

Manchester 40R Virtual Visioning Session
6-7pm, September 24, 2020

Below is a list of questions asked by residents during the September 24 Q&A session. The Town's responses are in red. Note that some of the questions have been combined or shortened for clarity.

General

- I like Manchester the way it is and don't think we need to change. Why is the Town considering this? **The Town's Master Plan, developed over a period of 3 ½ years through an extensive public process, identifies the need to both increase town revenues and diversify housing options. We have the ability, through the use of strong development standards, to ensure new development is in keeping with the current character of the town.**
- Who owns the land being considered for rezoning? **The Town and private landowners.**
- This is a broad area with varied topology. Would you consider breaking it into smaller sections to get some activity without committing to developing the entire area, which could be controversial? **Yes, there is no intention to develop the entire LCD. More than half of the LCD is protected land and will remain undeveloped.**
- What is the size of the development and the number of residential units under consideration? **Type and the amount of development are still being determined. The size of the district is likely around 80 acres of the 760 acres in the LCD. Current zoning allows for a considerable amount of commercial development with the LCD.**
- The 40R process sounds like a very valuable tool, but it doesn't make much sense to create a residential area in a commercial district. It seems more sensible to apply 40R in smaller downtown locations and meanwhile shape the commercial district through revisions to the zoning bylaws. What consideration has been given to this? **This alternative remains a possibility. In the end, the voters may decide this is the preferred route to take. However, the 40R option in the LCD allows the Town to address its two principal goals of revenue generation and housing diversity and to take advantage of financial incentives from the State. 40R Districts could also be considered in the downtown area.**
- Is it known how much extra space in 40R would actually not be developed? Will it all be developed in some way? **The boundary of the 40R Smart Growth Neighborhood has not yet been proposed. With the goal of creating a livable neighborhood, it is assumed there would be land for both buildings and open and public space.**

Quality of the new neighborhood

- With so many different property owners, how can the plan/zoning be fashioned to result in a cohesive and connected neighborhood? **The 40R zoning will include robust design guidelines that will outline the Town's goals for the area's architecture, site planning, roads, and open space, and will describe how these elements should lead to a cohesive, well-connected neighborhood. Any project built under 40R zoning will need to follow the design guidelines.**
- It seems that the area is being considered because it just happens to be one of the last large tracts of land in town and where two developers have made their plans known. How will these projects be made to meet the nice neighborhood criteria cited by participants here, like

walkability, character, etc.? The Town uses Zoning Regulations and Design Guidelines to control and guide new development. Development Agreements (a legal contract) between a Town and Developer can also be used to address issues not controlled by Zoning. (Also see the response to the previous question.)

- We need to know what the town is considering - a huge tenement or strip mall versus a nicely constructed small town house development. What is being planned? A 40R Smart Growth Overlay District requires that the neighborhood meet certain livability and sustainability criteria. The Town's intent is to create a mixed-use neighborhood where residents would be proud to live. The public process we are undertaking is geared toward coming up with a consensus of what residents wish to see.
- *Note: The word tenement is often used in a pejorative manner to refer to multi-family housing that is run-down and overcrowded. It is not an appropriate term to describe housing being considered for this new neighborhood.

Possible uses

-
- I'm interested in biotech R&D companies in this area but am concerned about hazardous activities; how could this be handled? Any project would be subject to building codes, occupational safety codes, and environmental regulations at the federal, state and local levels.
- The current zoning allows for a solar array, has this option has been studied? A solar array has not specifically been studied, but green building features can be included in the district design guidelines. Solar arrays are best suited for building tops and as canopies to parking lots, not for virgin land.
- Can the area include recreational fields? Manchester needs another cemetery, could this be considered for the outskirts of this area?
- It is up to the Town to decide on desired uses for the neighborhood which can include public uses (fields, cemeteries, facilities), commercial facilities and housing. These decisions will be based on Town goals and input received from the community during the visioning process. In a 40R district, housing must account for at least 51% of development and 20% of the housing must be affordable.

Financing and Infrastructure

- Will this increase taxes on MBTS homeowners through increases expenses associated with additional schoolchildren, services, etc? A significant goal for the new neighborhood is to increase town revenue and decrease the Town's dependence on residential taxes.
- When do studies occur that compares tax revenue from housing versus commercial development? In general, commercial development produces greater tax revenues than residential development. The type of commercial and residential development must be known for a more definitive comparison which will emerge as the study progresses.
- How will water and sewer be dealt with? Who will pay for the infrastructure? Developers are responsible for securing water and sewer for their projects.
- How many new residents would be planned for in an expanded housing project and what level of increase would impact existing infrastructure (schools, police, fire, DPW, etc.?) The amount of potential new housing isn't yet known and will be determined in the coming months. The intent

is that revenue from the commercial portion of the district, as well as state payments available for 40R districts, will offset any impacts on the town budget.

- Can developers be required to do an impact analysis in a 40R? Yes, although 40R zoning must allow for housing at a certain density by-right or with site plan review; potential impacts will be considered for the entire district as well.

