

3A Task Force Meeting
3A Task Force & Planning Department
Monday, October 30, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. remote via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Member/Staff Attendees: Chris Doktor, Toni Mooradd, Sarah Player, Lindsay Randall, Ken Redford, Carolyn Britt, Glenn Gibbs, Peter Eliot, Brendan Conboy, Andrea Bates

MAPC Attendees: Josh Fiala, Emma Battaglia, John Cruz

Josh opened the meeting at 7:00pm and provided an update on the project and the agenda. John and Emma introduced themselves. The 3A TF introduced themselves. Andrea said that Chase Delano from the Ipswich Partnership is stepping down from the TF and Peter Eliot, also from the Ipswich Partnership, has been appointed to the seat.

Josh stated they completed the community engagement working document that outlines the engagement plan. This can be found on the Section 3A webpage.

He provided an update on the focus group meetings that have occurred. Main issues related to housing that have been raised include: inability for senior to downsize and for people entering the market finding starter homes or homes they can afford; lack of housing options/diversity, lack of rentals; affordability is a consistent issue; accessibility of housing; failure of imagination for downtown in terms of what it could be and how its historic assets could be better leveraged; and, the notion that you cannot create much of the historic building stock in downtown Ipswich today because of zoning and parking requirements. Main principles related to this project that have been raised include: enhancing affordability; having a strong approach to context; sensitivity around design and the historic town character; thinking about 3A districts from a smart growth perspective and limiting sprawl; respecting existing industrial and commercial uses; and, enhancing sustainability.

Josh stated MAPC conducted a review of previous town studies and reports, which is posted the Section 3A webpage. He communicated that the Community Development Plan (CDP) and Housing Production Plan (HPP) both have goals and actions that can be directly advanced by our 3A project. He outlined the goals and strategies in the CDP that are related to this project include: rezoning for housing options in the town center; adoption of a 40R district near the train station; an area vision plan along Route 1; allowing infill development near the town center; and, multifamily or mixed-use by right in the town center. He outlined that the HPP states that Ipswich needs a more diverse housing stock, more rental, multifamily, and affordable housing, as well as smaller and service-enriched housing units.

Josh asked the TF members to share their thoughts about this list of principles and goals. He said these will be aggregated with the information from the other focus group sessions. He said these guiding principles will be used both as we are starting to develop zoning districts ideas and further into this process as we are making decisions about specific parcels.

Ken said that a diverse population is desirable and should be a top principle, and we should look at all of our actions through the lens of whether they will help increase or decrease diversity. Glenn said that population diversity can only be sustained with a housing diversity.

Lindsay said that she agrees and does not want to see exclusionary pockets of zoning. She said affordable housing is a component of this principle as people should be able to live anywhere in Ipswich, not just certain areas.

Sarah said that we will need to be able to address infrastructure as it will continue to come up as a potential roadblock. Chris said one way to help address this as we are considering sites is access to services.

Chris said that walkability is important because if MBTA access is part of our goal, so too should be alternative transportation methods such as walking and biking.

Carolyn said that parking on the street upsets neighborhoods and we need to identify areas or types of development that can be supported by people already living in neighborhoods.

Toni said that a way to communicate the benefits of 3A may be to show how historical zoning changes, such as infill developments, have benefited the town. She said that people are interested in co-housing or village living opportunities and that if we offer these as options as part of 3A it will show people we are listening. Carolyn said that Newburyport has done this effectively and referenced the Hillside Center for Sustainable Living, a cottage-type development.

Sarah said that in order for this 3A and development to be welcomed, there needs to be specific design guidance requirements.

Chris said that using the CDP as our foundation for this work is key. He said that we should have a principle of respecting a diversity of uses, including business and commercial uses, because people fear that downtown will just become housing. Peter said that a principle should then be a vibrant and balanced downtown with housing and business opportunities. Ken said this principle should be a vibrant and balanced town.

Lindsay said that our current zoning would not allow us to build the buildings we currently have and that a principle should be high-density housing that mimics our current built environments. She said that 3A uplifts our historic character and will allow us to follow historic development patterns.

Chris said a missed opportunity with the 3A law is that we can have a site density that conforms but that does not comply with 3A because of the multifamily housing type requirement. Brendan said that due to the multifamily housing type requirement, at minimum we can have

triplexes. Brendan said that we should explore the option of smaller lot sizes with multifamily units. Emma said that some communities are taking this route.

Peter asked what guiding principles that communities similar to Ipswich are working under.

John showed town maps of different GIS layers that will help us start to look at district siting including: land use, land use by land cover, protected open space, protected species core habitats and critical natural landscape, wetlands, wellhead protection areas, FEMA flood zones, anticipated sea level rise by 2070, and excluded land. Carolyn asked for these to be interactive maps. Lindsay said the excluded lands map does not include cemeteries or some town-owned parcels. John said this is a data quality error and he will look into it. Lindsay asked for these views to be layered. John said this is a good idea. Emma said MAPC's data services division has been developing a suitability analysis tool for this purpose.

Josh opened up a mapping exercise for potential 3A district locations. TF members participated. Discussion ensued. Josh said this exercise will be done in community meetings and also in the community-wide survey in December.

Josh discussed the upcoming community meetings. Andrea talked about logistics. Discussion ensued. Josh and Andrea will continue to work out the meeting details.

Public Comment

Carl Nylén, 34 Brownville Ave, said that linking 3A to the CDP will be necessary, both in order to advance 3A and to also help familiarize the community with the CDP because he does not think most of the community is familiar with its content. He said that in 2024 there will be a lot of competition for residents' attention and that it would help to recruit other boards and committee members who can play a role in keeping this topic in front of people. Carl said that the mapping exercise occurring online for a long period of time would be helpful, as would putting the different map layers online. Sarah agreed. Andrea said this is the plan and will occur.

Charlotte Kahn, 39 Spring St, said that she thinks this process is too tightly controlled and narrowly focused. She said that the community is not being engaged and the first real opportunity the community will have to weigh-in on this project will be at town meeting. She said that she is concerned that the TF does not have a real understanding of 3A or its constraints and that she thinks it gives authority and power to developers. She said zoom meetings cannot accomplish what sitting around a table with maps can accomplish. Josh said the TF can decide the most advantageous future meeting formats and that everything suggested is intended to occur so we will work to communicate this better.

Meeting adjourned at 7:06pm.

Minutes taken by Andrea Bates.

Minutes adopted November 30, 2023.