

**City of Hallowell  
Comprehensive Planning  
Committee Meeting  
November 27, 2007  
City Hall  
6-9PM**

## **CPC Meeting Focus: “Understand Open Space and Affordable Housing”**

The Hallowell Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) met on Tuesday November 27 along with members of Conservation (CC) and Affordable Housing (AHC) Committees, and select member of the Ordinance Review Committee, the Planning Board and the City Council to discuss current trends in housing and open space. David Giroux (City Manager), and Frank O’Hara and Antje Kablitz from Planning Decisions were also in attendance. The agenda included (1) a discussion of the major findings from the Open Space and Affordable Housing Committees’ Plans and (2) a discussion on how their findings relate to the comprehensive planning process. A copy of the agenda is available on the Hallowell Comprehensive Plan Webpage ([www.planningdecisions.com/projects](http://www.planningdecisions.com/projects)).

Dawn Gallagher, Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), opened the meeting with introductions and shared her ideal that the committees present should present a united front when it comes to meeting the open space and affordable housing needs of the community. The goal is to fold the concepts of the two committees into the work of the comprehensive plan update.

Cathie Murray spoke for the Open Space Plan. She indicated that the current final draft will be presented to the public on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2007 and that the Conservation Commission (CC) hopes to have a final plan before the City Council in January 2008. Cathie noted that throughout the planning process, the committee has remained very engaged and open with the public and the CC believes the Open Space Plan adequately represents a broad public view.

Sybil Baker spoke for the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC). The AHC hopes to present the City Council with a report on the current status of affordable housing in the city as well as a series of recommendations at the Council’s January 2008 meeting.

Frank O’Hara gave a brief overview of the current population and demographics of the City. A detailed account of which can be found in the agenda packet for the November 27, 2007 meeting on line at the City of Hallowell Comprehensive Plan webpage. He highlighted significant trends in the City’s development:

- Hallowell is largely urban with most of the population living in the core;
- Hallowell has higher than state average rental population;

- Though Hallowell has lost population in the past, currently population trends are stabilizing
- Even though the population has not grown significantly, Hallowell has had a gain in the number of households (as a greater number of smaller - 1 and 2 person - households move into the area).
- Single family growth is predominantly outside the urban core
- Hallowell has had an increase in housing cost but the median income remains low.

### **Open Space Plan Findings and Discussion**

Hallowell is bounded on all sides by substantial open space. These areas define a part of the community's character and buffer the city from surrounding communities. Frank presented the CPC with a brief synopsis of the Open Space Plan's vision and themes as well as key issues within the plan.

#### **Open Space Vision:**

*Generations from now, Hallowell will still be a place where people are keen to live, raise a family, work, and own businesses because the quality and distribution of open space strongly sustains natural functions and community identity and supports outdoor recreation and enjoyment of nature, even in the core of the city.*

#### **Open Space Themes:**

- 1) *In the Hallowell of tomorrow, the natural environment will be strongly expressed and well protected.*
- 2) *In the Hallowell of tomorrow, children and adults will have access to a diversity of well maintained and safe open spaces and facilities for outdoor play, natural wonder, and fitness and mental well being. Users will understand and honor the differences between public and private lands, and respect the property and rules of both.*
- 3) *The city's identity will be uniquely defined by its historic, visual, and other special values.*
- 4) *In the Hallowell of tomorrow, people will be able to easily walk or bike to every-day destinations where they shop, work, go to school, or access a recreation area.*

At this point the floor was opened for general discussion of the Open Space Plan.

- Shoreland Zoning
  - Current comprehensive plan directs the City to keep up with current standards
  - New State standards will be enforced in the summer of 2008
  - Current ordinance is not in line with current or future state standards
  - Stream Regulations
    - Minimum follows USGS map definition of stream. Excludes intermittent streams
    - Alternative: NRPA definition of streams based on characteristics and including intermittent streams
  - Some decision on Shoreland Zoning needs to be reached by the City by Spring of 2008
- Development Options
  - City and committees to understand options for alternative development types
  - Host Public Workshop on
    - Alternative growth and development strategies
    - Non-zoning alternatives
    - Land use alternatives
  - Perhaps work development education into January CPC public session
- Land Suitability Analysis
  - Mapping to be completed by Planning Decisions for CPC Land Use Inventory
- Augusta/Hallowell Buffer at the new Augusta Crossing Location
- Low-impact Development
  - Implement ordinance regulations that promote environmentally sustainable construction and development techniques
- CPC staff needs to review OS actions as they relate to the current comprehensive plan

