

Exhibit D Design Review and Site Photos

Richard P. Fenuccio, Architect (MA Lic. # 7789)
d/b/a ClearPath Advisors LLC
30 Morgan Way
West Barnstable, MA 02668
508-280-3209

31 March 2021

Katharine Lacy, Senior Planner
Massachusetts Housing Partnership
160 Federal Street #2
Boston, MA 02110

Re: Independent Design Review for Project Eligibility Letter
Proposed Fifty-Six (56) Unit, Mixed-Income Residential Development
15 High Street, Norwell, MA

Applicant: Northland Residential Corporation, Concord MA.
Map/Parcel: Map 11B- Block 17, Lots 67,16, 17 & 18

Dear Ms. Lacy,

In accordance with the request by *Massachusetts Housing Partnership* to conduct an independent design review of the proposed multi-unit rental housing development, I am pleased to submit this review with related comments and questions.

Documentation Provided:

The following supporting documents were provided to this reviewer and the accuracy of such has been assumed for the purposes of this review:

1. Application packet for 40B Project Eligibility Letter dated January 29, 2021 as prepared by the applicant, Northland Residential Corporation to Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)
2. Existing and proposed site/ civil drawings entitled "15 High Street Proposed Residential Development- 15, 19, 27 & 35 High Street Norwell, MA" dated January 29, 2021 as prepared by Merrill Engineers and Land Surveyors, Hanover MA.
3. Architectural drawings entitled "15 High Street, Norwell, MA Schematic Architecture Package" dated January 29, 2021 as prepared by Union Studio Architecture & Community Design, Providence RI.
4. Street Tree & Landscape Plan dated January 29, 2021, as prepared by Ryan Associates, Waltham, MA.
5. Handbook: Approach to Chapter 40B Design Reviews dated January 2011 as provided by MHP
6. Design Review Checklist per 40B Guidelines and 760 CMR 56.04(c)

Site Visit:

Concurrent with my review of the submitted project documents, I visited the site and surrounding areas on March 30, 2021. During this site visit, I spent time walking around and photographing the immediate and general neighborhood context in and around High St. in order to understand the existing development patterns, streetscapes and architectural context. A series of photographs of the site and immediate context are included as an appendix to this review letter.

Project Description:

Based upon the various materials submitted by the project applicant with their *Application for Project Eligibility*, the general scope of the development consists of the removal of four pre-existing single family wood frame dwellings of varying age and condition, and re-development of the merged site for a fifty-six (56) unit, ninety (90) bedroom, ten building residential rental community. Of the fifty-six units provided, forty-two (42) will be market rate rentals and fourteen (14) will be dedicated mixed income affordable units.

The site will ultimately consist of 3.88 acres upon the combining of the four subject properties, of which 1.82 acres (47% of total lot area) will be dedicated to open space or landscaped areas. No consolidated development table of building types and gross areas was provided and should be provided in the submittal documents.

It should be noted that, based solely on its age (approximately 1900), the existing residential building located at 15 High St. would appear to be considered “historic”, purely based upon its age; however, this review will not opine on the importance, or lack thereof, of this structure and this design review is limited to the proposed new development only.

Of the ten new buildings proposed, there are five different building design types ranging from four, six or eight units per building. The buildings are thoughtfully organized around a central “village green” space which is partially open space at the present time, and located directly across from the busy CVS entrance/ exit. This green space also accommodates the sub-surface, shared septic disposal field as no municipal wastewater system is available to serve the site. An additional open green space is provided along the westerly edge of the property in between buildings ‘C’ and ‘D’ providing dedicated passive green/ recreational space behind a central “mail pavilion”, and well located remotely from the majority of the parking and vehicular travel. Two curb cuts onto High St. provide two-way site ingress and egress on opposite ends of the site and create interior streets providing access to both open parking areas, and dedicated driveways and garage spaces.

The site plan yields a total of 112 parking spaces, inclusive of the interior garage spaces, with a minimum zoning requirement of 84, yielding a very reasonable level of resident and guest parking spaces. A complete sidewalk system connects all units, entrances and public spaces. From a landscaping perspective, a reasonable and appropriate level of street trees, ornamental trees, deciduous shrubs, evergreen shrubs and perennials & grasses are presented within the landscape drawing, although some of the property edge buffer conditions should have supplemental information provided to better understand these areas.

Site Context:

The subject property is located at 15, 19, 27 and 35 High St in Norwell, MA and within a generally suburban location at the juncture of three different zoning districts, including Business C1, Residence B, and Business B4 districts.

According to the zoning data table provided on civil sheet C3.1, the total proposed lot coverage of 53% exceeds the maximum allowable coverage within the “Aquifer Protection District” by a mere 3% and appears offset by the significant amount of open space and landscaped areas provided (47% provided versus 33% minimum required).

