

## Questions for APARTMENTS DEFINITION ZONING AMENDMENT (JM-8/25/21 version)

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### I. MASTER PLAN SECTIONS INVOLVED:

- Improve town fiscal health and businesses through strategic development
- Increase economic vitality/environmental sustainability
- increase density when strict design and planning guidelines are met
- Honor and maintain historical/cultural qualities of neighborhoods
- Guide new housing growth it minimizes impact on open space & small-town rural character
- Involve and educate community in density increases
- Direct denser development of appropriate scale and design to Amherst center and village centers
- Emphasize preservation and adaptive reuse (downtown, village centers, specific districts and residential neighborhoods)
- New zoning/development/designs account for potential impacts of strong student housing pressures(Inc. absentee landlords)

### II. BACKGROUND (history, problem, goals)

1. What is the problem being solved?
2. What is the goal of change? (Numerical?)
3. What was the reason for the 24 units/building count requirement? What was the vision of PD, PB and Town Meeting? PB or PD report to Town Meeting, arguments made in town meeting in favor or against?
4. **Result, i.e., did it work?** Apparent result is small-scale garden apts and complexes with lawns, trees and parking. Grills and chairs, some playground equipment. Do apt complexes have greater economic, cultural and ethnic diversity than larger apts and mixed-use buildings?
5. **Do tenants like the apt complexes? What would they like to see changed?**
6. **Where does the PD want to see bigger apartments? Why? How many more units sought?**

### III. OTHER OPTIONS/RESEARCH/COLLEGE TOWNS

1. Did PD consider doing village center and downtown planning process to sort out what we want to see there, then taking steps and adjusting zoning to achieve it?
2. Did PD look at other options, such as increasing the units per building to 30, 40, 50— instead of lifting the unit cap completely?

3. Did PD look at zoning by district or limiting unit max in different districts?
4. Or not allowing apts over 24 units (or moderate cap increase) in BG or BL to encourage mixed use buildings in these districts?
5. Research into other towns and college towns done by PD? What worked/didn't work well?
6. Did PD look at adding requirements for additional side/rear yards per floor and increasing front setbacks?
7. Are there other, less impactful, ways to get more people housed? (i.e. house shares, rooming houses, renting rooms from seniors and families, supplemental dwelling units, converted dwellings, and the like?)

#### **IV. RESULTS/POTENTIAL IMPACTS Each zoning district will be affected differently**

1. **DID the PD do an impacts analysis before developing the zoning amendment? Is it still in process of data collection and analysis? Has PD developed a list of pros and cons?**
  - Applied relevant Master Plan goals and directives?
  - Look at impacts and full buildout in all affected districts?
  - What could full buildout look like in different districts—in 3d? How much more than current buildout?
  - Density per acre/building size? (without assuming a 25-foot front setback that is not required-developers usually maximize lot use, not reduce it)
  - When lots are combined lots?
2. **Cumulative impact of proposed zoning changes and liberal footnote a waivers**
  - Has PD analyzed impacts of all proposed zoning changes here, i.e. how they will work together to increase density and building size?
  - What if footnote a dimensional waivers are given (as they almost always are) for: basic min lot, additional lot area, frontage, basic min/max front setback, basic min side and rear yards, min rear yards, max building coverage, max lot coverage, max floors, min/max height?
  - What if additional lot area per unit requirements are waived like happened recently at 187 College Street. If this requirement can be waived, how many units can apt buildings have?
  - What other dimensional requirements can be waived in what districts? What is the potential cumulative impact on unit count, building size, etc.?
  - What if the building is non-conforming?
  - If parking requirement was reduced from 2 spaces/unit?

3. **Can apts be built by Special Permit in RN, FPC, LI, PRP, COM?** If yes, these zoning districts have no requirement for additional lot area per unit
  - How many units and how big? What does build out look like in each zoning district?
  - If the building is non-conforming like at Aspen Heights—can unit counts/building size get much higher?
  
4. **What could buildings look like?** Will the result be big boxy buildings without design guidelines? (DRB is regularly ignored.)
  
5. **Incentives?** Change appears to create strong Incentives to:
  - combine lots, such as 432 and 446 Main Street, or small lots downtown, along Meadow Street. What impacts if lots are consolidated?
  - tear down older attractive buildings
  - Use non-conforming to get around dimensional requirements
  - Tear down historic buildings and streetscapes
  - build denser, larger buildings at current apt complexes
  - build apts instead of mixed use buildings
  
6. **If apts are built instead of mixed-use buildings, will there be:**
  - Loss of spaces for small businesses in village centers and downtown?
  - Higher rents for businesses
  - More/Less income to businesses and town
  - BL and potential BL overlay district building apartments without ground floor business?
  
7. **Appropriateness by district. Did PD consider characteristics, goals & options for each?**
  - Where are apt buildings of 24+ units to over 100+ unit appropriate or inappropriate?
  - Should apts not be allowed in BG or have a unit cap to keep incentives in favor of mixed use buildings and keep 1<sup>st</sup> floor commercial and retail?
  - Should apts be excluded from some districts and specific unit caps in different districts? (Especially in the RG, BVC, BL-all moderate densities. BN-not a housing district.
  - RVC has lots of older, historic buildings—limit size of apts and require adaptive re-use?
  - Close down the option to build apts in Light Industrial District, Professional Research Park, COM, Flood Prone Conservancy, Office Park to keep space for those uses?
  
8. **Effects on historic building and streetscapes, small town character**
  - Incentive to tear down older historic buildings, consolidate small lots?
  - Worse impacts outside Local Historic Districts?
  - Steps to protect town's historic properties *before* density increases from zoning changes that encourage tear downs?
  - Does this fit with Master Plan call for adaptive re-use, different development approaches to keep an areas character and historic qualities, protection on historic buildings and streetscapes?

9. Why are townhouses being treated differently from apts?

**10. Who will the tenants in big apts be?**

- Likely students?
- Impacts on village center, downtown, neighborhoods if new apt buildings mostly house students?
- Higher rents? Lower? Impacts on housing for moderate, low income and families and individuals? Evidence? (Recent high rent student housing projects drove up all rents.)
- Will big boxy buildings likely be rented to students and smaller garden apts to families or older residents?

**11. Impacts on tenants in big buildings on quality of life—**

- Quality of life, sense of community or home for tenants?
- Are larger apt buildings more/less neighborly than smaller apts?
- did PD talk to tenants in diff types of apts/mixed use buildings now?
- How will apts with so many more units be “integrated into the context of existing neighborhoods” Master Plan H.1.D

**12. Other questions**

- Increase/decrease **traffic/spawl** in different districts?
- **Timing** What is the need or reasons to adopt this zoning amendment now, before the consultant and PD PB develop design guidelines/form-based code for village centers and the downtown? Is it more sensible and prudent to wait?
- **Financial impacts?** Revenue vs. increased costs to town? Any fiscal impact analysis?

**V. HOW ARE MASTER PLAN DIRECTIVES BEING MET?**

**Is the Master Plan directive to increase in size and density of apt buildings *after or concurrent with adopting of strict design guidelines* being followed? The other directives at the top of document?**

**VI. HOW have residents been notified and informed of this zoning amendment proposal? Their responses and ideas? With the Public Hearing closed, how can they get information and give feedback now? Steps being taken by PD?**

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