YIMBYism – Yes In My Back Yard

Why Development is Good

Jesse Kanson-Benanav
A Better Cambridge

MEREDA 2017 Spring Conference
1. Everyone please rise.

2. Sit down if you have never attended a public meeting or hearing about a proposed development project near where you live.

3. Sit down if you have never spoken up or offered testimony at such a meeting/hearing.

4. Sit down if you have never spoken in favor of the development project that was the subject of a meeting/hearing.

There is a “new” acronym for everyone who is still standing – You’re “YIMBYs.”
Introducing: “YIMBY”
What is a YIMBY?

Yes
In
IMy
Back
Yard
What is a YIMBY?

- Emerging political movement in U.S. (and global) of local citizens supporting higher density residential and mixed-use development in their communities
Who is this YIMBY?

- Trained urban planner
- 15 years in affordable housing advocacy, policy, and development
- Local politics & government
- Community leader/activist on urban growth issues in Cambridge, Mass. as founder & chairman A Better Cambridge
WHY YIMBY?

• New integrationist movement

• Higher density housing – affordable, mixed-income, & market rate

• Address the massive inequities/exclusion & environmental destruction caused by physical & social development of American communities
What is Density?
What is Density?
Density throughout US History

- European influence on colonial communities
Density throughout US History

- 19th century western land expansion
Density throughout US History

- 20th Century Cities & Post-WWI Suburban Expansion
Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- *Exclusionary land use policies = exclusionary communities*
Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- *Exclusionary land use policies = exclusionary communities*
Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Racial segregation

- Natural or artificially established barriers will prove effective in protecting a neighborhood and the locations within it from adverse influences . . . [including] prevention of the infiltration of business and industrial uses, lower class occupancy, and inharmonious racial groups – FHA, 1938
Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Urban Divestment
Impacts of Suburban Expansion

- Fossil Fuel/Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Impacts of Suburban Expansion

• Loss of farmland, natural landscapes/green fields
Solution: Densify American Communities

Diversity of Housing Types
Efficient Land Patterns
Neighborhood Compatibility
Services and Programs
Infrastructure Improvements
Transit and walking choices
Yes in My Backyard!
Why Density?
Density through Smart Growth
Benefits of Density: Housing

- Inclusive communities

**Housing Density**
Dwelling Units Per Acre (du/ac)

- Single Family Homes (4-10 du/ac)
- Townhomes (20-40 du/ac)
- Apartments (50-100 du/ac)
Other Benefits of Density
What’s the problem in Metro Boston today?
Housing production is a prerequisite to long-term economic growth in Massachusetts.
Baby Boomers comprise 49% of region’s labor force

One million workers born before 1970 will retire by 2030 (39% of labor force)

Region is not producing /importing enough young workers to fill vacant positions

Source: MAPC Population Projections 2014
A stronger region is possible

Continued outmigration = no labor force growth

Population in the Labor Force, Metro Boston, 2010 - 2040, Status Quo vs. Stronger Region
A stronger region is possible

Net in-migration of 10,000 per year

= +175,000 workers by 2040

(7% increase)
We are Struggling to be Stronger

Net Domestic Migration, Metro Boston Counties, 2011 - 2016

Metro Boston now losing 18,000 residents annually to other states housing affordability is a major culprit
Housing demand:
Population growth is only half the equation (or less)
Average Household Size, Metro Boston, 1970 - 2040

23% decline since 1970

10% drop projected 2010 - 2040

Source: Decennial Census, MAPC Population Projections 2014
Same number of residents form more households, need more housing units

2010

250 people =

2040

250 people =
Long-term economic growth requires 435,000 new units in Metro Boston, ~500,000 units statewide, by 2040.
How are we doing in Metro Boston?
In recent years Massachusetts cities and towns have permitted less new housing than at almost any point since the 1950s.

Annual Housing Production in Massachusetts by Decade

Data from U.S. Census Bureau, Building Permit Survey. Note: in this and in all subsequent graphics, multifamily is defined as a structure with 2+ units and permits are as reported by cities and towns with imputed data by the Census Bureau for communities that fail to report.
Without adding *any* new people or *any* more jobs, the state’s housing supply is already about 44,000 units short of demand.

Chart shows the amount of new housing needed to achieve a 6% vacancy rate for rental housing and 2% vacancy rate for owner-occupied housing. Those are the generally accepted levels at which supply and demand is balanced and prices are stable. Total housing needed to meet current statewide demand is approximately 44,000 units: 27,000 rental and 17,000 ownership.

Both the current housing supply gap and projected need for new housing through 2030 are heavily concentrated in metro Boston.

Projected Net New Households, 2015 to 2030

Data from forthcoming report for MHP, DHCD and the Urban Land Institute by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.
In total, not nearly enough housing is being constructed to meet demand – particularly multifamily housing, which represents about two-thirds of the state’s projected market need.
More than half of the multifamily units permitted statewide over the last five years were in just five cities and towns: Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett and Watertown.
Even if the pace of new housing construction is maintained at 2015 levels – the highest level in a decade -- there will still be a housing shortage of over 80,000 units by 2030.

Multifamily permitting in 2015 was at its highest level since the late 1980s. Preliminary data suggests that both total permitting and multifamily permitting declined in 2016, which would make the projected gap in 2030 even larger.
Enter YIMBY
“In Cramped and Costly Bay Area, Cries to Build, Baby, Build”

An activist who calls her group BARF is pushing for more housing, pitting cranky homeowners and the political establishment against newcomers who want the region to make room for them, too.

