

**North Adams City Council  
Community Development Committee  
Meeting Minutes – October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – 6pm  
Zoom**

**Call to Order – 6pm**

**Statement for virtual meetings**

- Councilor Lamb read the statement on virtual meetings into the record
- Councilor Lamb attempted to resolve a video issue but was unable to allow video for all panelists due to pre-set settings in the City zoom account.

**Roll Call:** Councilor LaForest, Councilor Sweeney, Councilor Lamb

**Additional Presenters Present:** Z. Feury (Community Development Office), M. Maloy (BRPC)

**Approval of minutes**

- **June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020**
  - Motion to approve: Councilor Sweeney
  - Second: Councilor LaForest
  - Approve: 2 / Abstention: 1 – Motion Carries

**New Business**

- **Presentation by Community Development Office and Berkshire Regional Planning about Smart Growth Zoning updates through the City.**
  - Councilor Lamb introduced the presentation and passed the presentation to Z. Feury
  - Z. Feury from the Office of Community Development and M. Maloy from Berkshire Regional Planning presented the below presentation, included as record and minutes.



# Office of Community Development

City Council  
Community Development Committee  
Smart Growth Zoning  
10.27.2020

## Agenda

- Overview of enabling legislation
- Planning alignment
- Proposed district features
  - Boundaries
  - Significant sites
  - Regulations
  - Design Standards
  - Payments
- Questions and discussion

# MGL c.40R Overview

- Created by legislature in 2004 to:
  - Increase the supply of housing
  - Decrease the cost of housing
  - Increase the amount of land zoned for high density residential development
- Enables municipalities to create special zoning overlay districts, called Smart Growth Zoning Districts
  - Follows the principals of Smart Growth
  - Overlay district
  - By-right
    - Site Plan Review
  - Dense residential (20 units/acre minimum)
  - Mixed-use development (50% residential minimum)
- Control over the location, size, appearance, and other characteristics of new projects through local design standards
- A way to attract developers by creating pre-approved districts with a simplified approval process (120 days).

# MGL c.40R Overview

- Zoning must require that at least 20% of the housing units in 40R projects be affordable to low and moderate income households
- Affordable Housing is not Section 8
- Who Qualifies for affordable?
  - Area Median Income (\$80,900) (median household size)
    - 80% of AMI (\$64,720) qualify
    - Total housing costs of no more than 30% of income
      - \$1,618/month or less
  - According to American Community Survey
    - All occupations in North Adams qualify (median salary) except:
      - Firefighters
      - Doctors
      - Lawyers
- Current Market Rate Rent in North Adams(Zillow 10/20/20)
  - 1 Bedroom - \$650
  - 2 Bedroom - \$1325
  - 3 Bedroom - \$1500

# MGL c.40R Overview

- Provides financial incentives to a municipality
  - Zoning Incentive Payment – up to \$600,000 upon approval of municipal 40R ordinance by the state
  - Density Bonus Payment - \$3,000 for each unit built
- Must be used for capital expenditures
  - Sidewalks
  - Water and sewer lines
  - Park improvements
  - Brownfield remediation

## MGL c.40R in Berkshire County

- Pittsfield (2008)
  - Downtown area
  - 296 units
  - 112 built
- Great Barrington (2017)
  - Housatonic and south of downtown
  - 494 units
- Lee (2018)
  - Eagle Mill
  - 119 units
- Adams (2020 town approval, state approval pending)
  - Along Route 8 corridor extending out from downtown
  - 693 units



