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PLANNING BOARD  
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December 28, 2016

Mark Parent, Chair  
Zoning Board of Appeals  
Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002

Re: Beacon Communities Development LLC (BC North Square LLC)  
North Square at the Mill District – Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit

Dear Mr. Parent:

The Amherst Planning Board has received a presentation from the applicant and has reviewed material submitted by Beacon Communities Development LLC for a Comprehensive Permit for a for a mixed-use development in North Amherst, including 130 dwelling units of which 26 (20%) are proposed to be low income (at 50% AMI and below) under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B. The project name is North Square at the Mill District.

After discussion the Amherst Planning Board voted 7-1-0 (with one member absent) on December 21, 2016, to support the proposed project, with the following comments regarding the design of the site plan and architecture:

1. The site is generally appropriate for residential development; the site is currently in the Commercial zoning district, in which mixed-use buildings are permitted by Site Plan Review and Special Permit; the Planning Board has been in favor of creating an enhanced mixed-use zoning district for North Amherst Village Center having proposed “Form Based Code” for North Amherst Village Center which included mixed-use buildings; this zoning proposal received significant support at Town Meeting although it did not achieve the necessary 2/3 to pass as a zoning amendment; there has been general town-wide support for mixed-use development in North Amherst Village Center;
2. The site design is generally appropriate for the site taking into consideration factors such as the proposed use, schematic site plan and building massing, topography, environmental resources and integration into existing development patterns;

3. The Planning Board makes the following specific recommendations for consideration with regard to the site design, architecture and uses:

**Parking & Circulation**

- a. Consider requiring more sharing of parking between residential uses and commercial and retail uses on the site in order to limit the number of parking spaces overall;
- b. If the number of parking spaces cannot be reduced, consider requiring additional landscaping in the vicinity of parking lots to minimize the impact of so much pavement; consider carefully the granting of the waiver from the requirement that 10% of parking lots be landscaped;
- c. Request that the applicant work with the town to create on-street parking along Cows Road;
- d. Consider requiring enhanced bicycle amenities and connections;
- e. Consider carefully the need for the expanded width of driveways to 32 feet; look carefully at the need for this much pavement for access by trucks and emergency vehicles;
- f. Look carefully at the adequacy of the turnaround for emergency vehicles;

**Landscaping & Green Space**

- g. Consider requiring added plantings in the Residential (R-N) zoning district, on property owned by Cows, to provide a buffer for other residential property along Montague Road;
- h. Consider requiring enhanced and enlarged common area and other green spaces and enhanced pedestrian access to the common area and green spaces;

**Architecture**

- i. Consider and look carefully at the height of the tallest proposed building and look carefully at the height of the buildings overall;
- j. Consider carefully the granting of the waiver of the front setback for Building A1, which is proposed to be 3 feet from the right-of-way line of Cows Road.

Very truly yours,



Stephen Schreiber, Chair  
Amherst Planning Board