



Metropolitan Area Planning Council

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Serving the 101 Cities and Towns in the Metropolitan Boston Region

October 28, 2009

David Ragucci
Town Administrator
Town of Stoneham
35 Central Street
Stoneham, MA 02180

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TOWN OF STONEHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Re: General Land Area Minimum Analysis for the Town of Stoneham conducted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Dear Mr. Ragucci,

At the request of the Town of Stoneham, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) conducted a Computation of Statutory Minima, General Land Area Minimum; an analysis of whether the town meets the 1.5% land area minimum standard for land occupied by affordable housing under Chapter 40B as further defined in 760 CFR 56.03(3). The results of this analysis demonstrate that Stoneham does not currently meet the Land Area Minimum. With the development of Langwood Commons, a 40B project involving the conversion of the former site of the New England Regional Medical Center at 5 Woodland Road to a residential development with 25% low income housing, Stoneham would meet this minimum, assuming the project occupies a minimum of 9.6 acres. The calculations and analysis supporting this finding are described in the narrative and map below.

Analysis Summary

Regulations governing land area analysis under Chapter 40B provide clear direction as to how the General Land Area minimum of 1.5% is to be calculated. First, parcels that are either owned by a governmental body, subject to development prohibition by Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), water bodies, or covered by a zoning district that prohibits development for residential, commercial or industrial uses are excluded from the total land area, leaving the Developable Land Area as the denominator of the equation. Second, the area occupied by affordable housing is compiled, creating the equation's numerator and resulting in a percentage of the Developable Land Area that is occupied by affordable housing.

There are a total of 2,184.02 acres of land available for development in the Town of Stoneham, excluding all lands owned by governmental agencies or otherwise excluded from these calculations according to 760 CFR 56.03 (3). Of this area, 23.13 acres, or 1.06%, are occupied by affordable housing consistent with the definition of SHI Eligible Housing units.



Excluded lands totaled 2,068.33 acres, or 48.6% of Stoneham's total land area. In order to meet the General Land Area Minimum of 1.5%, Stoneham would need to have 32.7 acres devoted to affordable housing.

Land Area Occupied by Affordable Housing (numerator calculation)

The latest version of the regulations promulgated by DHCD in 2008 limited the area of a parcel that can be counted towards the General Land Area Minimum to that area directly occupied by SHI eligible housing units and associated parking and landscaping, 760 CFR 56.03(3)(b)7. This provision eliminates portions of a parcel occupied by forest or similar "unused" land from being counted towards the land area minimum. The entire area of a rental project is counted if 25% of the units are affordable while for ownership projects, the land area counted is proportionate to the amount of affordable units provided.

There are currently ten (10) projects on the Department of Housing and Community Development Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). These are primarily Stoneham Housing Authority projects, and nearly all are rental projects. The Highland Village project represents the only ownership project in Stoneham and, with affordable units representing 25% of the total units, only 25% of the developed land area of this parcel can contribute towards the affordable housing occupied land area. The location or general land area occupied by the Stoneham Homeowners Rehabilitation Program, Community Service Network, representing nine units, could not be confirmed¹ and was therefore excluded from this analysis. The DMR Group Homes are listed as confidential. Based on conversations with the Department of Developmental Services (formerly DMR), the land area for these 16 units has been estimated to be equivalent to four single family homes of an average lot size for the Town, calculated at .15 acres² for a total of .6 acres. The land area occupied by the SHI projects, as described above, totals 23.13 acres. Adding 9.6 acres to this total would bring Stoneham to the 1.5% threshold.

Land Area available for Development (denominator calculation)

To determine the developable land area of Stoneham, based on the regulations found in 760 CFR 56.03 (3), we excluded the area occupied by government owned parcels, roads, water bodies, and parcels in the Recreation & Open Space zoning district. There were no parcels in Stoneham subject to development restrictions by MA DEP under M.G.L. c. 131, § 40A. The remaining area was 2,184.02 acres. Further land area totaling approximately 10 acres could be excluded from the developable land area if parcels 6-0-63, 12-0-376, 12-0-401, 14-0-53, which are identified in the MassGIS database as open space lands held by non-profits and shown on the accompanying map, could be rezoned into the Recreation & Open Space District. Further, if any parcels in Stoneham are subject to a conservation easement that completely prohibits

¹ MAPAC worked with Town officials to identify the locations of these housing units. Locations could not be confirmed by the Town.

² Estimation based on a sample of 548 parcels in the Residency B zoning district. Maximum: 3.53 acres, Median: 0.15 acres, Average: 0.18 acres.



development, these could potentially be rezoned to Recreation & Open Space as well. However,

it would take the addition of 410 acres of land to the Recreation & Open Space zoning district to bring Stoneham to the 1.5% threshold with the current land area occupied by SHI eligible housing units.