### CPC views on OS Findings

- How to Preserve Open Space?
  - One approach is heavy handed (ordinance and regulations) the other is based on promoting incentives to preservation
  - Committee favors incentives
  - CPC sees public workshop as a positive starting point
- OS has done a lot of good work here
  - They have gone through a similar vetting process in regards to public meetings and hearings
  - They have established a strong vision
  - They have done a significant amount of data collections and research
  - They have made it easy for the CPC committee to bring the OS piece into their work
- CPC sees OS focus on
  - Protecting habitat and wetlands

- Working on cooperative measures with local land owners
  - There are just a hand full of families “out west” who have held onto their land for generations creating the open space and vistas that we see today
  - Danger to these areas is not immediate - land owners will in most cases stay the same for the foreseeable future
  - Provide land owners with incentives not edicts
- Respect the existing regulatory structure
  - No proposed zoning changes
  - All changes are on a voluntary basis for land owners

### Housing Committee Findings and Discussion

There is a strong desire in Hallowell to preserve what the community has (vibrant community, open space, history) while adding more of what we need (affordable housing). To keep the vibrant community (defined the local population of artists, teachers, local shop owners and their employees), Hallowell needs to ensure these residents affordable housing options.

- Affordable housing in the downtown
  - Preserve river views - no building increase on the river side of downtown rather focus on the “west-side” of water street and the urban core
  - More height
  - More density
  - Accessory Dwelling Units
  - New developments
  - Development should keep with existing character
- Floodplain Issues
  - How to build safely and effectively within the flood plain
  - David Giroux indicated that Hallowell does have code which allows for development within floodplains under certain conditions
- There is a need for the development of Land Use and Financial Options for developing affordable housing in the City
  - Affordable Housing TIF
  - Capital Investment
  - Accessory Dwelling Units
  - Density bonuses
  - Tax incentives for developers and landlords
  - Ordinance Changes
    - Parking requirements for downtown
    - Additional housing type development
  - Focus should be on infill rather than outlying growth
    - Concentrate on water street to second street area
  - Cluster development as an option for “west Hallowell”

- Exxon Mobile Property
  - Needs to be tested before any question of development can begin
  - To test the city needs to talk to the land owner
- Stevens School Property
  - State representative needs to come to a CPC meeting to address the issues/potentials surrounding the school redevelopment
- Over arching Goal: to provide housing for all residents at all income levels
  - Ensure mixed income development not concentration of affordable housing
- Zoning concerns
  - How to zone Water Street to ensure mixed use and potential for affordable housing
  - North Street/Augusta Line area vulnerable to big box/chain development
  - BB district has issues regarding wetlands (available space) and what the city wants to promote in the area
  - Tighten certain zones (in particular commercial zones)
  - Issue of residential to commercial conversion
- There is a need to cross reference existing ordinance with Housing Plan
- CPC sees providing affordable housing as an important component of Hallowell's future
  - Will incorporate findings into comprehensive plan
- How to define affordable
  - Affordable housing is based on salary. Typically housing should be less than 30% of your costs per month
  - Ordinance could include a clause to maintain affordability by requiring some housing costs to be based in % of the median income
  - Also look at providing housing to meet the needs of specific portions of the population
    - Teachers, firefighters, police, and other local service providers
    - Artists and musicians
    - Local employees of retail and restaurants
- Need to develop a projection model of needs versus existing stock
  - Address the issue of new development vs. rehabilitation in terms of cost, location, efficiency

**Other Items of Focus at the Meeting**

- What is the Division of Labor between ORC and CPC?
  - Need to draft ORC/CPC Scope and Definition
  - ORC moving ahead with drafts even if these may be tweaked by other committees prior to final approval
  - ORC moving ahead on Site Plan Review development
  - CPC focusing on zoning and policy changes
    - Frank O’Hara cautioned the group here in saying that the CPC does not create zones rather provides overarching guidelines for future ORC/Planning Board/City Council discussion on zoning changes or amendments
  - ORC to update city ordinance to meet current comprehensive plan standards and existing city regulations
- Issues of immediate concern
  - CPC feels that their role should be to look forward and existing committees should address current concerns and needs so long as they are constant with the existing comprehensive plan.
  - Current committees should address development pressures on the northern and southern borders of Hallowell’s downtown.
  - Current committees should address concerns around Augusta Crossing and the potential need for buffer areas
    - Look into wetlands issues
    - Cross reference any potential actions with current comprehensive plan
    - Talk to affected and abutting land owners
    - Possibility of a “sunset” clause to have decisions reviewed after the new comprehensive plan goes into affect

**Where do we go from here?**

- CPC continues to develop a community inventory and begins to review concepts for policy development keeping in mind the work and recommendations of the CC and the AHC.
- The ORC moves forward with changes to the current ordinance that meet the standards of the current comprehensive plan and address areas of immediate concern to the community.
- The CC and AHC present their findings to the City Council in January of 2008.