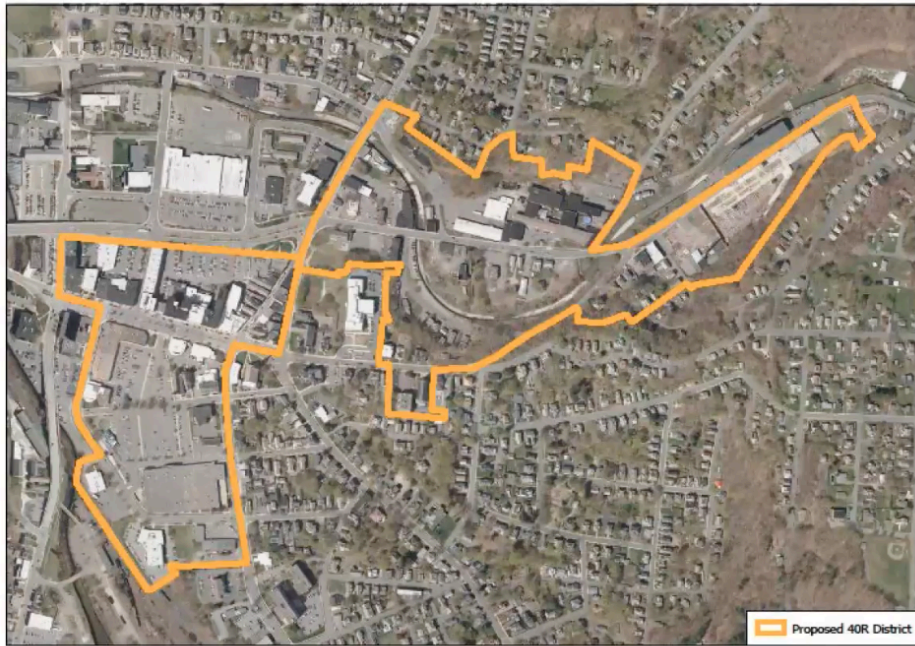
## Alignment with Vision 2030 Plan

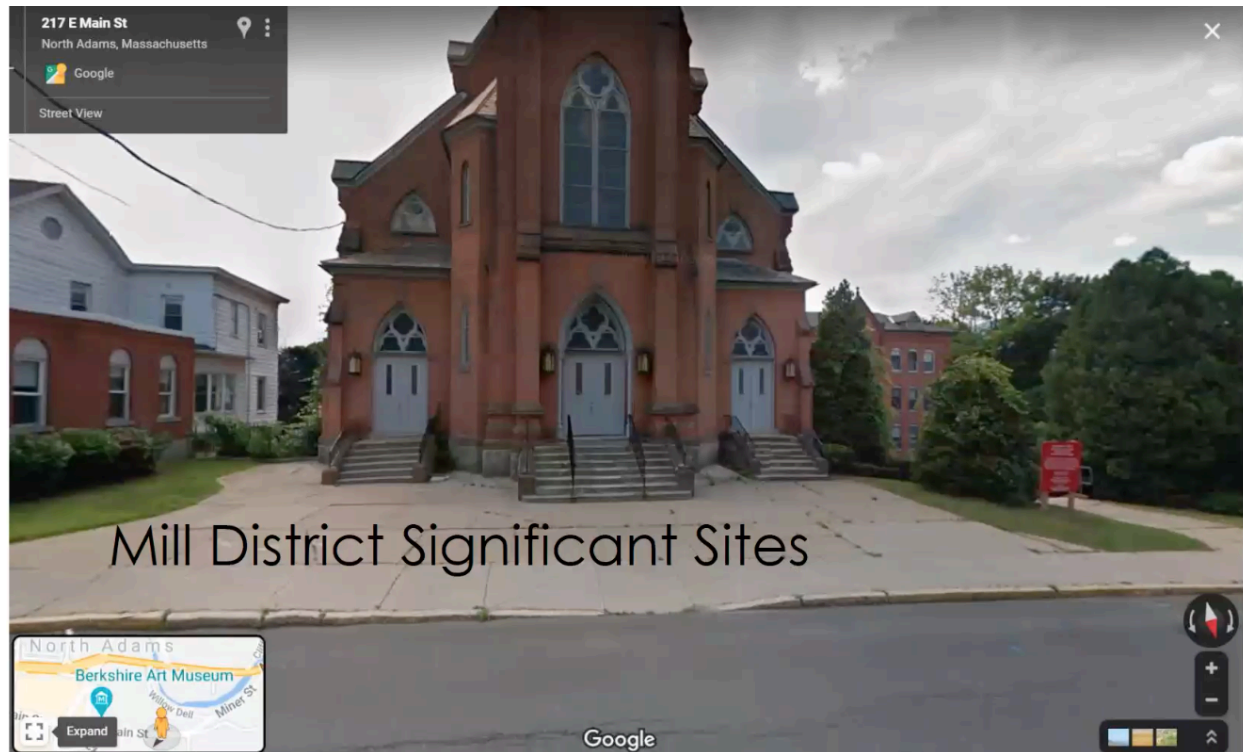
- Vision 2030 Plan:
  - Goal E7: Improve the livability and liveliness of downtown
  - Goal HN1: Provide high-quality housing options that meet a variety of needs and lifestyles
  - Goal HN2: Address blight and improve property values
- Housing Needs Assessment:
  - Stimulate new housing production
  - Improve neighborhood infrastructure

