

Started by [We Love Harbor Springs](#) February 25, 2024

Petition to City of Harbor Springs City Council

Citizens of Harbor Springs Share Concern Over Aggressive, Proposed Zoning and RRC Changes

The Situation: The Harbor Springs City Council and Planning Commission have been working under the community's radar to transform the town into a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC). While leaders spearheading the zoning changes suggested the RRC will improve affordable housing, the reality seems starkly different. Several meetings later, the chairman of the Planning Commission stated the affordable housing train has left the station. The community deserves a chance to ask important questions and contribute input.

On the surface, the proposed changes threaten to escalate housing costs significantly, making it difficult for local residents to afford remaining and living in the area. The RRC initiatives in the new zoning code aim to attract developers keen on constructing multi-tenant buildings, expanding the Downtown/Central Business District (CBD), and adding additional, unneeded retail spaces. Without offering any protections to the historical buildings, these changes will alter the character of Harbor Springs.

After more than a year of planning away from the public eye, the Planning Commission is on the verge of pushing these zoning changes through City Council rapidly. Given the profound impact of these modifications, it's unreasonable to expect the community to grasp and evaluate program consequences in just a few weeks. This isn't merely a tweak in the zoning laws as portrayed by the Planning Commission, but it would mark a radical shift that would permanently alter Harbor Springs' historic charm and community fabric.

What can be done?

It's crucial to halt the expedited implementation. Harbor Springs residents must voice their concerns in writing to City Council leaders, advocating for a process that respects the community's voice, values, and vision for the future.

Here's how:

1. Sign this petition
2. Leave comments in the petition
3. Email us with your contact details if you wish to help: weloveharborsprings@gmail.com
4. Write your concerns to city officials. Ask for your letter to be included in next City Council agenda to be sure the public knows:
5. Victor Sinadinovski, CityManager citymgr@cityofharborsprings.com
6. Jeff Grimm, Assessor assessor@cityofharborsprings.com
7. Matt Bugera, Mayor mjbugera@gmail.com
8. **Attend the May 6th City Council meeting: Via Zoom or In Person**
9. We have been asked by City Council to provide our desired changes
10. Read summary of Key Concerns Below
11. Follow links to Additional Information Below

Key Concerns

1. Loss of Local Character – The push to align with MEDC/RRC standards will dilute Harbor Springs' unique charm in favor of generic, state-dictated development. The one-size-fits-all approach overlooks the city's distinctive character, potentially rendering it indistinguishable from other Michigan towns that have adopted similar policies.

2. Overdevelopment, Increased Density, and Downtown Expansion – The proposed zoning modifications favor higher density housing. This shift towards duplexes, triplexes, and multi-story units, particularly along the scenic Bay Street and within the Central Business District, threatens the city's aesthetic and functional balance. In the new zoning proposed, housing sizes can be as small as 560-square-feet, not quite a 400-square-foot 'Tiny Home', but close. The proposed flag lots will add multiple units on a single property, helping to eliminate single family lots in a neighborhood. Furthermore, the ramifications of this increased

density have not been adequately examined, jeopardizing the stability of our infrastructure and potentially unsettling the established community dynamics.

3. Promoting Economic Inequality – Without mechanisms to ensure affordable housing, the redevelopment efforts may inadvertently favor wealthier individuals, developers, and the economic divide within the community. The focus on high-value properties could displace long-standing residents and businesses, undermining the fabric of the community.

4. Lack of Community Input & Support – The substantial zoning overhaul demands more transparent discussion and genuine community consent. For example, the absence of RRC mentions in official Planning Committee records raises questions about the legitimacy of the community consultation and engagement process. The rush to implement these changes amidst significant opposition reflects a disconnect between city officials and the community's wishes.

5. Disregard for Agricultural Rights – Proposed zoning changes eliminate the "Agricultural Residential" district with no notice, jeopardizing the livelihoods of future local farmers and access to locally-sourced produce. According to the Planning Commission the new zoning is supposed to be "future forward." Eliminating the Agricultural district makes absolutely no sense. Following complaints from many residents, after the zoning plan was released, the city quickly proposed a new "Residential Neighborhood" category with an "agricultural overlay." This seems more like a concession than a commitment to preserving Harbor Springs' agricultural heritage. This zoning decision about the two Agricultural areas within the city limits are now to be rezoned for residential development, and this development opportunity has already been targeted by the city. We ask that the Agricultural District be kept intact in both areas of Harbor Springs.

Watch the most recent City Council Meeting from March 18: [YouTube](#)