



March 2, 2020

Rebecca Frawley Wachtel, Director
Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program
Department of Housing and Community Development
100 Cambridge Street, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Comments received during 30-day review period of Project Eligibility for the Amherst Supportive Studio Apartments at 132 Northampton Road

Dear Ms. Wachtel,

During the Project Eligibility review period for the Amherst Supportive Studio Apartments project the Town received 64 comments that are enclosed with this letter. The public was able to submit comments through an online form on the Town's website, by emailing staff, or delivering them to Town Hall. Included in the comments are letters of support from the Town Council, Planning Board, and Amherst Redevelopment Authority.

Many of the comments were submitted by an individual or household, while a few were submitted by organizations such as the Amherst Housing Authority, Elliot Community Human Services, Inc., and the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness.

Comments ranged from full support of the project to outright opposition. Those in support cited the need and urgency for small studio apartments that would house different income levels. Those in opposition questioned several items including the density and number of proposed residents, parking, walkability, neighborhood characteristics, and overall feasibility.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Town with questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul Bockelman
Town Manager



TOWN OF
AMHERST
MASSACHUSETTS

Town Council
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 259-3002
towncouncil@amherstma.gov

February 24, 2020

Rebecca Frawley Wachtel, Director
Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program
Department of Housing and Community Development
100 Cambridge Street, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Proposed Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Supportive Housing at 132 Northampton Road, Amherst MA

Dear Ms. Wachtel,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the application for Project Eligibility for the Proposed Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Supportive Housing at 132 Northampton Road, Amherst MA, submitted by Valley Community Development Corporation (Valley CDC). Valley CDC is proposing to develop approximately 28 units of affordable housing at 132 Northampton Road. The project is seeking a Comprehensive Permit per M.G.L Chapter 40B for the development of affordable housing. The Comprehensive Permit allows all local permitting to take place with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Valley CDC is a local non-profit corporation formed in 1988 that addresses the growing needs of low and moderate income people through developing and preserving affordable rental and ownership housing and providing economic opportunities through small business assistance (summarized from Valley CDC's website: (<http://valleycdc.com/about-us/>)).

The project on Northampton Road is in response to the local need for small affordable rental units for extremely low- and low-income individuals. The Town of Amherst Master Plan (2010) and Housing Production Plan (2013) identify the severe lack of this type of housing, and recommend the creation of these types of units. The project would be one building that includes 28 small studio apartments as well as a multi-purpose common room, a laundry room, and office space for the part-time Resident Services Coordinator and part-time Property Management. The project also includes the provision of support services for tenants.

Prior to Valley CDC's neighbor meeting on April 24, 2019, discussion of Valley CDC's Supportive Housing Project had taken place mainly at three board/committee venues—the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Committee, Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (AMAHT), and the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC). At the 2017 Annual Town Meeting the Planning Board also supported, and Representative Town Meeting passed, a zoning change to allow an affordable project with the same unit type, such as small studio apartments.

As background on the topic of housing for low-income and homeless people, we include the following:

- The Town of Amherst has long recognized the need for housing for low income and homeless people. This is identified in the community's Master Plan (2010), Housing Production Plan (2013) and the Comprehensive Housing Market Study (2015).
- Craig's Doors at the First Baptist Church opened 8 years ago as a seasonal behavior-based overnight shelter for homeless people; in 2018, it housed 172 individuals during the months of December through April.
- In July of 2016, the town held a public forum on homelessness that was attended by over 100 people. Representatives of several service providers spoke about the region-wide need for shelter and housing for low-income people. Residents came together to address issues related to housing for low-income and homeless people. Similar Amherst housing forums including these topics have been held annually by a variety of groups.

The timeline below indicates when Valley CDC's supportive housing project was discussed at a public meeting or hearing, and when there was local media coverage of the project. *Please note that the Town of Amherst adopted the Town Council/Manager form of government, which became effective on December 3, 2018.*

January 2017

- Valley CDC submits a request for \$51,000 in CDBG funds for site assessments and feasibility studies to help identify a site for a supportive enhanced small studio apartment development.
- Valley CDC discusses small studio apartments with Planning Board's Zoning Subcommittee to February 2017 □ CDBG Advisory Committee holds public hearing and votes to recommend funding for Valley CDC.

