

March 4, 2024

MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE PETITION TO AMEND  
THE SOUTH HADLEY ZONING BYLAW TO ALLOW MULTIFAMILY RESIDENCES WITHIN  
THE BUSINESS A-1 ZONING DISTRICT

**TO:** Members of the South Hadley Planning Board

**FROM:** Linda Sachs (South Hadley homeowner and resident)

I urge you to please reject the petition from the Liquor Town store owner to amend Business A-1 Zoning so that he can put an apartment building on the land he owns behind Liquor Town.

Nothing in the proposed zoning amendment would help to create the 312 deed restricted affordable housing units that Massachusetts Law requires of South Hadley. Nor would it guarantee housing that is within reach of moderate income households.

Yet it is those very two categories of housing that our Housing Production Plan has identified as necessary for South Hadley.

It seems like favoritism to support a zoning change that doesn't satisfy our town's needs.

South Hadley has put a lot of time and money into the recently completed Rt. 202/33 Corridor Study and into the Housing Production Plan. Our town is now hiring a consultant to explore the zoning changes that will be needed to implement the corridor study and the town is appointing a committee of citizens to work along side that consultant. That is a thoughtful and democratic way to go about changing zoning laws. Zoning changes should not be made at the behest and for the benefit of one businessman who can't be bothered to wait for this democratic process to run its course.

The Liquor Town owner has submitted a petition, with citizen signatures, that is in my opinion, disingenuous. He writes: **“South Hadley needs a range of housing options and more housing to enable our younger and**

**senior residents and family members to reside in the community....  
Housing affordable for our workforce is critical for our business and  
employment base.”**

Laudable goals, but let's not be fooled. There is absolutely nothing in the proposed zoning amendment that would make his apartment building affordable. It will undoubtedly maximize profit with market rate or luxury housing that is not available to moderate or low income folks. People who signed that petition were misled by that disingenuous language. Plus, some of those people don't live in South Hadley, but rather in Belchertown, Holyoke, Chicopee, Granby, Easthampton and Westfield.

I realize the petitioner may be in a hurry to build on his land, but I think he needs to wait. There is nothing in the proposed amendment that addresses the town's legal mandate for deed restricted affordable housing or our desire to increase modestly priced housing.

Additionally the proposed amendment only pays lip service to sustainability and smart growth guidelines. Turf grass lawns for example are almost as bad as concrete. They are ecological dead zones that require vast amounts of water and harmful chemicals to maintain. It's time for the Planning Board to evolve it's 20<sup>th</sup> century landscaping and building mindset and genuinely embrace the concept of ecological landscaping and green architecture. That would benefit everyone in town by arresting environmental damage. At the very least any new development should limit turf grass and be required to have 75% of plantings be native.