

Submitted by Joanne Cullinane, precinct 21

Presentation by the Town's Economic Development Coordinator to the Redevelopment Board on August 5, 2024. These are the portions of the Q&A where they discuss types of spaces that businesses looking to set up in Arlington are seeking. This discussion is relevant because the board's re-interpretation of ground floor at street level to exclude portions of the ground floor - though we still don't know fully what they are excluding - would shrink the size of the commercial space gained in exchange for the extra height and mass conferred to developers via this bonus.

Stand-alone square foot minimums floated by Board members in passing would not be proportional to the building, as the original 60% of Footprint is, and were also below what was described as in demand by businesses looking to set up here.

<https://youtu.be/HWIOtWojpGY?si=B-M9HoCeLGAd2sze&t=7106>

**1:58:25 - 2:00:56**

**2:02:35 - 2:04:25**

>> RACHEL: Let's start with Steve. Any questions or comments for Katie?

>> STEVE: Thank you for the overview. I hope-- would it be possible to have the slide deck added to our agenda? I'd like to show it to some people. I do have two questions.

>> KATIE: Yes!

>> **STEVE: First, the director of the Chamber of Commerce, Beth Locke, she appeared before the Redevelopment Board last April to talk about active business development from her perspective. And one of the bit of feedback they recall getting from that meeting was that there are a lot of businesses looking-- that would like to be in Arlington. But we have spaces that are not appealing or we don't have the right kind of spaces or not the kind of spaces they're looking for.**

**So my first question is do you agree or disagree with that? And why?**

>> **KATIE: Yes, I definitely agree with that.** I get calls weekly from people looking to move into Arlington, and I keep a list of them. **Like, overall, our commercial stock for space is very old.. and it's very small. I'd say overall, we-- our spaces are, like, 2,000 square feet and under, generally, which suits some people, but not most people.**

Um, and what we do have is very old, so it requires a lot of upfront costs, which can be really daunting to a lot of small-business owners.

Um, there's, of course, the outliers. 30 Mystic Street is the big outlier, and that's been vacant for about a year so it takes a long time to make the right match for those kinds of spaces. So that's kind of the flip side of the problem, where you have this.. This unicorn of a lot, and trying to make the right fit for that is really difficult, as well.

But, absolutely, I have a lot of people coming to me saying they really want to move into Arlington because it's such a great community, but making that match.

Um, we've also...um.. sometimes had the problem where I finally get in touch with people, and they have trouble reaching brokers. So we do have these vacant storefronts, but the real estate agents aren't picking up the phone, or they're not having an easy time getting in touch with them.....

<https://youtu.be/HWlOtWojpGY?si=ocDMjZXqvZ8uGF1J&t=7356>

**2:02:35 - 2:04:25**

>> **GENE:** Yeah, thank you very much for the presentation. I just want to uh follow up on part of Steve's question, which was I think one of the questions we all had is, **so what types of spaces are people looking for that Arlington doesn't have? I mean, you said, you know, the spaces are too small, too old. Like, what size? What are they looking for, and are they retail, are they office? What are we talking about?**

>> **KATIE:** **Not office. Less office, more retail.** More fitness. We're already seeing a lot more fitness-centered businesses come into Arlington. But I'm still getting a lot more calls that even more want to come in.

Unsurprisingly, more childcare facilities want to come into Arlington. **But overall, you're looking at least to like 3,000 5,000 square feet ..want to come in. That's really the sweet spot. Um. Anywhere up to 8,000 square feet.**

There are-- not to go on-- like-- I'm-- I'll start talking about specific properties. We have some on, like, Dudley Street that could work. But then property owners, once they get over a certain threshold of square footage, they want tenants to take the whole building, which makes sense from an economic standpoint. But that's very difficult for tenants.

But, yeah, retail, fitness. Less so restaurants, um, which I'm not as surprised about because we do have quite a healthy hospitality sector in Arlington. We do have a lot of eateries. Those are the two that I see trending right now, and childcare.