

Article 22 as Amended

Informational

Town of Leicester
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Purpose

The purpose of Article 22 is to allow for horizontal mixed use in the HB-1 zone. This will allow a residential component to be a part of any commercial development if a potential developer so wishes. In the early 2000's the town had the foresight to create a zone which allowed large scale commercial development. Since that time, the big box store plazas of yesterday have become less profitable due to the shift to online shopping. This caused a change in how real estate developers look at commercial development.

The demand for housing has proven to be part of the solution. The new model is a mixed use of both residential and commercial development. The Planning Board and the Economic Development Committee have researched this model and found many examples in our area. Edgemere Crossing in Shrewsbury, which boasts a Market Basket, Starbucks and a Clinton Savings Bank has a residential component of 250 units. Most of these units are one- and two-bedroom units and a small number of three bedrooms. The thought process is that the residential units are a built in and instantaneous return on investment that patronizes the commercial entities located on the site. The greater community and surrounding areas also benefit from these new retail stores.

The old Spags plaza has been redeveloped using this same model with a grocery store component and many smaller commercial spaces. The residential community adds to the housing stock of Shrewsbury and the retail spaces contribute to the economy. These commercial spaces also sell things that are taxable, adding additional revenue to the town's economic cycle.

Our research further shows that multifamily housing has less of a burden on infrastructure and town resources including schools. The combined student load from both the Edgemere project and the Lakeside (Spags) redevelopment was 17 out of approximately 400 units. The data also shows that multifamily developments rely less on vehicular transport compared to single family homes.

The Density Calculation

The Planning Board used the success of the Edgemere crossing project to determine a baseline for density and ratio of commercial to residential space. It was important to allow the expansion of a residential component in the HB 1 zone based on its success in other communities. After careful consideration the Board decided on a more conservative approach of 6 units per acre and a ratio of 60 percent residential to 40 percent commercial. Preserving open space in town is a very important goal of the Planning Board so we opted to add in a caveat that allows an increase to 70 percent residential and reduction to 30 percent commercial if 20 percent of the property is preserved for open space.

To put these ratios in perspective a forty-acre parcel in the HB 1 zone could have up to approximately 205 units if the open space option was used. If the open space option is not utilized, then the residential unit count would be approximately 175 residential units.