeting—with old strategies for reference**

**Strategies where there is clear consensus to add**

Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

Promote fair housing

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**STRATEGY 1:** Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

1A Continue current efforts to identify sites through metrics and encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown

1B Explore additional methods, such as using a real estate agent and publicly highlighting the site search

**STRATEGY 11:** Promote fair housing

1A Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results

1B Continue to work with the Human Services Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents and the public on fair housing

1C Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers

**Strategies that will be informed by affordable housing incentives study**

STRATEGY 1B: Evaluate increasing inclusionary zoning requirements.

STRATEGY 4C: Continue to evaluate current zoning, parking requirements and other incentives to shape residential development.

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**STRATEGY 4:** Implement recommendations of affordable housing incentives study

[This is a placeholder. Wording strategy and the list of sub-strategies to be proposed when the study is substantially complete.]

**STRATEGY 7:** As part of the City’s general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development and consider amendments, as needed

**Strategies that can be sharpened/reformulated (discuss)**

STRATEGY 2B: Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

STRATEGY 3B: Encourage universal design and visitability standards in new development.

STRATEGY 3C: Enter into partnerships with supportive service providers to create housing and/or provide services to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

STRATEGY 4D: Evaluate use of regulatory/administrative policies to encourage creation of 3+ bedroom units.

STRATEGY 5C: Provide emergency funding for critical repairs in existing affordable units.

STRATEGY 5D: Evaluate short-term tenant-based rental assistance.

STRATEGY 6A: Increase public education/awareness of the need for a variety of housing types at various income levels, via community workshops or other events.

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**STRATEGY 3:** Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

A: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project

B: Consider financial assistance for 103 Nichols Avenue

C: Consider financial assistance for elevator modernization at Woodland Towers and Munger Apartments

D: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating potential for redevelopment of existing properties

**STRATEGY 9:** Encourage higher universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects.

A: Consider adding universal design and visitability elements to the city’s design guidelines

B: Consider peer review of development plans for inclusive design

**STRATEGY 6:** When considering new affordable housing developments, consider opportunities to include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

**STRATEGY 10:** Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments

**STRATEGY 8:** Track and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments

A: Periodically discuss capital needs and funding sources with existing affordable housing developments

B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs

**STRATEGY 12:** Consider short-term rental assistance in the event of an emergency need affecting Watertown

**STRATEGY 13:** Help cost-burdened tenants and homeowners understand available housing resources

A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city’s website

B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing technical assistance to cost-burdened tenants and homeowners

**Strategies that should be added**

**STRATEGY 5:** Increase the City’s capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan

A: Employ a full-time housing planner within three years

B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the linkage fees expected before 2030

C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units for the city

**STRATEGY 2:** Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development

A: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s 148 Waltham Street site

B: Work with the MBTA to consider an affordable housing development on its Watertown Yard site

C: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s parking lots in Watertown Square

[Note: text would make clear that affordable housing development is defined as more than 50% affordable, so would include mixed-income]

**STRATEGY 14:** Evaluate impact of city’s new zoning at an appropriate interval

A: Watertown Square zoning after five years (during 2029)

B: New accessory dwelling unit ordinance after three years (during 2028)

**Strategies to revisit**

STRATEGY 3A: Evaluate rehab loan program.

STRATEGY 3D Partner to provide financial planning assistance to enable seniors to age in place

STRATEGY 4E: Ensure that affordable units are compliant with DHCD guidelines for SHI units, but allow flexibility as needed to increase the number of functionally affordable units.

STRATEGY 6C: Improve marketing and outreach for affordable housing lotteries.

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Recommend that these strategies not be included in the new plan. Strategies 4E and 6C do not address identified problems. Strategy 3D is outside the scope of the proposed housing plan. Strategy 3A is unrealistic based on the likely funding and staff capacity during the next five years.

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO JULY 15, 2025 MINUTES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST

The following documents should have been attached to the minutes and were accidentally omitted and added in January 2026

# Suggested Incentives to Test in Affordable Housing Study

## Summary

Building on our previous Affordable Housing Incentives white paper, the HAW Steering Committee suggests testing the following set of affordable housing incentives for market rate and affordable housing developments. Developing policy incentives in isolation from real world conditions may result in incentives that do not result in actual affordable housing production. Therefore, we also suggest examples of common Watertown lot typologies to test an incentive's effectiveness.

