

**From:** Todd Selig <[tselig@ci.durham.nh.us](mailto:tselig@ci.durham.nh.us)>

Sent: Tuesday, June 6, 2023 9:27 AM

To: Zachary Azem <[Zachary.Azem@unh.edu](mailto:Zachary.Azem@unh.edu)>; Michael Behrendt <[mbehrendt@ci.durham.nh.us](mailto:mbehrendt@ci.durham.nh.us)>; Andrew Smith <[Andrew.Smith@unh.edu](mailto:Andrew.Smith@unh.edu)>

Subject: Re: Initial feedback/reaction on working draft of housing needs assessment from Todd Selig

Dear Zachary and Andy,

A few additional observations/comments:

Q10:

How many people *actually know* what the minimum lot sizes are, and what drove those sizes? It is my guess (though I do not know for sure so Michael may want to weigh in) that the larger lot sizes in the districts not served by Town water and sewer, the larger size does not simply reflect the *\*transect\** approach to development from an aesthetic perspective, but the practical element of septic and leach field needs years ago. Now, with newer septic technology, perhaps those lot sizes could be reduced. If this were true, a question such as: If newer leach field and well technology could SAFELY (note: leach fields eventually fail if not properly maintained and the leachate eventually adds nitrogen to the watershed, which is bad for the Great Bay) facilitate smaller lot sizes in rural areas, would respondents be open to them?

Q11:

The difference between attached and detached ADUs could be enhanced to obtain better data.

Q13:

Isn't this sort of a leading question, i.e., "How well do you understand the concept of 'workforce housing'?" That is, respondents may only THINK they know. Workforce housing, affordable housing, missing middle housing, etc. The definition provided seems to blend workforce and affordable housing so it is a little confusing. How do we get to the "truth" about a respondent's understanding, unless we provide a good definition and concrete examples?

Q17:

(the ethical responsibility question) The question ignores the issue of regional obligation and what Durham may have done to address the regional need already. In addition, Durham has a unique population where more than half of our census pop. is comprised of more-or-less transient college students. Have the regional dashboards taken this into consideration or simply provided a census population allocation?

Q25:

Is it helpful to include RETIRED as an option, not just NOT WORKING ??

Q30:

Years in TOTAL living in Durham: perhaps explain, as in, if you were away for a while, add all the years you were here. Quite a few residents grew up in Durham, moved away, and then came back.

Todd

[Todd I. Selig](#), Administrator

Town of Durham, NH

a: 8 Newmarket Road, Durham, NH 03824 USA

t: 603.868.5571 | m: 603.817.0720 | w: [www.ci.durham.nh.us](http://www.ci.durham.nh.us)

he/him pronouns

*Everyone can tackle climate change. How can you reduce your carbon footprint?*

**From:** Todd Selig <[tselig@ci.durham.nh.us](mailto:tselig@ci.durham.nh.us)>

Date: Monday, June 5, 2023 at 6:09 PM

To: Zachary Azem <[Zachary.Azem@unh.edu](mailto:Zachary.Azem@unh.edu)>, Michael Behrendt <[mbehrendt@ci.durham.nh.us](mailto:mbehrendt@ci.durham.nh.us)>, Andrew Smith <[Andrew.Smith@unh.edu](mailto:Andrew.Smith@unh.edu)>

Subject: Initial feedback/reaction on working draft of housing needs assessment from Todd Selig

Dear Zachary and Andy,

I've given the working draft a quick review and provided some initial feedback within the attached PDF.

Generally speaking, this represents positive movement in the right direction – so thank you -- but I believe there is more to do.

It's not enough to simply know how many residents believe that additional housing or additional conservation land or additional this or additional that feels good to them. We need to better understand how residents react when presented with the real-life value laden scenarios new housing units may represent.

For example, local zoning currently limits the height of apartments in our downtown core to 3-stories, and a few parcels closest to UNH to 4-stories to maintain Durham's quintessential New England downtown look and feel. It would therefore be helpful to understand not only whether residents would like more housing downtown, and the type of housing they hope to see, but also whether they would be open to allowing higher apartment buildings (or denser apartments) to actuate that housing goal, with a potential impact to our downtown's look and feel. Or perhaps less parking to make way for more

apartments. And when those apartments are being constructed, do we still want to require the most stringent energy standards possible to meet our stated local climate action goals, even though those standards may in the short term drive up the cost of the very housing we're trying to incentivize?

The same would be true with agricultural, forest, or conservation land. Do residents want to keep large unfragmented tracts of field or forest (for future locally grown crops, carbon forest sequestration in accordance with our climate action plan, or for wetland protection/walking trails/wildlife), or would they rather see dense or fragmented smaller lots of housing in those spaces in some form, and what form would they prefer? The housing will likely impact in some way those fields and forests and pastoral gateways so there is no easy/simple answer.

This conversation is all about real choices and consequences, not hypothetical answers that may feel good provided in a vacuum. If for example we are going to ask how people ethically feel about adding additional housing stock, we should then have sister questions asking about ethical perspectives focusing on protecting the environment, protecting Durham's history, protecting Durham's gateways, preparing proactively for climate change, etc. Only then can we evaluate how the ethical goal of adding housing might impact other ethical priorities.

To the extent we can provide residents with sets of questions that require them to critically evaluate and make choices concerning their own priorities and aspirations for Durham and provide feedback that gives decision-makers a sense of which choices and consequences they would prefer to see actualized, that would be truly beneficial, and probably more enlightening (and ultimately helpful) for the community members who devote the time to take the survey as well.

Todd

[Todd I. Selig](#), Administrator

Town of Durham, NH

**a:** 8 Newmarket Road, Durham, NH 03824 USA

**t:** 603.868.5571 | **m:** 603.817.0720 | **w:** [www.ci.durham.nh.us](http://www.ci.durham.nh.us)

he/him pronouns