

March 14, 2018

Council Colleagues:

Since February 2016, Council and staff have responded to community-wide dissatisfaction and concern regarding the Blue Hill (formerly Ephesus Fordham) District by working to improve the area's form-based code. Results of these efforts include the passage of a series of LUMO text amendments, the creation of new design guidelines and the adoption of a Mobility and Connectivity plan.

As the attached spreadsheet of benchmark data shows, residential development accounts for roughly 98% of the newly built square footage in the district and we have made little or no progress toward achieving our goals for office and retail space. Additionally, we have achieved only half of our affordable housing goals and do not have a plan for how to achieve the rest. Current, active interest in the redevelopment of several sites in the district would include at least another 966 residential units, which would surpass our residential goal and forfeit those sites and others as potential opportunities for commercial, retail or affordable housing development – which will have long-term consequences for the district and the town.

Additionally, the recent approval of the Fordham Apartments project has demonstrated that block length, setbacks and design guidelines do not adequately address community concerns about building size and the desire for increased pedestrian and visual permeability throughout the district.

Further refinements are needed to ensure that we meet stated town and district goals of building a diverse tax base, providing affordable housing throughout town, achieving good place-making and better integrating public and green spaces throughout the district. Acting quickly to strengthen the form-based code will allow us to target the remaining redevelopment opportunities in the district to ensure that we achieve our other goals.

To move us forward, we are petitioning the mayor and manager to bring back solutions to address the following community interests quickly so that proposed changes can go through the advisory board review and council public hearing process and come to council for a vote before summer break:

1. Increase the amount of non-residential commercial development in the district by using density bonuses or other mechanisms to encourage developers to include commercially contributing, non-residential square footage in their projects. For instance:

Project Height	Contributing Commercial Requirement for the project
Up to 3 stories	0%, bonus to 4 stories if retaining existing commercial
4 – 7 stories	50%

2. Propose solutions that will allow us to meet our existing goal of 300 new affordable housing units as well as to mitigate impacts of units lost when the Park Apartments property redevelops.

3. Address building size and massing concerns by having staff work with Tony Sease to develop standards around maximum linear street frontage, maximum building lot coverage, maximum building footprint or other standards to improve place-making and permeability throughout the district.

We understand that the economics of redevelopment are complicated but believe, based on our work on Economic Development and Affordable Housing strategies, that we can find creative solutions to these issues which will benefit all Blue Hill stakeholders and help the town meet its stated goals without impeding district redevelopment.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Jessica Anderson

Hongbin Gu

Rachel Schaevitz