



City of Medford

Office of Planning, Development and Sustainability

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To: City Council President Zac Bears and Honorable Members of the City Council
From: Danielle Evans, Senior Planner, Office of Planning, Development, and Sustainability *on behalf of* the City of Medford Community Development Board
Date: March 10, 2025
RE: Community Development Board Recommendation (Salem Street Neighborhood Corridor District- Council Paper #24-515)

In accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. c.40A, s. 5, the City of Medford Community Development Board held duly noticed public hearings on January 22, 2025, February 5, 2025, and March 5, 2025 to consider and make a recommendation to City Council on the following proposed zoning amendments (Council Paper #24-515):

1. Amend Section 94-2.1 (Division into Districts) to add the Salem Street Corridor District.
2. Amend Section 94-3.2 Table of Use Regulations (Table A) by incorporating the Salem Street Corridor District into the existing table and to designate the uses permitted therein.
3. Amend Section 94-4.1 Table of Dimensional Requirements (Table B) by incorporating the Salem Street Corridor District and to state the dimensional requirements therein.
4. Amend Section 94-12 (Definitions) to amend and add various definitions.
5. Amend Section 94-9.0 to insert a new subsection to create the Salem Street Corridor District.
6. Amending the Zoning Map to create a new Salem Street Corridor District, and to change the zoning district designation of various properties to place them within said district, as shown on a map entitled, "Salem Street Corridor Zoning" dated December 8, 2024.

Public Hearing Proceedings and Board Actions

- **January 22, 2025**

Board members present at the meeting were Chair Emily Hedeman, Vice Chair Peter Calves, Member Ari Fishman, Member Ayni Strang, Member Adam Behrens, Member Sabrina Alpino, and Associate Member Benjamin Lavallee.

Emily Innes and Paula Ramos Martinez from Innes Associates appeared before the Board and gave a presentation of the proposed Salem Street Corridor District zoning ordinance. During the public comment period, thirty (30) members participating in the Zoom meeting provided comments both in favor and in opposition to the proposed zoning changes. Please refer to the approved meeting minutes from January 22, 2025 for more details.

The CDB voted unanimously to continue the public hearing to February 5th, 2025.

- **February 5, 2025**

Board members present at the meeting were Chair Emily Hedeman, Member Ari Fishman, Member Ayni Strang, Member Adam Behrens, Member Sabrina Alpino, and Associate Member Benjamin Lavallee. Vice Chair Peter Calves was absent.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing without discussion to March 5, 2025 to allow time for more public outreach and to hold a public listening session (held in person on February 10, 2025 at the Roberts Elementary School.)

- **March 5, 2025**

Board members present at the meeting were Chair Emily Hedeman, Vice Chair Peter Calves, Member Ari Fishman, Member Ayni Strang, and Member Adam Behrens. Member Sabrina Alpino and Associate Member Benjamin Lavallee were absent.

Emily Innes and Paula Ramos Martinez from Innes Associates appeared before the Board and gave a presentation of the revised proposed Salem Street Corridor District zoning ordinance, which eliminated certain uses from all or most of the district and reduced allowable height and density. During the public comment period there were multiple comments from members of the public participating in the Zoom meeting both in favor and against the revised proposal.

The CDB voted unanimously 4-0 (with Member Fishman leaving the meeting prior to the vote) to recommend to City Council approval of the zoning amendment with the following recommended revisions to be incorporated into a new draft:

1. Revise the “multifamily residential” subdistrict to align closer to the “Urban Residential” with regards to allowed uses and dimensional standards.
2. Adjust the Development Incentives by reducing the incentive for indoor seating, outdoor pedestrian plaza, and fountains from a half-story to a quarter-story.

cc: Alicia Hunt, Director of Planning, Development, and Sustainability
Emily Hedeman, Chair, Community Development Board
Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Mayor
Adam Hurtubise, City Clerk

Meeting Minutes
Medford Community Development Board
January 22, 2025

Board Members Present: Chair Emily Hedeman, Vice Chair Peter Calves, Board Member Adam Behrens, Board Member Ayni Strang, Board Member Ari Fishman, Board Member Sabrina Alpino, Board Member Ben Lavallee

City Staff Present: Alicia Hunt, Director of the Department, Danielle Evans, Senior Planner, and Brenda Pike, Climate Planner

1. Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:43 PM through the remote platform Zoom by Chair Emily Hedeman. Also in attendance were Board Members Ari Fishman, Ayni Strang, Peter Calves, Adam Behrens, Sabrina Alpino, and Ben Lavallee. Also in attendance were Alicia Hunt, Director of the Office of Planning, Development, and Sustainability; Danielle Evans, Senior Planner; Brenda Pike, Climate Planner; and Josh Neidleman, Student Intern.

Chair Hedeman stated that the meeting was being conducted via remote participation pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023. No in-person attendance by members of the public would be permitted, and public participation in any public hearing conducted during this meeting would be by remote means only. The Chair provided information on how to participate in the meeting remotely outside of the Zoom platform. She informed Board Members that all votes taken during the meeting would be roll call votes.

