1. **Introductions and Welcome.** Co-chair Nancy Buffone began the meeting by going over the agenda. There was clarification that the final report from U3 would be delivered in September to ensure full involvement by stakeholders, including students. David Ziomek noted that the RKG Housing Market Study is not in the final form and that U3 Advisors is clear that this is a preliminary report with corrections to occur.

2. **Presentation by U3 Advisors:** George Smith of U3 Advisors presented. He told the group that only a few slides will be shown. He wants to take most of the afternoon to listen and before they get to the analysis and synthesis stage.

   Mr. Smith clarified U3’s Scope of Work: *recommend strategies, interventions, and processes for UMass and Amherst to collaborate on to create a stable balance in housing and economic growth that allows the University and Town to grow and prosper.*

   Noted team organization - U3 is the project lead; Corneil Collaborative offers urban design, edge strategies, and experience with the innovation economy; The Cecil Group is on board to provide expertise on local zoning and public process.

   **U3’s Process and Timeline:**
   - May through July – Discovery Phase, included meeting with the Chancellor and Town Manager
   - May through August - Exploration/Analysis
   - July through early September - synthesis and implementation
   - August and September – Work on and delivery of final report

   Mr. Smith noted that U3 will make sure that students have a chance to have a voice in this process too.

   He noted the Meetings already scheduled –
   - Steering Committee
   - Umass leadership and administration
   - Town leadership and administration
   - Tours led by planning staffs of both UMass and Town
Data Review of available reports is also taking place

Framing the issues

- Off-campus student housing rental are disrupting the Amherst housing market and impacting neighborhood composition (what are the interventions that can be suggested that can put this back into balance?)
- The University and Town lack the social spaces and amenities that appeal to students and young workers (how does this tie back into housing and economic development - some of the new housing can have this space; how do we capture the economic benefit)
- Despite the significant college and university presence in Amherst, the town’s primary source of revenue is from the residential tax base (Smith noted that U3 sees this as all interconnected)
- All of the identified issues requires consensus and sustained collaboration from the Town and University

Mr. Smith opened this up to questions from the committee

Ms. Buffone noted that the list of interviewees is incomplete. The Chamber and the BID, real estate developers, and some neighbors have not yet been consulted.

3. Committee Feedback

Ken Rosenthal said that the RKG housing draft is incomplete and erroneous. He has concerns that U3’s first impressions are shaped by that document. He noted that neighbors have not yet been heard. Coalition of Amherst Neighborhoods would like to talk to U3. He would like the same or similar process with U3 that the neighborhoods had with Commissioner Ed Davis’ interviews.

Stephanie O’Keefe said that she believes that U3 has captured what committee was trying to articulate and what we want from the process. She asked for some clarification for what U3 wanted for this meeting. Mr. Smith responded that he wanted to hear about specific concerns and issues that the committee might have about the process to date.

Mr. Ziomek, in response to Mr. Rosenthal, said we think we have representatives around the table who can speak for the neighborhoods. There is a balancing act with the time and scope of this project about being efficient and asking for wide involvement. The committee has a charge to act as representatives and articulate the issues and concerns that we are working on here.
Mr. Rosenthal: There have been extensive meetings with folks, many different groups and officials, but he thinks that neighbors should be talked to directly.

Greg Stutsman emphasized a need to meet with non-student young workers. They were mentioned by U3 as it framed issues, but young workers have yet been talked to directly.

Mr. Smith said there is a potential housing supply intervention in Amherst. Is that a path we should take? How do we view the addition of new housing to Amherst? If non-students are being priced out of Amherst is it more housing for non-students? Is it more housing for students? Is it both? What about inclusionary zoning?

Rolf Karlstrom claimed a 75% impact ratio as ¾ of our population are students. He believes that good close neighborhoods are a recruiting tool for faculty and professionals. He would like to see a better balance in neighborhoods. He noted a lack of consensus as to how to approach these problems, such as the infill/densification strategies in village centers and also in neighborhoods, which aren’t agreed on by all. He would like to use minimum distance bylaws in neighborhoods. He had a complaint about the University Overlay District in the RKG report. Huge issue is the public/private partnership issue to build new housing on University land.

Mr. Ziomek reminded all that if extensive comments can be posted to the Town Gown website and distributed to committee and audience members.

Ms. Buffone responded to Mr. Karlstrom on the subject of public private partnerships - a University System committee is looking at the issue. There are political and financial implications that will be presented to the Board of Trustees. UMass is also proud to house 62% of its students on campus. U3 can help us understand how many students are renting in town.

Mr. Karlstrom confirmed he is aware of the current process. He believes that if there is a push from a good plan here, then the flagship might be able to assist in shaping the public/private discussion. Asks that U3 reach out to CAN, Save Historic Cushman, and the Sunset Avenue Group for further input on economic development and housing issues.

Andy Churchill noted that Amherst is losing families. We currently have a “bi-modal tax base - students and retirees.” He is interested in public/private partnership and in new development if in the right place.

Mr. Smith – the question is what is the right place?

Mr. Churchill: we are primarily concerned with student rentals pushing residents out of their neighborhoods. Taxable student housing is important - if we are looking to diversify our tax base and education is our industry, then we need to tap that resource. Suggestions that some existing complexes can be densified seems to make sense to him. Finally - we need to be sure of what our numbers really are - we can’t toss out numbers we think we know. How many folks really live here year round?
Mr. Smith: when we present preliminary findings, we want to give some feedback that can answer the questions of where housing can be developed in the public/private sphere.

Jonathan Tucker agrees with Mr. Karlstrom and Mr. Churchill generally. He does not agree that the Planning Department has a strategy. They have a series of tactics to make up for the housing shortage - inclusionary zoning, student housing, must encourage smaller units to accommodate elders, lack of housing are the biggest problems. As long as housing supply is low, Amherst will make all housing problems worse. If we don’t increase supply, our current stock will be less affordable and neighborhood issues will continue to fester.