## Alignment with sustainable Berkshires Plan

- Sustainable Berkshires:
  - Labels North Adams a “Reinvestment Area”:
    - “The focus for [North Adams] is to improve [housing] opportunity conditions to better serve current residents” (p. HN 37)
  - Policy HN8.4:
    - Strategy A: Incentivize housing development in areas of high [housing] opportunity but low [housing] supply
    - Strategy D: Adopt Smart Growth Zoning in larger high opportunity towns
  - Policy HN9.1:
    - Strategy G: Explore creative models for incentivizing rehab investors and developers

Proposed North Adams 40R Zoning District











# Smart Growth District Requirements

- Area of Concentrated Development
- Less than 25% of total municipal land area
- Minimum Density:
  - Multifamily: 20 units per acre
  - 2- and 3-family: 12 units per acre
  - Single-family: 8 units per acre
- Affordable Housing:
  - 20% of all units within a Smart Growth project must be affordable
  - Affordable monthly housing costs = \$1,618 or less

# Smart Growth Use Regulations

Use	Standards and Conditions	MD	DD
<b>Residential</b>			
Single-Family Detached		N	N
Townhouse	Townhouses require individual lots and zero side setbacks.	PA	N
Two and Three Family		PA	N
Multi-Family (4 or more units)		PA	PA
Assisted Living		PA	N
<b>Commercial**</b>			
Dining Establishments	Not including drive-in or drive-through restaurants	PA	PA
Office Building	Office use must be permitted in the underlying district.	PA	PA
Retail	Retail use must be permitted in the underlying district.	PA	PA
Banks		N	PA
Services	Automobile body shops, sales lots, and service and repair stations are prohibited.	PA	PA
<b>Mixed-use**</b>			
Neighborhood-scale mixed-use developments, allowing two or more use within the same building	Mixed uses within a building must be allowed in the underlying district.	PA	N
Downtown-scale mixed use developments, allowing two or more uses within the same building	Mixed uses within a building must be permitted allowed in the underlying district.	PA	PA
<b>Industrial**</b>			
Light Manufacturing	Industrial uses must be permitted in the underlying district.	PA	N
General Industrial Uses	Industrial uses must be permitted in the underlying district.	PA	N
<b>Government, Institutional, and Public Service</b>			
Religious		PA	PA
Educational		PA	PA
Parks, Playgrounds, Recreation and Community Centers		P	P
Municipal Government Buildings		PA	PA



# Smart Growth Design Standards

Purpose:

To ensure that 40R projects will:

- Preserve and complement existing architectural qualities, historic character, and pedestrian ways
- While promoting infill development and
- Substantial redevelopment of historically significant and underutilized properties.

# Smart Growth Design Standards

Guiding Principles:

1. **PROMOTE** compact, mixed-use development in pedestrian-oriented form
2. **ENHANCE** connectivity and accessibility
3. **CREATE** distinctive neighborhoods that provide diverse housing options
4. **IMPROVE** the design of public space and the built environment
5. **ENCOURAGE** creative design consistent with neighborhood character

# Smart Growth Design Standards

## Mill District Vision Statement:

A district with existing historical and natural resources that are leveraged to create a distinct, vibrant neighborhood in which residential, locally-owned and operated commercial, and recreational uses coexist. New residential and mixed-use developments within historic structures enhance the look and feel of the area to create a highly desirable and inclusive neighborhood.

# Smart Growth Design Standards

## Downtown District Vision Statement:

A vibrant downtown neighborhood that mixes residential and commercial uses wherein increased residential development supports local businesses; and a vital, multimodal streetscape serves to attract and retain a diverse array of residents from all age and income levels. The Downtown District will be enhanced by residential and mixed-use development in existing vacant and under-utilized buildings.



# Smart Growth Payments

- Provides financial incentives
  - Zoning Incentive Payment:
    - Up to \$600,000 upon approval of municipal 40R ordinance by the state
  - Density Bonus Payment:
    - \$3,000 for each unit built on a unit-by-unit basis
- Smart Growth Zoning Payments to North Adams
  - Zoning Incentive Payment (ZIP):
    - 563 Incentive Units = \$600,000 ZIP
  - Potential Bonus Payments:
    - 1,280 Potential Bonus Units = Up to \$3,840,000

## Next Steps

- Preliminary public hearing
  - Vote to submit application
  - DHCD preliminary approval
  - City Council approval
  - DHCD final approval
- 
- Z. Feury passed the conversation back to B. Lamb to moderate question
  - Councilor Lamb thanked Z. Feury and M. Maloy for the work to date and noted that these efforts speak to future opportunities. He also emphasized that because this is an overlay, it actually matches with other stackable incentives like the downtown opportunity zone to potentially inspire investment and redevelopment.

- Councilor Lamb asked if developers are beholden to doing 40R projects in the zones or not
- Z. Feury stated it is not mandatory, it is optional as an overlay
- Councilor LaForest asked if approving this would preclude other benefits like opportunity zones, or would it encourage growth? If someone wanted to put in luxury apartments would that still be permitted? Has this been considered in North Adams previously, and if not, why was this not consideration for the zoning project recently done?
- Z. Feury noted that Smart Growth was a recommendation and action item in the housing and neighborhood section of the Vision 2030 plan. It wasn't undertaken in part with the zoning map because a lot of work needed to be done before pursuing smart growth, including a housing needs assessment done this year. It has been a long time in the making, and the process has been slow and deliberate.
- Councilor LaForest thanked Z. Feury for the history.
- Councilor Lamb opened up to public attendees to speak on the item.
- Eric Rudd stated he is in favor of affordable housing but not "projects." He worries that the financial incentives aren't worth it. He referenced a plan in Adams he was involved in focused on loft space. He feels that 40R was rushed through to support a different project in the same building. Considers the high density of units depressing the value of property in Adams by 5-10%. He referenced emailing the committee a few moments ago an alternative plan to 40R. He is in favor of diversified affordable housing. He noted a cap of profits based on tax incentives utilized.
- Councilor Lamb noted in response that this is part of a very long, multifaceted approach to downtown development. Language use can be challenging when "affordable" and "section 8" and other categories get combined into the same definition. The goal here is not creating homogeneous housing complexes, it's about mixed development. An example would be Clark Biscuit, which is beautiful and saved historic aesthetics while creating mixed units. He sees this as an important facet of meeting the deficit of units based on our housing needs assessment as a city and as a region. Building projects to scale to meet the demand requires putting incentives out for use. While this likely won't change minds in developing, it could prompt some. He asked when the future public hearing process will begin?
- Z. Feury felt that they would be trying to hold the initial hearing the week of December 2<sup>nd</sup>. That would be a public hearing posted in line with chapter 40A requirements. Abutters would get a notification before that public hearing.
- Councilor LaForest echoed what Councilor Lamb noted and appreciates the work of Community Development. Downtown North Adams has been engaged in a swan song of development for decades. It used to be busy every night. The number one economic driver in a downtown is housing, so any initiative to place people in downtown North Adams is admirable and one that every councilor and every business owner should support. If there is any bashing of "affordable housing" downtown, it is a very myopic understanding of affordable housing and the notion of if we want a thriving downtown. \$1,600 or less is not really "affordable housing," those are robust rental rates. Knowing there is the permissibility of more expensive housing is reassuring. He would love to see a busy downtown of people living, eating and dining in North Adams. This is a phenomenal step in the right direction. He noted that he prefers the hearings happening sooner rather than later to avoid postponement for one reason or another during the pandemic.
- Councilor Lamb asked for any final questions. None were offered.

- Councilor Lamb requested a motion to adjourn

**Motion to adjourn:** Councilor Sweeney

- Second: Councilor LaForest
- Motion Carries
- Meeting Adjourned: 7:43pm