The site is located one street back from Washington St (Route 53) and adjacent to the access driveway to the Washington Square business condominium development. The front of the proposed street-edge buildings A, J, G, and F will be located 20’ back from the property line along High St and generally parallel with the existing road. Numerous single family homes are located to the direct south and a CVS retail store is located directly across the street on the easterly side.

It is my opinion that the subject site is well suited and appropriate for the development of the multi-unit housing community as proposed. From a site and architectural context standpoint, there are a few existing site features or building types that would significantly inform the proposed design; and the developer and design team appear to have utilized well regarded site planning and “placemaking” principles in their design approach.

General Conclusion:

Based upon the material provided to me and a review of the proposed development site and general surrounding site context; it is my professional opinion that the building and site design, as submitted, are acceptable in terms of overall design appropriateness for the issuance of a Project Eligibility Letter (PEL). Overall, I believe that this project is very well designed, appropriate and thoughtful in its architectural response to the site and the broader context, and is an excellent example of a fairly high density residential development which is balanced with a wide range of varying building types, reasonable site features, resident amenities and significant open space.

The remainder of this letter will identify specific areas of appropriateness, a few areas of concern or items that may require additional clarification by the applicant and/or their design team during the upcoming regulatory review process.

Design Review:

While there are a few specific questions and minor areas of concern, overall the project design represents a well-executed approach to a multi-building, suburban infill type residential development; and its general scale, massing, material and color selection, fenestration (door & window openings), and façade detailing are consistent and appropriate within both the micro-context (immediate site surroundings) and the macro-context, within the wider Norwell business and residential districts within which it is located.

I offer the following specific comments in accordance with the criteria outlined in the *Design Review Checklist*:

1. Relationship to adjacent building typology:

Based on a walking and photographic survey of the surrounding residential and commercial/ retail area; the building height, shape, façade design, material selection, detailing and overall architectural style appear, to this reviewer, to be consistent with overall established development and architectural patterns. In an area with a wide mix of older and newer buildings of various styles and uses, the proposed new buildings would, in my opinion, be deemed compatible with the local and regional architectural vernacular.

2. Relationship to adjacent streets:

The proposed buildings are located closer (20') to the existing sidewalk than the present single family homes (ranging from 30.8' to 43.9' back), reducing the amount of open space between the building and street edge; however, the proposed design will create a new, consistent and more clearly defined street edge through four building facades and new street edge trees, while creating a new central open space at the village green. The site design and building orientations to the existing streets do not appear to compromise the existing street patterns and exit/ egress points.

The close proximity between the proposed north-easterly entrance drive to the adjacent Washington Square condominium complex should be identified on the site/ civil drawings and I would further recommend that the site distances and sight lines be checked from this same entrance and exit curb cut to the nearby signaled light intersection to the north. It was observed that vehicles leaving Route 53 at this intersection and entering High St are reaching a relatively high rate of speed at the proposed site locus and it should be determined, perhaps by a traffic engineer, that a left-out exit would not constitute a safety concern.

From a streetscape perspective, the exterior façade designs utilize many traditional architectural elements and design strategies found throughout our New England region including a) covered door entries at the first floor spaces, b) corner deck elements c) variations in siding material and color, d) projected second floor built-out bay window groupings in Buildings G & J, d) “punched” window openings within larger fields of cladding and e) use of third floor dormers let into the attic story to help reduce the perceived height of the overall building.

It should be noted that even the highest buildings have maximum ridge heights of 43', only 9 feet higher than the maximum allowable under the local zoning requirements.

3. Density:

The proposed 56 units with a density factor of 14.5 “units per acre” could be considered “high density”; however, the overall design approach mitigates any design concerns. In my opinion, the proposed development, while clearly representing a maximum site build-out scenario, does not appear overly dense relative to open spaces provided on the site, spaces provided between buildings, and when compared to other building types and sizes found throughout the town and region at large.

4. Conceptual site plan & building massing:

The site design is, in my opinion, very well executed and is an excellent example of a well-balanced approach to building placement, driveways within the site, defined open green spaces, recreational spaces, sidewalk system, trash management and accommodation of sub-surface septic and stormwater management systems.

There is also a nice mix of public and private outdoor spaces provided for the residents with a landscaping approach that will help define High Street and interior street edges. The central pavilion is noted as a “pavilion” on the architect’s drawings and a “mail pavilion” on the site/ civil drawings. Because of the prominent central location of this detached structure, a conceptual design should be developed to clarify its intended use and design; and incorporated within the submittal documents to the town for upcoming regulatory filings.

In general, the building locations, entrance locations, service areas and parking are reasonable approaches for a multi-unit housing community of this scale and on this particular site.

One interesting observation is that the higher, larger buildings with maximum ridge heights of 43’ above the adjacent grade are located closer to the middle of the site and the buildings located closest to the direct single family abutter to the south are only two stories in height with zoning-compliant maximum ridge heights of 33’ above grade.

