

Amherst Downtown Community Forum

June 29, 2017

Exercise 2

“What qualities of the downtown do you value? What aspects of the downtown need improvement?”

(Each row denotes a submission)

VALUE	IMPROVE
Hustle & Bustle Small Town Feel Winter Amherst and Summer Amherst (both have their appeal) Historic New England feel Cultural Activities Area that brings us together Economic generator Farmer’s Market and activities on common Cultural + Artistic Ambiance Public Art	Tacky quality to some of the development (e.g. some of the 1 story buildings) Roads Sidewalks Better mix of stores Boltwood parking -> pedestrian mall Development without vision and/or focus
Intimacy of scale Walkability Accessibility to residents. Do not need a car Historic preservation. (Town Hall, library, Main St., Hastings’) Sweetser Park Cinema, cafes downtown...(cont’d)	More outdoor dining areas Access to outdoor space North common – is tired Expand farmers market and local farmers Single story ugly old homes into single use More people living downtown Living and working – urban market...(cont’d)

<p>North Common, benches – welcoming</p> <p>Farmers market – local farmers</p> <p>N. Pleasant with present buildings</p> <p>Kendrick Place – good infill, dramatic changes to place that didn’t have a good use</p> <p>Garden</p>	<p>1 East Pleasant – too big, takes away from walkability. Does not want to go in this direction</p> <p>Make Kendrick Park more useable</p>
<p>Small shops</p> <p>Walkability</p> <p>Easy come and go</p> <p>Charm</p> <p>Diversity of restaurants</p> <p>Parks/open space</p> <p>History/buildings</p> <p>Classic architecture</p> <p>Library</p> <p>Local ownership of businesses</p> <p>Cinema</p> <p>Human scale</p> <p>Fire station (people not building)</p> <p>Emily Dickinson Group</p> <p>Strong house</p> <p>Most basic amenities are present</p> <p>Farmers market</p>	<p>Parking</p> <p>Design integration of new buildings</p> <p>Sidewalks</p> <p>Bicycle safety</p> <p>Lighting at garage</p> <p>Affordable housing</p> <p>Family amenities/playground</p> <p>Public meeting space</p> <p>Triangle St/Lessey St intersection</p>
<p>Local Stores</p> <p>ARMS Tennis Courts</p> <p>Restaurants...(cont’d)</p>	<p>Parking</p> <p>Sidewalks & Pavement Markings</p> <p>Stronger Lighting crosswalks...(cont’d)</p>

<p>Ped. Friendly</p> <p>Attractive 9 block core</p> <p>111 Main St Police</p> <p>Town Common</p> <p>Small town feeling</p>	<p>Kendrick Park</p> <p>Connections to UMass</p> <p>Intersection of Main & Pleasant St</p> <p>UMass build more on campus housing</p> <p>Gateway co-op/grocery</p>
<p>Walkability</p> <p>Small town feel</p> <p>Small shops/independent restaurants (non chain)</p> <p>Common (Town Green) (all)</p> <p>Several parks</p> <p>Events on commons (a lot)</p> <p>MODEST scales of buildings</p> <p>Public transportation</p> <p>Jones Library materials & programming</p> <p>Amherst Bookstore</p> <p>New England quaint buildings</p> <p>Important landmark buildings create “public” sense</p> <p>Cinema</p> <p>AJ Hastings</p>	<p>Lack of DIVERSITY in shops</p> <p>Groceries stores</p> <p>Too student-oriented</p> <p>Too few families active</p> <p>Better sidewalks</p> <p>Signage (garish)</p> <p>Parking</p> <p>More places to sit</p> <p>Playgrounds = none</p> <p>Funeral parlor – odd</p> <p>Lights – not done according to the time of day</p> <p>Bank of America + N Pleasant intersection</p> <p>Better customer service</p> <p>Scale of new apartment buildings</p>
<p>Vibrancy</p> <p>Open space</p> <p>Restaurants</p> <p>Filled Businesses</p> <p>Size...(cont’d)</p>	<p>Zoning/building size</p> <p>Traffic</p> <p>Parking requirements for new buildings</p> <p>Lack of parking</p> <p>Talking about issues and not acting...(cont’d)</p>

