

NORTH SQUARE

SNAPSHOT

- **130 residential apartments will provide a range of housing opportunities:**
 - 59 one-bedroom
 - 58 two-bedroom
 - 13 three-bedroom
- **26 of these apartments will be permanently affordable** to very low income households (earning up to 50% of the area median income (“AMI”). Of the 26 apartments, **3** will be set aside to serve extremely low-income households earning up to 30% AMI. There will be 8 Project-based Section 8 vouchers for households living in the affordable apartments.
- **22,000 SF of community-based retail** to expand the Town’s commercial tax base and keep spending local
- **Approximately 5.37 acre lot**
- **Sustainable Design**
 - Sustainably designed buildings
 - Green Space for community-based activities
 - PVRTA bus access and Bike storage
 - Access to local open space and recreation areas
- **Responsive to the Amherst Master Plan**
 - Creating a vibrant village center
 - Expanding and diversifying the housing supply
 - Providing new community gathering space
 - Encouraging smart growth principles and preventing sprawl
- **Supports the Amherst Housing Production Plan and Market Study**
 - Expanding the supply of affordable housing targeted to very low and extremely low income households
 - Increasing the supply of Section 8 housing
 - Creating 26 new affordable apartments towards the Town’s goal of 200 new, affordable units by 2018 (50 created since 2013)
 - Diversifying Amherst’s housing stock with new, market rate units targeting non-student households
 - Responding to the housing preferences of young professionals and empty nesters

narrative

NORTH SQUARE

In this narrative:

- Program
- Community Engagement
- Project Ownership Structure
- Income & Unit Mix
- Community Benefits
- Open Space & Landscape
- Healthy Homes
- Transportation & MassWorks
- Financing
- Other Permitting
- Construction Management Plan
- Anticipated Schedule

PROGRAM:

North Square consists of two mixed-use, mixed-income buildings surrounding a traditional New England village green designed to create a community destination through a pedestrian-oriented streetscape and experience. Atkins Market is not formally part of the proposed project but the North Square design integrates Atkins into the overall project to further support this new town center.

	Building A	Building B
Height	3 stories stepping up to 4 stories toward the interior of the site. To maintain pedestrian scale, the building steps down to 2 stories at several key corners along Cows Road. There will be 2 elevators in the building.	3 stories stepping down to 2 stories adjacent to the single-family homes at the corners facing Route 63 (Montague Road). There will be 2 elevators in the building.
Retail	17,300 SF of ground floor retail	4,700 SF of retail
Apartments	63 residential apartments	67 residential apartments
Other	Bike storage and the management office for residents of both buildings	Bike storage and 2,140 SF of ground floor amenity space that will be shared by residents of both buildings.

- **Amenity space:** Apartment amenity space will include Fitness Center, WiFi café, and clubroom.
- **Parking:** The new development adds 286 parking spaces to *The Mill District*, including 93 retail spaces and 193 residential spaces. In addition, there are 29 parking spaces in the area at Atkins Market.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the last 6 months, the North Square development and design team has invited input from:

- **Two** well attended open community meetings at Bread and Butter restaurant (including one design charrette)
- **One** informal presentation to the Select Board (July 18, 2016) and meetings with the Housing and Sheltering Committee, Affordable Housing Trust, and Amherst Housing Authority
- Over **25** meetings and telephone conversations with residents of Amherst (many of whom live in North Amherst), local nonprofit organizations, Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, business leaders, the colleges and universities, community advocates, and the Amherst Survival Center

In addition, Beacon Communities continues to actively seek community comment on our website at <http://www.courbanize.com/projects/north-square/information>

PROJECT OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT

Beacon Communities, through a limited dividend affiliated entity named BC North Square LLC, will acquire the site via a 99-year ground lease from W.D. Cows, Inc. Beacon will design, finance, permit, and construct the proposed community within the redevelopment area (approximately outlined on the next page). After construction, Beacon will own and manage the apartments and provide property management services for the entire community, including snow removal, landscaping, common area and parking lot maintenance and repairs. Beacon will create a commercial condominium and convey the retail space to W.D. Cows, Inc (or an affiliated entity). W.D. Cows will own, market and lease the retail spaces. This project structure allows W.D. Cows to leverage their connections to local businesses and continue to build an integrated commercial Mill District, while Beacon provides its proven skills in development and property management.

As described in greater detail in the development team and management plan, Beacon Residential Management, the property management arm of Beacon Communities LLC, has a decades-long successful track record managing over 12,000 apartments in properties that run the gamut from senior housing, public housing, and luxury housing, including multi-family apartment communities adjacent to college campuses.

narrative

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Ground lease area approximately outlined as “redevelopment site” above.

INCOME & APARTMENT MIX

North Square will be a mixed-income community providing housing options for people at range of income levels. North Square will offer 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments and be designed to attract a wide range of renters including young professionals, families, and empty-nesters seeking professionally managed housing just steps away from apartment amenities, dining, retail and local recreation.

The income mix at the property is designed to both meet the Town’s affordable housing production goals (which emphasize apartments at 50% AMI or below) and provide market rate apartments to support commercial businesses and economic development in Amherst.

Based on average incomes by occupation provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, we believe this community will provide homes for people ranging from service professionals to those working in education and government.

INCOME LEVEL	% OF APARTMENTS	# OF APARTMENTS	ANTICIPATED AVERAGE INCOME	COMMON OCCUPATIONS	RENT* (ANTICIPATED)
MARKET	80%	110	\$60,000 - \$80,000 \$30-\$40/HOUR	ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, TEACHER, GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONAL, RETIREE	1 BED=\$1800-2000 2 BED=\$2500-2700 3 BED=\$3000-3200
50% AMI	14%	18	\$41,600 \$20/HOUR	BANK TELLER, NURSE ASSISTANT, TEACHER’S AIDE, DENTAL ASSIS- TANT	1 BED=\$652 2 BED=\$771 3 BED=\$879
30% AMI	6%	8	\$24,950 \$12/HOUR	WAITRESS, RETAIL ASSO- CIATE, VARIOUS SERVICE INDUSTRY	SECTION 8 RENTS

*Affordable rents include the utility allowance and are based on LIHTC and DHCD payment standards

- **Accessibility & visitability:** As required by ADA, 5% of the apartments will be fully handicap accessible and of these, 2% will also have features for people with visual or hearing impairments. Additional accessible features will be provided as needed through Reasonable Accommodations. All apartments will be designed as visitable.

- **Location of Affordable & Accessible Apartments in the Buildings:** As required by Federal Fair Housing and American Disabilities Act and Massachusetts Accessibility laws, the affordable and handicapped accessible apartments will be distributed evenly by building and apartment size.
- **Apartment Finishes:** Affordable and market-rate apartments will be indistinguishable from each other and have the same finishes.
- **Apartment Amenities:** The parking and amenities will be available to all residents.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS: MEETING HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

SHORT TERM/CONSTRUCTION PERIOD	ONGOING
Building Permit and Fees	Diverse Housing opportunities
Construction Period Jobs	Property Tax Revenue
Construction and Design Team Expenditures	Automobile Excise Tax
	Resident Annual expenditures
	Traffic and Pedestrian Safety
	Employment Opportunities

North Square at the Mill District is designed to meet the Town of Amherst’s evolving demographics and housing demand needs through a vibrant mixed-use North Amherst town center.

The concept stems from open dialogue with Town representatives and community members over the last 8-10 months, as well as the collective Town goals as set forth in the 2010 Master Plan and Housing Production Plan. The 2015 RKG Market Study commissioned by the Town, planning documents, and local housing authority waitlists speak to both a need for deeply affordable housing, as well as housing that will attract and retain young professionals and empty nesters.

Strengthening the Housing Market: Affordability

Amherst’s housing growth (125% increase) has not increased at the pace of population growth (175% increase). In our market study of seven Amherst area multifamily developments, we found vacancy rates of

under 1%. Beacon Communities has gained a first-hand understanding of local housing demand as the owners of the Rolling Green Apartments, where our property managers have turned away an average of 2-3 people per week for one bedroom units in the past two years. Expanding the supply of both market-rate and affordable apartments takes pressure off the rents throughout the community. In part due to this rental demand pressure, the Town's housing study found that 56% of households were spending too much on housing.

The Housing Production plan demonstrates that households earning less than 50% of Area Median Income have the fewest housing options in Amherst, with an unmet housing need of 2,475 housing units. North Square will help Amherst toward its goal of producing 168 additional apartments affordable to the very low income (earning below 50% AMI) before 2018. Income targeting that offers affordability to households earning 50% or 30% AMI or below was informed by the Housing Production Plan as well as conversations with local nonprofits and housing advocacy groups.

Strengthening the Housing Market: Diversity

Introducing a new type of housing in Amherst will respond to a growing senior population and attract a declining young professional population. Between 2000-2010, the percentage of 55+ renter households increased 60% in Amherst, mirroring trends of new "renters by choice" seen across the country. The RKG market study suggests the potential for Amherst to attract a greater share of this new renter population by providing urban community amenities in a small town context.

Likewise, population statistics also suggest that Amherst is capturing less than its share of post-college aged young professionals. Despite consistent employment growth and University of Massachusetts expansion and business development, between 1990 – 2010, the Amherst population aged 25-44 decreased 45%, while the population increased 1.7% nationwide in the same time period. These findings suggest opportunity to attract new residents to Amherst from the surrounding area, by introducing appropriate and competitive housing to the town's housing stock.

Economic Development

North Square will generate more than an estimated \$3 million of residential, commercial and Community Preservation Act tax revenue in years 1-10 and over \$600,000 annually after year 10. This new commercial development will expand Amherst's tax base, which is currently 90% residential. Generating new taxes and expanding the commercial tax based is particularly important given the Town's budget of \$100 million in proposed public projects over the next ten years—any additional tax dollars generated from private development will help offset the potential need for residential tax increases.

The Cows are committed to executing their vision of *The Mill District*—a destination for “arts, eats, and entertainment”. The Cows family has the local relationships and commitment necessary to ensure a vibrant marketplace with synergies between local retailers. Uses under consideration include restaurants and other small cafe, small home furnishings store, nail salon, art gallery, and fitness center.

Based on our local market analysis, there is over \$341 million in unmet retail demand within 5 miles of the subject site. There is a particular need for clothing and accessories stores, healthcare, and food service.

The new 22,000 square feet of retail space will generate 8-10 new business opportunities ranging from retail to food service. We anticipate that the residential and commercial businesses will generate between 20-25 new jobs (part-time and full-time) for local residents.

In addition, 130 new households will pay local car excise taxes and bringing new businesses to the Mill District will help keep spending local.

PLACEMAKING: OPEN SPACE & LANDSCAPE DESIGN

A focal feature of the new community will be a public, multi-use lawn area in the town center that will serve as a “village green.” This lawn area and surrounding open spaces will provide passive and active community gathering opportunities for both residents and visitors alike. In keeping with the Town’s Master Plan emphasis on community building and cultural vitality, the multi-use lawn area can also serve as an event lawn for activities such as outdoor artisan markets, local food festivals, holiday fairs, group exercise classes and other community events.. The site will also feature a children’s play area

In addition to the “village green”, the sidewalks adjacent to the retail areas will offer opportunities for social interaction. The provision of bench seating, bike parking, trees and sidewalk space will help to further enhance the retail experience at North Square. The remaining open space areas throughout the site will be landscaped with a combination of open lawn areas, planting beds full of seasonal perennials, and ornamental tree plantings.

Special emphasis has been placed on the selection of native plant material which will be used to highlight and celebrate the natural beauty of the area. Native grasses and perennials are utilized throughout the planting design to reconstruct small pockets of flowering meadows that emphasize the rural character of the site. Careful attention has been placed on plant selection to ensure visual interest and seasonal color throughout the year. In accordance with the zoning bylaw, the minimum shrub container size will be 5 gallons and the minimum tree size will be 1-1/2” caliper at time of planting.



Sample image of a parking lot bioswale.

Parking lot and trash enclosure areas will be screened appropriately. At the parking lot areas, landscape treatments will include bioswales . These bioswales are designed to capture rainfall to help rainwater infiltrate the ground. The trash and recycling areas will be screened by metal panel enclosures as well as landscape treatments.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY

The North Square project will be sustainably designed, resulting in a development that will have reduced energy and water consumption, and a lighter footprint on the environment. Beacon Communities understands the importance of a holistic, integrated design approach in achieving such these goals, and has assembled a design team that has the experience and expertise necessary to realize this vision.

Energy use reduction is a critical local and global issue. The North Square project will address this issue through a combination of a high performance exterior building envelope to reduce the overall building energy load, paired with efficient heating & cooling mechanical systems. Low flow, high performance fixtures will be integrated to reduce water and energy use.

Electrical load will be reduced through smart lighting design that takes full advantage of the efficient, reliable, and attractive LED fixtures and controls . Appliances will be top performers in function, design, energy, and water efficiency.

Renewable energy - In an effort to support and encourage solar development in Massachusetts, the team will offset a percentage of the electrical use of the development through procurement of Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECS). This is an affordable alternative to installing solar panels at North Square.

Indoor Air Quality - Beacon is committed to providing individuals and families with homes that enhance their lives and health. Ventilation systems will be designed to provide fresh supply air directly to each home. Toxins and contaminants will be minimized through careful specification of low VOC and no added urea formaldehyde materials.

Landscaping, as outlined in the previous section, will emphasize the environmental priorities of this project. Plantings will be appropriate for the area. The landscape, including the use of bioswales, will play an important part in the management and infiltration of storm water on site. The design team evaluated the possibility of installing pervious surfaces throughout the site. These surfaces are not as durable as concrete and asphalt and do not hold up under New England's winter weather conditions. Beacon is very sensitive to installing systems that ensure storm water management and infiltration balanced with creating a safe pedestrian experience and materials that are less subject to cracking and heaving in winter conditions.

Non-smoking—All Beacon communities are smoke-free, and this regulation is strictly enforced.

We expect this project to meet the minimum requirements related to Stretch Code, LEED and Energy Star certification. The buildings will be certifiable under the LEED for Homes Midrise rating system, with an expectation of reaching the Silver level.

TRANSPORTATION

The site is designed to support residents and shoppers traveling by bus, car, and bike.

- **Bus:** Pioneer Village Transit Authority bus routes 31, 33, and 46 service North Amherst with stopes on Montague and Sunderland Roads and directly across from the North Square site on Cows Road.
- **Car:** The development provides for an additional 286 parking spaces, at 9' x 18' wide; 7 of these spaces will be designated as handicapped accessible per ADA requirements. The 193 residential spaces are located behind building B as well as directly off of Cows Road; these lots will be restricted to apartment residents and separate from commercial traffic. Commercial parking will extend from the existing lot near the Atkins Market, and surround the central square. The commercial parking may be available to residents between 10 pm—7 am. Beacon will also investigate demand for ZipCars and electric car charging stations, and include these based on demand.
 - Access to all parking will be through the Cows Road entrance; emergency vehicles will have additional access off of Route 63 (see section on ingress/egress).

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- **Bike:** The property will include indoor bike storage for residents as well as outdoor bike racks in proximity to the retail space and town green.

	Program	Residential Parking	Commercial Parking
North Square	130 residential units, 22,000 SF commercial	193 spaces 1.48 spaces/unit	93 spaces 4.23 spaces/1,000 SF
North Square + Atkins Market*	130 residential units, 26,200 SF commercial	No additional spaces 1.48 spaces/unit	29 additional spaces 4.65 spaces/1,000 SF

*Atkins Market is not officially part of North Square, but it does provide additional retail parking.

Emergency Access

The Amherst Fire Department requires a second means of access to North Square. The existing driveway at 92 Montague Road, a property also owned by W.D. Cows, will be expanded and the ground will be reinforced (or paved as may be required by the Fire Department) to support fire truck access. The emergency access will be gated and locked at all time as set forth on the plans and pedestrian access will not be permitted. BRM commits to maintain this pathway for optimal public safety, including snow plowing and towing of private vehicles as may be necessary.

A note about Sunderland Road: The question of access to the site from Sunderland Road has been raised on several occasions. Additional site access off of Sunderland Road was also considered, but the team deemed it infeasible due to steep grade changes, significant disruption to an active business and lack of site control to the southwest of the site (as the parcels here are held under different ownership).

MassWorks

In August 2016 the Town of Amherst submitted an application to the State’s MassWorks grant program. The application requests funding to further augment the investments that the town has already made in North Amherst (e.g. new water and sewer infrastructure and roadway improvements on Pine Street) to support road intersection and sidewalk improvements that will encourage traffic calming along Route 63, Cows Road, Sunderland Road, improvements at the intersection of Pine and North Pleasant Street, and the extension of municipally owned, high speed broadband Internet infrastructure. MassWorks looks favorably on municipal applications that can demonstrate that there is additional private investment in an area. The North Square project and MassWorks grants are mutually supportive of their Sponsor’s respective goals to improve North Amherst.