March 2017

- Planning Board holds a public hearing to discuss the zoning amendment related to allowing the same size units if all affordable, and votes to recommend the zoning amendment to Town Meeting.

April 2017

- Daily Hampshire Gazette article describing Valley CDC's efforts to find a site for supportive housing project.

April - May 2017

- Planning Board presents Article 35 Report to Select Board, Town Meeting Coordinating Committee and League of Women Voters.
- Annual Spring Town Meeting approves Article 35: Zoning – Apartment Bedroom Mix (Planning Board) VOTED Yes 145, No 25 with 10 abstaining to amend the Standards and Conditions of Section 3.323, Apartments, by adding the language in bold italics, as follows:

“ . . . No more than 50% of the total number of dwelling units shall be of any one size (i.e., # of bedrooms). For projects in which all dwelling units provided, other than those occupied by resident manager(s), are Affordable (see Article 12, Definitions), the Permit Granting Board or Special Permit Granting Authority authorized to act under the applicable section of the Bylaw for this use may waive or modify this requirement. ”

A management plan, as defined in terms of form and content in the Rules and Regulations adopted by the Permit Granting Board or Special Permit Granting Authority shall be included as an integral part of any application under this section. In all districts, the Permit Granting Board or Special Permit Granting Authority shall apply the provisions of Sections 3.2040 and 3.2041 to any construction, renovation, or expansion resulting in the creation of new dwelling unit under this section. Action taken 5/15/17.

November 2017

- The Town of Amherst and Valley CDC enters into a CDBG contract for site selection. The initial contract ended in September 2018 and was extended through February 2019.

June 2018

- The CDBG Advisory Committee holds a Public Hearing on current activities, including an update on the Valley CDC site selection process.

November 2018

- The Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust sponsors a public forum with Valley CDC that discusses the need for small affordable units, including SRO housing.
- Valley CDC discusses their planned CPA proposal for the project with the Housing Trust.

December 2018

- The Housing Trust votes to support Valley CDC's planned CPA proposal.
- Valley CDC submits CDBG proposal for \$200,000 to fund architectural fees and energy consulting for the supportive housing project.
- Valley CDC submits CPA proposal for \$500,000 for general costs of the project.
- Daily Hampshire Gazette Article describing Valley CDC's CDBG proposal.

January 2019

- CDBG Advisory Committee recommends funding Valley CDC's proposal.
- Daily Hampshire Gazette article about Valley CDC's project moving forward.
- Valley CDC purchases property at 132 Northampton Road.
- Location and number of units made public.

February—March 2019

- CPA Committee discusses Valley CDC's \$500,000 CPA proposal.
- The Housing Trust discussed progress and process of Valley CDC's project.
- The Town submits CDBG application to State, including Valley CDC's request for \$200,000.

April 2019

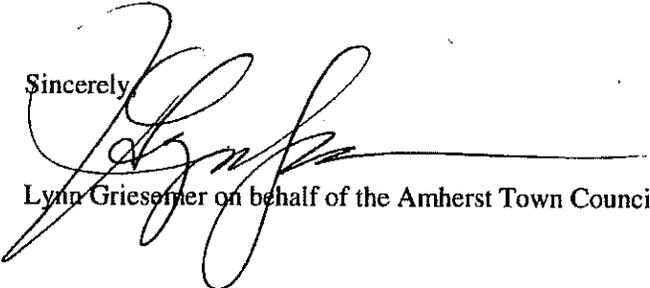
- Daily Hampshire Gazette Article about Valley CDC's FY20 CPA Proposal for \$500,000 for the project.
- Valley CDC holds a community meeting at the Bangs Center to hear comments from neighbors.

May-June 2019

- Town Council reviews and discusses Valley CDC's project and their CPA proposal.
- The Town receives comments from the community, including neighbors with questions and concerns about the project
- Town Council Community Resources Committee reviews CPAC request.
- June 24th -- Town Council holds Open Meeting of the Residents
- June 25 -- Finance Committee review of CPAC request
- July 1 -- Town Council votes on CPAC request, approving it by a vote of 11 in favor with 1 abstention. One Councilor was absent from the meeting.
- January-February 2020
- January 6 -- Valley CDC provides an update and answers questions at the Town Council
- January 31 -- DHCD review period for comments opens
- February 10 -- DHCD site visit attended by three Town Councilors

Consistent with the previous actions of various governing and advisory bodies of the Town of Amherst, the Amherst Town Council, expresses its strong support for the proposed Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Supportive Housing at 132 Northampton Road, Amherst MA, submitted by Valley Community Development Corporation (Valley CDC). We continue to encourage residents to share their views during the DHCD review period as well as at future Zoning Board of Appeals hearings.

