

**Hartford Planning Commission
Community Meeting
Proposed HCR Zoning District
1/19/21
Draft Minutes**

Attendance: The following individuals attended a community meeting on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. Chair Bruce Riddle called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Bruce read the Act 92 open meeting script.

Planning Commission Members: Dennis Brown, Toby Dayman, Robin Adair Logan, John Reid, Dave Sherman and Chair Bruce Riddle.

Zoning Board of Adjustment Members: Chris Lowe and Scott Snyder.

Staff: Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield, Zoning Administrator Jo-Ann Ells and Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Members of the Public: Janice Chen, Jane Harrigan, Bobby Oakes, Mike Morris and Dennis ?.

Possible Zoning Change to Consider Route 5 White River Junction from Industrial-Commercial (IC) to Highway Commercial/Residential (HCR): Matt Osborn reported that during the 2019 Town Plan community forums, we heard strong support for mixed-use development in Hartford and to rethink strict segregation of uses. We have since heard from property owners looking for more flexibility in zoning.

There is a small area on the east side of Route 5 near the intersection with Route 4 that is currently zoned Industrial-Commercial and includes the Listen property (formerly 25,000 Gifts) as well as a duplex, a mixed-use building and the former Morris Homes model. The Industrial-Commercial district does not allow mixed-use development or residential uses. The proposal is to change the zoning designation from Industrial-Commercial to Highway Commercial-Residential. The proposed Highway Commercial-Residential zoning district would make mixed-use, single-unit dwellings, two-unit dwellings and multi-unit dwellings conditional uses. Other changes include:

Moving from Permitted Use to Conditional Use This would require going before the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a Conditional Use Permit in addition to going before the Planning Commission for Site Development Plan approval.

1. Hospital/Medical Center
2. Light Manufacturing/Industry
3. Light Manufacturing/Retail Sales
4. Motor Vehicle Fueling Facility
5. Motor Vehicle Sales
6. Office 10,000 square feet or more
7. Parking Facility
8. Recreational Facility
9. Research, Testing Laboratory

Eliminating the Following Uses from the District

1. Adult-Oriented Businesses
2. Agriculture
3. Manufacturing/Industry
4. Transportation Terminal

Jo-Ann Ells clarified that if single-unit and two-unit dwellings are made a permitted use, Planning Commission approval would not be required. It would only require a zoning permit.

Bruce Riddle asked members of the public if they had comments.

Zoning Board of Adjustment member Chris Lowe stated that he supports the proposed zoning but thinks a single dwelling unit should be a conditional use.

Zoning Board of Adjustment member Scott Snyder said he is in favor of the proposed changes.

Mike Morris stated that he has owned the property on Route 5 for twenty years. The property served as the office of his Morris Homes business and includes a model home. He supports the addition of residential uses in the district and would like to see single-unit residential as a permitted use.

Janice Chen stated that she supports opportunities for more housing and thinks making housing a permitted use makes it easier to develop housing.

Bruce Riddle asked the Planning Commission for their feedback.

Dennis Brown stated that he would like to see single-unit dwellings as a permitted use.

Dave Sherman stated that he supports the proposal and is comfortable with single-unit dwellings being a permitted or conditional use.

John Reid stated that he was persuaded by Mike Morris' comments and supports single-unit, two-unit dwellings and multi-unit dwellings as a permitted use.

Robin Adair Logan agreed with John Reid's comments.

Toby Dayman stated that he supports single-unit and two-unit dwellings as a permitted use but thinks multi-unit dwellings should be a conditional use.

Bruce Riddle stated that he would like to change the zoning district to place residential and mixed-use development ahead of commercial and add that the area serves as a gateway to the downtown and is an important pedestrian corridor.

Lori Hirshfield expressed concern about the compatibility of uses if single-unit and two-unit dwellings are classified as a permitted use. Dennis Brown responded that the burden of compatibility should be on the commercial uses and not on the residential uses. He added that prior to the construction of Interstate 91 and widening of Route 5 in the 1960s, the corridor was primarily residential.

Toby Dayman asked why the west side of Route 5 was not included in the proposal. Matt Osborn responded that the uses are more commercially intensive and not as compatible with residential uses.

Bruce Riddle wanted clarification on whether to make residential and mixed-use development a permitted or conditional use. There was consensus to make single-unit and two-unit dwellings as a permitted use and make multi-unit dwellings and mixed-uses a conditional use. There also was consensus to change the zoning district objective to place residential and mixed-use development ahead of commercial development and add that the area serves as a gateway to the downtown and is an important pedestrian corridor.

There was discussion about the poor condition of the Route 5 sidewalk in spite of it being an important pedestrian corridor. Lori Hirshfield responded that VTrans is obligated to adhere to the complete streets guidance.

Next Steps: Matt Osborn described the zoning amendment process. It will require a minimum of one public hearing with the Planning Commission and a minimum of one public hearing with the Selectboard. The Planning Commission will be required to prepare a report on the zoning changes which will go out to the Planning Commission chair of adjoining towns, the Regional Planning Commission and the Department of Housing and Community Development. Each public hearing will require a 15-day notice and needs to be advertised in a local newspaper and posted at the normal posting locations. Matt noted that the process normally takes 2-3 months depending on whether changes are made to the zoning amendment which would require additional public hearings. Matt stated that the Planning Commission Report will be drafted and presented to the Planning Commission for approval at the January 25th community meeting that also will include discussion of the proposed Quechee Commercial/Residential zoning district.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.