2. Public Hearing – Salem Street Corridor District (SSCD) Zoning Amendment

Chair Hedeman read the public hearing notice into the record.

Emily Innes and Paula Ramos Martinez from Innes Associates appeared before the Board provided background for the rezoning proposal. Paula Ramos provided context for the Salem Street Corridor District, as well as the previous rezoning on Mystic Avenue. Paula provided background on the Medford Comprehensive Plan and its impact on the vision for the Salem Street Corridor.

Paula emphasized that the current makeup of Salem Street does not reflect the current zoning, with several businesses operating on lots zoned for residential purposes. Paula also provided context for incentive zoning, which allows greater density on certain lots if the developer provides a substantial benefit for the community.

Paula also detailed the corridor's neighborhood compatibility requirements, which will mandate setbacks, pedestrian improvements, and other adaptations to preserve neighborhood character and community.

Emily Innes emphasized that the Mystic Avenue and Salem Street Corridor rezonings differ. The Salem Street Corridor will be lower density and not include certain uses that would be allowed in the Mystic Avenue Corridor District such as adult uses. Innes also emphasized that incentive zoning is based on a menu where developers must include benefits from the pre-set options in order to receive the height benefits. These bonuses are not stackable and can only be accrued up to the maximum height outlined in the zone.

Emily Hedeman asked why adult medical uses are specifically restricted to five employees. Hedeman also noted the importance of setbacks as well as allowing existing businesses to remain in place.

Ari Fishman said that they appreciate the mixed-use nature of Salem Street and are glad that the Salem Street Corridor takes the current uses of the street in mind and noted that much of the existing uses in the area aren't actually allowed under the current zoning and emphasized the importance of updating zoning.

Adam Behrens noted the differences between the Salem Street and Mystic Avenue plans and emphasized the importance of gentle density along and leading into the Salem Street corridor.

Alicia Hunt stated that the City Council version could be modified to restrict the hours of certain uses such as restricting neighborhood medical uses to the hours of 8 am to 7 pm. Additionally, Hunt wondered if operating hours should be adjusted throughout the community to suit neighborhood needs.

Emily Innes responded to comments from the board and city staff, emphasizing that scale has been considered throughout the rezoning process to keep neighborhood character in mind.

Paula noted that home occupation is proposed to be allowed on multifamily residential properties.

Chair Hedeman opened up the public comment portion of the meeting.

Carlos Cabrejas stated that, as the corridor gets busier, traffic will worsen. He asks what mitigation strategies have been put in place to address rising traffic in the Salem Street Corridor.

Dave McKenna stated that he is generally supportive of the new development because it will increase the city's tax base and mitigate the housing crisis in Medford. He praised the incentive bonuses for pocket parks and asked if additional greenspace incentives could be provided.

Marielena questioned the differentiation between medical offices and noted that large medical offices opening in residential areas could have negative impacts on the community, particularly if operating hours and size are not considered. Marielena also questioned the impact of additional

housing on school capacity in Medford.

Zachary Chertok asked if nonconforming buildings will need to go through a variance process to make adjustments to continue their current use. Zachary Chertok asked if the menu of options for the IZs could be published front and center. He also questions if transportation impacts have been properly considered, noting that the trucking route passes through Salem Street.

Patricia Schiapelli asked if the CD Board received a letter from their attorney representing approximately 800 constituents criticizing the communication and work with the community.

Patricia stated that, despite language barriers, little has been done to work with language-isolated members of the community. Patricia also stated that Salem Street already struggles with traffic and worries that the Salem Street Corridor District will worsen traffic.

Jane Marcus express concern with the rezoning's impact on the Roberts Elementary School and that certain uses could make the area less safe for the children.

Cheryl Rodriguez stated that the plan is extreme and worries that changes to buffers and lot size will worsen traffic in the community. Cheryl also worries that neighborhood incentives will be too easy to abuse.

Ralph Kline stated that traffic and parking are already overwhelming on Salem Street. He says that crossing the street is too dangerous for his grandchildren as well as himself, and notes that height permissions will make the Salem Street area busier and more dangerous.

Doreen O'Hare stated that she is opposed to the zoning because of overwhelming traffic in the area. She worries that first responders will struggle to navigate a denser community and questions the impact on neighborhood schools. Doreen also stated that parking concerns should be investigated further.

Julissa Almendares stated that their home has been rezoned to commercial mixed 2, but is behind an existing home slightly back from the road. She wonders what the impact of the rezoning will be on her property and echoed other constituents' concerns about the impact on parking, traffic, and safety in the community.

Melanie Tringali echoed previous concerns about the impact on public safety, traffic, and infrastructure in the community. She stated that overwhelming density near the Roberts School would be unsafe for local children. Melanie also stated that businesses may be displaced by the plan if the property owners sell to a higher bidder.

William Navare stated that Medford is not "full", and that there is room for more people. William asks if Innes Associates have considered the fiscal impact of stepbacks on developers and worries that the requirement could make development unfeasible.

