

Hanover Residential Zoning Project Public Forum

October 13, 2012 – Ray School

9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Meeting Notes

After an introductory presentation on housing choices, the forum participants were divided into four break out groups to discuss issues relevant to the Intown, village centers, and rural areas of Hanover. The core discussion for each break out group revolved around the following questions.

- *What housing choices are appropriate for each area and how does this meet the Town's Master Plan objective to diversify the housing stock?*
- *What should these types of housing choices look like in this part of Hanover?*
 - *Intown*
 - *Village core (i.e. Etna, Hanover Center)*
 - *Areas outside the village core*
 - *Rural Farmstead*
 - *Open Space Residential*

While these discussions did not ultimately address these issues specifically, a number of comments were made regarding the process, the end goal of the residential zoning project, the presence and role of Dartmouth College's plan for future growth, the Town's Master Plan recommendations, and student housing. Additionally, participants were asked to identify appropriate locations on a map where various types of housing might be sited, although none of the groups felt ready to do that.

The following are the notes taken from the four break out groups and are organized by topic to the extent possible.

Central Questions:

1. What are different people's/institution's assumptions about growth? And are they valid?
2. Should zoning questions be grouped with "master plan" type "character" questions?
3. What role does green space and parks play in our community? – Walkability/Biking, etc.
4. How are we going to address the infrastructure needs of whatever plan evolves?
 - a. Parking/Traffic
 - b. Paving/Sewer management
 - c. Schools
 - d. Water

5. What are Dartmouth's plans and the possibility of deferring town's plan? – Also regional planning efforts
6. How can we manage transition spaces thoughtfully?
 - a. Institutional/Residential
 - b. Mixed use (commercial w/ housing)
 - c. Planned developments/Land
7. How do we address environmental impacts in a creative manner?

General Comments:

- Can we deal with noise problems, etc. in zoning to accurately judge effects of changes?
- People move to Hanover with an expectation of stability
- Greenspaces rezoned as multifamily?
- People like town the way it is
- Traffic calming
- Sidewalks/trails
- "Connected" multifamily
 - Open space
 - Pedestrian
- Settled expectations in town and rural should stay settled
- Historic value of town is why we moved here
- Solve problems with local resources
- Affordable housing? Would it reduce traffic?

Town Master Plan/Zoning Issues:

- Should we revise the master plan first before changing the residential zoning?
- If ratio is 3.7 to 1 (Intown density/rural area density), do we need more rural? Why are we talking about becoming more urban? What is included in the 3.7?
- The ratio is not the issue...we should focus on the quality of life
- Master plan proposes a village center in the Greensboro Road/Rt. 120 area...has there been an economic feasibility study done for this...why would we even talk about it if one hasn't been done
- If we are only growing at 4% in the last 10 years why change?
- We should keep these objectives in mind... improving mixed income opportunities and the environmental benefits of allowing more density in certain areas
- Why allow a density bonus?
- Why should development be shoe-horned into areas with utilities?
- Concern that we will begin to lose our unique character if more multi-family is built
- We have to make sure we provide for walkability if we add more housing in existing residential areas

- Do we favor growth? How do we manage growth? – growth bound to happen
- Leave current density to manage growth
- Are we already too dense in places?
- When will studies on effect of traffic, water, etc. be done? Can we see these studies before voting on rezoning?
- Capital Improvement Plan is in the works
- Show net effect of changes at “full build-out”
- Are there areas in town where rezoning is appropriate for increased density?
- What about protecting green space in new zoning?
- Has zoning caught up with master plan?
 - Village centers – Rivercrest
 - Cluster development- helps with traffic
- Have we built out current zoning?
- Fix zoning issues without changing character of town
- How does zoning impact property values? Assessed values to change? Who are the beneficiaries of change? Will assessment change after rezoning?

Intown Area/Dartmouth Issues:

- Dartmouth College can accommodate 10-15 years of growth in “Intown” district
Dartmouth has started a master plan...we should be made aware of what it says...they should keep us fully informed; work together with Dartmouth for a plan
- Have there been conversations with the college...why aren't they at this meeting?
- Should town react to Dartmouth plan or vice versa?
- We have no control over Dartmouth's growth, but they should respond to their needs/increased density on their own land
- Ask Dartmouth to limit student parking; raise permit prices for employees too; make it a walking campus
- Frustration that town can't influence the college
- Open forum with Dartmouth? Need transparency - hasn't been the case historically
- Student residencies became institutional by default
- Don't want student residences in neighborhoods
- Town and college – can we impact Dartmouth plans? Trade-offs? More greenspace?
- Dartmouth plan 2002 - “golf course is Dartmouth land bank”
- Parking for Dartmouth biggest problem- effects downtown parking and residential areas
- Occom Pond neighborhood enjoyed by whole town
- Current institutional “greenspace” should be changed to NP or R
- Greenspace should be protected
 - Golf course
 - Frost Field

