



HISTORIC
SALEM INC

📍 Preservation at work

January 22, 2019

Salem City Council
93 Washington Street
Salem, MA 01970

Dear Salem City Councilors,

We have appreciated the opportunity to work with the Planning Department over the last many months to help to craft a Municipal and Religious Adaptive Reuse Overlay District Ordinance which would enable the rehabilitation of historic buildings while minimizing negative impacts to historic neighborhoods by virtue of the scale and density of oversized new construction.

We are extremely disappointed with the recommendations of the Planning Board to grant highly permissive zoning relief for new construction, provisions which had largely been removed from the Ordinance. Consistently, at every public meeting and public hearing, the concern expressed by residents has been the scale and density of new construction. Not once in the public hearings did members of the Planning Board indicate that they intended to recommend such significant changes for new construction.

The original and consistently stated intent of the Ordinance was to provide a clear permitting path to reuse of historic buildings, primarily former schools. The premise that these buildings can only be reused if there is significant new construction on the site has not been factually demonstrated and distorts the intent of the new Ordinance. In fact, of the three buildings that are currently under most active consideration for reuse, all are eligible for deep public subsidies in the form of Federal and State Historic Tax Credits and most likely Housing Development Incentive Program Tax Credits, all of which support and facilitate redevelopment.

Historic Salem is not supportive of the changes on new construction recommended by the Planning Board, nor with the current density allowances, and believes that an ordinance passed with those provisions has the potential for significant negative impact on historic neighborhoods.

In addition, through the public hearing process, members of the public have identified the potential for this ordinance to be used to promote development in ways that are clearly not meant by the intent, which is to reuse and repurpose historic buildings. As currently written, through religious or municipal use, the ordinance could even apply in the future to sites like the Witch City Mall and Shetland Park.

9 North Street | P.O. Box 865 | Salem, MA 01970
V 978.745.0799 | F 978.744.4536
info@historicsalem.org | www.historicsalem.org

We urge the Council not to accept the Planning Board's recommendations for over scale dimensions permitting dense new construction. The ordinance should conform dimensions for new construction to existing zoning, and the Council should ensure that the ordinance is clearly written so that it will successfully accomplish what is intended, including minimizing impacts to surrounding neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Jenkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "J".

Tim Jenkins, President

Cc: Mayor Driscoll
City Planner