



**PLANNING BOARD**

**Report to Town Meeting**

**Article 33. Zoning – Supplemental Dwelling Units (Planning Board)**

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To see if the Town will amend Section 5.0 of the Zoning Bylaw, as follows:

~ SEE WARRANT ~

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Recommendation

The Planning Board voted 5-0 with 4 members absent, to recommend Article 33 to Town Meeting.

Background and Purpose

An ongoing study and topic of discussion for the Planning Board has been about strategies to increase residential units in Amherst, both in quantity and in diversity. The Planning Board went back to look at the Amherst Housing Market Study from March 2015 provided by RKG Associates and focused on Chapter 6, Recommendations.

There were many suggestions and approaches to increasing housing that were very relevant and not yet implemented. After many in-depth Planning Board conversations, considerations of public input from various local groups (Amherst Housing Trust, TM members, and others) and continued studies from Town staff, Zoning Subcommittee and Planning Board members, what culminated from these ongoing discussions was a list of strategies. All these strategies together are intended to bring a diversity of housing to the community at a variety of scales and economic levels. A few strategies are still under study while some strategies stood out as seeming very beneficial to the town and were straight forward in their logistics of implementation.

Among these approaches was the idea to increase the Supplemental Detached Dwelling Unit size from a maximum of 800 square feet to 1,000 square feet (1,100 square feet for ADA accessible units). This difference of 200 square feet would not be perceptible at the scale of the town's overall density but the difference would have a big impact on the occupants of these units. The increase of 200 square feet is potentially the difference between creating one-bedroom apartments to two and three-bedroom apartments.

### Mechanics

The article would amend Section 5.0 of the Zoning Bylaw by amending Article 5, Accessory Uses, Section 5.011, Supplemental Dwelling Units, Section 5.0112 General Requirements, by adding text that separates out the Supplemental Detached Dwelling Unit as having the new allowable maximum of 1,000 square feet and ADA accessible units of 1,100 square feet. The Supplemental Apartments I and II would remain at the 800 square foot maximum (900 for ADA accessible units).

For all Supplemental Dwelling Units, one of the dwelling units on the property is required to be occupied by the owner(s) of the principal one family residence, under Section 5.011 of the Zoning Bylaw.

### Benefits

The ability to create a wider variety of living arrangements through the increase in the size of the Supplemental Detached Dwelling Unit is a valuable strategy towards the overarching goal of providing a more diverse housing stock in Amherst. Providing the ability to create potentially two or three-bedroom units would benefit young families moving into the area who are looking for rental units in neighborhood settings. Another possibility is providing an opportunity for the owners of the properties to potentially downsize while still living on their property in the Supplemental Detached Dwelling Unit. Basically this new increase in square footage could encourage more density in the Residential zones with the added benefit of providing more diversity in the new housing stock.

### Risks

There appear to be no apparent risks.

### Process

A Planning Board public hearing on this article was held on April 11, 2018. There was one public comment received at that time, from Attorney John Edwards, who spoke in support of the article. The Planning Board voted 5-0 with 4 members absent to recommend it to Town Meeting.