- Is it important that town is represented on Dartmouth presidential search committee? Presidential search webpage looking for town input/comments – Brian Walsh or Julia Griffiths on search committee?
- Any housing proposed for the piece given to the college by Fanny Chase is inappropriate
- We have a lot of concern about the expansion of fraternities/sororities into existing residential areas
- Graduate students are good neighbors
- People are going to want tighter regulations regarding this
- Intown development is already in constant upheaval
- Concern about proposal to use Lot A as for multi-family housing...more traffic...loss of wooded area
- Concern about multi-family zoning abutting Frost Field...Intown open space is precious
- We should allow more Kendal type development
- Wasn't Rivercrest proposed to have some mixed use?
- Rivercrest developed as a growth accommodation?
- East Wheelock can't handle proposed changes
- Traffic congestion more important than design?
- Can we go higher above two floors in downtown?
- Lack of enforcement is an issue with regard to increasing opportunities for rental units within intown and village center locations....need to ensure owner occupancy
- We do not need to grow the urban areas
- Residential zoning project – does it address institutional and downtown zoning? Need to do these at the same time. Downtown rezoned in 2006, but institutional not recently looked at.
- How does zoning affect "institutional" zones?
- Concern about increased density
- Need more neighborhood park space (pocket parks)
- Accessory apartments
 - Owner occupied?
- Architecturally controlled multifamily
- Mixed use upper floor residential
 - Structured parking
- Active streetscape w/ amenities
- Brook Hollow
- Affordable housing
- Control of student housing
- Limit tear downs
- Improved public transportation
- Denser population in town - people still have cars
- Adequate supply of affordable student housing

- Occom Pond area should be preserved as a resource...great concern over potential impacts to this from proposed multi-family or college use...we would like it expressed that there is little or no support and strong opposition to fraternities, affinity housing or grad student housing in this area
- SR1-2-3 zoning districts should stay as is
- How to maintain green spaces currently zoned "I"
- Parking and traffic keeps getting worse

Rural Areas

- Agricultural preservation- few farms left
- Open space
- Rural vistas
- Viewshed protection-
- Single family housing along roads (limited setback)
- Buffered cluster or open space housing
- Conservation "development" (flexible lot standards)
- Subdivision standards requiring contiguous open space
- Transfer of development rights
- Wetland preservation
- Water is a significant issue in rural areas
- We shouldn't change the way density is calculated in rural areas...disregard the recommendations of the compendium on this as well as with the distinction between major and minor subdivisions
- We should think about permaculture and community farms as ways of protecting rural character
- How do we protect hilltops from development now?
- Wildlife corridors are an essential part of the rural character...need to be protected
- Rural locations would be inappropriate for continuing care type facilities
- We need to be aware of impacts to forestry areas
- Rural areas need a water supply well for each house - what is sustainable level of development for water supply conservation? Sustainable agriculture- no longer "crazy" Agricultural zoning (golf course for instance)
- Pim Park is nature preserve
- Rural areas don't rezone for subdivision
- Individual stewardship in rural areas important

Infrastructure:

- Do we know where the aquifers are and what their capacity is?
- What is the town's overall sewer capacity?

- We need to know what our water/sewer capacities are...should be thinking about growth regionally and not just planning for it in Hanover
- Can our facilities accommodate growth? Capacity? – Fire Department

Process Issues:

- The compendium endorses more multi-family housing but the town hasn't passed a rental housing ordinance
- Why does the compendium call for more dorms on N. Park when the college is not asking for more dorms? We should strike this from the compendium
- It seems like the recommendations of the compendium are developer driven...there are a lot of opportunities we are not exploring like converting existing housing into multiple units rather than building new ones
- The recommendations of the compendium seem contradictory to the master plan
- How can we even consider this if master plan hasn't been updated?
- This whole thing seems to be pushing us faster than we want to move
- Getting it right means talking to people who have done this
- Public process not thorough or transparent
- Is there are a consensus?
- Are we trying to fix something that isn't broken?
- Spot zoning? Better to address things as a whole
- A before and after assessment would be helpful
- Zoning Board not involved in new zoning? Three planning board members have experience on Zoning Board

Main Themes and Takeaways from the Meeting:

- Understanding Dartmouth intentions is essential; group was unable to separate this from the need to update residential zoning.
- Do not support any extension of student housing types into existing neighborhoods/residential areas not owned by the college.
- Doubts about changing existing residential zoning ahead of updating the master plan; there seemed to be an impression that the master plan is woefully out of date...this needs to be addressed immediately and effectively by the Planning Board or it will continue to provide an opportunity for naysayers to rally support.
- Support for the idea of allowing conversion of existing single units into multiple units as a way to accommodate new growth but there is a concern that owner occupancy be a part of the requirements.
- There is general support for more CCRC development.
- There is general unease with "multi-family".
- No real sense of the distinction between where Intown ends and village centers begin.
- The overall tone was that new growth shouldn't be encouraged.

- The compendium was misunderstood and created a lot of confusion...this probably led to the confrontational nature of the initial part of the meeting.
- There seems to be a misunderstanding of VHB's history with this process...this should also be addressed by the planning board. Note: VHB involvement began in September 2012.