

The Housing Blue Ribbon Committee met on September 11, 2025. Members reviewed past progress and identified priority actions before the end of the current council term.

Key Points:

- The meeting started without a quorum (too few members to vote), but discussion continued.
- Past work includes moving forward the Sherburne School and Commerce Way projects, creating the Housing Trust Fund, and reviewing barriers to housing supply.

Four Priority Actions Identified:

1. **Expand Gateway zoning** to include Heritage Ave. and Constitution Ave. industrial areas.
2. **Shift parking requirements** into site plan review for more flexibility.
3. **Adopt RSA 79-E tax incentives** to encourage redevelopment and workforce housing.
4. **Update conversion rules:** remove the 1980 cutoff date and ease restrictions to allow larger homes to be split into multiple units.

Other Discussions:

- Simplify Portsmouth's six single-family residential zones into three (small, medium, large lots).
- Align bigger reforms with the 2025 Master Plan rewrite, including first-time homebuyer assistance and exploring co-living models.

Public Comment:

- Maeve Nolan from the Workforce Housing Coalition supported the recommendations, especially RSA 79-E and zoning simplification.
- She noted future state legislation may expand 79-E to cover new construction.

Next Steps:

- Push the four priority items forward (through councilors if needed).
- Prepare a year-end wrap-up report.
- Next meeting on October 9 will include an update from the Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA).