

**From:** John Page <[john@amherstarea.com](mailto:john@amherstarea.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 18, 2021 2:19 PM

**To:** Town Council Members <[towncouncil@amherstma.gov](mailto:towncouncil@amherstma.gov)>; Planning Department Email <[planning@amherstma.gov](mailto:planning@amherstma.gov)>

**Cc:** Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce <[claudia@amherstarea.com](mailto:claudia@amherstarea.com)>; Gabrielle Gould <[gabrielle@amherstdowntown.com](mailto:gabrielle@amherstdowntown.com)>

**Subject:** A Point of Clarification: Housing & Leasing Is A Business and It Supports A Whole System of Jobs and Workers

Good Afternoon Town Councilors & Planning Board Members,

For the sake of accuracy, the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce is writing to clarify a point raised in recent letters and op-eds conflating business certificates/licensure with permits to build new buildings. We are clear-eyed about the difference. This is indeed the work we do as a Chamber every single day. We serve businesses large and small across Amherst, Belchertown, Hadley, Pelham, Leverett, Shutesbury and Sunderland including leasing, property management, and development companies. They directly employ hundreds and contributes to an entire system of trades people and professionals from architects to construction workers, plumbers and electricians, high-speed internet providers, wholesalers, and HVAC installers, just to name a few. We represent those businesses and those workers. When we say it will have a detrimental impact on those industries we are not talking about businesses certificates we are talking about preventing permits for new housing by the proposed moratorium.

Education, social services, and health care are our largest employers are the largest non-profit sector by far but it is indeed housing and its associated industries that comprise a large share of the private sector jobs and is the largest opportunity for expanding Amherst's tax base. Similarly, our largest private industries are accommodation & food services as well as retail trade BOTH HIGHLY dependent upon capturing a year-round population with disposal income to patronize their business. Adding housing, and specifically following the smart growth of mixed-use, and as outlined in our Master Plan in-fill and redevelopment of existing Town and Village Centers model creates a consistent customer-base for the businesses near-by.

So yes, if this moratorium were to pass you could indeed receive a business certificate for a new salon or café but without the built in customer base and daily foot traffic that makes a Downtown an attractive place to open a business. A moratorium on redevelopment of our Downtown and the inclusion of more housing is a moratorium on Downtown businesses recovery.

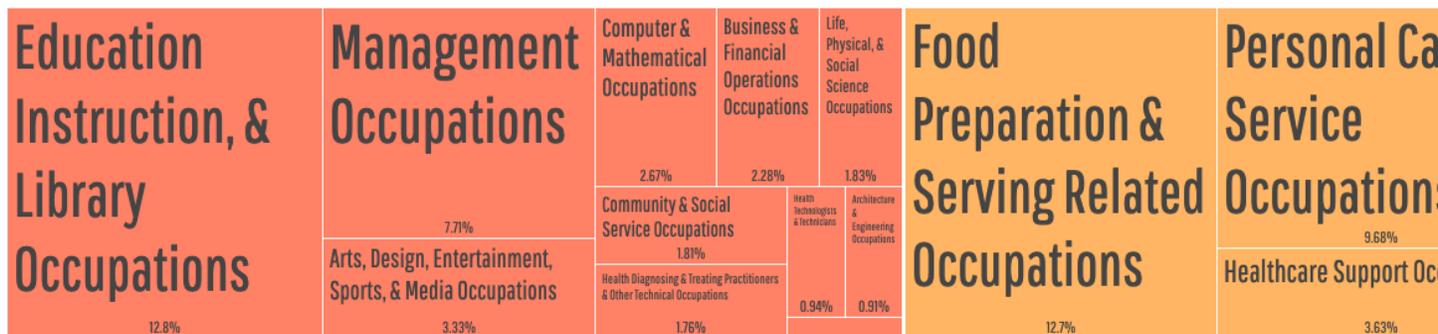
A note here that occupation and industry data parsing can be tricky for our region because it relies on self-reporting as part of the American Community Survey (ACS) and depending on your role in an educational institution or in the housing and leasing sectors it might be unclear which category you fall under. For example, real estate property managers, offices of real estate appraisers, and other activities related to real estate fall under the Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing industry code but their workers appear as either office & administrative support occupations or sales & related occupations codification.

Here is some data for just the Amherst Center (8206) Census

Track: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/amherst-center-ma#housing>

*Sorted By Occupation*

Total: 8.71k



2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Sorted By Industry

Total: 8.71k



2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Moreover, as the Chamber’s mission is to create, maintain and promote a vital, thriving business climate throughout the Amherst area and to initiate and support the civic, educational, recreational and economic well-being of the Amherst Area. With that in mind we have other considerations beyond just the fact that the moratorium is detrimental to local economic growth and recovery, but also undermines the Chamber’s civic, educational, and recreational priorities.

- **Civic:** New or redevelopment Downtown is an investment in our community which contributes directly to our tax rolls, decreasing the dependence on residential property taxes and enabling the Town to more fully fund its priorities including schools, public safety, environmental sustainability initiatives, conservation, roads and sidewalks and so much more.
- **Educational:** Education is the economic driver of our town and region. Dense development in our Downtown and Village Centers embraces our college and University identity incorporating students, faculty, and staff who desire to live, work, and play in a dynamic Downtown with metropolitan/global experiences who will in turn patronize other local businesses including restaurants and retail. This moratorium tramples that vision, preserving instead boarded up shells of buildings where people could be living and working.
- **Recreational:** Development and redevelopment focused where there is already infrastructure and existing buildings enables us to preserve open space and the bucolic landscape that drive tourism to our region.
- Lastly, as stated in our previous letter, this moratorium is incongruent will nearly every other plans or goal setting done by the Town Council or the Town. Higher density development in out Downtown and Village Centers is clearly outlined in the Master Plan, as a priority in the Town Council’s goals for the Town Manager, in the Housing Production Plan, and the Housing Market

Study. The need for more housing of all types, not less, is clearly underscored in all of these reports. The moratorium ensures that private developers which are trying to contribute positively and invest in our community adding units, will not be allowed to proceed.

Thank you for your time.

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Best,



**John Page**

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**Building Business. Building Community.**



**WASH YOUR HANDS**



**WEAR A MASK**



**SOCIAL DISTANCE**