Claudia Fennelly asserted that Salem St will need to be widened or parking will need to be removed for the plan to work. She questions the impact on nonconforming business. Claudia

worries that the plan is overly ambitious and too dense for Medford.

Lori Spinney-Flagg questions the impact of upzoning in the area, echoing concerns about traffic and parking in the area. Lori notes that bus service along Salem Street has worsened and thinks that more should be done to address traffic issues along the Salem Street.

Kelly Rasso asked what the city's incentive is to support the zoning changes. She wonders what precautions have been put in place to prevent overwhelming development in the area. She adds that it should be on the developer to make an effort to notify residents about any proposed developments.

Jean Nuzzo stated that developer profits have been prioritized over the needs of residents. She notes that development in the area has already impacted her property extensively, and she worries that neighborhood interests are not being considered. She stated that the impact on the environment has not been thoroughly investigated, and questions why 31 Paris Street has been given special accommodations.

Maureen Wing stated that six story buildings are not appropriate for Medford. She echoed traffic and parking concerns in the area, and wonders if traffic mitigation has been considered. She questioned the impact on the school population and stated that she opposes the presence of a methadone clinic.

Planning Director Alicia Hunt clarified that all nonconforming buildings will not be asked to move and that zoning changes merely reflect what is allowed to be built on a given lot.

John Souza echoed previous concerns about stepbacks and noted that they may cause water issues. John recommended removing stepback requirements from the proposal and asked if there would be any sort of aesthetic review.

Anne Sullivan stated that Haines Square business community has not been properly consulted. She wonders who will be monitoring development to ensure residents' interests are being properly served. Anne also notes that significant work can be done to improve the Salem Street area, both within and outside the scope of zoning.

Ren Bean stated that, while he is generally supportive of new housing, the details will be important to ensure that infrastructure can support a growing community. Ren also noted that incentives should be monitored to ensure that developers can not take advantage of bonuses without meaningfully serving the community. Ren also noted concerns about parking minimums and thinks that a traffic study would be wise, given that Better Bus Project frequencies may not reduce car ownership in the area.

John Flag stated that Salem Street should not be viewed as a corridor, but as a collection of neighborhoods. John echoed concerns about parking and questioned the speed of upzoning along Salem Street.

Alyssa Nugent stated that she is appreciative of past changes to the proposal, specifically citing

the removal of marijuana establishment uses. Alyssa questions the proportionality of some incentives, and wonders if a bench or fountain can be compared to a pocket park. Alyssa stressed the importance of pedestrian-minded development, despite parking concerns, as well as creating a walkable corridor.

Donna Messina stated that, as an abuttor, she felt she should be notified about upzoning along the corridor. She echoed parking and traffic concerns and questions the speed of upzoning in the area. She stated that neighborhood concerns are not being properly considered.

Andrew MacRobert voiced his support for upzoning in the area and advocated for more walkable development in the Salem Street area.

Marian Thomaschuk echoed concerns about first responders and traffic in a denser community. Marian noted that parking will worsen and that reductions in lot size will make significant community benefits difficult.

Patricia Brady Doherty stated that the Salem Street Corridor project should be taken off the table. She stated that overwhelming density and a lack of planning around traffic and parking render the project unfeasible.

Lisa Koerber stated that she is opposed to upzoning in the area, echoing concerns about parking, traffic, and public safety near the Roberts School. She questioned the need for additional housing in Medford when the city has 150 apartment vacancies.

Andrew Castenetti questioned the impact of upzoning on local taxes, and notes that taxes will keep going up following the proposal.

James Sampson stated that he opposes change to the community and cautioned the city against moving in a denser and busier direction.

Lisa Serio stated that she appreciates the convenience of Salem Street, and notes that it is a neighborhood and not a corridor. Additionally, she questioned why revitalization efforts have not been concentrated in Medford Square.

Emily Innes offered a few points of clarification. First, Emily clarified that the zoning proposal doesn't change the existing parking requirements. Secondly, Emily noted that setback requirements are common, but added that they can make adjustments as needed. Thirdly, she clarified that a single bench will not provide the bonus of a full story, as well as clarified that water fountains have been included as a benefit because of the high cost of installation and

maintenance. Lastly, Innes clarified that Innes Associates are not traffic engineers and cannot perform a traffic study. She stated that traffic and infrastructure concerns should be taken seriously.

Planning Director Hunt noted that the city has worked with local business owners throughout the process and will continue to do so moving forward. She added that several business owners have expressed interest in developing apartments over commercial space and have not been allowed to do so under current zoning and that the city is always open to a dialogue with people who are interested in opening businesses in Medford.

Jean Nuzzo stated that her question related to 31 Paris Street had not been answered, and Emily Innes clarified that an answer could be provided at a later date.

Board member Ayni Strang made a motion to continue the public hearing for the SSCD and Green Score Zoning Amendments to the February 5, 2025 meeting. Board Member Calves seconded the motion. The vote passed by a 7-0 roll call vote.

3. Adjournment

Board Member Fishman made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Strang seconded. The vote passed 7-0 by roll call vote.