By CONOR DOUGHERTY APRIL 16, 2016
First National YIMBY Conference

**Boulder Daily Camera:**
“Boulder to Host Country’s First Official ‘YIMBY’ Conference”

*Battle soaring housing costs by building, advocates urge*

**By Alex Burness,** May 14, 2016

**Next City:**
“YIMBY Movement Heats Up in Boulder”

**By Josh Stephens,** June 21, 2016
Growing National Movement
Former “YIMBY-in-Chief”
Growing National Movement

• Economically successful cities that are attractive places to live but that have really strong restrictions on building new housing.
Growing National Movement

• No national organization or ‘manifesto’

• Informal network of local activists and organizations

• Particular urban development challenges of their own communities
YIMBY in Greater Boston
A Better Cambridge
Our Vision

• We believe that Cambridge has always been, and should continue to be a forward looking community that thrives on the diversity and openness of all of its residents. For Cambridge and the region to continue to live up to its promise, it needs to be innovative and open to ensuring it is inclusive to all new and potential residents, with equal access to the amenities and opportunities that make our city and region thrive.

• When we allow for more residential development — of all sizes and character — we allow new residents to join our neighborhoods and existing residents to afford to stay, creating more opportunities and options for everyone. We are part of the growing YIMBY (yes in my backyard) movement across the nation that understands increased housing production as the only solution to the affordability crisis and a crucial step in environmental sustainability and fighting climate change.
Five Point Mission

• Diversity
• Sustainability
• Growth
• Livability
• Dialogue
Five Point Mission: Diversity

• We want to strengthen the social, cultural, and economic diversity of our neighborhoods.
Five Point Mission: Sustainability

- We want to build a strong and sustainable community where current and future residents will be able to work, shop, and play near their homes.
Five Point Mission: Growth

- We want to preserve and expand the diversity of our community by supporting sustainable growth and appropriate density.
Five Point Mission: Dialogue

- We want to support open and constructive engagement between all parties to the planning process, based on mutual respect for differing views.

envision what could be
DIALOGUE

www.abettercambridge.org
facebook.com/ABetterCambridge
@ABetterCambridge

DIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY GROWTH LIVABILITY DIALOGUE
Founding ABC

The Personal is Political
What ABC Does

• Advocate for policy: zoning changes, planning processes
• Support smart growth development proposals
• Education
  ▫ Candidate survey & ratings
  ▫ Candidate forums
  ▫ Educational forums
Supporting Development
## Candidate Ratings

### 2015 CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE RATINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DENSITY</th>
<th>BUILDING HEIGHTS</th>
<th>GROWTH</th>
<th>MARKET RATE HOUSING</th>
<th>AFFORDABLE HOUSING</th>
<th>MASTER PLAN</th>
<th>PARKING</th>
<th>TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>CITY COUNCIL AUTHORITY</th>
<th>CANDIDATE VISION</th>
<th>CANDIDATE TOP 3 POLICIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact that planning efforts in Cambridge such as A2D2 have recommended greater housing density to be developed around transportation nodes.</td>
<td>Cambridge should allow taller buildings in certain areas to accommodate future needs.</td>
<td>More people willing to live in cities and Cambridge in an attractive place to live, will see increasing demand for homes in these areas.</td>
<td>Market rate housing in Cambridge might mitigate upward pressure on housing costs in Cambridge.</td>
<td>Affordable housing in Cambridge should be addressed without private development.</td>
<td>Master Plan for moving forward on existing land use proposals or other opportunities that may arise (e.g., MIT Kendall Square development, Longfellow bridge).</td>
<td>Parking needs for Cambridge to review specific development proposals/appraisal to determine if they are to be addressed.</td>
<td>Transit-oriented development would help reduce carbon use in Cambridge.</td>
<td>City Council Authority to discuss the impact of local climate change on this area.</td>
<td>Candidate Vision to address local climate change and the impact on housing.</td>
<td>Candidate Top 3 Policies to address the need for affordable housing.</td>
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<th>Master Plan</th>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Transit Oriented Development</th>
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Total ABC Rating
Candidate Forums
Educational Forums
Cambridge Context
Cambridge Context: Opposition

**CRUSH HOUR IN CAMBRIDGE**
A Transportation Forum  
Saturday, November 17, 4-6 PM • Senior Center, 806 Mass. Ave.

- Over 18 million sq. ft. of new developments
- Over 50,000 additional cars on Cambridge streets
- Over 66,000 more commuter trips on buses & the T
- Gridlock potential at many intersections
- Sardine-packed subway cars during rush hour
- Increased noise, congestion, exhaust fumes

Is this what we want? • What can we do? • Who will stand up for Cambridge?
Cambridge Context: We All Sound the Same

- Affordable Housing
- Diversity
- Livability
- Sustainable
It’s all about showing up!
What You Can Do: Keep Working For Change

• Shift public policy & cultural norms towards smart growth, higher density
• Address gentrification; displacement of existing communities
• Even spread of economic benefits
• Impacts on public transit, infrastructure
For more information…

http://abettercambridge.org
http://yimby.wiki

tw: @ABetterCambMA
    tw: @JesseKB

fb: ABetterCambridge