

**Lincoln Select Board
Statement Regarding Article #3
Housing Choice Act 3A Zoning
March 5, 2024**

At its meeting on Monday, March 4th, the Lincoln Select Board voted unanimously to support the adoption of a Housing Choice Act-compliant zoning district ("HCA District"), and to endorse the work of the Housing Choice Act Working Group and Planning Board on the HCA District they are presenting at the annual town meeting.

The Board believes this is an important inflection point for the Town. As part of a strategy to address the housing crisis, the Massachusetts State Legislature passed the Housing Choice Act with overwhelming bipartisan support, and it was signed into law by Governor Baker in early 2021. Its implementation and augmentation are now Governor Healey's top priority.

Lincoln has been a leader over the past 50+ years in proactively building multi-family housing which has given the community a broader and more affordable range of housing options and has kept us compliant with the 1969 Comprehensive Permit Law ("Chapter 40B"). We believe that we can once again step up as regional leaders and lay the groundwork for future housing opportunities by approving an HCA District that balances multiple town values and keeps Lincoln eligible for important sources of state funding.

In evaluating whether to endorse the formation of an HCA District, the Board considered the following questions:

1. Zoning is a policy expression of town values, one that must strive to balance many (and sometimes competing) needs and viewpoints. Did the Housing Choice Act Working Group (HCAWG) and Planning Board conduct a process that gave residents voice and choice and allowed them to shape the direction and substance of the zoning bylaw?
2. Is there a benefit to Lincoln as a whole in establishing an HCA District?

For a number of reasons, the Board believes that the answer is "yes" to both of the above questions:

- The HCAWG developed a range of options built on values that reflect decades of prior work and multiple town meeting votes: 1) rezone near public transportation; consider codifying the work the town has done to allow multi-family development; 2) lay the groundwork for additional housing options; 3) support our small commercial center; 4) promote decarbonization and climate change adaptation; 5) keep Lincoln eligible for state grants so that we can achieve town goals and mitigate impact on property taxes; 6) proactively tailor zoning to fit Lincoln's unique character.
- The Working Group ran an open process that actively encouraged participation and created iterations of zoning options based on a spectrum of viewpoints, as well as facilitating a resident proposal for one additional zoning option.
- The Select Board, at the request of residents and the HCAWG, brought 5 zoning options forward to the December 2023 Special Town Meeting, and asked voters to choose which they believed did the best job of balancing the Town's values. At the well-attended meeting, after one round of voting via a secret ballot, 55% chose "Option C" to move forward.
- Since then, the Planning Board has met weekly to finalize the accompanying zoning bylaw, altering it where possible based on community feedback. This has resulted in a carefully written bylaw that aims to protect our commercial center, preserve open space

by only rezoning areas that are currently developed, and require buildings that are in scale with the existing built environment.

- Establishment of the HCA District will keep Lincoln eligible for state grants from which we have already benefitted and that we hope to use in the future to both defray the cost of expensive infrastructure projects (replacement of water mains, stormwater control, and climate change mitigation strategies), and to help us with goals such as the development of Affordable housing units when opportunities arise.

The Board acknowledges that this is a topic that elicits a range of opinions and feelings. Lincoln becomes a stronger community when we express ideas, listen to each other, and then engage in the democratic process of Town Meeting to make a collective decision. The Board believes that the current proposal, as developed by the Planning Board, represents a thoughtful and responsive execution of the option that was chosen by voters in December. If Town Meeting confirms the December vote and passes the article by a majority, the bylaw will go into effect once it is reviewed and approved by the Attorney General and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. If, though, Town Meeting chooses a different direction, the Select Board is committed to bringing all interested residents together to forge a compromise to be voted on at a Special Town Meeting before the end of the year.

We are at an important crossroads, and we look forward to being in community together at 9:30am on Saturday, March 23rd.

Sincerely,
Jim Hutchinson, Chair
Kim Bodnar
Jennifer Glass