## Suggested Incentive 1: Affordable Housing Overlay

The city should evaluate an Affordable Housing Overlay which provides a bundle of incentives for projects where 100% of units are deed restricted at affordable rents. **It is important to test the incentives as a package, because, as Cambridge's AHO iterations over the last 5 years have shown, no one single incentive is enough - the whole package of incentives is needed to effectively stimulate affordable housing construction.** The bundled incentives, based off of model ordinances in Cambridge and Somerville include:

1. **Allow affordable multi-family residential uses on all non-open space parcels by-right.** Only about 20% of Watertown is zoned for multi-family use, and only 2% of lots citywide allow multi-family by-right, requiring most projects to go through a discretionary special permit process. Previously, affordable housing projects could use chapter 40b to avoid these restrictions, but since 2020 Watertown has met the 40b safe harbor criteria and can reject these permits.
2. **Allow height bonuses based on the height limits of the underlying zone.** This allows for additional height to make projects more feasible, while respecting the context of the existing built environment. These bonuses can include transition zones for projects next to residential zones.
3. **Reduce required setbacks.** Overly restrictive front, side and rear setbacks reduce the available space for a building, making construction infeasible. In Watertown, side setbacks have doubled from 6 feet in 1925 to a 10/12 foot minimum today. Cambridge had to reduce their side setback from 7.5 feet to 0 feet in an AHO update to to unlock housing production.
4. **Replace lot coverage caps with an open space requirement.** Watertown regulates building coverage and open space separately, which results in large expanses of useless impermeable space. Cambridge's AHO only regulates open space, ensuring most of a lot is used productively as either housing or green space.
5. **Remove density and FAR caps.** Some of Watertown's zones have a density cap (in lot area per dwelling unit) that renders projects infeasible. Both Cambridge and Somerville removed their density limits for affordable housing projects. Similarly, Cambridge removed FAR requirements from affordable developments, allowing the setbacks, height limits and step-back provisions to control building bulk.
6. **Reduce required parking minimums.** Parking is expensive to construct, and excess parking requirements drive up construction costs, reducing project feasibility. Residents in affordable housing own cars at a lower rate than the public at large. Cambridge removed parking requirements for affordable housing developments under their AHO. Even without mandates, AHO projects still built parking, but only enough to meet the needs of their residents and not to meet an arbitrary and wasteful municipal standard.
7. **Provide a defined community engagement process.** Cambridge allows all projects by-right with a modified site plan review/design consultation process. The developer is required to hold two community meetings, one before and one after designs are drawn up, and is required to hold at least two design consultation sessions with the Planning Board. The Planning Board's final report constitutes approval of the plans. This defined process reduces uncertainty in the approval process and focuses community meetings on collaborative feedback rather than adversarial critiques hoping to sway a discretionary special permit process.

## **Suggested Incentive 1 Scenario Test Parcels**

To evaluate and adjust the package of AHO incentives, the city should test the AHO incentives on a variety of lot in the city. We suggest the following example lot typologies:

1. **Vacant lot under 1 acre** such as 264 North Beacon Street.
2. **Vacant lot over 1 acre** such as 527 Pleasant Street or 560 Pleasant Street (Former Russo's).
3. **Single Story commercial building/building block** such as 660 Mount Auburn Street, 276-282 Orchard Street, or 275 Arsenal Street.
4. **Single Story industrial building** such as 1 Grove Street.
5. **Single Family/Two Family on a small lot on an Arterial Road with transit access** such as 304 Mount Auburn Street or 691 Main Street.

## **Suggested Incentive 2: Missing Middle/Small Project Inclusionary Zoning Incentives.**

Inclusionary zoning (IZ) helps produce affordable units by mandating a certain percentage of units for projects above a certain size have rents or sale prices limited to a percentage of the Area Median Income. In Watertown, the threshold is projects with 6 or more units, at which point 12.5% of units must be deed-restricted affordable. This policy creates a “cliff effect” where small projects at the IZ threshold choose to build just enough units to avoid triggering the threshold, which would add another unit’s worth of costs to the project that would not be covered by the affordable rent/sale price. Recently, Watertown has seen two 5 unit small lot proposals at 75 Spring Street and 12 Wheeler Lane, demonstrating this cliff effect in action. While Watertown does have some incentives for these kinds of projects in the zoning ordinance, they do not appear to have every been used and are clearly insufficient for projects in our current development environment.

