

Minutes  
Senior Services | Aging in Place Task Force  
Housing Working Group  
January 26, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.  
Zoom Meeting

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by the chair.

**2. Roll Call/ Introductions**

Present: Richard Schmitt, Cynthia DeMan, Nancy Robinson, Susan Clark, Eric Brown, Carol Windorf, Jim Schneider, Jerry Amber, Melinda Loftin

Absent: James Downing, Joan Koelsch

Others Present: Rachel Bush, Joseph Murphy

**3. Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting on 05Jan2022**

Motion by: Nancy Robinson

Seconded by: Cynthia DeMan

All in favor. None opposed. The motion carries.

**4. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Motion by: Carol Windorf

Seconded: Cynthia DeMan

All in favor. None opposed. The motion carries.

**5. Meeting Dates (Virtual) and Key Objectives**

a. **January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022** – get to know each, review mission/vision and data

b. **January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022** – establish work group vision statement, what we heard from data, special report from Planning Director (master Plan Update and R.O.S.E.S. funding), any other external reports needed.

c. **February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022** – establish Goals for our domain (Housing) and listen to any other external presentations

d. **March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022** - start to establish recommendations to achieve our goals

e. **March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022**- continue to work on recommendations and start to finalize our report

f. **April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022**- finalize our report to the task force

## 6. Feedback from what you “heard” from readings on Focus Groups and Community Surveys, Boston 2017 plan or Beacon Hill Village.

### *Community survey*

Most residents are satisfied with what’s happening in Royal Oak, but how much has changed since taking the survey?

- The survey was originally released at the end of 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything
- Who didn’t have access to the survey, didn’t have access to the internet, didn’t understand what they were being asked?
- How to best serve the groups who responded as being unsatisfied or having needs that aren’t met through Royal Oak’s housing stock and services?

Question 16: What factors would influence your decision to move out of Royal Oak during the next few years?

- Most respondents indicated that the factors named would not impact their decision to move out of Royal Oak
  - o Do not need smaller or more accessible home (47.56%), expenses aren’t an issue (54.06%), don’t need to be nearer to medical care/other conveniences (64.85%), wouldn’t move for public transportation or other transportation options (58.08%)
- Many respondents live in a single-family home, seem to enjoy their current living standard, and it’s likely ideal to stay where they’re at
  - o Financially, most respondents don’t feel burdened by their housing cost
- 155 people skipped this question – this seems like a sizeable group not answering the question
  - o Maybe they weren’t considering moving out or felt the question didn’t apply to them – but how do we find out more from them?

Question 17: do you plan to make any of the changes below to enable you to stay in your home as you age?

- Adding grab bars (30.86%)

Question 33: Age distribution

- 201 skipped this question for some reason
- The majority of respondents are 60-69 years old, these responses are skewed from people who are approaching senior age or qualify as seniors (which is not surprising)
- An age distribution analysis could be performed to sort out responses based on specific age group

Overall, from these survey responses we can gather there is a sizeable group who may be uncomfortable without modifications to their homes. The Housing Working Group should look to keep housing friendly for younger age groups with a particular emphasis on keeping seniors comfortable in their homes.

There was group discussion about downtown parking costs and availability causing issues for livability, safety, accessibility, and comfort.

There was also discussion about a lack of community cohesion and interaction among neighbors, as long-time senior residents have left Royal Oak and new households have replaced them. Property taxes were also mentioned as an issue, perhaps pricing fixed-income seniors out.

- The Headlee tax amendment (1978) requires voter approval before Royal Oak can levy new taxes or increase existing tax rates and will eventually cap a homeowner's property taxes
- Renovations to a home that don't add square footage will not increase a home's property taxes
- What tax incentives could exist for seniors to stay in their homes?
  - o Identify the appropriate representative from Assessing to speak with the Housing Work Group

### *Housing Data Summary*

- Open comments: 15 mention concerns with the lack of small single-floor housing options
- The most popular modification was adding grab bars, handrails, or non-slip tiles
  - o Followed by bedroom, bathroom, laundry added to first floor (instead of located in the basement or upstairs as in the bungalows/small colonials common in Royal Oak)
- Home maintenance support is very important to survey respondents
  - o Low-income residents qualify through ROSES

## **7. Ideas for our "Vision" statement**

Identify what housing opportunities are already here, identify contractors to source for senior-specific housing improvements (these are goals)

Themes discussed:

- o Housing options
- o Safety
- o Diverse
- o Attainable to a range of incomes
- o Affordability, reasonably-priced
- o Multi-generational housing, ADUs

The group agreed to workshop individual vision statements and email them to the Chair. The vision statements will be discussed and a single statement will be drafted in the next meeting.

## **8. Special report from Mr. Joseph Murphy from Planning Department on: a) Royal Oak Master Plan Update timing**

Planning Commission and City Commission made the decision several months ago to undertake a master plan update.

