

# August Newsletter

From City Councilor Marc Laredo



## Dear Friends

I hope that everyone is enjoying the summer and getting some well-deserved time off! While the summer is typically a quieter time for the City Council, we continue to do important work. This month I will focus on housing and the upcoming municipal elections:

---

## Housing

Housing and zoning policies have generated intense debate in Newton. Our decisions must be based on *facts*. We must have clear, accurate data that we update regularly and use this data to drive our decisions. We need to do a better job in this regard.

I have been working with the city's Planning and Assessing Departments to obtain information about Newton's current, historical, and approved (to be built) housing units. I've asked for a breakdown of that number into single-family homes, two-family homes, condominiums, traditional apartments, accessory apartments, congregate living facilities, and the number of units in each category that are deemed "affordable." The approved but not yet built category is particularly important because it includes several large projects that will be built, such as Riverside, Dunstan East, and Northland.

Here are some of the many examples of why the data matters so much:

- The number of single-family homes in the city has remained virtually the same for the last 20 years. The reason is simple - we are a built-out city. While people may want more single-family homes, that will not

happen in large numbers in Newton. So, what does that mean for development in the city? This means that if we build more housing in Newton, it will have to be heavily concentrated in multi-family dwellings. While that will increase our total housing supply, it won't do much to change the price of a single-family home.

- Accessory apartments have been touted as one of the solutions to the housing situation. Yet, a number of years after we allowed internal accessory apartments to be built as of right, we have only 92 approved accessory apartments in the city. With 33,000 total units of housing in Newton, that is a negligible number. We need to better understand this information and how it could inform our thinking about any zoning changes.
- In 2010, we had almost 32,000 units of housing in the city. By 2020, we had slightly over 33,000 units. But that number is scheduled to increase by at least another 2,000 units when we add in the developments that have been approved but not yet built. The city's Comprehensive Plan called for a 10% increase in our housing stock, a number that will then have been met. Some are calling for significant further increases in our housing stock. Before we go down this path, we need to have a robust discussion about how much our housing stock should increase, what types of units should be built, and what infrastructure changes will be needed to serve this increased number of units. We can only do that with accurate and current data.
- Congregate living facilities, including dormitories and nursing homes (such as the Sunrise facility in Newton Corner), provide important housing options for our residents, especially our seniors and those with special needs. Yet, we do not have full and complete data on the number of residents living in such buildings. For example, when we add housing at Sunrise, we apparently are not counting it as part of our housing supply.

We need to make sure that this critical information is readily available and regularly analyzed to inform our decision-making. Therefore, I will continue to urge the Administration to obtain and update this information and the City Council to use this data as we make our zoning and land-use decisions.

# Elections

I am running for re-election in November and hope that I continue to earn your vote. While I am running unopposed, it is important to me (and to our city) to have City Council colleagues whom I believe will serve our city well. In the next few months leading up to the November 2 election, I will offer my thoughts and endorsements. As you listen to the candidates, I suggest that you consider the following:

- Do they bring a practical, results-oriented approach to their work?
- Will they be independent thinkers?
- Are they willing to engage in vigorous debate while being open to changing their views?
- Will they work collaboratively to solve problems?
- Do they always remember that they work for the residents of this city, not to further special interests or their own ideology?

As always, I welcome your thoughts, questions, comments, and criticisms!

Thanks,

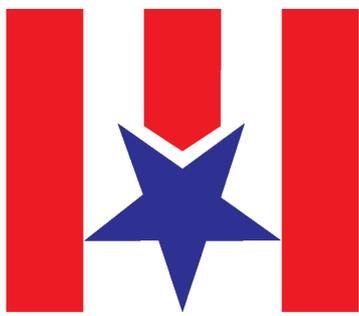
Marc

## Committee to Elect Marc Laredo

25 Hobart Road, Newton  
Massachusetts 02459 United States

[Unsubscribe me](#)





**MARC LAREDO**

Councilor-at-Large  
Ward 7

mailer lite