As mentioned prior with respect to parking, 112 standard size parking spaces are provided on-site and within the garage spaces (2 per residential unit), which is 28 more than the required 84 spaces. Only two dedicated handicapped accessible parking spaces are clearly shown on the site drawings so the actual required number should be identified and shown where they will be located, even if within specific driveways at the HC-accessible units. The solid waste collection areas, located at the north-west and south-west corners of the site appear easily accessible from a front loading trash truck.

With respect to overall building massing and façade articulation, there are five different building design types within only ten overall buildings, each with a high degree of variation in building forms, shapes, articulation and façade treatment.

The proposed unit plans are well developed and located, relative to one another, to yield an interesting mix of building types and external massing expression.

5. Topography:

The existing parcel is relatively flat and there do not appear to any measurable cuts & fills anticipated. An existing stone wall along the edge of the westerly property line appears to be retained in the design documents and a nice, off property, woodland buffer to the west will contribute to reasonable screening to the adjacent business condominium development.

6. Environmental Resources:

This project represents the re-development of a previously disturbed site, and according to the submitted materials, there are no apparent, bordering environmental resource areas, making this criteria not applicable.

Furthermore the site does not appear to be mapped as a priority habitat based upon a review of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas (2017), nor is it located within any mapped flood zones or areas prone to flooding.

7. Integration into existing development patterns:

As cited throughout this letter, the proposed development is consistent with established development and architectural patterns within the town as well as from a larger regional perspective, and there are no significant areas of concern that would preclude this project from moving forward on the regulatory approval path from a design appropriateness standpoint.

The above summary notwithstanding, the following outline represents a series of questions or comments that should be clarified by the applicant and/or their design team during the regulatory review process:

1. Is the existing sidewalk shown shaded on the site drawings anticipated to remain or will this entire section be replaced as part of the overall construction?
2. Confirm that a "left-out" exiting at first (north-east) curb cut meets recognized site engineering and traffic sight lines relative to existing curb cuts and the nearby signalized intersection at Rte. 53.
3. It does not appear that any bordering screen plantings are provided along the south property line abutting the single family home perhaps due to limited space and the presence of a drainage easement along this edge so the type and height of fencing proposed in this area should be clarified.
4. Clarify the intended use and provide conceptual design drawings of the freestanding pavilion structure shown
5. Provide dimensions of the two open green spaces to help board members establish scale
6. Clarify the street material change in front of this pavilion
7. Consider removing the semi-circular sidewalk shown on drawing L-1.0 inside the passive recreation area to allow maximum flexibility of use within this green space
8. Clarify where all HC-accessible parking spaces are located even if within specific driveways at accessible unit types.
9. Clarify if the existing plantings along the northerly property line abutting Washington Square driveway will remain as-is or be reinforced with additional plantings.
10. Consider providing a more complete exterior lighting plan and accompanying photometric plan to a) determine exact type, quantity, height and spacing of light fixtures and b) to assure lighting levels will meet recognized technical lighting standards for this use (e.g. also note that no light fixtures are shown along the entire sidewalk edge between Buildings C & D)

11. Identify if any special energy conservation measures will be integrated and determine if any provisions are being made for the incorporation of renewable energy systems, either now or in the future (e.g. will south facing roofs be designed to support a potential solar photovoltaic system and with minimal roof penetrations on these roofs etc...)
12. It does not appear that any "out of unit" tenant storage is provided for any units so operational measures should be identified to clarify extent of allowed, or prohibited, exterior storage of personal effects.
13. No bike storage racks or enclosures are provided. Could some consideration be provided to incorporate some level of shared bike storage or shelter? Is a playground anticipated?
14. Consider having the design team provide a full length streetscape drawing showing all street facing building facades and street trees to assist local regulatory board members with a key visualization tool.
15. Shingle accents are noted on the architectural drawings under "typical exterior materials" but it is unclear where these occur on the exterior elevations. This item should be clarified.
16. Consider increasing the size of the undersized running exterior trim at the street facing and larger building corner boards and roof rake boards to be more in scale with the size of these buildings.
17. Clarify if fire suppression systems will be provided within each building and, if so, clarify where the sprinkler valve rooms will occur. The current drawings show a modest exterior utility closet but it is unclear if this space will be adequate for fire protection equipment.
18. Provide a clear and comprehensive development table showing all building types, which unit types are located in which buildings and the gross building area of each building and in total should be provided for easy reference by reviewing town board members.

In summary, this review concludes with the recommendation that the project, as currently designed and submitted, be found acceptable for the issuance of the *Project Eligibility Letter* with respect to design appropriateness and compatibility within the existing community. I am available to discuss the contents of this letter with MHP staff, town planning staff or the project applicant and their development team.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard P. Fenuccio".

Richard P. Fenuccio, Architect (MA License #7789)

cc. Appendix / Photographic survey from 3/30/21 site visit



Photo #1



Photo #2



Photo #3



Photo #4



Photo #5



Photo #6



Photo #7



Photo #8



Photo #9



Photo # 10



Photo #11



Photo #12



Photo #13



Photo #14



Photo #15



Photo #16



Photo #17



Photo #18