

May 5, 2022

Gloucester City Council
Gloucester City Hall
9 Dale Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Council Members,

Housing 4 All Gloucester is a group of concerned Gloucester residents advocating for increased housing of all kinds in Gloucester, particularly affordable housing. On May 10th a bundle of proposed zoning amendments which were tabled by Planning & Development on March 2nd and revisited by P&D on April 20th, will come before you for a vote. We are writing to urge the Council to vote in favor of the amendments included in this bundle.

If we are to meet the housing needs of our community, we must see to it that the much needed units of new multi-family housing are created in Gloucester over the next few years. Our 2017 City Housing Production Plan provided us with a housing roadmap for Gloucester which included housing production targets and we are behind schedule in meeting them. By passing the amendments on May 10th you will be removing barriers to housing production by creating a less complicated permitting process for owners who wish to create new units of housing. That's an important and necessary step for us to take. The City of Gloucester doesn't have on its own, the resources or programs necessary to fund the creation of housing on a large scale. As a community we are reliant on investors and homeowners to bring resources to Gloucester to fund the creation of the new housing we need. What Gloucester does control however are its own local zoning laws. You, as the City Council, have the ability to create the conditions necessary for others to create new housing units for us, by reducing existing regulatory barriers which limit the production of housing in our city. Your role is to set the conditions needed for housing to be created. We are urging you to take an important step toward making the housing production process simpler by passing the following amendments:

For Motion #2

This amendment will remove the special permit process and allow conversion to a new three-family dwellings in R-5 *where lots meet other requirements*. Currently, there are 317 single family and 226 two-family homes that could possibly convert to three-family in this zone. Our hope is the passage of this amendment will entice some of these owners to attempt to create new housing units in the future. It is however, very unlikely that many would; the increase, while important is not likely to be very large. This is not likely to contribute to *overcrowding*, while it might generate a number of needed additional family units.

For Motion #5

This amendment increases the maximum building height to 35 feet for three family dwellings only, in zoning districts R-30-, R-20, R-10, R-5, CCD, CB and VB. This modest height increase will make it more feasible for an owner to produce additional housing by providing additional room for ceiling heights.

For Motion #7

This amendment is split into two parts. "7A" allows for a maximum building height of 35 feet in zones R-30-, R-20, R-10 and R-5. "7B" allows for a maximum building height of 45 feet in districts CCD and CB.

These amendments will make it easier for owners to create multi-family, three and four story dwellings along Main Street and downtown areas, districts where larger buildings already exist .

For Motion #8

This amendment simply corrects the Dimensional Table footnote to apply a note that corresponds to the 35 foot and 45 foot heights, respectively. There is no change to the permitting process associated with this amendment.

For Motion #9

This amendment will allow buildings in excess of the 35 or 45 foot maximums to be authorized by a special permit issued by the City Council.

Taken together these are truly modest changes. The passage of these amendments will not result in dramatic changes to our built landscape. What they will do is make the very difficult process of creating new housing in Gloucester somewhat easier for owners. We must do what we can to streamline the housing production process in Gloucester if we are to achieve the housing production goals we set out for ourselves five years ago.

Housing 4 All Gloucester

Signed by 21 Gloucester Residents