

**CITY OF KEENE
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

JOINT PUBLIC WORKSHOP
PLANNING BOARD/
PLANNING, LICENSES, AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 12, 2018

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Planning Board Members Present

Gary Spykman, Chair
Andrew Bohannon
Mayor Kendall Lane
Nathaniel Stout
Chris Cusack
Pamela Russell Slack
Martha Landry
Councilor George Hansel

Planning Board Members Not Present

Douglas Barrett, Vice-Chair

**Planning, Licenses and Development
Committee Members Present**

Councilor David Richards, Chairman
Councilor Bart Sapeta
Councilor Margaret Rice
Councilor George Hansel

**Planning, Licenses and Development
Committee Members Not Present**

Councilor Philip Jones

Staff Present

Michele Chalice, Planner

1. Roll Call

Chair Richards called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and a roll call was taken.

2. December 11, 2017 meeting minutes

A motion was made by Mayor Kendall that the Joint Committee accept the December 11, 2017 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by and was unanimously approved.

3. Presentation on “*There’s No Place Like Home: A Critical Analysis of the Millennial and Student Housing Markets in Keene*” by Keene State College Geography Students Mark Landolina, Kevin Saline, and Kathryn Van Veen, and Faculty Mentor, Dr. Christopher Cusack

Planner Michele Chalice addressed the Committee first and stated in 2016 the Joint Committee identified two particular priority strategies; more options for workforce housing, retaining younger individuals in the community. Based on this, the Joint Committee invited Keith Tebo of Southwest Community Services who presented on how Keene can expand our diversity of housing. The presentation today would tie into that topic and will explore a particular segment of the housing market in Keene – that of millennials.

Mark Landolina, Kevin Saline, and Kathryn Van Veen were the three presenters from Keene State College.

Kevin Saline was the first presenter. He noted that the presentation was going to cover the current shift in millennials and college student demographics in Keene and how this shift is impacting the housing market in Keene. The presentation is based on a millennial survey, college student survey and a focus group.

Millennials are those born between 1982 – 1988. There are four common milestones of adulthood; getting married, having children, working and living independently. Mr. Saline compared two different timelines – those who were 25 to 34 years of age in 1975 and the same age bracket in 2016. 50% of young people in 1975 had nearly all of these milestones completed but only 25% in 2016. Millennials are getting married later in life and are having fewer children than they used to, which calls for different housing options compared to prior generations. They rather have low cost apartments with room-mates than a four bedroom home with a picket fence. He noted millennials have the capacity to bring about a certain kind of vitality to a city.

Mr. Saline referred to a map and noted in New England millennial growth has been rather sparse, based on IRS data gathered between 2011-2015. This map indicates those millennials who are truly independent and are not dependent on parents or attending college. New Hampshire has seen a net gain of 900 compared to Massachusetts and Connecticut who are carrying a negative number. Keene during this five year period has seen no growth but has dropped round 73 people, which is not a large number but refers to stagnation.

Another decline in the City of Keene is the decline of college students; Keene State saw a decline of 18% (900 students) but UNH on the other hand saw an increase of 2%. This decline at Keene State causes for an increase in available housing which then provides old student rentals which could now be turned into other opportunities for buyers perhaps in the millennial generation.

Mr. Landolina was the next presenter who talked about the current housing market in the city. Old houses provide for a sense of history but could also present some concerns for the city. Historical homes lack the modern amenities millennials are looking for. He referred to a median year structure built which shows that Keene has an older housing stock. Mr. Landolina then focused on the central business district which is mostly comprised of 20 year olds and this is mostly because of the college housing that exists in this area. This area is also comprised of higher volume of renters; older homes and higher volume of renters are focused in east Keene in the central business district. The best way to attract millennials is to focus on neighborhood revitalization.

Mr. Landolina went on to say that there has been a change to the housing market in the past ten years. He referred to a graph for the period between 2006 – 2010; owner occupied single family housing is at 39%, renter occupied multi-family dwelling is also at 39%. 2011-2015 is when there is shift to more owner occupied single family homes and felt this trend could attract more millennials to east Keene.

