



**ALICE SAVAGE, ACTING DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
TOWN OF EASTON**

**136 Elm Street | Easton, Massachusetts 02356
Tel: (508) 230-0643 | Fax: (508) 230-0639 | E-Mail: asavage@easton.ma.us**

To: Abutters to 12A Highland Street & 249 Prospect Street
CC: David Colton
All Easton Boards & Committees
From: Alice Savage, Department of Planning & Community Development
Date: September 14, 2009
Re: **Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 6; Results of Development Feasibility Study at 249 Prospect St. and 12A Highland St.**

Please join the Fair and Affordable Housing Partnership for a public information session to review the proposal to develop 12A Highland Street as an affordable single-family, three-bedroom house and discuss the findings of the study to determine the feasibility of the development of two town-owned parcels as affordable housing.

Public Information Session: Affordable Housing Development on Town Owned Land

Results of Feasibility Study on Development of Affordable Housing at 249 Prospect St. and 12A Highland St.

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

6:30 P.M.

Mary Connolly Meeting Room, Easton Town Hall

Summary of Town Meeting Request

At the Special Town Meeting this year, Easton voters will be asked to approve a warrant article to authorize the Board of Selectmen to donate or sell 12A Highland Street for the purpose of developing a single three-bedroom affordable house on the lot. A feasibility study performed earlier this year found the lot to be suitable for this type of development, and South Shore Habitat for Humanity has expressed interest in partnering with the Town to develop the lot.



Summary of Report Findings and Recommendations

Engineering and site survey work performed following a Town Meeting vote in May, 2009 successfully identified 12A Highland Street as being suitable for the development of a single three-bedroom house, the construction of which would be allowed as-of-right under the Easton Zoning By Law. Development of affordable housing at 249 Prospect Street was determined to be unfeasible. A Town Meeting warrant article has been submitted to authorize the Board of Selectmen to dispose of the property for the purpose of developing affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity has expressed interest in working with the Town to develop a three-bedroom house on the lot, using privately raised funds for construction.

How will this benefit Easton?

There is a significant, documented need in Easton for the development of affordable family housing. Easton will benefit from the development of this property as affordable housing by:

- Reintroducing this property to the tax rolls
- Increasing the Commonwealth Capital Score by 3-5%, making the Town more likely to be awarded competitive grant funding for roadway and conservation land acquisition projects
- Successfully implementing the Affordable Housing Planned Production Plan
- Increasing the supply of housing affordable to Easton families in need

Project History

The Town of Easton adopted the Affordable Housing Production Plan in 2005, which included a recommendation to determine whether any of the Town's small parcels could support housing development. Pursuant to this recommendation, Department of Planning & Community Development staff reviewed all municipally owned parcels using the following criteria. To be considered potentially suitable, a lot had to be

- Greater than one-half an acre in size
- Accessible to a public way
- Unrestricted as to use (i.e. not under a conservation restriction)
- Containing sufficient upland area to be potentially buildable, based on MassGIS wetlands data

Of more than 380 parcels reviewed, only 12 met all of the criteria established. Staff evaluated each lot with the Housing Partnership (now, the Fair & Affordable Housing Partnership) and performed a site visit on each lot. Ten of the 12 lots were found to be unsuitable for development because of the presence of wetlands. Town Meeting voted in May 2009 to fund a feasibility study on the two remaining lots, 249 Prospect Street and 12A Highland Street.

The work performed included:

- Development of a survey plan for each lot
- Hiring an engineer to perform soil tests to determine if the site is suitable for a septic system
- Preparation of preliminary site plans, which would be submitted to Town boards for approval

A preliminary engineering report indicates that 12A Highland Street is suitable for the development of a single three-bedroom home.

Who will build the housing? How will the construction be funded?

A nonprofit developer would be chosen through a Request For Proposal (RFP). Staff recommends that one of the selection criteria be the ability of the developer to finance the construction of the house.

South Shore Habitat for Humanity has expressed interest in partnering with the Town to develop the parcel. (Habitat has had previous success in building two homes in Easton.) Habitat's model for development includes "sweat equity" from the family as well as private funding.

How will families be selected?

Families will be selected through a lottery process. Eligibility for entrance to the lottery will be based on income and household size. If Habitat for Humanity successfully applies to develop the parcel, the organization will additionally use a comprehensive evaluation process, founded on Habitat for Humanity International and H.U.D. guidelines, to select a family based on need, income, and willingness to partner with Habitat.

Is the proposed project a 40B/Comprehensive Permit?

No. Based on the findings of the feasibility study, the best way to develop 12A Highland Street as affordable housing would be as a three-bedroom single-family home, which would be allowed as-of-right under the Easton Zoning By Law. All local Board of Health and wetlands protection regulations would apply.

Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Alice Savage

Acting Director of Planning and Community Development

508-230-0643

email: asavage@easton.ma.us

web: <http://tinyurl.com/PlanningEastonMA>