



OLD NORTH BRIDGE

TOWN OF CONCORD

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TO: Concord Planning Board
FROM: Concord Municipal Affordable Housing Trust c/o Chair Keith Bergman
DATE: March 4, 2022
SUBJ: Public Hearing on Zoning Amendments: CMAHT Comments on Articles 33 & 35

For the Planning Board's March 8, 2022 public hearing on proposed zoning amendments, please see the comments below from the Concord Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (CMAHT) Board of Trustees regarding 2022 Annual Town Meeting Articles 33 and 35. Thanks very much.

Article 33, Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Zoning Map & Thoreau Depot Business District

The Concord Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (CMAHT) Board of Trustees supports the concept of multi-unit housing in appropriate locations, including the provision for housing units within mixed use buildings in the Thoreau District rezoning as proposed by the Planning Board in 2022 Annual Town Meeting Article 33. Trustees note with particular approval the requirement for affordable housing in Section 7.11.4 for payments when the by law would require creation of a number of affordable units that is more than an integer but less than 0.5 units below the next integer. In this way, there is no incentive for a developer to manipulate unit numbers to avoid affordable housing obligations. The money so collected could be used by CMAHT for a variety of purposes to increase the stock of affordable housing units.

Article 35, Zoning Bylaw Amendment – By Citizen Petition

While the Concord Municipal Affordable Housing Trust has yet to take a position on Article 35, Trustees did want to relay our concerns that this article will make it more difficult, and more costly, for Concord to provide additional units of affordable housing. The PRD (Planned Residential Development) regulations require a builder to offer some affordable units in a planned development, and it will be possible to use funds in the Trust to buy down additional units, or to lower the areawide median income (AMI) of affordable units the developer is required to build.

Article 35 would increase the percentage of open space which must be unprotected upland from 50% to 75%. The required open space does not include buildings, as well as roadways, parking areas and lawns and gardens attached to individual units. Raising the upland open space requirement means that the cost of purchasing the land for development will be distributed over a smaller number of units, making those units even more expensive. The cost of both market rate units and any units made affordable under the PRD rules will rise.

In the alternative, a developer who acquires a piece of land may decide that a PRD would not be profitable due to the increased land cost per unit, and can decide to build only the houses permitted “as of right” in the applicable zoning district. Recent experience in Concord with newly built homes shows that such units will be large (~4,000 square feet) and expensive (~\$1.5 million or more), making the general housing market in Concord even less affordable.

We are aware of no evidence that the existing requirements for upland open space in the PRD regulations have resulted in major environmental degradation. Sensitive habitat and wetlands have protection, and can provide wildlife habitat and a buffer around any PRD. We strongly recommend keeping the current requirement in Concord’s PRD regulations that 50% of open space in a PRD must be upland and therefore recommend against approval of Article 35.