Impact of Expiring Units on Statutory Minima calculations

Finally, the deed restrictions for the Stoneham HOR Program sites and the Mountain View Terrace site expire in 2010 and 2011 respectively. While the area occupied by the HOR program sites is unknown and is not included in the current calculations, the expiration of the affordability status for the Mountain View Terrace site will result in a loss of 8.5 acres from Stoneham's total acreage of affordable housing, bringing the affordable housing land area to 14.63 acres or .75%. MAPC supports communities' efforts to retain expiring affordable housing units and can provide assistance to the Town in retaining these units by providing information relating to state programs and other means of extending or making permanent their affordability status.

Notes on Calculations

Discrepancies were noted in the acreage attributed to some of the parcels included in these calculations between the GIS data and the Assessors' data. MAPC used the GIS data for these calculations. These differences are summarized as attachments in Tables 2 and 3.

Parcels owned by the Stoneham Housing Authority that were occupied by recreational playing fields and an old railroad ROW were excluded from the numerator, the land occupied by affordable housing, but were included in the land area subtracted from the denominator as parcels that are government owned and/or zoned Recreation & Open Space.

A portion of the Highland Village project was excluded from the numerator based on this area's use as open space and not directly associated with the affordable housing on the site.

Conclusions

The Town of Stoneham is very close to meeting the 1.5% land area minimum standard for land occupied by affordable housing under Chapter 40B with 1.06%. An addition of 9.6 acres would allow Stoneham to reach 1.5%. The proposed Langwood Commons development will allow Stoneham to meet this standard, if it provides a minimum of 9.6 acres of SHI eligible unit land area. To also compensate for the potential loss of the Mountain View project's affordability status in 2011, the project should provide another 8.5 acres for a total of 18.34 ^{18.1} acres. Approximately 24.3 acres of the former New England Medical Center site are already developed for structures, parking and associated landscaped areas. If the Langwood Commons development occupies the same footprint, then Stoneham will meet and exceed the 1.5% land area minimum for SHI eligible units.



Total Land Area	4,252.35
Developable Land Area	2,184.02
Recreation & Open Space District	1,441.73
Government Owned*	127.64
Roads	492.64
Water**	6.32
DEP Prohibits Development	0.00
Total Excluded Land Area	2,068.33
SHI Projects Land Area	23.13
Percent of Land Area Occupied by Affordable Housing	1.06
Additional SHI eligible project land area necessary to reach the 1.5% threshold	9.6
* Not overlapping with Recreation & Open Space District area	
** Not overlapping with Recreation & Open Space District or Government Owned areas	

MetroFuture

MetroFuture is the regional smart growth plan for Greater Boston. Working with stakeholders from throughout the region and involving the input of more than 5,000 people, the plan sets a number of goals towards creating a more livable Boston region. One important component of this plan is the expansion of housing opportunities throughout the region, especially for the development of affordable housing necessary for Greater Boston's young families, working adults, and seniors with limited incomes. The cost of housing in Greater Boston has been identified in numerous studies and publications as a serious issue impacting the economic growth and prosperity of the region.

MAPC encourages the Town of Stoneham to develop a Housing Production Plan that reflects Stoneham's local needs and is coordinated with neighboring localities. Meeting the statutory minima does not necessarily mean that Stoneham has met the affordable housing needs of its residents. Rather, it means only that the town is in a stronger position when negotiating with developers of affordable housing developments to ensure that those developments meet the community's goals and standards for affordable housing and residential development design.

Benefits of developing and implementing a Housing Production Plan include:

- If a community has a DHCD approved Housing Production Plan and is granted certification of compliance with the plan by DHCD, then a decision by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) relative to a comprehensive permit application will be deemed "consistent with local needs" under MGL Chapter 40B. "Consistent with local needs" means the ZBA's decision will be upheld by the Housing Appeals Committee.



- Housing affordability is a consideration for corporations as they are considering potential locations for new facilities or expansion of existing facilities.
- Increasingly, senior citizens and young adults who are from a given town or city in the region are finding it difficult to stay there when they seek to downsize an existing home or purchase their first home.
- Many cities and towns and cities are finding that their own employees are unable to afford to live in the municipality, which is creating a challenge for employee recruitment.

MAPC has extensive experience with this type of planning effort throughout the region and is available to assist Stoneham in developing its own plan.

Should you have any questions about this analysis or require further information, please contact me at (617) 451-2770 x 2056 or jraitt@mapc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Raitt", is positioned above the typed name.

Jennifer M. Raitt
Chief Housing Planner

cc: Marc D. Draisen, Executive Director
Holly St. Clair, Data Services Director
James Freas, AICP, Regional Planner
Christian Spanring, GIS Analyst

