

Notes from Meeting of May 13  
MDI Tomorrow Housing Group

Attending were: Janet Hamel, Sydney Roberts Rockefeller, Marla Major, Terry Kelley, Lee Worcester, Hook Wheeler, Stan MacDonald, Ron Beard

***Check-in comments:***

Sydney felt discouraged that more people weren't taking the housing issue to heart, and that others felt that there was little that could be done... others noted that one of the roles of this group and of MDI Tomorrow is to help people understand the long term implications and connections of the housing issue to other issues such as community design and land use and economic prosperity...

Stan shared an article on Co-Housing, a concept pioneered in Denmark, but serving as a model for some housing on Martha's Vineyard (see Find Homebuilding, Spring/Summer 2001, article titled A Deliberate Neighborhood, by John Abrams).

Terry noted that the second portion of the housing authority's housing survey was underway, this segment interviewing landlords on the rental market and related issues. Overall results anticipated by mid-summer.

Marla noted that some communities have made some progress on making housing more affordable through dedication of public funds raised through a real estate transfer tax, usually of 1-2%.

Hook Wheeler had completed his review of housing needs of major employers (the Jackson Lab, MDI Hospital, First National and Bar Harbor Banking and Trust, and the Hinckley Company—notes attached). He felt most employers did not look very far into the future regarding the role housing would play in attracting qualified staff.

**Discussion on involving members of the housing industry in the issue**

Lee suggested that we describe the kind of housing we envision and ask for comments on what factors on what might make it more affordable... what incentives for developers and builders might work in these circumstances:

Houses for mixture of buyers and renters, mixture of ages, incomes, located in a neighborhood, close together to reduce cost of electrical, sewer and water service, road construction and other costs, within walking distance of community centers... some houses could be detached, others might be duplexes, condo-style or apartment buildings.

The group brainstormed a list of builder/developers who might be invited to a joint session of the MDI Tomorrow housing group and the group working on community design/land use (June 20) will be held until the community design group can be consulted). Subsequent meetings might be held with other segments of the housing industry (architects, builders, bankers)

Partial list of developers: Alice Carter, Keating Pepper, Jan Moore, Tim Gott, Cuff Train, Ed Hamor, Shep Harris, Steve Gillespie, Pam Gleichman, Dave Irvin, Ron McQuinn, Cliff Vanderbosch, Brian Shaw, Bob Bond, Lyme Timber...

A subcommittee was formed to work on getting our *housing issue information into the MDI Tomorrow workbook* format: Janet Hamel, Terry Kelley, Stan MacDonald (and Tom Martin will be asked)... they will try to develop stories of people to add depth to the statistics about housing...

*Notes from Hook Wheeler, from phone interviews:*

*Chris Owen of MDI Hospital and Barbara Hepburn Of B.H. Banking and Trust.*

*MDI Hospital - Housing, per se, has not been a reported issue for the Hospital. Finding Nurses, at all, has been more difficult than their finding suitable housing. They are also paid greater than many other technicians in the area. New physicians joining the Hospital have found suitable housing on MDI. Future hires from out of Hancock Co. is unclear at this time.*

*BHBT - New bank Officers relocating from off of the island to work in Bar Harbor, have had difficulty finding suitable housing. The new CEO who arrived about 18 months ago, was unable to find suitable housing until recently. Other senior officers, new to BHBT report a desire to live outside of Bar Harbor, chiefly due to a disinterest in fighting the summer traffic and congestion. BHBT is part of BTI Financial located in Ellsworth. Recent hires there who could have relocated to the Ellsworth area, have chosen to commute from the Bangor/Hampden and Winterport areas. They report that they feel lucky NOT to have to commute to the Bar Harbor BHBT location. Barbara reports that possible 5-10 new hires per year will come from out of the area and compete for housing, locally.*

*Hinckley Co Lynn Bradford has been the personnel specialist there for about 20 years. She's well acquainted with the housing stock on the island, particularly in the SW Harbor area. Hinckley is not bringing in a lot of top management, but when they do the salaries paid do afford those folks the possibility of a purchase on MDI. Lynn's chief recruiting challenge is skilled technicians. Even though they pay from \$10-\$15 per hour for skilled carpenters (their biggest need) most can't afford to live on MDI, so they commute from up to two hours away. They report to her that they would live closer, on MDI, if housing prices permitted. Her skilled labor is finding it difficult to rent, not just buy a home. Lynn has seen a tremendous amount of former year-round rentals, in her area, go to seasonal.*