Ms. Van Veen was the next speaker. She talked about the interviews this group conducted. She noted the purpose of the focus group was to have an informal conversation about living in Keene as a millennial; Stay, Work and Play were the subject of the entire project – housing, employment and recreation.

For housing – the consensus was that Keene is expensive and the quality of housing is an issue. There was an argument that taxes are what is causing the price of rentals, but on the other hand millennials also don't want the burden of owning a home and be tied down. There was also the

notion that the dependability of student rentals is what is driving rental prices.

When asked about housing revitalization, landlords indicated because of the high turnaround renovations is not worthwhile to make when there is such high turnaround with students. Many young professionals did agree college students negatively impact housing decisions. While they don't mind living in a mixed use zoning they would not want to live in the same unit.

Employment – The focus group noticed there is an issue with employment, there are many hiring signs but nothing that provides for a livable wage. One of the key quotes from the focus group is that there is an oversaturation of highly educated individuals but there are many unskilled jobs available. Hence, Keene State and Antioch graduates are seeking employment outside of Keene. The focus group also agreed the increase to green energy, energy security, technology and eco-tourism could help more people to stay after graduation.

Recreation – The focus group had a positive feeling about this item; there isn't much Keene needs to do about recreation – there is a lot to do but more advertising of events is necessary. The group agreed there is something for everyone to do in Keene.

Mr. Landoline talked about the survey they sent out. What the survey concluded is that millennials are dissatisfied with housing in Keene; types of housing, quality of housing all average below three stars (five being the highest). Millennials are also dissatisfied with overall salaries, job availability and selection of jobs (1.6 stars).

He then referred to three pie charts which represented three different groups of millennials; are you currently living in your ideal living situation? 74% of millennials who own their home say they are living in the ideal living situation. In contrast only 33% who rent a home are living in an ideal situation. 25% who rent an apartment are living in their idea living situation.

So why aren't more millennials not owning homes? Significant financial barriers caused by student loans, credit and salary.

When Millennials were asked whether they would move in the next years, 75% said they would. According to the survey, the millennials who want to live in Keene would like to live close to Central Square. Keene is a beautiful town is the reason most choose to live in this city; it has a lively downtown, numerous recreational activities, and a perfect mix or urban and suburban life.

Mr. Saline then addressed the survey they completed with college students. Close to 86% of upper classmen live off campus. Many of the students who were surveyed lived adjacent to the college. One of the questions on the survey was for the students to compare the quality of live in their neighborhood versus the rest of Keene. Students who live off campus housing viewed their neighborhood as same or of higher quality in comparison to the rest of Keene. He felt what the survey also told them is that the quality of the neighborhood really does not matter to a college student or they are just ignorant and are not too concerned about their neighborhoods which could cause the decline of these neighborhood standards.

The students were also asked what type of housing they preferred; nearly 49% would choose to live in a single-family house, 44% were split between multi family, apartment and dorm rooms. With high demand students will rent them anyway.

The next question was post-graduation plans; 65% indicated they would not stay in Keene, 32% were unsure, and 3% said yes. Some of the reasons for leaving Keene is they wanted to go where

their jobs took them, they were moving back in with their parents, or they wanted to explore more. As far as the majority of the type of housing they were looking for – 30% wanted to rent.

In conclusion, Ms. Van Veen stated most of the college students are satisfied with their housing. 16% were neutral about living in a mixed-use neighborhood, 55% wanted to live in student only neighborhoods, and 29% wanted to live in a mixed-use neighborhood.

For millennials those who wanted to live in a mixed-use neighborhood was 36%, 21% did not want to live in a mixed-use neighborhood and 17% were not sure. Both millennials and students would be fine living in a mixed use neighborhood and mixed use neighborhood is defined as a number of different types of people from all walks of life living together. Ms. Van Veen stated what they have been able to surmise from the survey is that a majority of students are satisfied with their off campus living arrangements but with the decline of Keene State enrollment there might be an excess of Keene State housing which could make room for young professionals to live downtown.

The key finding from the survey is that students prefer to live in houses rather than in apartments or dorms and this could be because they prefer to live independently and increase their social life. According to the survey 95% of young professionals would like to own a home someday so this could be a discrepancy between the survey versus the research.