Dennis Swinford noted that 4 unrelated adults in housing is a low number. He asked that the consultants look into this issue in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Tucker: if you cut the unrelated from 4 to 3, you cut the market by a quarter. Where would they move?

Mr. Stutsmanis happy to hear that we’re talking about the residential tax base as being the main driver. The area needs good jobs for young graduates to stay.

Phil Jackson talked about developing professional office parks to create jobs, light manufacturing, etc.

Mr. Smith: there are challenges to match the research strengths of the university with the industrial and commercial base of Amherst.

Janne Corneil talked a bit about research, commercialization of research, entrepreneurship and student engagement and how this must be looked at beyond Amherst and more as a regional problem.

Tony Maroulis mentioned that the newly formed regional chamber of commerce is doing their own study about regional economic development impacts and have spoken a great deal to people in town and at UMass. Noted that FutureWorks consulting might be willing to speak to U3 about their findings.

Niels la Cour asked if the consultants have looked at the town’s zoning bylaw? How extensive will that be? Going back to the Rosenberg Study of 20 years ago, there have been discussions of just how restrictive our zoning bylaw is. There are a lot of little details in the zoning bylaw.

Mr. Smith: we can’t get down to that granular level in all reports. They can do a deeper dive into the zoning bylaw. Ken Buckland many impacts by small tweaks of the bylaw that is over 40 to 50 years old. A simple, elegant solution is the best possible solution.
John Kuhn: It is important to look at zoning, but what broad strokes can we take to help build more housing and kick off economic development.

Ms. O’Keeffe hopes that the findings give a real text description of the ramifications of the recommendations. The pros and cons are not always obvious to people.

Mr. Karlstrom mentioned the institute for Applied Life Sciences. They have resources that U3 might want to look at further. There are also internal advisory boards that include Isenberg Professors who are looking at the interaction of business and science. This could be huge for the future of Amherst.

Mr. Smith asked why hasn’t Amherst built a better research ecosystem?

Mr. Churchill: you can’t plunk down a manufacturing facility in Amherst. We have 3 locations where there are Professional Research Parks, one where there is no sewer or water lines. UMass has centers for excellence - computer science - could have a place for an off-campus facility.

Mr. Stutsman noted that a speaker said: "we are allowing businesses. We are not attracting them." We are competing with areas that are attracting business.

Mr. Churchill: we don’t have an economic development director in town. Might be an area where the town could cooperate with the University.

Mr. Jackson is suggesting that we need a road map to get to where we need to be - a five year plan. Give recommendations – Ms. O’Keeffe would like to see them note what happens “if you don’t.” Needs to be a clear implication of what happens with action and inaction.

Mr. Karlstrom urge folks to look much more regionally both on economic development and housing.

Mr. Smith: what about amenities and retail for students? What does the committee think about this? What are the ways in which any new student housing can incorporate other elements that are not just housing-focused. Must give students options - heard that students come off campus for is beer and movies, mostly beer.

David Webber: what does this age group want?

Mr. Maroulis: Students are going to Hadley for the movies and not going into town for bars as we do not have a big bar scene. Rather neighborhoods are the location for social activity. Social space on campus space also deficient - student union

Mr. Smith: new student housing options involve a mix of options for students. Housing-plus.
A prolonged discussion about student activity opens and the lack of significant square footage for retail options. Dennis Swinford mentioned that UMass is currently looking at the need for a new Student Union and to create new spaces on campus that would give them a choice to stay on campus or go off into the host community. Hope to have input from the community on what the campus should plan and need. John Kuhn recommends that we speak to the BID and Chamber.

Mr. Churchill noted that the geography is tricky because our biggest issue is what to do with student traffic flow. Should University Drive be a student village? Is downtown destined to be an adult destination? We need to be cognizant of the implications of what we do.

4. Next steps – next meeting will be the week of August 4. Early analysis of conversations and data will be the focus.

5. Public comment -

1. Sarah la Cour - Downtown is a unique place. Many missed opportunities, underutilized place. Downtown and the VCs have only started to get there in the next few years. Great opportunities. Urged U3 to look closely at the zoning downtown to make development more friendly. More people living downtown gets more amenities.

2. Hilda Greenbaum - Said that folks who are not on our side of the table are the property owners. There is incubator space. No centralized person to speak to at UMass. Must speak to the landlords. Many vacancies and they are underreported. What are the unintended consequences?

3. Janet Keller - puts in a plug for the North Amherst neighborhood. Wants UMass to be the pilot for public/private partnership. We can be the test case within the system. Making areas more dense is a good idea, but it must be in the appropriate places and with protections.

4. Michael Alpert - is the Gateway study involved. We don’t want to have dense homogenous populations. Wants students to be mixed into the neighborhoods. Building more SouthWests - he's an abutter with UMass and likes living with and near students.

5. Melissa Perot - Alarmed by the cry of more. More is not necessarily better. Less is sometimes more. The foundation of this place is critical to how you go forward to it. It’s quality of life that people are looking for not ‘broken bottles in conservation areas.’ limits are good. Creativity and innovation comes from limits.

6. Connie Kruger - commending people for their work here as some of the same conversation has been expanded. UMass invested in Hadley in the past partly because it was believed it would be too difficult here. Mixed population housing - grad family housing, staff and subsidized family housing. The process is as important as the recommended solutions.

7. Eddie Hull - we are a land grant institution - access is important to us. Do you have access to our socio-economic data. In 2 weeks, we will be doing a facilities audit of all of
our residence halls. Much deferred maintenance. The impacts of the study will have some influence on how we think about our housing stock on campus.