Environmental

- What would be the impacts on nearby conservation lands and watersheds? Have any studies been done to understand how much development this area can support without negatively impacting the nearby protected lands? This will be a critical issue to address in the coming months as we create zoning regulations for the district. Low Impact Development Regulations will be put in place.
- Most of this area is rock or marsh. Will there be a great need for blasting? It is likely that blasting will be necessary for some of the development in the district. The amount cannot be determined until a project is identified.
- Many of the surrounding towns that have allowed development are now in a constant state of water bans throughout the year. How can we avoid this? Water conservation, including bans, are used by many towns, both those that are well developed and those that are primarily rural. Proposed development must show adequate water availability to be approved.
- When development happens, would there be a way to consider requiring sustainable building materials, low-impact development requirements to reduce stormwater impacts, or other measures for green development? Yes, low impact development, energy efficiency and other measures for green development are principal considerations. A few years ago, the Town adopted the more energy efficient “stretch” building code which requires all new construction to meet higher energy efficiency standards.

Housing

- I don't think there's a need for affordable housing in town; most people who live here already own their homes. Why is the town thinking so much about affordable housing? The Town has identified the need for more affordable housing for over 40 years and the desire for more diverse housing stock was affirmed in the Master Plan that was recently adopted.
- Do we need more housing if a 40B development is already proposed for the area? The Town is looking to include the 40B development as part of the new neighborhood, thereby assuring we don't overproduce housing.
- How can we make sure new development includes a range of housing types to encourage and increase diversity in income, age, background? Zoning Regulations and Design Guidelines will identify and regulate the types of housing that are allowed.
- What is considered affordable? 20% of all housing in a 40R must be affordable to households earning less than 80% of greater Boston's median income. This means that, in 2020, a two-person household earning less than \$77,000 would qualify and would pay about \$1,800 in monthly rent.

Connectivity and Transportation

- Can we partner with CATA bus transportation so people can get to town without a car? **Yes, that is a recommendation of the Master Plan.**
- What could be included in the plan to assure that this area is connected with the rest of the community and doesn't become its own community separate from MBTS? **The LCD study planning process is working to address this issue. It is important to both the community and to the State, which must approve the district.**
- Will new roads be made? If so, which roads qualify as 'frontage'? **It is too early in the process to answer this question.**
- Can the project involve better paved roads (ie. School St.), bicycle access, and a safe connection path between the new neighborhood and downtown Manchester? **Yes, this is a goal of the new neighborhood.**
- More stoplights on School Street? **It is too early in the process to answer this question.**
- What would the traffic impacts be? **We need to decide on the type and amount of development desired before we can answer impact questions but once we determine the development we desire, we will be assessing impacts, including traffic.**

40R Process

- Do you have any examples of 40R developments that include uses like office space, startup company space, health services, or other uses, without a major retail component (which would compete with downtown)? Some examples include:
 - o Northampton's [Village Hill](#) allows for office and light industrial uses that are not intended to compete with the city's popular downtown.
 - o The [Eagle Mill](#) 40R District in Lee allows for office, hotel, public market, and other non-residential uses.
 - o [A mixed-use project](#) in downtown Reading MA has seen non-residential uses such as medical offices and karate studios (as well as a small grocer) in the ground-floor commercial space.
- The Cordage Park Smart Growth Overlay District in Plymouth includes [apartments](#) as well as a number of separately permitted office uses within the [Cordage Park Commerce Center](#). How would a 40R district be approved by the town? **A 40R District, including district boundaries, Zoning Regulations (uses, density, dimensional criteria etc.) and Design Guidelines must be approved by a 2/3rds Town Meeting vote. Prior to the vote, the Town will host public forums and the Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing to solicit input.**
- If the town adopts a 40R zoning district, would each new development be approved at town meeting, or would it be up to town officials? **Because the Town approves the District, Regulations and Design Guidelines in advance, each new development proposed does not need another vote, however it must comply with the regulations and go through site plan review.**
- Would a 40R zoning district override other local zoning codes? **No, the underlying (existing) zoning remains and an applicant can choose to apply for a Special Permit using the existing underlying zoning or the new overlay zoning.**

Logistics

- Why couldn't attendees at the Sept 24 meeting see other attendees or their comments? The meeting platform has various view options, for attendees and comments. Given the large number of folks that signed up, it seemed reasonable to limit the view to folks who would be answering the questions. Note that a great many of those attending don't use the video function (so are not seen anyway) and many call in on the telephone which means they are also not identifiable.
- We agree it would be helpful for comments to be visible to all and have identified how that can be corrected at the next meeting.
- What stakeholders have been/will be engaged, how were they identified? The LCD Study planning process looks to engage the entire community and the Consultant and Town Planner are working with a Working Group of Board and Committee members to identify who is engaged and how. Components of that process include:
 - o Public Forums – everyone welcome
 - o Community Survey
 - o Targeted Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings – Downtown Business Owners, Boards and Committees not represented on the Working Group
 - o Landowner Interviews
 - o Board and Committee Meetings open to the public
 - o Joint Board and Committee Meetings
- What is the best way to pose additional questions? You can send questions to the Town's Consultant Alexis Smith at asmith@mapc.org, or to the Town Planner, Sue Brown at browns@manchester.ma.us