Another item to note is “housing flip” – homes that used to be student rentals are now being turned into single family homes. Ms. Van Veen referred to homes in east Keene to support this finding which she felt was quite promising. With the decline in enrollment, this could be an opportunity for young professionals.

Overall millennials satisfaction with Keene’s housing is inadequate and this is due to the rental cost versus the quality and the other reason is the cost of property taxes.

There is an overall housing satisfaction between millennial renters and homeowners.

In regards to what Keene provides, live and work are bigger concerns for millennials than is play.

In closing the students thanked those who helped with this project.

Ms. Russell Slack thanked the students for their presentation.

Councilor Hansel thanked the students as well and noted he served on this focus group. He also stated that he serves on the Governor’s Millennial Advisory Council where housing is one of the areas being discussed and stated he would be sharing this presentation with that group and this group would be holding sessions throughout the region as well and wanted to keep these students in the loop.

Councilor Stout asked how millennials are defined. Mr. Saline stated millennials are those born between the period of 1982 to 1998 and it is considered a generation.

Mr. Bohannon commended the students as well and noted he is responsible for the “play” aspect in the city. He asked how recreation should be advertised in the city. The group felt radio and social media were best options.

Mayor Lane commended the presentation. He asked during the focus groups and interviews whether the availability of jobs in connection with housing was discussed. Ms. Van Veen stated this issue is like a double edge sword, you can’t have one without the other – they are looking for

both; not mainly the quality of the housing but mostly a job that could afford the housing. It doesn't need to be perfect but they would like a balance. They like the mixed use factor as well.

Councilor Sapeta stated the information the students presented tonight have already been shared with many groups in the city and commended the presentation. He went on to say taxes are mentioned a lot and felt looking at some incentives for young people to offset that burden would be prudent. He asked what these students would like to see with that aspect.

Mr. Saline stated Trinity College in Connecticut did have an incentive if graduates stayed in the region after graduation they were given a tax break on their housing.

Ms. Landry commended the presentation and asked whether the survey group consisted only of college students and college educated individuals. Mr. Langoline stated they went with the Keene Young Professionals group and used their Facebook group to seek out people to interview. He noted not too many college students participated in the survey. He added most who participated in the survey have a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, and about 50% attended Keene State College or Antioch University.

Ms. Landry noted one of the items discussed in the presentation was about fixing older homes but with that there is also the issue of those who then won't be able to afford those homes anymore - she considers Keene to be a fairly blue collar community. Ms. Van Veen stated the good thing about Keene is there is that support system. However, what they noticed is with millennials, there are those who make too much to be able to qualify for subsidized housing. She indicated the goal of this project was to focus on these types of people.

Ms. Russell Slack asked whether the survey or group discussion showed why people have poor credit. Mr. Langoline stated they did not ask them that specific question but this seems to be the trend nationwide, where college graduates are trying to build credit. Ms. Russell Slack stated what she sees is these students signed on to loans without really knowing what they were getting into; student loan never goes away and if they are not paying back their student loans it could become an issue with their credit. She hoped there is something the federal government could do to address this.

Mr. Stout stated he and his wife have lived in this community for over 30 years and when he thinks back at what they have had to do, it has been difficult. He asked what can be done to preserve this community and what can be done to retain the millennials. Mr. Saline stated for him personally, after graduation he would be depended on his parents for a short period of time and hence will be returning home and felt this seems to be the trend for many.

Ms. Van Veen stated there are great small businesses in Keene and felt these businesses should be provided with incentives to enable them to hire more college graduates.

Dr. Cusack commended the work these students have put into this project and the work ethic they have displayed in producing such a great project. He also thanked city staff who helped with this project.

Chair Richards stated he was surprised to hear about the desire to fix up older homes and was under the impression the younger generation wanted to make things simpler. He too applauded the presentation.

4. Approve changing the May 2018 meeting date to May 16 –

A motion was made by Councilor George Hansel to change the meeting date to Wednesday, May 16. The motion was seconded by Andrew Bohannon and was unanimously approved. Due to Budget Meetings

5. Next Meeting – March 12, 2018.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Krishni Pahl,
Minute Taker