

MDI Tomorrow Housing working group
Minutes from January 23, 2003 meeting

Note Next Meetings : January 30, February 10 and February 25—
all at 8-9:30 am at Terry Kelley's Office
MDI Housing Authority, Malvern Belmont Estate,
80 Mt. Desert Street, Bar Harbor

Attending were: Janet Hamel, Bobbi Williams, Terry Kelley, Marla Major, Stan McDonald, Tom Martin, Hook Wheeler, Kathy Suminsby, Sam Coplton. Ron Beard Ann Kreig, planner for Bar Harbor, had hoped to attend, so may be at an upcoming meeting to discuss "housing friendly" amendments to ordinances.

Folks **checked in** with housing updates from a variety of perspectives:

- Discussions underway among MDI Housing Authority and Mount Desert Community Trust for use of a parcel of land in Town Hill to be deleted from Acadia National Park, originally for a solid waste transfer station.
- A workforce housing project is under preliminary discussions in Bar Harbor
- Mount Desert Community Trust (MDCT) has identified interest in a variety of projects to fill in among existing housing in villages. They are expanding the number of participants in their meetings to include folks from other towns and organizations. There is interest in the MDCT developing a project in Somesville, near town sewer and water. Another private project in Mount Desert may include a pilot "affordable housing" component.
- Private interests have discussed housing options in Trenton with Jackson Lab, which may have some limited operations in that town. Jackson Lab continues to discuss housing for Lab staff as part of its ongoing planning efforts at or near its "campus".
- Mount Desert Housing Authority will see a significant reduction in some of its federal funding for 2003 and 2004, due to accounting blunders by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Observation... as land and house values escalate, landowners may feel the need to develop "in-fill" lots, but are blocked by restrictive zoning.
- Observation... we need public policy at the town level that extends carrots to encourage development of housing affordable to working families, but also establishes penalties or sticks for undesirable development eg "starter

mansions”. Such “sticks” are used in other states and municipalities (see our MDI Tomorrow Housing Report)

- Observation... The town of Cranberry Isles has a modest but successful housing initiative to be noted by other towns, the Mount Desert Community Trust and the MDI Housing Authorities
- Recommendation: Tom Martin of the Hancock County Planning Commission strongly recommended that each town on MDI update its comprehensive plan with language addressing the housing issue and goals, so that when ordinance changes are voted in, they will have the strongest foundation, as required in Maine law. Failure to take this step will result in more challenges to projects which bring out the “not in my back yard” response. Individual towns could start with the MDI Tomorrow Housing report and adapt it to meet their circumstances.

Next steps for MDI Tomorrow

The MDI Tomorrow steering committee met earlier in the week and has outlined a tentative timeline for the next year, including an island wide community conference on April 12. Initial plans include using that session to solicit volunteer and organizational support for projects and activities suggested by the various working or issue groups. Ron asked the housing group to come up with projects or activities, based on our report and discussions so far, suggest an organization(s) who might lead or coordinate such a project, to define some key volunteer roles and identify other resource needs, including seed money.

Following the April conference, and as the various project groups identify some policy choices or possible public expenditure, the steering committee will try to contract for a statistically valid phone survey (the Harris Poll surveyed 300 residents and 300 summer residents by phone and analyzed the results for \$20,000 in 1991... Harris Poll sources indicate that cost has doubled to the present) *In discussion, Kathy Suminsby suggested that MDI Tomorrow approach the board of the Stroud Fund, an endowment for community outreach, maintained by the St. Mary's/St Jude churches for funding of this scientific survey)*

In the fall of 2003, the steering group will bring community members together for a third conference and will try to create newspaper supplements to document elements of the survey results, portions of the State of the Island report and progress reports from any project or issue group that begins or continues.

Beyond that time, the MDI Tomorrow steering committee will meet to determine how to assure it is alert to new opportunities to involve citizens and locally elected policy makers in bringing about an integrated “preferred” future.

Structure of Housing committee

Following the lead of the overall steering committee for MDI Tomorrow, the housing group has decided to continue to meet beyond the April Conference in order to maintain communication and coordination of issues and opportunities in the housing arena. The group enjoys good communications among a fairly diverse group and stands ready to assist with any housing related issue that comes up for local residents.

Project ideas for further discussion at future meetings

- The Eric Henry proposal—create a pool of funds from various sources (donations, grants, a real estate transfer tax, housing impact fees) and begin to buy housing stock as it becomes available and resell it to qualified applicants (based on income and connection with local employers, community) with provisions that return a portion of any appreciation to the pool if it is re-sold (similar to the provisions in the successful West Eden Meadows project).
- Conduct an inventory of infill building opportunities, mapped on GIS to encourage housing, or housing and commercial mixed use in down-town areas served by sewer and water.
- Inventory houses up for sale that have potential as “affordable housing”
- Target areas on maps where towns wish to encourage year-round housing, and encourage local ordinances which favor that use and ownership
- Encourage homeowners who have no heirs to develop charitable remainder trusts to put housing stock into affordable housing pool following their passing.
- Conduct a housing summit meeting or a housing road show (antique housing road show) to highlight the recommendations in our report and to spur further community involvement
- Further quantify the need for housing affordable to community workers, perhaps starting at both ends—what is the need (count the number of employees looking for housing on MDI who now commute) and what is the minimum number of year round residents with children that would assure a viable year round community...(Eric Henry suggested 500 houses across the island, in hopes that those would be lived in by families who will circulate their disposable incomes within the community and with children who will attend school. The adults would be among the volunteers in our community (boards and committees, ambulance and fire fighters, Little League and 4-H club leaders, etc.) Some people may want more rationale for a number that can be defended... a number between 10 and 1000, assuming 2.5 people per household, adding 25 to 2500 year round residents or preventing a similar number from having to leave the island for housing that is more within their means (the minute taker digresses))

- Work with Hancock County Planning Commission to conduct an MDI Trenton and Lamoine housing study, with potential sources: Maine Community Foundation, major employers on MDI at a cost of between \$8-15,000.

Next meeting agenda: January 30, 8-9 am Terry Kelley's Office

What ideas do we want to frame as projects to take to the April 12 conference?

Suggestion—let us heed the need many have expressed that we create opportunities for concerned citizens (individuals and businesses) to take meaningful action soon... meaningful projects... let us not suffer the paralysis of analysis.

Please read the Housing report to see what other communities have done? What might we replicate here?

Will Mount Desert Community Trust and MDI Housing Authorities agree to be the coordinators of some or many of these projects? Who else needs to be brought into our discussions... bring them to the next meetings!