

## Lopez, Donna

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**From:** Mike Connolly <mike@mikeconnolly.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 23, 2015 1:28 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** Lopez, Donna; Rossi, Rich; Peterson, Lisa; Farooq, Iram  
**Subject:** Support for Policy Order #1

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am writing in support of Policy Order #1, which looks to explore the possibility of producing a comprehensive housing plan as an “early action item” of the citywide planning process.

Thank you to Councillors Carlone and Mazen for filing this order, and thank you as well to Councillor Simmons for all of the work she has done to advance policy as Chair of the Housing Committee in the current term.

As evidenced by the most recent [Citizen Survey](#), “Affordable Housing/Housing” is generally considered the most important issue facing the City of Cambridge. And yet, in this time of development boom and affordable housing emergency, the City does not appear to have a comprehensive housing plan.

Planning for housing is important because it can help us to do a better job of protecting current residents from displacement while also helping to unlock complex opportunities to expand access to housing in the face of incredible market forces and profound wealth and income inequality.

Having said that, the housing plan should not be the product of any one individual. Rather, it should be the result a robust public process. To ensure the success of the process and the quality of the plan, we need everyone working together — city councillors, city staff and other officials, residents and neighborhood leaders, industry and other stakeholders, and the Utile team and other relevant experts.

I became interested in the idea of a comprehensive housing plan when I noticed that cities such as [Boston](#), [Somerville](#), and [San Francisco](#) have all recently completed housing plans. The Boston plan appears to have been produced in less than a year, and was produced in advance of their pending master planning effort. Here in Cambridge, we could aim to complete the first draft of our housing plan by the end of 2016. It could be further updated at the conclusion of the citywide planning process.

Some urgent questions that could be considered as part of the housing plan:

1. **How many new units are planned for Cambridge?** The Cities of Boston and Somerville both structured their recent plans around Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s latest housing production goals — but here in Cambridge, we are already [on track](#) to greatly exceed MAPC’s most ambitious targets for new housing production; the city has permitted nearly 7,000 units of new housing since 2010, which exceeds MAPC’s recommendation of 6,200 new units between 2010 and 2030.
2. **How to make policy that will keep up with market forces?** In May of 2013, members of the Planning Board asked the City to examine the possibility that “luxury high rises end up having a net negative effect on affordable housing in the whole area...” The recent debate over the Normandy Twining zoning amendment made it clear that this question has not been answered in a satisfactory fashion for many residents. In September, the [Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#) concluded that “new luxury housing may cause dramatic upswings in the price of residential real estate in formerly distressed central neighborhoods...”
3. **How best to synthesize, communicate, and engage with all the efforts that are already being made to support affordable housing in Cambridge?**

**4. How best to promote regional coordination and planning, including working with others for increased funding on the state and federal levels of government?**

One of the great things about the City of Cambridge is that we all support the goal of affordable housing. I hope the notion of a comprehensive housing plan will enable people from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives to work together to advance policy on this urgent topic in the new year.

Thank you, and Happy Thanksgiving!

Mike Connolly  
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