

## Hingham Unity Council Recommendation to the Accessory Dwelling Unit Study Committee

Submitted 6-7-22

Hingham faces numerous challenges to new housing production even as our population continues to grow. According to the [Housing Plan released by the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust in June 2021](#), the demographic trend in our town indicates an aging population with the need for many more single family residences on the horizon. There is also a growing need for residences with access for people with disabilities, supportive services, units without substantial maintenance demands, and starter housing - both rentals and owned units.

The HUC urges this study committee to recommend amendment of the ADU by-law to remove the familial residency requirement, as well as approving detached units as requested in the 2021 warrant article. Doing so would provide badly needed additional rental inventory at very little to no negative impact to our community. Additional benefits of changing the ADU by-law include:

- Providing a fairly inexpensive means of increasing the supply of year-round rental units at lower cost than new construction and without significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood.
- Creating housing units that do not require additional Town services, such as new streets or utilities, and involve little or no loss of open space.
- Encouraging a more economic and energy-efficient use of the Town's housing supply while maintaining the appearance and character of the Town's one-family neighborhoods.
- Providing companionship, security and services for the homeowner or tenant.
- Generating increased tax revenue in a locality because accessory units typically add value to existing homes.
- Providing income to residents who might not otherwise be able to afford to live in their homes.
- Offering a way of preserving historic properties using the rental stream available to help maintain the property.

Finally, the Housing Plan notes that, while there might be a "NIMBY" faction concerned with the impact of ADUs on existing neighborhoods, this negative impact has not been borne out in other communities. The Plan cites a Town of Needham survey of nine comparable communities (including Scituate, Lexington and Newton) that provides compelling evidence that ADUs can contribute to the overall goal of increasing housing options for older adults, young adults, people with disabilities, and people with moderate incomes with little or no negative impact on the character of the neighborhood or on Town services, while minimizing the regulatory burden on Town officials and resources. In fact, [Towns with no restrictions on ADU occupancy, like Newton](#),

[showed only slightly more applications than towns with residency restrictions, and the total ADU numbers are still a very small percentage of the housing stock.](#)

The HUC affordable housing working group strongly encourages this committee to [follow the lead of towns like Newton](#), Lincoln, and [Lexington](#) and amend the ADU by-law to remove the requirement that rentals may only be to family members.

In addition, the Housing Plan also notes that the [Town of Lincoln](#), which is over the 10% state 40B goal like Hingham, has introduced a program to support deed-restricted affordable ADUs with incentives through a property tax exemption and 10-year, zero interest loans of up to \$25,000 to help create such units. This could add units to the Subsidized Housing Inventory at very little cost to the Town. This is something the HUC strongly encourages this study committee to explore further.

Thank you.