



Director of Community and Economic Development

UPDATE

October 18, 2021

■ Director's Report

1. Form-Based Codes with Alan Manoian

Biography - Alan S. Manoian is the Director of Community and Economic Development for the Town of Ayer (since 2016) and is a form-based/character-based zoning code author and advocate. A native of Lowell, MA, Alan has served as a New England municipal planning & economic development professional for 30-years. Alan has advanced the principles and practices of sustainable local development, New England Form-Based/Character-Based Zoning Codes, downtown revitalization, historic & heritage preservation, public space design, and the “Economics of Place” in all three northern New England states. Privileged to have been a member of the (2005) inaugural class of the Form-Based Code Institute, and having authored five Form-Based Codes, including the first Form-Based Code adopted in the State of Maine, Alan has dedicated his public service expertise to preserving and sustaining our valued and authentic New England heritage places.

Background and Summary – Zoning has been a special challenge in Harvard and is made more difficult due to a strict and confusing Bylaw. Aside from the need to have a comprehensive zoning rewrite, Harvard offers no innovative means to solve specific community challenges. The 2016 Master Plan and many planning studies prior recommend a range of projects and policies such as adding affordable housing and housing of differing types, developing a zoning for the Center, and improving the zoning for the commercial district.

Related to the Center, the Master Plan specifies a zoning overlay. This type of zoning tool leaves the base zoning in place (Agricultural-Residential in this case) and applies an additional or alternative set of zoning provisions that allow different uses, setbacks, and other criteria. Overlays can and often are confusing because they often blend the base and overlay provisions and it can be difficult to interpret. Another option is to create a new base zoning district. However, conventional zoning not the

ideal tool to address a town or village center with its unique characteristics, relatively dense pattern of development, and mixed uses. Enter the Form-Based Code. While Harvard has been introduced to the term related to the commercial district and its applicability to creating rules for a relatively undeveloped area, it also is the ideal tool for downtowns.

Alan will be speaking to the Planning Board on Monday evening about the concept and its use, adding a little about why it may be something Harvard considers to optimally protect its Center.

2. 2021 Fall Town Meeting Wrap-Up

Since I have no idea how Town meeting will go, I will not speculate.

3. 2022 Spring Annual Town Meeting Bylaw Amendments

Annual Town Meeting in the Spring offers the Planning Board the opportunity to introduce some impactful legislation for the Town. These fall into three primary categories with some overlap.

- A. Senior Residential Development
- B. Open Space Residential Design
- C. Town Center Zoning District

Related to senior residential development, category B below is one of the biggest provisions, but it is intended to serve well beyond providing just senior housing, offering alternative residential opportunities for many different markets. As mentioned in earlier UPDATE's, the challenge will be to make the Bylaw clear and as concise as it can be without losing depth, getting density right, and making sure that wastewater solutions are clear and as flexible as Title 5 allows.

Other senior housing-related amendments considered by the Board for Spring 2022 include:

1. Mapping the Multifamily district and amending provisions.
2. Amending public water supply provisions.
3. Amending the multifamily conversions section.
4. Adopting an inclusionary housing bylaw.

Some of these may need to be pushed back to fall 2022 but the Board should judge which can be addressed in the spring shortly after this October Town Meeting.

The Town Center Zoning District may be a huge lift by May 2022. However, if Alan Manoian can assist us, it may be achievable. The only question then is whether the Board has the bandwidth to conduct a massive amount of education and outreach on all of these amendments.

Finally, at some point the Board must decide as to when we take on the next huge task—local zoning reform. It will be expensive and elicit a huge pushback from citizens who do not want change.

Thus, there is no shortage of big projects for the Board to sponsor. Some hard prioritization decisions will need to be made.

■ Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) – Types of OSRD and Types of Units

This short presentation will cover the types of OSRD projects and the permitted and conditional uses allowed.
