



TOWN OF ARLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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August 27, 2020

John Hurd, Chair
Select Board
Town of Arlington
730 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington, MA 02476

RE: 1165R Massachusetts Avenue
Comprehensive Permit Site Approval Application

Dear Members of the Board,

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Select Board regarding the 1665R Mass Ave Property, LLC's proposed 130-unit multifamily residential rental development located at 1165R Massachusetts Avenue. We hope that these comments assist the Select Board in their response to MassHousing on the Comprehensive Site Approval Application. We have comments on the following aspects of the project.

Affordable Housing

1. Adding 33 affordable homes is necessary and beneficial to the community. 176 qualified applicants responded to a lottery DPCD coordinated in July 2020 for one affordable rental home in Arlington. This demand speaks to the overwhelming need for more affordable homes in Arlington and the surrounding region.
2. Because the project will be developed under Chapter 40B, all of the units in the development would be added to the town's Subsidized Housing Inventory maintained by the MA Department of Housing and Community Development. The addition of 130 units will increase Arlington's percentage to 7.4% pending any updates to the year-round housing units following the completion of the 2020 Census.
3. The affordable units will be designated and deed-restricted as affordable to those households earning up to 80% of the area median income (AMI). The deed restriction will control for both the rental amount that can be charged to tenants and the income of the tenant. The Town's inclusionary provisions in the Zoning Bylaw require that rental units are affordable to households earning at or below 70% AMI and rents are set at 60% AMI. We encourage the developer to consider a deeper level of affordability of a portion of the units. The DPCD staff are ready to work with the developer to access funds through the North Suburban HOME Consortium to assist in making deeper affordability a reality for this project.

Environmental, Climate Resiliency, and Energy

1. The proposed improved access to the Mill Brook is important because much of the brook that runs through Arlington is surrounded by private property and inaccessible to the public. We encourage the developer to incorporate even more aspects of the [Mill Brook Corridor Report](#) into the project, especially as the brook is daylight in this section of Arlington.
2. A portion of the project site is located within the floodplain, primarily confined to the channelized Mill Brook. However, the project should incorporate additional flood control features to avoid the loss of property as floods become more frequent and intense.
3. The increase in pervious green space is beneficial both to the public and to the project, providing relief from the expansive parking lots that surround the existing buildings and helping to control stormwater runoff and minimize flooding.
4. We encourage installation of rooftop solar panels similar to what is currently on existing structures.
5. It appears that natural gas is not incorporated in the development; this is consistent with Arlington's Net Zero commitment. If feasible, we would encourage the incorporation of other elements from the Net Zero Plan when it is finalized to further demonstrate commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic Development

1. The loss of spaces for artist studios and small businesses is disappointing. However, the developer should identify ways to continue to partner with the arts and cultural community in Arlington. This may include utilizing common space on the property to showcase emerging artists.
2. While the project is just beyond the edge of the study area included in the [2019 Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan](#), we encourage the developer to consider recommendations on how to incorporate programming opportunities for the proposed indoor and outdoor common areas.

Traffic and Transportation

1. We look forward to further refinements to the Traffic Impact Report (TIR) as the program is refined through the approval process, including a more detailed study of the intersection of Ryder, Forest, and Peirce Streets.
2. As the vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access to the project is further developed, we encourage consideration of the following:
 - a. Include clear signage for both motorists and bicyclists, particularly given the vehicular ingress via the West Drive off of Massachusetts Avenue and egress via Ryder Street.
 - b. Accommodate and improve pedestrian access to the property, particularly via West Drive off of Massachusetts Avenue. Ryder Street sidewalk improvements, including installation of curb ramps, may also be needed.
 - c. Consider ways to improve access to the Minuteman Bikeway from Ryder Street.
3. The Transportation Demand Management Plan incorporated into the TIR is appropriate for the size and type of development proposed.

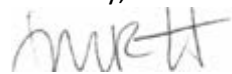
Historic Resources

1. As more detailed site development plans evolve, we encourage the inclusion of meaningful educational signage and programming to amplify the historic nature of the property.

The Department looks forward to providing additional reviews and guidance as this proposal moves forward. We will work with the applicant on securing necessary resources to assist with affordability. We will also assist with additional follow up to ensure other above-referenced issues are addressed.

Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact me at jraitt@town.arlington.ma.us.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Raitt

Director of Planning and Community Development

cc: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager