

Mayor's Housing Policy Proposals

Lee Kyriacou, Mayor City of Beacon, 2 August 2021

What Beacon's Already Done

The City of Beacon has long been a leader in progressive zoning and housing inclusion. Here are key examples:

- The percent of subsidized low- and moderate-income units in Beacon is among the highest in Dutchess County.
- Beacon permitted accessory apartments in single-family neighborhoods 25+ years ago, long before the concept became popular for creating affordable units.
- Beacon's short-term rental ("AirBnB") law prevents housing from being turned into exclusive short-term rentals, which elsewhere has reduced rental stock and raised rents.
- Approved and constructed projects over the last 10 years have included more than 20% affordable, workforce and senior housing.
- In the last two years, a surplus city-owned lot was used to create 72 affordable units.
- Beacon's inclusionary zoning requires one workforce unit for every ten units (10%) in new developments.
- Multifamily housing is permitted in all commercial districts.
- Artist live/work housing is permitted and encouraged in almost all zones.
- Beacon's zoning on Main Street, the train station, and along Fishkill Creek include required commercial space, to encourage job creation and a live-work community.
- Main Street fourth floors require a public benefit, such as affordable housing.

What's Being Proposed for Discussion

Across the country, as cities have regained popularity, housing has increased in price while zoning has often made it difficult to build additional housing. To provide more affordable housing in popular urban areas, local public policy must encourage increased development targeting affordability – while also supporting public amenities and quality of life. The Mayor proposes that the Council begin policy development for the following priorities.

1. Rezone to focus on smart growth that can increase affordability.
 - a. Allow smaller lot sizes for new homes and increased clustering.
 - b. Allow two-family homes in single-family districts.
 - c. Consider multi-family homes in more zoning districts.
 - d. Make multi-family a permitted use in the RD districts.
 - e. Increase development potential near public transportation.

- f. Encourage walkable, traditional neighborhood development.
2. Encourage accessory dwelling units (ADUs) – for renter and owner affordability.
 - a. Make ADU approval as-of-right across City.
 - b. Revise minimum and maximum square footage.
 - c. Eliminate or reduce set-back and parking requirements.
3. Reduce or eliminate required parking standards.
 - a. Update Beacon’s outdated parking standards, which were created in 1974.
 - b. Strategically reduce parking standards in Main Street and transit-friendly districts.
 - c. Decrease or waive parking requirements for designated affordable units.
 - d. Manage public parking as a public resource, with fees into a parking fund.
4. Streamline the approval process for buildings with affordable units.
 - a. Make step-backed four-story buildings in the Central Main Street district permitted uses when they meet higher affordable unit standard.
 - b. Provide incentives in Central Main Street, Linkage District, Fishkill Creek, and Waterfront Development districts for affordable housing.
5. Target city-owned lots and underutilized lands for affordable housing development.
 - a. Require significant percentage (e.g., 50%) of affordable housing on these lots.
 - b. Develop a form-based code that reduces approval time and costs.
 - c. Prepare a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) to speed review.
 - d. Package multiple City parking lots into one RFP for development.
6. Provide flexibility to allow building of smaller (i.e., more affordable) units.
 - a. Revise zoning to allow for square footage of residential space, not unit number (permitting additional smaller units vs. fixed number).
 - b. Provide incentives for creating smaller, more affordable units.
7. Further restrict short-term rentals (STRs) – which reduce available rental housing stock.
 - a. Review STR law to make sure that permanent housing is not crowded out by STRs.
8. Revise local requirements for the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR).
 - a. Classify development incentives for affordable housing as Type II Actions.
9. Advocate for changes in state and federal housing policies.
 - a. State legislation to allow ADUs by right across State.
 - b. Additional New York State bonding for affordable housing construction.
 - c. Statewide tenant protection legislation and/or additional legal services funding for tenant protection.
 - d. Additional federal government funding of Section 8 housing program.

What's a Lower Priority and Not Proposed Here

- Further Increasing the City's inclusionary zoning percentage of affordable units.
 - Beacon already has a high inclusionary percentage, and an incremental increase will not generate a large number of affordable units.
 - There is no evidence that affordable rent for a unit can recoup the current cost of construction for that unit.
 - There are significant potential unintended consequences.
- Adopting Emergency Tenant Protection Act in Beacon.
 - The eligible number of units in Beacon is quite small – only a couple percent.
 - The implementation effort and expense is substantial for a small number of units.
 - The Act does not target those in need with lower incomes, and could afford a financial benefit for those who do not need one.
 - There are other significant potential unintended consequences.