



Town of East Longmeadow
Department of Planning & Community Development
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August 2, 2022

RE: A Public Response to the July 28, 2022 Edition of the Reminder

Summary

This letter is intended to clarify certain matters covered in the article on the front page of the July 28, 2022 publication of the Reminder entitled, "Options for mixed-use overlay district presented to board." The article is meant to be a summary of the July 19 Planning Board meeting. To clarify, let us explore (1) what is being discussed, (2) why it is being discussed, and (3) how you can participate in the discussion.

What is being discussed? – Center Town Zoning Overlay

The Planning and Community Development Department has been exploring the addition of a *zoning overlay* in the *center of town* that would allow *mixed-use development*. A *zoning overlay* is a zoning district that is superimposed over one or more existing zoning districts in order to impose additional restrictions and/or allow certain uses that achieve community goals. *Center of town*, for the purpose of the zoning overlay discussion, is roughly defined as 0.4 radius from the rotary. *Mixed-use development* is defined as pedestrian-friendly development that blends two or more residential, commercial, cultural, and/or institutional uses.

The specific boundary of the zoning overlay was the focus of the discussion at the July 19 Planning Board meeting. With that in mind, here are two critical points: (1) zoning is the regulation of development, not a proposal for development; (2) the boundaries of the overlay are still being discussed and have not been set in stone.

The next discussion will review design standards and permitted uses within the overlay at the Planning Board Meeting August 16 (meeting details on Town Website). The discussion of design standards includes discussion of building height limits and lot size requirements. The Reminder article mentioned "buildings up to six floors" – this is not an accurate representation of the July 19 discussion. The Board has not yet discussed building height limits; rest assured, the Town is *not* planning to allow six-story buildings anywhere in East Longmeadow. The Planning Board did discuss requiring *six-acre lots* for planned mixed-use developments within the overlay.

Why? – Achieve Community Goals in 2021 Resilient Master Plan

The Town recently adopted the 2021 Resilient Master Plan after extensive public-input. A community's Master Plan serves as a 15-30 year future vision of the community; the plan outlines implementation strategies for town officials and stakeholder groups to accomplish the vision. One of the strategies outlined in the 2021 Resilient Master Plan is to consider adopting a Center Town Overlay District to create incentives for desired uses, such as office, commercial, retail, residential, and civic uses.

The zoning overlay will allow mixed-use in order to achieve this goal and set the Town up for success in achieving several other goals outlined in the 2021 Resilient Master Plan. This begs the question, what is the benefit of mixed-use development in East Longmeadow Center Town?

Mixed-use Development:

- Promotes pedestrian & bicycle travel
- Reduces auto dependency and corresponding traffic and pollution issues
- Promotes sense of Place and sense of community
- Encourages economic investment and rehabilitation
- Provides more housing opportunities and choices

How can you participate in the discussion? – Reach Out to P&CD Department

As I mentioned before, this discussion of the zoning overlay is just beginning. The Planning Board is in the initial discussion phase and will seek public comment before they vote on any complete zoning bylaw. Right now, you can take the 2022 Community Development Survey, which is focused on the 2021 Resilient Master Plan implementation strategies outlined above. The survey closes August 5 at noon. If anyone in the community has questions or concerns about the overlay, please contact me via email or phone.

Yours truly,



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