DHCD is aware of the substantial investment that the Town has made in North Amherst and the application to MassWorks for additional improvements that would contribute to the overall redevelopment of North Amherst. We expect that this will contribute to North Square's overall competitiveness for the 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

Traffic

A third-party traffic impact assessment conducted a field inventory of existing condition and gathered traffic count data in order to project existing, 2023 no-build, and 2023 build (both with and without the roadway realignment included in the MassWorks grant application). The report concluded that the additional trips generated by the project under existing conditions would not have a significant impact on motorist delays, and that no safety deficiencies are expected. The project can be safely accommodated within existing transportation infrastructure. Beacon Communities acknowledges and commits to implementing the Project Access and Transportation Demand Management recommendations listed in the report (included here in tab 7, Executive Summary—page 2).

NORTH SQUARE FINANCING

Beacon is proposing to work in collaboration with the Town of Amherst and the State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to develop North Square. The proposed financing will include 9% Low-income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), State Low-income Housing Tax Credits, State Affordable Housing Trust Funds and a 1st mortgage loan. Beacon will apply for 8 Project-Based Vouchers from DHCD as part of our LIHTC application. In order to be competitive for DHCD's 9% LIHTCs, the municipality needs to make a substantial financial contribution to the proposed project. Simultaneous with this submission to the ZBA, we are submitting a formal request to the Town Manager for a property tax incentive under the Town's newly adopted Affordable Housing Property Tax Incentive legislation. The legislation was passed in 2015 to encourage the creation of mixed-income, mixed-use projects in Amherst. Town Manager and Select Board approval of this request will satisfy the DHCD requirement for a local contribution. The request will be for residential taxes of \$500/unit in years 1-3, \$1,000/unit in years 4-7, and \$2,000/unit in years 8-10. Full residential taxes will be paid starting in year 11. The commercial space is not requesting any tax relief.

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PLAN (CMP)

Beacon and our General Contractor will submit a complete CMP for the Town prior to the construction start. The estimated construction period will be 16-18 months. The project website will provide updated information about the construction schedule and “look ahead” about key construction activities. Key aspects of the CMP will include:

- **Construction fencing and Security** – The construction site will be fenced. Manned security will be provided at the discretion of the General Contractor.
- **Safety** – Beacon and its GC will take all appropriate safety measures both on-site as well as along Cowls Road to ensure vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- **Access** – Construction vehicles will be required to enter the site via Sunderland Road to Cowls Road.
- **Cowls Road** – The road will be open during construction expect for limited utility or other work that may be required. Appropriate and adequate notice and coordination will be provided.
- **Construction hours** – Monday – Saturday 7am – 7pm
- **Noise** – Efforts will be made to minimize weekend noise.
- **Dust** - Appropriate dust control measures such as watering the site will be employed as needed.
- **Vehicle idling**—Construction vehicles will not be permitted to idle in or around the project area.
- **Emergency** —24-hour emergency contact information for Beacon and the General Contractor will be provided.

OTHER PERMITS

Beacon will be applying for several other permits to support the proposed project including:

- **Atkins Market** – W.D. Cowls, Inc. will submit an amendment to their existing site plan to reduce the number of parking spaces from 50 to 29. The spaces that are being removed from the Atkins site plan are being integrated into North Square. Atkins is only required to have 13 parking spaces.
- **Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act (MEPA)** – The State assesses the environmental impacts of development projects through the MEPA review process. Beacon will submit an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) and expects that there will be no significant findings and approval will be granted.
- **Department of Transportation (DOT)** – DOT reviews applications from projects seeking access to State Highways (Route 63). The proposed project abuts State Highway 63 so we will be required to submit a request for a DOT permit. Beacon is eligible to apply to DOT after it receives all local zoning approvals.
- **Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)** – Beacon has received confirmation from MHC that there are no historical structures on the proposed site.

SCHEDULE (ANTICIPATED)

The following is Beacon's proposed schedule:

2016

- **October** - Comprehensive Permit submission to ZBA
- **November – February** – ZBA Hearings

2017

- **January/February** – Financing Application submission to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Submission date to be determined. After submission the State generally makes award announcements within 3-4 months and then Beacon would begin to finalize the project for a financial closing and to commence construction.
- **February** – ZBA hearing conclusion
- **Fall** – Financial Closing and Ground Breaking. Construction period is estimated to be 16-18 months.

2019

- **Winter** – Opening