<p>Walkability</p> <p>Looks/appearance</p> <p>Well defined downtown</p> <p>That we have a center</p> <p>Historical sense/identity</p> <p>Personability of small businesses</p> <p>Rich cultural center</p> <p>Friendliness</p> <p>Emily Dickinson Museum</p> <p>Community opportunities</p> <p>We support each other financially – 4 purchases</p> <p>Free museums</p> <p>Summer concerts</p>	<p>Parking</p> <p>Increase density necessary</p> <p>More attractive new building designs</p> <p>Affordable rents for biz & living</p> <p>Downtown Performing Arts Center</p> <p>Too small for sprawl to East etc, more neighborhood emphasis “annexes”: N, S, + East</p> <p>As business owner, find ways to attract more people downtown. Multi-use buildings that adhere to existing aesthetics.</p>
<p>Value</p> <p>Local stores</p> <p>Tennis courts at Middle School</p> <p>Variety of restaurants</p> <p>Pedestrian friendly</p> <p>Core defined by Town Hall + library is attractive</p> <p>Police dept</p> <p>Town Common</p> <p>Small town feeling</p>	<p>Parking</p> <p>Sidewalks, crosswalks, pavement</p> <p>Stronger lighting</p> <p>Kendrick Park (not inviting)</p> <p>Connections to UMass</p> <p>Lights at Amity/Main/N Pleasant</p> <p>UMass needs housing on campus</p> <p>Put food co-op in Gateway</p>
<p>Value</p> <p>Hustle + Bustle</p> <p>Small town feel</p> <p>Value Winter + Summer...(cont’d)</p>	<p>Tacky one-story development</p> <p>Bad roads & sidewalks</p> <p>Better mix of stores</p> <p>Like a pedestrian mall at Boltwood...(cont’d)</p>

<p>Historic New England feel</p> <p>Cultural activities</p> <p>Area that brings people up together</p> <p>Economic generator</p> <p>Farmers Market</p> <p>Activities on common</p> <p>Cultural & Artistic Ambience</p> <p>Public Art</p> <p>Movie Theater</p>	<p>Development w/o vision or focus)</p>
<p>Compact</p> <p>Walkable</p> <p>Town Common</p> <p>Library</p> <p>Post office</p> <p>Restaurants</p> <p>Hastings</p> <p>Shopping</p> <p>Cinema</p> <p>Dickinson</p> <p>Non-chain attitude</p> <p>Top college town</p> <p>True mixed-use buildings</p>	<p>New buildings</p> <p>High-rise attitude march the way down</p> <p>Loss of traditional stores -clothing, pharmacy, hardware</p> <p>Not the right kind of shopping – more and variety</p> <p>Need year round residents, not student housing</p> <p>Some run-down buildings that won't get redeveloped</p> <p>What kind of retail in mixed-use</p> <p>Infrastructure – crosswalks embarrassing</p>

Value	Needs Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmosphere • Amherst Cinema • No big stores/chains...(cont'd) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of 'critical mass' of retail • Need more parking • Need more housing, density...(cont'd)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkability • Small town feel • Historic elements of streetscape • Dining options • Jones Library, Emily Dickinson Museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More social elements, public spaces, gathering spaces • Infrastructure – streetscape, sidewalks, lighting • Bike accessibility • Should be a destination • UMass should build more student housing
---	--

Online Submissions:

Online Submission 1:

Like Local/family owned and operated businesses, mix of dining and retail, bike and bus accessibility. Needs improvement: parking, diversity of cuisine offerings, entertainment venue, playground

Online Submission 2:

I've lived in Amherst for 39 years. I have an environmental design degree and an interior architecture degree and am dismayed by some of the design choices made regarding the downtown.