To encourage small projects to build the IZ unit, we suggest testing the following incentives for small scale (<20 unit) projects:

1. **Grants or tax abatements to cover the cost difference between the sale price/rent of the unit and the cost of construction.**
2. **In-lieu of fees to fund the construction of affordable housing elsewhere in the city.**
3. **A height bonus or parking reduction to reduce costs of development.**
4. **Removal of Special Permit requirement and replacement with Site Plan Review.**
5. **Removal of density restrictions, if applicable.**
6. **Evaluate a higher IZ threshold or a moving to a square footage rather than unit count threshold.**

## **Suggested Incentive 2 Scenario Test Parcels**

To evaluate and adjust the small scale IZ incentives, the city should test the incentives on a variety of parcels in the city including:

1. **A median 5,000 square foot lot and a large 10,000 square foot lot with a vacant building.**
2. **A median 5,000 square foot lot and a large 10,000 square foot lot with a small cape.**
3. **A median 5,000 square foot lot and a large 10,000 square foot lot with a large single family home.**
4. **A median 5,000 square foot lot and a large 10,000 square foot lot with a two family.**
5. **A small single story commercial parcel**, such as 443 Mt Auburn Street.
6. **A small single story industrial parcel**, such as 140 Watertown Street.

**From:** [Brian Ho](#)  
**To:** [Field, Larry](#)  
**Cc:** [\[REDACTED\]](#) **Cook, Cliff**  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Questions about Affordable Housing Incentives Study  
**Date:** Saturday, June 21, 2025 10:41:17 PM

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Hi Larry,

Thank you for your response. This is very helpful. I hope we can have at least one opportunity for the public to weigh in on study scope when a firm is selected to conduct the study

I also really hope we test incentives with the goal of attracting **income-based rental units that help households at 50%, 30% or lower AML**. Surely some of these below incentives will be tested? Will there be room for all of them to be tested and explored?

- Density bonuses that allow more units to be built on a site than would otherwise be allowed by the underlying zoning code
- Zoning variances that allow higher-density development
- Reduced parking requirements that lower land or construction costs
- Access to a streamlined development approvals process
- Reduced or waived development fees
- Tax abatements or exemptions

Hope AHT and City Staff can take that into consideration. Thanks again.

Best,  
Brian

On Wed, Jun 18, 2025 at 10:43 AM Field, Larry <[lfield@watertown-ma.gov](mailto:lfield@watertown-ma.gov)> wrote:

Thanks for your keen interest in this study, Brian.

Although the study has been discussed at Affordable Housing Trust meetings, it will be managed by city staff. We are still in the procurement stage and have not finalized our approach to public participation. However, the study will be analytical and data-driven, so more akin to the “linkage fee” study done in 2022 than the 2023 Comprehensive Plan and 2024 Watertown Square Plan efforts that had robust public participation at each step. Having said that, any ideas or comments, including incentives to test, are welcome. Finally, the RFQ was designed to describe the study’s scope and not list everything that might be considered.

Larry Field, Senior Planner

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Cell 617-921-3608 P. (617) 972-6417 ext 121643

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*In responding, note that the MA Secretary of State determined most email is public record and cannot be kept confidential.*

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Brian Ho** ~~brian.ho@watertowntrust.org~~

Date: Sun, Jun 15, 2025 at 10:56 PM

Subject: Questions about Affordable Housing Incentives Study

To: ~~brian.ho@watertowntrust.org~~ cliff cook

Hi Cliff,

My name is Brian Ho, living at 31 Elton Ave Watertown.

I read through the RFQ for the Affordable Housing Incentives Study. I appreciate the RFQ having a focus on both market-rate developments and affordable developments. That being said, I was hoping we could see even greater prominence for affordable developments incentives and especially for income-based rental units. I am also curious on the process throughout the study. Specifically, how involved the AHT and public will be in this work.

I recognize the RFQ deadline has passed — I just hope these considerations can be taken into account throughout the rest of the process, from choosing a consultant to final recommendations. Below are a few questions for you and the AHT.

1. Will income-based rental units be part of the scope of the study? Fixed below market-rate rents are a great start but many households in Watertown are at or below 30% and 50% AMI and need units that are at rents based on income (30% of their income). I'm not seeing it mentioned in the RFQ.
2. Will AHT be kept informed and be able to offer feedback/review about the progress of the study especially when identification of incentives that will be tested are being finalized?
3. Can AHT and public see 'trial incentives' and have a public comment period for them before they are finalized?
4. Can we submit trial incentives to staff and AHT to be considered?

I appreciate all the work the Trust has done so far in making Watertown more affordable to live in. I look forward to hearing what you think of these considerations.

Best,  
Brian

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~~brian.ho@watertowntrust.org~~