

## Using 30% of first floor of a mixed use building isn't an adequate amount of commercial businesses

Ira Bryck <ira@irabryck.com>

Wed 11/3/2021 9:00 PM

To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>; Brestrup, Christine <brestrupc@amherstma.gov>  
Cc: Town Council Members <towncouncil@amherstma.gov>; Bockelman, Paul <bockelmanp@amherstma.gov>; Rooney, Pamela <prooney@facil.umass.edu>; Jennifer Taub <jennifer.taub9@gmail.com>; Elisha Walker <info@ellishaforamherst.com>; AmherstAna@gmail.com <AmherstAna@gmail.com>; info@anikalopes.com <info@anikalopes.com>; michele@votemichelemiller.com <michele@votemichelemiller.com>

Hello, to the Town of Amherst Planning Department and Planning Board, Town Council, Town Manager, and incoming new town councilors,

I am hoping you will agree, now or after further consideration, that our central business district and village centers depend on a vibrant public life, where people congregate, for shopping, dining, or taking care of business.

In Amherst we do have several buildings that are ripe for re-purposing, to evolve from a 1 story building with commercial establishments to a multi-story building, with residences above.

Many people in Amherst have expressed their strong dislike for 5 story private dorms downtown, and think 3-4 stories in more in proportion to our town; and not designed for and marketed to only students, but to mix it up for a diverse and stable community.

The idea, being pushed by the town council and planning board, until now, is that the first floor need only have 30%, or maybe 40%, of its square footage be "non-residential," which includes anything that isn't a residence – it could include parking, or bike storage, or mechanicals, or many other things that are not stores, offices, restaurants.

One reason for allowing this puny percentage is that it's seen as a difficult task to attract businesses here, given the pandemic, and the growing advent of online shopping.

Though many towns are thriving around us, not even having the tourism and academic industry that brings so many people to Amherst.

To not have a much more substantial ground floor commercial presence is to limit, even prevent, our success as a town with a downtown.

It seems to me that an effective chamber of commerce, business improvement district, and talented and connected economic development director, all working together, should be able to keep our first floors full, without allowing for an insubstantial business environment.

Alternatives, like allowing a rooftop bar for residents, or a business not on the ground floor, is detrimental to our economic vitality as a town.

I urge all our public servants to not lower the bar in this way. Please stick to your guns, and insist that a much greater percentage of ground floor space in our downtown and village centers be required to be filled with enterprises, not more beds and other loophole uses.

Many thanks

Ira Bryck