

South Hadley Planning Board
116 Main Street
South Hadley, MA 01075

Dear Planning Board Members:

My name is Rob Watchilla and I am a candidate for one of two open seats on the Planning Board. As a practicing Planner and concerned resident, I'm writing today to express my thoughts and concerns regarding the zoning amendment request before you. I am overall impressed with the thoroughness and quality of review in regards to site design, preservation of onsite open space, and the fact that commercial space is an upfront requirement. Incorporating this as a site plan review process allows for § 255-148 to be applied to all projects in this use category.

It appears that this provision is flexible in order to accommodate existing buildings. For example, if you had an existing commercial space, you could add on site residential whether as an addition or a separate building entirely (with the exception that first floor units must be 200 feet further back from the ROW). I am in agreement that this is an appropriate provision to ensure that these qualified properties in fact become mixed use.

I do have concerns in regards to density. The Business A-1 district does not have any density requirements for residential development. For any multi family development (especially in a potential high development area), creating a ratio that allows X number of dwelling units per square foot will ensure that the mixed-use development will not have "too many units". This is crucial in order to prevent over crowding of a particular building, to better preserve nearby open spaces/conservation areas, and to not exceed the carry capacity of Town utilities (water and sewer).

There was no provision for mixing of residential dwelling unit types. It would make sense to require that no more than a certain percentage of dwelling unit types (studio, one bedroom, two bedroom), be allowed at all times. We should make sure that the developer does not build a mixed-use building that has only studio apartments. Having a provision, for example, that allows for no more than 50% of one dwelling unit type (studio, one bed, two bed, etc.) to be allowed in a mixed-use building, will diversify the types of tenants who may live there. A requirement for a percentage of affordable units should be considered here as well.

I encourage members of the Board to consider further review and to consider incorporating the two areas of concern I have outlined to you. I look forward to potentially joining you as a Board Member and thank you for your time!

Sincerely



Rob Watchilla, AICP