

## Downtown Amherst expansion

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Mon 4/12/2021 10:29 AM

To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Monique Hillen, resident of Amherst. I am writing you in concern to building plans for downtown. Due to the continuous expansion of UMass I understand it is unavoidable for Amherst to become more of a college town than a residential town. I think this is unavoidable, and quite exciting for local businesses.

More important is how are we going to embrace it in ways that could work for everyone? Since my approach in general is mostly focused on long term possibilities, I came up with some ideas how we could embrace the growth of Amherst in productive and exciting ways.

My idea is to make sure Amherst will become the most interesting college town in the country, and because of this will attract tourists too. The way we can do this is by making sure each building build will be a state of the art design in creativity, so Amherst through the expansion will become an interesting town of beauty instead of a dorm town with similar buildings all over. We can even have contests among architects working together with architect students at UMass, and have UMass pick up part of the costs for this.

This is an idea at its beginning stage of possibilities. And i would like to offer my time to help create a truly classy and interesting project so our town will become more interesting vs a monotonous boring town.

I would like to meet with you, and the people who are in charge of the project to further explore positive possibilities.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Monique Hillen M.Ed

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Dear Town Council

I am writing in support for allowing proposed development in the town and to hopefully convince you to stop the notion to put a moratorium on larger scale buildings.

As a former business owner with an office in Kendal Square Cambridge I was impressed how Boston became the global mecca of economic development and succeeded over some amazing areas in the world for biotech research. At the time there was a limit to the number of stories buildings could be built in Cambridge therefore the boom expanded into Boston and the seaport area. We are fortunate to have high quality jobs that attract a diverse workforce.

I am a career economic development agent with over 30 years of experience helping businesses expand both national and internationally.

As former Director for Economic Development for the city of Newton, I witnessed firsthand the hesitation of neighbors wanting development in their backyard (population 95k). Village centers, of which there are 13 became out of reach, rent wise so they have become advertisement for banks, and financial offices. The average home costs \$1.3 million and with limited inventory, commercial development and mostly zoned for single-family homes, one thing became very apparent, no new blood, no diversity and the mega rich and ultimately older generation are the majority of the residents. With limited commercial opportunity, housing which would have been affordable to the seniors and city employees Newton became out of reach for the hard-working families. I implore you not to do this to Amherst. The NIMBY's become more apparent when they proclaim they want economic vitality and population diversity but then shoot down every project. I know how challenging your role is, I sat on your side of the table.

I recently took up the position as Director for the Innovation Institute at UMass, when they bought the campus in Newton I suddenly became aware of how fortunate we were to have a leading research university in our back yard. When I visited Amherst it was a game changer so much so we just purchased a home at 392 West Street, we are truly vested into this wonderful community. Hailing from Ireland. Amherst brings back all the things I love about vast landscape, quality of life and people who are genuine, humble and kind (seriously I am still asking is it in the water!). I feel so fortunate that my career path went in this direction and with this pandemic it become more apparent that we are all in this together and we need to support one another in order to get back to some form of normal. Our grandkids are going to be paying for all this debt, we have a duty to recover our businesses, increase employment and offer a diversity of homes, now is the time to act.

Having worked for the past 2 years with the UMass I have seen the dependence on economic value of having student populations across three separate campuses close to Amherst. When I hear students get bumped out of this area due to a dire shortage of housing, not just students but academics and staff who are trying to relocate to this wonderful area only to find such limited inventory of housing. We feel fortunate to have gotten in the market and I implore you to consider increasing the housing density so others have the same amazing opportunity.

Apartment buildings like the recent one's built in town are truly exceptional from not just design but how well they fit into the landscape. When I see students taking over and not maintaining single family residences, it's hard to witness, having more apartment style home can reduce this, as well as reduce

multiple cars parked on lawns. Reduce driving and the dependency of having cars are the biggest result of the live, work play model. Businesses in town have suffered enough let them at least have some chance of recovery with more people visiting and living in the town center. It breaks my heart as a resident but also with an economic development hat to see places like Jude's with boarded up window's, now is the time to act swiftly. The lack of commercial office and lab space also reduces the opportunity to attract domestic/global companies who would come to this area due to the skill labor force and quality of life.

We are all trying to live through these torturous times and we need to make sure we can help all, this pandemic affected every single one of us and if we limit our willingness to assist a neighbor to get back on their feet, I feel we can do this in a place like Amherst where I am proud to call home.

I will keep drinking the Water!!!

Sincerely

Kathryn Ellis

## Planning Department Inclusionary Zoning Amendments

Gerry Weiss <gerryweiss@comcast.net>

Fri 4/16/2021 11:52 AM

To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>; Brestrup, Christine <brestrupc@amherstma.gov>;  
Town Council Members <towncouncil@amherstma.gov>

I would like to express my appreciation to the Planning Department for their forward thinking amendments. They are long overdue and of critical importance if we wish to make IZ a more successful bylaw.

Two thoughts I have for consideration:

1. Payment in Lieu: This is clearly tricky territory and must be discussed at length. On the positive side, I would think there are developments which might not be that appropriate to expect lower income persons/families to live in. For instance, places like 1 E. Pleasant Street, which, unless I'm mistaken, is primarily rented by undergraduate students. The complicated part of that discussion would require admitting that they are primarily inhabited by undergrads, again if my claim is true. If I'm wrong, then there is no problem and PIL would not be appropriate in that setting. If I'm correct about the population, then PIL might be an appropriate alternative.

2 I've discussed this with Chris who told me that Nate is looking into this: The amendments don't offer any density bonuses. The state of the art for Inclusionary Zoning is to offer density bonuses as an incentive:

[https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/11/03/Inclusionary%20Zoning.pdf?\\_ga=2.23474490.1430682532.1618588020-1821621025.1618588020](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/11/03/Inclusionary%20Zoning.pdf?_ga=2.23474490.1430682532.1618588020-1821621025.1618588020)

So, if we want our law to be state of the art, I think it should include density bonuses. I have also expressed my concern to Chris that to not offer any incentives could be challenged in court as a "taking".

Thank you for your time and attention,

Gerry Weiss  
277 Middle Street