



ARLINGTON REDEVELOPMENT BOARD

TOWN HALL, ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02476

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September 27, 2016

Pamela Heidell, Chair
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Arlington
51 Grove Street
Arlington, MA 02476

RE: Arlington Land Realty, LLC Application for a Comprehensive Permit to develop
Thorndike Place – Comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals

Dear Ms. Heidell and Members of the Board,

To aid the Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in their review of the Arlington Land Realty, LLC Application for a Comprehensive Permit to develop Thorndike Place, the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) met on Monday, September 26, 2016 to discuss the project and provide comments. The ARB has the following comments and questions on the proposed project, organized by topical issue:

1. **Wetland Impact, Restoration, and Access:** The ARB defers to the Conservation Commission on measures that can be used by the developer to protect the wetlands. However, has the following questions and concerns:
 - a. Is the designated 11.5 acre open space publicly accessible? If not, then what will be the restrictions on public access?" Will structures, such as a boardwalk or pathway, be built and by whom? Locations and access points for the proposed wetland paths should be confirmed. We recommend access from Thorndike Field, as well.
 - b. How will the existing wetlands be cleaned and modified?
 - c. How will the wetlands function following clean-up? How will the flow of water through the wetland be improved and what are the related impacts of these improvements downstream?
 - d. If the 11.5 acres are deeded or permanently restricted, who will own and maintain the wetland after occupancy? The ARB recommends that the Open Space Committee engage in discussions with the developer with the goal of preserving and providing public access to this open space resource.
 - e. With additional residential development occurring along Route 2 in Cambridge and Belmont, what are the cumulative impacts on stormwater and the wetlands?
2. **Traffic, Circulation, and Access:** The ARB defers to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on matters relative to traffic and circulation. TAC conducted a

thorough review of the Traffic Impact Assessment Study (TIAS) and provided a comment letter to the ZBA. The ARB has the following questions and concerns:

- a. A new TIAS should be conducted to take into account a number of issues:
 - i. Lake Street is one of the most congested streets in Arlington. The ARB is concerned about added traffic on this street and in the neighborhood. A revised TIAS should adequately consider the project's impact on Lake Street.
 - ii. The developer should consider direct access from the project to Route 2. With additional residential development occurring along Route 2 in Cambridge and Belmont, what are the cumulative traffic impacts? A revised TIAS should consider the recently built and planned development in Cambridge and Belmont along Route 2. If Route 2 access is considered as an option for the project, then the TIAS should fully explain the impacts of traffic with and without the route 2 access.
 - iii. The TIAS should take into account the heavy use of Thorndike Field by sports teams after school, overlapping with the evening peak traffic hour.
 - b. The application includes a high parking ratio of 1.4 spaces per housing unit. The ZBA should request information about the reasoning and justification for this amount of parking. The ARB recommends that Transportation Demand Management (TDM) be applied to this project. TDM is recommended to reduce vehicle use on the site, and also increase the use of transit, bicycles and walking. In relation to TDM matters:
 - i. What on-site amenities will the developer provide to encourage bike use, e.g. covered bike parking?
 - ii. What is the connectivity between the project and the bike path, bus, and subway transit routes? How will residents be able to connect with those amenities? Will the pedestrian overpass on Route 2 be restored to encourage access? What is the projected bike path use and ridership as a result of this project?
3. **Design:** The ARB has the following questions and concerns:
- a. The ZBA should request full-size plans. The following design documentation should be provided: site plan, floor plans, (all levels,) with building dimensions, building sections with floor to floor and overall building height dimensions, building façade elevations with materials indicated and specified, building massing / 3-D views, building mechanicals and placement of mechanicals with noise estimates and hours for testing for generators and similar, parking plan, lighting plan and landscaping plan. The massing plan should show the view along Dorothy Road. A building model would also be useful for understanding overall site impact and scale and samples of the actual building materials and colors should be provided.
 - b. The raised front porches of the proposed houses along Dorothy Road, as well as the style of the fences on the porches, create an image of the houses being closed-off from the sidewalk, street, and neighborhood. An alternative, more

open interface between the houses and their surroundings should be considered.

- c. The developer should consider moving the houses closer to the street with vehicle access to the rear. This could create more open space and community gathering areas.
- d. The developer should consider applying LEED ND guidelines in planning and development for the site.
- e. The ARB would appreciate the ability to provide further comments on the design as plans progress.

4. Affordable Housing: The ARB has the following questions and concerns:

- a. The Town (ARB and Board of Selectmen) recently adopted a Housing Production Plan (HPP) that outlines affordable housing needs. Per the HPP, the ARB recommends that all units are deed-restricted as affordable in perpetuity. Further, per the Town's Inclusionary Zoning requirements, the ARB recommends that the affordable units are dispersed throughout the development and comparable to market rate units in terms of quality and character, room size, and external appearance. Parking for affordable units should also be comparable in location and appearance to parking for market rate units.
- b. The HPP identified the need for housing for middle-income households (110% of area median income or \$280,000 for two-bedroom unit and \$325,000 for a three-bedroom unit). The ARB recommends that at least one or two of the for-sale condominiums be available and affordable to middle-income households. Additionally, the ARB would prefer more for-sale housing units at all price points—market, middle-income, and affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the area median income.
- c. The developer should provide the Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan to determine the market for these units, pricing and marketing of all units.

The ARB is available to discuss any of the above comments and questions with the ZBA. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the project design further with the ZBA and with the developer.

Thank you for your consideration of the ARB's comments and questions.

Sincerely,

Andrew Bunnell
Chair