August 15, 2018

South Hadley Planning Board
Town Hall
116 Main Street, Room 204
South Hadley, MA 01075

RE: Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District | Draft Design Standards

Dear Chairman Squire and Members:

We appreciate the work that has gone into developing the Draft Design Standards received 7/31/18 for the Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District. We see this as a strong starting point for discussion and thank the Planning Board and Town Planner Richard Harris for allowing us input into this process.

The Draft submitted to the Planning Board is, understandably, a compilation of Standards from other towns and cities. Reinventing the wheel when developing Standards is certainly not desirable and yet the result of this Draft, especially the images, seems to reflect environments and streetscapes of a more urban nature than that of the Newton Street area. Our Smart Growth Zoning District has great potential for commercial and residential development and it seems critical to make sure that the Standards are thoughtfully and carefully constructed for this unique setting. We reiterate that a New England Village style/sensibility is desired.

With this in mind we respectfully submit the attached feedback on a variety of points in the Draft along with a Power Point presentation of images of mixed-use development across New England that shows possibilities that might more closely fit and improve upon the residential/commercial nature of the Newton Street area. The presentation is also provided as a PDF file for posting online and sharing with stakeholders, who may benefit from a ‘visual tour’ of possibilities.

In addition, we want to commend the Planning Director for developing a grant application to MassWorks that will use the incentive payment from this Smart Growth Zoning District toward infrastructure improvements in the immediate area.

We again thank the Planning Board and Mr. Harris for welcoming input from our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Mike Adelman Marilyn Gass
Liz Austin Marie Rohan
Barbara Callan-Bogia Martha Terry
Jim Canning Linda Young
Lucia Foley

Enc: Feedback Notes
     Powerpoint Presentation
To: South Hadley Planning Board and Planning Director  
From: Newton Street Neighborhood Group  
RE: Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District Draft Design Standards  
Date: August 15, 2018

**General Feedback**

1. Please consider prefacing the Design Standards with a one-page Vision Statement like the sample that follows. We believe that setting the stage for developers and for the South Hadley community is essential and can be done succinctly and effectively by calling attention to the desired outcome in this way. Providing this guidance on a single page offers easy reference and allows stakeholders to utilize this key information in a variety of ways. This would not replace similar wording within the Standards.

2. For ease of use, we suggest adding an Appendix to provide additional detail and resources, such as the text of Section 255-23 of the Town of South Hadley Zoning By-Laws, which is referenced numerous times throughout the Design Standards.

3. The neighborhood group will most likely have further comments as this process unfolds. Thank you for your consideration of our feedback.

**Itemized Feedback**

5.3 Second sentence is a bit redundant. Maybe something like “The Village Commons project in the Mount Holyoke College area is a successful example of a mixed used development designed to be compatible with its surroundings.”

5.5 Not sure what ‘storefronts and signage are integrated’ means.

Note: Additions to Objectives, 5.3 and 5.5 work as part of the Standards, but are less successful in the separate Vision Statement document, which should be a very simple ‘elevator speech’ that can be used by all to describe the goal for the district.

6.2 What is the ‘Downtown’ referenced here? Maybe this should be the ‘Woodlawn Village Center’ or some such? (Why not reference a longstanding place name?)

6.4 Reword “…moving the buildings next to the sidewalk in commercial areas…” to say “…situating buildings in commercial/retail areas next to sidewalks for easy pedestrian…”

7.1.1 Graphic shows blank walls adjacent to text that advises avoiding blank walls at pedestrian level. Graphic should be moved below or beside 7.1.2 if it is needed.

7.1.3 Illustration is difficult to understand, and small text is hard to read. An additional caption or line describing what the three images show would be helpful.

7.2 As graphics with this section show primarily urban-style buildings, there’s an implication that's the preference--or at least the expectation. People do tend to respond to visuals, so it's important that those match what the Planning Board hopes to achieve through the Guidelines.

7.2.5 Seems to be related to the Falls area, not Newton Street.
7.2.6 Is there a specific type of ‘franchise architecture’ to be minimized? Would this apply to storefront design within a shared building or only to freestanding structures such as a McDonald’s outlet. What, exactly, does ‘generic in nature’ mean?

7.2.6 The graphic seems to be misplaced and again shows only a very urban style. Consider replacing with the graphics that follow. (A) The same basic building as line art with no shading, with a fourth floor setback added to illustrate that concept; (B) A companion illustration showing a building with the fourth floor contained within the angled roofline and gables.

7.4.4 Stronger statement about sightlines. This is particularly necessary for abutting residences.

7.5 Materials. This section seems to presume an urban style. We need to address a preference for quality materials and materials appropriate to the New England Village mixed-use style.

7.6 Roofs. It is a relief to see that this section is reflective of the New England Village style and yet in 7.6.2 the word ‘shall’ in relation to locating residential units under peaked roofs seems to limit the possibility of residences in flat-roofed buildings.

7.6.3 Wording in last sentence is not clear. What is ‘five (5)?’

7.7 What are the setbacks?? This will affect Stonybrook condos. Please state the setbacks from the bylaws. Privacy concerns—design with sensitivity to sightlines to and from Stonybrook and other residences.

8.1.10 The sections on plantings seem thorough. In this section does ‘caliper’ of trees mean diameter? If so, can it be stated as such?

8.2.5 Add ‘seating areas.’

8.3.5 Wording seems incomplete. …following??

8.6 Utilities. Placement of loading docks and dumpsters should be sensitive to the surrounding residences for visual and noise factors. We need to add something somewhere about elevators, which will be needed in residential and business buildings for handicap access. All floors should be accessible.

8.7 We applaud this.

9 SIGNS: Is there an overarching Town sign ordinance that should be referenced and included in the Appendix? What rules apply to signage at entry points from the street? What about wayfinding signage?

9.2.1 What are wall signs? Need a description of the use and illustrations.

9.2.3 Do not allow signage on windows above the first floor. Wayfinding signage in/near entryways is acceptable.

9.3.1 What is the target area for blade signs and will blade signs at second floor level be allowed? This should be described and illustrated. What about signage painted on windows, or window decals?

9.3.3 Preferences for bracket fixtures should be described (black wrought iron, or what?), and any restrictions on length/depth articulated. Will spot-lighting be allowed or not?

9.3.4 Needs to agree with 9.2.3.

9.5.2 Please do not allow internally illuminated signs. (Note typo in ‘internally’).
9.5.5 Needs an illustration (if internal illumination has to be allowed).
9.5.6 Seems to need a better description and placement detail or an illustration of a cantilevered sign with ‘integrated lights.’ Is there other external lighting that might require more than two fixtures?

Additional Feedback from Neighborhood Residents

• Will security be considered in the Design Guidelines? Things such as preventing vehicles from driving into plazas or pedestrian areas, or preventing vehicles from escaping quickly? Please consider asking the Chief of Police to review plans from a security perspective.
• Is there any consideration of roof solar panels or cell phone tower(s) in this complex?
• Can a separate, somewhat hidden delivery entrance and area be considered to protect existing or future condos or other residences from annoyance?
• Please emphasize accessibility for the handicapped and elderly.
• Elevators presumably will be required for buildings with more than one story for moving and accessibility, but no guidance for placement, frequency, capacity, or size is articulated in the draft.
• Please keep signage low-key and within a consistent ‘theme’ or ‘type.’
• Please give strong consideration to Stonybrook’s concerns and feedback.
• Will there be a playground or picnic area for residents?
• What is EIF (see 7.5.2)?
• Is there a decibel limit not only for air condensers but also for trucks, delivery belts, etc?

Alternate graphics (A and B) for Section 7
Additional graphics to match these or to illustrate specific concepts can be provided.
Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District
South Hadley, Massachusetts

VISION STATEMENT

The overarching vision for the District is to leverage the power of residential and mixed-use
development to create a vibrant village center with a New England aesthetic. This will be an
inviting, pedestrian-friendly destination with lively public spaces, where people live, work play,
shop, dine, and engage with others.