I value the Amherst Cinema. It's a great asset. I value the older architecture and areas of downtown that have a distinctive "sense of place." I think the flower baskets and planters are a great addition in the summer! I do not have a problem with finding parking in downtown Amherst. Amherst has some good restaurants but not enough exceptional ones.

As for what needs improving: 1) I would love to see lots of tables and chairs in a park-like setting where people can gather, relax with a drink, eat a take-out meal, socialize. I think of plazas in European cities and parks, where there is far more outdoor restaurant and cafe seating. Perhaps this could be provided in the section of the common closest to Town Hall. Another area that is sorely underdeveloped is the patio space in the center of the parking that is above the underground garage. What wasted space! This should have lovely landscaping and attractive tables and chairs. There are so many little restaurants from which one could take out meals. Providing attractive public spaces to sit and eat or relax and read would be a real plus. It feels like the town went only halfway to making the Boltwood parking area attractive. It could be better designed to attract more people.!

If it were up to me, I would also eliminate the parking spaces in front of Town Hall and use that space as a plaza. Build a real parking garage in the CVS lot. A parking lot smack in the middle of a town is ugly. Parking should be hidden as much as possible.

I do not think parking in the center should go up to \$1 an hour. That's awfully expensive for small town parking. It will discourage people from coming to Amherst. I thought we want to encourage more people.

There should be more variety in shopping downtown. There should be a good grocery store on Pleasant Street, especially if there are going to be a lot more people living in the center.

I think the large common should have more benches. ...(cont'd)

I think Kendrick park should include a well designed playground for children, benches and/ or tables and seating. Look at what Northampton did with the redesign of Pulaski Park. It's wonderful!! Inspirational!

Online Submission 3:

I'll list my favorite spaces here because can't scan: Jones Library, Kinsey Memorial Garden, the Commons & Kendrick Park & the little "brown cow" park on No. Pleasant, Amherst Cinema, the many restaurants (Formosa especially), the several coffee shops & Black Sheep deli, the sole remaining bookshop (I miss Food for Thought), the friendliness of staff at places like Collective Copies, the fact that we know the USPS workers in center town.

I love the open spaces -- both for walking & the open feel -- of the Common, of Kendrick Park, of the setbacks of large houses on North Pleasant between Triangle & McClellan. I love the rural look & believe it can be maintained even if larger sized. I love the walkability & wish we had pedestrian shopping or restaurant streets. I love the cluster of Jones Library, Amherst Cinema, & small restaurants & coffee shop. BUT: The sidewalks are broken, uneven, & I have fallen several times. The "mall" with Zanna & Blue Marble is ugly, at odds with the lovely cemetery behind it, & also at odds with the lovely shops (from old houses) directly across the street. I don't value architecture that screams "Anywhere, USA" (both the flat mall noted above & the new 5-story highrises). I do value the historical architecture & believe it can be maintained despite development.

I wish we had a book store that was also an art gallery & coffee shop, a place to read & buy & hang out. I wish we still had a grocery store (the old Louis Foods). I wish I didn't have to drive down Rt 9 for hardware -- maybe we could have a "general store" added onto what Hastings offers. We need a place for Improv Theater or student theatrical productions & musical productions, rather than having to use the school auditoriums. Perhaps a theater space (evening) could be combined with a community events space (daytime) -- I'd prefer that to the reconfiguration of the Jones Library to accomplish these goals.

I wish there was a greater variety of activities (cultural, social) available in the downtown, but I don't need it to pretend to be Northampton. Our challenge is to maintain the historical look & feel that characterizes Amherst while providing more economic development & residential or tourist amenities. I don't want Amherst to try to become a city. We have enough cities already! There are no other Amhersts.

It's very very important that the sidewalks be repaired for safe walking & widened; this could be done by placing "boxes" around the tree roots where they push up the sidewalks. The boxes could be seen & avoided, so we wouldn't stumble.

It's very important to repair the streets & make adequate space throughout for safe bicycling.

Parking, obviously.