



Town of Barrington

PLANNING, BUILDING AND RESILIENCY
DEPARTMENT

Barrington Town Hall | 283 County Road | Barrington, RI 02806

25 Watson Avenue Ad-Hoc Committee

Planning Process - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The 25 Watson Avenue Ad-Hoc Committee includes members of Boards, Committees, and Commissions that focus on issues relevant to the planning and future development of this property. Other members include neighborhood representatives and the Town Planner (serving as Chair). The Committee is working with the Town's consulting team and residents to create a plan for the property that will best serve Barrington.

Q: What is the purpose and role of the 25 Watson Ad-Hoc Committee?

The Town Council on 9/13/21 approved the following “charge” in endorsing the Town Manager’s establishment of the Committee:

“The multi-disciplined committee will work with the Town’s Real Estate Development Consultant as part of a collaborative public planning process in order to make recommendations to the Barrington Town Council on final disposition of the Watson Avenue property.”

While its role is advisory, the Committee was established with the intent to garner input from a broad range of stakeholders. Members include representatives from the Town Council, Planning Board, Resilience and Energy Committee, Open Space Committee, Park and Recreation Commission, Senior Services Advisory Board, Housing Board, Economic Development Commission, Conservation Commission, and the neighborhood. The Chair is the Town’s Director of Planning, Building and Resiliency, a professional planner whose role is to facilitate discussion and keep the Committee on task.

The Committee also is processing input from the public, through a public engagement process conducted by the Town’s consultant team, as well as input received from an online comment form. All materials are posted online on the 25 Watson Avenue Ad-Hoc Committee web page:

<https://www.barrington.ri.gov/watson-committee>

Q: How will the Committee guide the process and work towards a preferred plan?

The Committee is helping to guide the process through the Discovery phase (completed) and the Design Strategy phase (ongoing). This process was initiated in Fall 2021. The Committee conducted several public meetings in January and February 2022 to review and provide input on multiple future use scenarios developed by the consultant team, taking into consideration the results of the Discovery phase. The “Design Funnel” process is intended to allow Committee members and the public to consider various options for the site, engage in discussion around each option, and narrow down the options into one or two scenarios that can allow the consultant team to advance analysis of the development scenarios.

At the meeting on February 28th, the Committee was presented scenarios that were refined to consider input from the Committee as well as input received through the Town’s online comment form posted after the February 3, 2022 meeting. Over 70 comments were received through that form. After the February 28, 2022 meeting, a second comment form was posted for online comments. As of March 22, 2022, over 30 additional comments were entered into the system.

The next step is the presentation of the of “Design Funnel” Final Deliverables at a joint meeting of the Town Council, Planning Board, Housing Board and Ad Hoc Committee (date TBD).

Q: Who has the “final say” in confirming consensus of the 25 Watson Ad-Hoc Committee?

The committee, with 19 members, may not be able to reach full consensus on the final preferred development scenarios resulting from the Design Funnel process. The Committee is expected to make and vote on a motion that provides the consultant team direction as it works on finalizing the Design Funnel deliverables to be presented at the upcoming joint meeting (see above). If the Committee is able to pass a motion, members who vote against the motion should make their concerns known for recording in the meeting minutes.

Q: What is the expected format of the 25 Watson Ad-Hoc Committee’s recommendation to Town Council?

As the Committee’s role is advisory, the motion should include general guidance on the future use of the property. The list is up to the Committee, but to help with discussion these items could include the following:

- Building types: Multifamily, “Cottage Court,” or a combination of both.
- Affordable Housing minimum: 20% is the minimum by Town ordinance. Would the Committee want to exceed 20%?
- “Missing Middle” housing: Is there a goal for requiring units that are above the affordable housing maximum price/rent but below the market rate?
- Site amenities for the residents on site
- Energy and sustainability goals. Solar panels. Geothermal/electric heat pumps. “Passive House” design. Stormwater management objectives.
- Public space / public amenities
- Parking to support housing units as well as visitor/public parking
- Electric Vehicle parking and charging stations
- Preservation of buffers, tree plantings, protect natural features

Q: What's included in the next phase of the planning process - the "Delivery Strategy"?

