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Franklin, MA 02038

April 28, 2025

Bruce Hunchard, Chair
Franklin Zoning Board of Appeals
355 East Central Street
Franklin, MA 02038

TOWN OF FRANKLIN
TOWN CLERK
2025 APR 30 P 1:26
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Re: 444 East Central Street friendly 40B

Dear Mr. Hunchard and members of the Board of Appeals,

This is a follow-up to the comments I made in support of this project at the first hearing on March 27, 2025.

First, as stated in my previous comments, I think this project is a key component of helping transform the East Central Street corridor into an attractive, pedestrian-oriented place that is less car-dependent. But also, the need for more housing, both market rate and affordable, remains critical, and Franklin's economic future depends on it.

Housing Need

Earlier this year, the Unlocking Housing Production Commission report documented the need for 222,000 new housing units in Massachusetts. More recently, Metropolitan Area Planning Commission released its finding that there are 441,000 low income households without access to an income-restricted housing unit. While it is true that Franklin is above the 10% threshold for units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, it is also true that market rate units within a 40B rental project still count as units on the SHI even though they are not income restricted. If those units were excluded, our percentage would be about 7%. Furthermore, many of those units are limited to the elderly and disabled. While that is a good thing, it means there are currently even fewer units available to families and young people.

Density Changes in Franklin

Since density has been brought up, I would like to make a few comments about its impacts. The table below illustrates the changes in density in Franklin between 1970-71 and 1999-2000:

Table 1
Changes in Density, 1970-2000

Year	Population	Residential Land Area (acres)	Density (persons per acre)	Change (persons per acre)
1970-1971*	17,472	2679	6.6	--
1999-2000*	29,560	5675	5.2	-1.4
Change 1970-2000	11,730	2996	3.9	-2.7

Sources: U.S. Census, 1970 and 2000

UMass-Amherst, Resource Mapping Project, 1971 and 1999

*The land use data is 1 year off from the Census data but close enough for this illustration.

Franklin's density decreased from 6.6 persons per acre in 1970-71 to 5.2 in 1999-2000. However, the change between 1971 and 1999 is more instructive. The population increased by 11,730 (67%) while the residential land area increased by 2996 acres (112%). Thus the new growth between 1971 and 1999 was at a density of just 3.9 persons per acre

Put another way, the population growth in Franklin between 1970 and 1999 required significantly more residential land (2996 acres) than the entire population growth of the Town from its first settlements by non-natives in the 17th century to 1970¹ (2679 acres). By the way, the population has only grown by about 5000 (17%) since the 2000 U.S. Census.

Impervious Surface Impacts

The impacts of lower density (also known as sprawl) are significant. In addition to resulting in the conversion of forests and farms into subdivisions, they result in significant more impervious surface per capita and much less tax revenue per acre, while increasing the amount of infrastructure construction and maintenance that is needed to serve fewer people.

A Charles River Watershed Association study calculated the amount of impervious surface in its member towns. I added population to the analysis and calculated that dense places like Boston, Cambridge and Somerville have just over 1000 square feet of impervious surface per resident, while places like Mendon, Lincoln and Wrentham require more than 5000 square feet of impervious surface per person.

Fiscal Impacts

Regarding fiscal impacts I compared a block in Franklin's GR-V district near downtown with one in the RR-II district a few miles from downtown. The GR-V block has an area of 4.24 acres and is surrounded by 2,148 linear feet of street. This block includes 25 parcels with houses that have assessed values ranging from \$377,700 to \$573,100 and a total assessed value of \$11,333,800. In FY23 it generated tax revenue of \$142,579.

By contrast, the block in the RR-II district has an area of 7.87 acres and has 2,627 feet of street around its perimeter. It includes just 11 parcels with assessments ranging from \$701,100 to \$806,700 for a total assessment of \$8,333,600. Its FY23 tax revenue was \$104,837. So a block that is 85% larger with houses assessed at significantly higher values generated only 73% as much property tax revenue as the block in the RR-II district while needing 22% more road and associated infrastructure to maintain.

Conclusion

This is not to disparage any type of housing. We definitely need a variety to suit diverse needs. The project proposed at 444 East Central helps to serve a compelling need for more affordable and market rate housing in a manner that makes efficient use of land, helps support our existing businesses, and has the potential to help transform the East Central corridor into a pedestrian-friendly destination, all as recommended in the Town's Master Plan.

Sincerely,

Gino Carlucci

¹ It should be noted that Franklin's population grew from about 10,000 to about 17,000 between 1960 and 1965. If comparable residential land use data were available for 1960, the difference would be far more dramatic!