Key Attributes

• A walkable, bikeable neighborhood environment with easy access to surrounding streets
  that is safe for all users, including pedestrians, bikers, strollers, wheelchairs, and people of
  all ages and abilities

• Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle connectivity, with access to public transit

• Visually pleasing architectural design that is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood
  and utilizes strategies to minimize the visual impact of taller buildings.

• An inviting site development with landscaping that encourages people to use and enjoy
  the area, with adequate lighting, greenery and trees, open spaces, walkways, seating, and
  areas suitable for small gatherings

• Attractive, welcoming storefronts, with high-quality, well-designed signage for businesses
  and way-finding
Newton Street
Smart Growth Zoning District

IMAGINING POSSIBILITIES

AUGUST 2018
SOUTH HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS
Mixed Use Development in New England

A VISUAL TOUR

Presented to the South Hadley Planning Board by Neighborhood Supporters
VISION / OBJECTIVES

The overarching vision for the Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District is to leverage the power of residential and mixed-use development to create a vibrant village center with a New England aesthetic. This will be an inviting, pedestrian-friendly destination with lively public spaces, where people live, work play, shop, dine, and engage with others.

Key Attributes

5.1 A walkable, bikeable neighborhood that is safe for all users
5.2 Connectivity
5.3 Pleasing architectural design that is sensitive to the neighborhood
5.4 Inviting site and landscaping plan
5.5 Attractive, welcoming storefronts; high quality signage for business and wayfinding
Mixed-use village centers are familiar

A pleasing mix of styles and colors, scaled to pedestrian use.

Stockbridge, MA
Village style comes in many sizes

Stockbridge, MA
Vibrant, appealing places bring people together

Attractive storefronts and signage, with awnings, flowers, benches, and bike racks create a welcoming environment.

Newburyport, MA
Building placement in our new District

According to South Hadley Town bylaws for the Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District (NSSGZD):

- Three-story structures can be placed within **25 feet** of Lyman and Newton Streets.

- Four-story structures must be set back **150 feet** or more from Lyman and Newton Streets.
Capitol Square at Smith Hill is a mixed-use development with affordable housing, designed to be a new gateway to the historic Smith Hill Neighborhood.

Advanced underground drainage systems collect and infiltrate storm water runoff from the buildings and rear parking area.

web.uri.edu/riss/capitol-square-at-smith-hill
Nobscot Village, proposed mixed-use redevelopment of an aging shopping plaza with retail shops and apartments.

www.framinghamma.gov/1869/Nobscot-Village
In 1988 a former strip mall was converted into Mashpee Commons, a mixed-use, mixed-income, pedestrian-friendly town center. Planning has since been expanded to six interrelated mixed-use neighborhoods, such as Job’s Green, announced in 2017.

www.prellwitzchilinski.com/projects/mashpee-commons-planning
Hanover South Block includes two, three, and four story buildings that complement adjacent historic downtown and residential areas.

truxecullins.com/project/architecture-hanover-south-block
Your Downtown Darien, proposed mixed use project with residential, retail, and recreation.
“OUR MISSION

Our fundamental goal is to create a community asset that will be cherished in the present and for generations to come, which will improve the quality of life for all Darien residents.

Through the planning and building of new, architecturally masterful buildings which will appear to have been built over decades, using the highest quality of materials, we will improve the look, feel and experience of downtown Darien.”

yourdowntowndarien.com
Austin Street mixed-use, mixed-income, energy efficient development in the heart of the Newtonville neighborhood, now approaching construction.

www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/current/austin_street_project.asp
South County Commons, a mixed-use ‘lifestyle center’ with restaurants, entertainment venues, retailers, medical and office tenants, plus condos, apartments, and independent living units.
The Co-op Plaza has revitalized an area that had been contaminated. The cleaned up site now includes affordable housing units.

Storm water is filtered by the green roof, permeable surfaces in the parking lot and a 20-foot buffer in a new public park.
30 Haven is a mixed-use, multi-family apartment community that was developed with green materials in 2013 and is fully leased.

Flat roof four-story with setback

ma-smartgrowth.org/news/smart-growth-project-30-haven-reading
The Village Commons’ architecturally surprising buildings are rooted in old New England town tradition, spread over beautifully landscaped, meandering courtyards.