

BUILD.IN.KIND/EAST HAMPTON: A “WHAT YOU CAN DO TOO” HOW TO

Thank you all for attending this [Mandala Community Voices](#) session to discuss over building in East Hampton. Your presence truly means so much to me, and I am very grateful for your engagement.

If haven't done so already, please **connect with me**: follow on Instagram [@build.in.kind_easthampton](#) where I do near-daily updates. And check my website: [Build.In.Kind/East Hampton](#) for much more information; add your contact info there so I can keep you updated on key issues, blog, and events.

Last Fall, Build.In.Kind co-sponsored a community screening of “[One Big Home](#),” an inspiring documentary about how the people of Chilmark on Martha's Vineyard came together to drive revision to town bylaws and create meaningful restraint on house size. During the film, one of the key protagonists advises: “*Whatever it is that's important to you...you've got to get in there and fight for it...you start a conversation.*” And extending that thought, during the Q&A session, the filmmaker Thomas Bena reminded us all: “*any one of you can be the spark.*”

I'm hoping many of you will come away from our discussion this evening wanting to advocate for change and to “be a spark.” So, here are **my recommendations about how to get involved and effective ways you can make a difference** to help restore balance to development and land use here in East Hampton.

In terms of process, any changes to [zoning code](#), such as adjustments to [house size allowances](#), will need to be initiated formally and driven by the [East Hampton Town Board](#) and guided by the [Town Planning Department](#). Over the last 6 months, in part related to Build.In.Kind's advocacy, the Board members have become more aware of — and concerned about -- the pace and scale of development going on across all our hamlets. Most interesting, the Town Supervisor, two Councilpeople, and the Town Planning Director have all gone on the record to say that they think it could be time to start considering possible changes.

It was a subtle but significant development that they started to speak publicly to this issue, but no direct actions have emerged from them yet. That is why it's essential they hear now and repeatedly from residents directly to compel them to act. Our Board needs to know that the community at large really cares — that is when our priorities will become their priority.

Here is the most important thing you can do from here: **Speak up to the Town Board.**

There are generally four or five EH Town Board meetings each month, held on Tuesdays at 11 am and Thursdays at 11 am or 2pm. Did you know that at every single one of those meetings there is an opportunity for any member of the public to address the Board on any matter? It's referred to as the “**Public Portion.**” Public Portion comments can be offered remotely, by watching the meetings live on LTV Channel 22 or [via the LTV website](#) and dialing in via the number you'll see on-screen. Even better, if you are so inclined, go to the meeting in person at Town Hall to speak. Here is the [link to the Town Board meeting calendar so](#) you can see exact dates/times and agendas of upcoming meetings where you can comment.

What to talk about? You might share your observations, concerns, opinions about development in the Town overall or simply on your block and in your neighborhood. You can focus on the impact you see it having on issues such as quality of life, community character, view sheds/vistas, natural resources (e.g., woodlands, wetlands, shorelines, wildlife, etc.), climate, water quality, and/or housing affordability. And, most important, you can and should ask the Board to take action to reassess and adjust the zoning code to ensure more rational proportions and productive land use.

We know some people are reticent or unsure at first to speak in public at these meetings -- I was when I started -- but it is a very important and high impact way to communicate with the Board and inspire fellow citizens to speak up as well. And once you get the hang of it, it's fun...and rewarding to do.

In addition to speaking, **you can write**: Address an email or letter to any or all Town Board members directly using their ehamptonny.gov email addresses ([see this link](#)). Written letters can also be sent by mail or dropped off at East Hampton Town Hall, 159 Pantigo Road.

And here are **five other important and effective actions**...any or all of which you can do to engage in this effort along with us and make a difference in the drive for change:

- ⇒ **Keep up with [Zoning Board of Appeals](#), [Planning Board](#) and [Architectural Review Board](#) agendas via these links.** It's a way to learn more about what's going on and how projects get reviewed and approved or denied. And most important, you will know when there are important

issues before them that impact your street, your neighborhood, hamlet, and our community more broadly. Then make sure to participate in public hearings about applications that are relevant to or concern you, by speaking at the hearings and/or by submitting written comments to the record.

- ⇒ **Write a Letter-to-The-Editor:** Put your thoughts in writing to our local papers about any opinions and/or recommendations you have regarding building, land use and overdevelopment. This is a great way to communicate not only with the editors, but with the rest of the community...and a lot of Town decision makers read the letters each week. The [East Hampton Star's](#) deadline for letter submission is each Monday by 5pm for the upcoming Thursday's print and online edition. Letters should be pasted directly into an email message and sent to: letters@easthamptonstar.com. See more in the Star's [FAQ](#) about letters in case you're not sure how to go about it. And here's [the link for 27East letters](#).
- ⇒ **Practice Observation:** We encourage you to really take some time when you are out and about to look and observe what's going on around you: what is being demolished, what is being cleared, what is being built and how does that relate to and impact the surroundings, as well as the people, local businesses, wildlife, and natural resources. Observation and experience are powerful foundation for action. We'd love to hear from you when you see houses/compounds being built that you think are out of context with the sense of place and incompatible with imperatives and needs of the community...or just too darn big.
- ⇒ **Talk with your friends and neighbors:** Chances are, if you are concerned about what and how much and how big things are being built near you or across East Hampton, then other people you know are as well. Many people assume there is nothing that can be done about it, but clearly there is if we all talk to our Town Board and Town Planning Department. Encourage them to engage in these efforts.
- ⇒ **Watch the movie "One Big Home" for inspiration.** You can watch it on your own, or even better, have a little watch party. You can stream the film via the [onebighome website](#) or [here on Amazon Prime Video](#).

If you need help with any of these ideas, want more information, or have other ideas to share, please message or email and I will get in touch. And stay tuned, because **I will also be scheduling some zoom sessions** to dig in in more depth about the zoning code, these Boards and more about how to talk to them.