

***Remarks by Select Board and HCAWG member Jennifer Glass
remarks accompanying the slide deck at the February 27, 2024
[community forum on HCA design guidelines:](#)***

Before we get to the design guidelines, I want to take a moment to address some of the questions we have heard. One set of questions essentially boils down to “Are you listening?” and the answer is yes!

For a couple of decades before the Housing Choice law was signed, there have been conversations and studies about ways to sustain the Mall area, including ways to rezone the area to allow more housing and support commercial activity.

Over the past two years, the work of the Housing Choice Act Working Group has built upon those earlier conversations. For example, we chose not to include some properties near the train station that currently offer more moderately priced rental units, fearing it would put these middle-income housing options at risk.

When the working group began public outreach last June, we proposed two options that put about 40% of the zoned units near the train station, and about 60% either at Battle Road Farm & Lincoln North OR at The Commons & Oriole Landing.

The feedback we heard was “This law is aimed at transit-oriented housing, so please develop an option that zones more of the units near the train.” We also heard that rezoning The Commons could be complicated, and we heard a range of views from residents at Battle Road Farm about rezoning Lincoln North.

As a result, we developed 2 options that put roughly 70 -75% of the zoned units near the train, eliminated The Commons & Oriole Landing, and included either Battle Road Farm or Lincoln North.

We had always planned to rezone the Mall as part of this process, and after a state rule change, we incorporated those plans into a new option that put all of the zoned units near the train. At the September State of the Town Meeting, we presented Options A, B, and C, and received overwhelming feedback that people preferred C.

But at State of the Town and in the days afterwards, we also started hearing from residents that they would like us to revisit the options with less zoning near the train.

So, during the month of October, we developed 3 options that offered between about 65 to 80% of the zoning near the train with the rest in the north of town.

In November, the Select Board decided to let the town weigh in by putting the options to a vote at the December Special Town Meeting. Also, the Housing choice working group voted to recommended that a fifth option that had been proposed by residents be added to those developed by the working group.

At the December town meeting, a system was in place to hold a series of votes until one of the 5 options received at least 50% of the vote, with the explicit expectation that whichever option was chosen would be prepared for the up or down vote we will be taking at the March Town Meeting. At the Meeting and in the first round of voting, 55% of voters chose Option C in a secret ballot.

Since then, the Planning Board has finalized the zoning bylaw, we will see what happens in March, and then move forward accordingly.

I am now going to turn this over to Margaret Olson, chair of the Planning Board.