

14 Affordable Housing Myths and What to Say in Response



You May Hear:	You Might Respond:
<p>"I'm in favor of affordable housing but this is out of character for our community. I would be in favor of a smaller project or one on the edge of town near the transfer station, etc."</p>	<p>"Historically, our community, like most towns, included a range of housing types including row houses and two and three-family homes and multi-family buildings. The current dominant single-family zoning was enacted in the 1940s to keep out people who were lower-income, African American, and immigrants. In most cases the smaller the project is, the less financially feasible it is to build and the less affordable for residents."</p>
<p>"This project will put a burden on our overcrowded schools and the property taxes from this project will not be nearly enough to pay the additional costs associated with educating those children."</p>	<p>"In fact, according to a recent study by the regional planning agency, new construction of housing is no longer a major driver of increased student enrollment. The turnover of existing homes is much more significant. Further, most suburban school districts have experienced a drop in student enrollments and schools are not overcrowded. Finally, it is important to note that even market-rate homeowners do not pay the costs of educating their children on an annual basis. Average property tax bills rarely equal the per-pupil costs of education, but most homeowners will live in their homes significantly longer than their children are in school."</p>
<p>"This project will destroy an important large old tree, vernal pool, wildlife habitat, water view, or other environmental good."</p>	<p>"The project should be subject to normal environmental review, just as market housing or commercial development is, but not be subjected to extraordinary scrutiny. Often denser multi-family developments allow more open space to be preserved than large single-family lots. Denser multi-family homes also generally have a significantly lower carbon footprint per household than single-family homes."</p>
<p>"The traffic impact of this project will be intolerable for our neighborhood with additional car trips on already clogged roadways and intersections."</p>	<p>"The developers have done traffic impact studies and the impacts are modest. People living in multi-family and affordable housing have fewer cars per household and utilize public transit more than others in the community."</p>
<p>"Unless the project has more parking, the new residents will use all the on-street parking in the area."</p>	<p>"See above. Additional parking requirements often drive up the cost of affordable housing and the parking often goes unused."</p>
<p>"I am only thinking of the families who might live there, the street is too busy and would not be safe for families with children or I am only thinking of the families who might live there and there used to be a dry cleaner on the site and we do not know what kind of toxic chemical are still onsite."</p>	<p>"Developers plans will be reviewed by the town and safety and environmental issues addressed if there are issues that need to be resolved."</p>
<p>"I worked all my life to afford my home and I do not want to see someone who did not work as hard get a home here that I am subsidizing and drive down my property value."</p>	<p>"The ability to afford a home in our community is, in significant measure, a result of historic factors like prior racial discrimination in housing and employment. It is not simply a function of one individual's 'hard work'. In fact, there is no evidence that property values will go down if affordable housing is constructed nearby."</p>
<p>"Our town does not have the services that these families need, and they would not be comfortable here."</p>	<p>"Residents of affordable housing are seeking good schools, a safe community, and access to shopping and other amenities: the same things that other families are seeking when they move to our community. We can also work to ensure that they feel welcome."</p>
<p>"Aren't we trying to encourage housing near transit? We do not have transit here in our town, so it does not make sense to build affordable housing here."</p>	<p>"While building housing near transit is one goal, our region's housing needs mean that we cannot meet all the need for affordable housing with sites near transit."</p>
<p>"Chapter 40B projects only serve middle-income people so this project will not help the truly needy really deserve our help."</p>	<p>"While Chapter 40B rental developments serve households with incomes at 80% of area median income or below (\$95,000 for a family of 4). There are also many families with incomes below this level who can use rental subsidies to rent apartments in 40-B multi-family rentals."</p>
<p>"This project will serve formerly homeless people who have many other issues, and we do not think the developer has adequately explained how they will address those needs."</p>	<p>"If the project will be serving a population with special needs (many formerly homeless people so not have special needs and simply need stable affordable housing), a detailed plan for services will be created and the property manager will coordinate with a service provider."</p>
<p>"It is the greed of the developer that is driving the number of units and we should simply force them to modify the proposal to make it smaller."</p>	<p>"Developers of affordable housing, whether non-profit or for-profit, need to make a profit just as developers of market-rate housing or makers of smartphones or pharmaceutical companies. Because of fixed costs like site work, simply making a project smaller will often make it impossible to build."</p>
<p>"I am an architect (substitute engineer, planner, builder) and I have looked at the proposal and I think it is shoddy and does not address all the issues with the site."</p>	<p>"Frequently opponents of a project will cite professional qualifications when speaking at a public meeting. This often intimidates others who may support a project whether the professional credential is relevant to the comment. It is extremely helpful if project supporters can speak early in a public meeting and speak to the need for the housing."</p>
<p>"This project is not consistent with our town's plan for the next twenty years: it violates a sacred trust with the future residents."</p>	<p>"Plans are helpful, but they are not immutable, and it is important for the future health of our community to provide a variety of housing options to meet the needs of many kinds of households."</p>