The Committee's recommendation will be presented at the joint meeting with the Council, Planning Board and Housing Board. Selection of a site scheme will be needed at the joint meeting in order to move into the final stage of this project: the Delivery Strategy.

The Delivery strategy includes the following tasks:

- Documentation of the **proposed building program** for the selected site scheme
- **Pro-Forma** of proposed building program, showing revenue and expense factors, as well as typical real estate development financial metrics
- **Fiscal Impact Analysis** – examination of prospective service costs and revenues associated with the preferred development program
- **Traffic Study** - Preparation of a trip generation summary memorandum including collection of vehicle volume, speed, and classification data along Nayatt Road near Watson Avenue using an automatic traffic recorder (ATR) for a 24-hour period, and a brief technical memorandum summarizing qualitative traffic impacts.
- **Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments** will be proposed that make necessary adjustments to the "Housing & Neighborhood", "Land Elements" and "Developer Guidance" necessary for Planning & Zoning regulations & approvals to be granted to a project that meets the above goals.

The Committee will hold the first meeting on the consultant's draft deliverables in the Delivery Strategy phase. The final presentation will be at a joint meeting with the Council, Planning Board and Housing Board.

Q: What happens after the Delivery Phase?

Adoption of the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments will require a public hearing by the Planning Board and Town Council (this could be a joint hearing).

The rezoning of the property will require review and recommendation by the Planning Board, followed by adoption by Town Council after a public hearing.

A Request for Proposal for development would be written to require consistency with Comprehensive Plan, as amended, and new zoning adopted for the site.

Subject to Council approval, voters may be presented with a motion at the 2022 Financial Town Meeting about the property, including whether to allow developers to propose demolition of the building (in addition to repurposing the building).

Q: How does the development Request for Proposal process work?

The Town intends to contract with 4ward Planning, the real estate development consultant working on the planning phase, to assist with the development of the RFP, review and scoring of development proposals (including an analysis of each developer's pro-forma and statement of qualifications), negotiations, and drafting of the development agreement. This also will require legal services from an attorney experienced with real estate development projects.

The RFP will include:

- The Town's goals for the project, to be determined at the end of the Delivery Phase. These goals are expected to include housing types, percentage of affordable and "missing middle" housing units (if applicable), off-street parking minimums for the development, preservation of open space and buffers, public space including amenities, public parking requirements, sustainability features (such as energy efficient buildings, geothermal, solar panels, EV charging stations, native plantings, green stormwater infrastructure).
- The "preferred" conceptual plan (or plans) for the site illustrating the Town's preference for laying out the site and achieving the project goals. The "preferred" conceptual plan (or plans) is not prescriptive, however.
- The market feasibility analysis completed for the Town during the planning phase.
- Request for the development team's qualifications – including relevant experience, quality of projects in portfolio, ability to deliver based on past performance, qualifications of the subconsultants (architect, engineer, landscape architect, etc.)
- A description of existing conditions, along with a timeline, the developer must meet in order to obtain possession of the property from the Town, or for effectuating a long-term land lease with the Town.
- A requirement to complete the Planning Board approval process.
 - The review process includes three steps: (1) Master Plan (approval of the site plan and building elevations), (2) Preliminary Plan (more detailed engineering, landscape design and architecture), and (3) Final Plan (finalizing all required permits, compliance with conditions of approval, etc.).
 - The Planning Board will hold public hearings at the Master Plan and Preliminary Plan stages. Notices will be posted in the local newspaper(s). Additionally, notices will be mailed to abutters and others within 200 feet of the property.

Q: How can the Town ensure the developer selected for the project builds what they are proposing, and in a timely manner?

The development team for which the town is most interested in engaging will be designated as the "Conditional Developer" prior to a developer agreement being negotiated and memorialized between the Town and the Conditional Developer. A development agreement is a voluntary contract between a local municipality, such as a city or county, and a third-party developer. The development agreement contains the obligations of both parties and lays out the various standards and conditions that will control development of the subject property. Although the parties may enter into a development agreement on a voluntary basis, once the agreement is signed, it becomes binding on all parties, as well as their successors in interest. Therefore, all laws and regulations pertaining to contract formation, breach, and termination will apply.