- Released a request for qualifications for firms who will assist in the process
- 11 requests filled by companies who are interested in working with us, to show us why they believe they are qualified
- These requests will be discussed at their next meeting on February 8 and the scope will be narrowed down to 3-4 companies
  - o Next steps: Requests for proposals from 3-4 companies

Can you share anything with us about the types of projects that are trending or seem to be a priority for housing projects in Royal Oak?

- Market research shows that developers will focus more on an urban setting for senior housing, for the very active senior, not of modest income (their target market)
- Royal Oak fits the profile of having access to shopping, health care, etc. Royal Oak would appear to be a suitable place for a developer to request to build this type of senior housing that is trending right now

It might be interesting to identify where opportunities are spatially to build single floor living developments geared toward seniors.

- New Amber projects, 2 out of 12 renters of the studio apartments are in their 60s; 2 of the 11 units at Crooks and 14 Mile are late 50s-mid 60s “seniors”; newly completed near Maple and Livernois, 2 more units rented to people in their late 50s; Crooks Rd and Normandy townhomes have stairs and may appeal more to a younger clientele, but open to anyone who wishes to live in the Royal Oak area

Based on construction and code requirements, there are certain types of buildings that we don't see enough of in Royal Oak (as opposed to typical townhouses)

- Are certain buildings being marketed differently to certain groups and not seniors? There must be units that are very accessible, but seniors decide not to live there – could be a communications issue
- One-floor condos seem to be absent from Royal Oak
  - o The cost to do these projects and the project profits – it's far more expensive to do things in Royal Oak where land values are high compared to the surrounding communities

The discussion returned to the topic of finding places to build in Royal Oak, such as park land, or historic buildings that could be retrofitted into condos or apartments

- Normandy Oaks is an example of a former golf course which was sold and is now split into a public park and a housing development. It was deeded to the City strictly as a park and that decision had to go to a vote from residents to accomplish the changes
- It can be truly cost-prohibitive to bring those historic buildings up to code, and there don't appear to be many opportunities for that type of adaptive reuse in the City

- The Harrison development is the best example of this – it was a former manufacturing block building that’s now market-rate apartments

**b) R.O.S.E.S. funding sources and workforce and/or approved contractors**

ROSES is a program offered through the Senior Center and allows for those of modest income (homeowners and renters) in need of assistance with basic chores at home (indoor or outdoor). The Senior Center accepts those applications and determines if the applicant is eligible for assistance. The Senior Center also recruits the individuals who perform the chores for seniors. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has subsidized the costs for the individuals to go out and provide those services.

Who are the individuals who are being serviced through this program? (June 19-June 2020)

- 61 households participating in the CDBG-subsidized portion of the ROSES program – 91% are single females.
- Average age: 71.4 years old
- Average income: \$19,977
- Type of housing: 62% are single-family homeowners, 38.2% are renters
  - A high percentage of those renters live in the two senior high rises here in Royal Oak

354 individual chores performed, totaling 457 hours of service

- This is a lower number than previous years due to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, many of the people in need had to wait for services.

Qualifications for the program are based on income (very low, low, or moderate income) with an hourly rate of \$3, \$5, and \$7 (normally \$15-20/hour)

- The CDBG subsidizes the remainder of the hourly rate
- CDBG subsidizes about \$30-\$40,000/year of these services
- Not something any senior in Royal Oak could participate in, due to emphasis on those in need based on income
- Very low income: 0-30% of Area Median Income (AMI)
- Low income: 30-60% of AMI
- Moderate income: 60-80% of AMI

**Area median income statistics (2019) \***

Overall median household	\$81,655
Family household income	\$110,101
Married Household income	\$121,996

\*These statistics are released in April every year

CDBG-funded housing rehab program through the Community Development Department

- Available to any homeowner who owns a single-family home, occupies the home for 10 years, and has a modest income
- Physical improvements – grab bars, taller toilets, ramps, etc.
- Through the rehab program, a forgivable loan of \$15,000 is available for exterior improvements

- If you occupy the home for 10 years, that whole dollar amount is forgiven

How is this program advertised?

- Word of mouth seems to generate a lot of interest, knowing somebody who took advantage of the program
- Full-page advertisement in every Insight magazine, that goes to every occupied unit in the city (both owner- and renter-occupied)
- Direct mailings to about 900 people this past year based on statistical analyses completed by the City

Based on the survey responses, there's people in Royal Oak who would not qualify for the CDBG-sponsored programs due to income (they make too much money to qualify) – is there potential for another program they could pay into? A service to call for a contractor, someone to check a hot water heater, etc.

- This has been a topic of conversation with the Senior Center coordinator and Parks and Rec advisory board – unclear as to where that's at
- It's difficult for the City to say, "here's a list of a preferred set of contractors"
  - Easier to do this for CDBG-sponsored program because the contractors must fit a set of criteria
- This could be a suitable recommendation for the Housing Work Group

## **9. Any other external reports needed**

## **10. Public Comments**

None submitted.

## **11. Adjourn**

The group adjourned at 9:00 PM.