Sincerely,



Lynn Griesemer on behalf of the Amherst Town Council

February 21, 2020

Ms. Rebecca Frawley Wachtel, Director
Low Income Housing tax Credit Program
DHCD
100 Cambridge Street, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Amherst Supportive Studio Apartments
Valley Community Development Corporation
132 Northampton Road, Amherst, MA 01002

Dear Ms. Wachtel:

At its February 19, 2020, meeting the Amherst Planning Board heard a presentation from Valley Community Development Corporation on their proposed affordable studio housing development, containing 28 studio apartments and 14 parking spaces and site improvements, at 132 Northampton Road in Amherst.

After the presentation and following discussion, the Planning Board voted 7-0-0 to express support for the proposed project and to forward its comments to DHCD.

The Planning Board's comments and recommendations are as follows:

1. That the Board appreciates the forms, scale and context of the proposal and the thoughtful manner in which the project was presented;
2. That the applicant may wish to consider including some one-bedroom apartments for people with children and people who may experience custody issues and have visitation rights;
3. That the applicant consider installing a roof over the smoking area to protect smokers from weather;
4. That the applicant may wish to consider relocating the dumpsters so that people won't see them when driving into the site;
5. That the applicant consider using graphics to show how the size of the proposed building compares with existing surrounding buildings.

Sincerely,



Christine M. Brestrup
Planning Director

Cc: Laura Baker, Real Estate Project Manager for VCDC, Applicant
Christine Gray-Mullen, Chair, Amherst Planning Board

2/27/20

To the Department of Housing and Community Development,

The Amherst Redevelopment Authority (ARA) fully supports the 28-unit single room occupancy housing project at 132 Northampton Road.

In recent years Amherst has made great gains in new housing, with many privately developed apartment buildings completed and more in various stages of design and build.

Because of Amherst's unique assortment of colleges and universities, much of this development has been geared to students. This market pressure along with high taxes and ever-increasing building costs has led to a scarcity of new housing for families, working people and the growing low-no income populations.

One notable exception to this trend is Valley CDC (Community Development Corporation). This new project at 132 Northampton Road consisting of high efficiency studio apartments with two handicapped accessible units and room for support services for recently homeless and mental health clients, is tailored to the needs of moderate, low and very low-no income people.

This project will be their third in Amherst and among more than a dozen in the region. Their continued success in this challenging market is due to its incorporation as a nonprofit community development corporation that works closely with and caters to the needs of its host community. Their extensive community outreach and Board of Directors with ties to local institutions, ensures this record of positive outcomes.

The ARA is also supportive of the small size of this project compared to other new apartment buildings in the area. This, combined with interspersing such projects alongside and within residential neighborhoods, helps to ensure an integrated town without large pockets of economically distressed areas.

We look forward to adding this project to Amherst's stock of rental units and encourage more like it.

Jim Turner,
For the ARA

Like many of you who are reading this my husband and I have been in Amherst for many years, for us it was in 1968. The changes to the community, the economy and the landscape have been significant, some positive and some perhaps not so positive. It may be important to think beyond this project and potential impact this project will have on similar proposals in future. Will this be the new model? Will it set a precedent that will impact other family neighborhoods in Amherst? Will adding this, which as I understand it is the second or third SRO in Amherst which is larger, costlier and will house more people open the gate for more? Perhaps now is the time to think more long term?

I have lived with my husband at 126 Northampton Road since 1973, the only family that is an immediate abutter to the SRO proposed for 132 Noho Rd. The initial submission listed our home as a B&B. We have not operated as a B&B since 2018. There are several other statements throughout the application that are suspect... ie including dormitory density in the area density discussion, listing Amherst College Housing as rental properties imply these residences match those similar to the buildings independent landlord west of the proposed site that rents to students.

As community members, we support affordable housing for others in our community. It is my understanding that while initially, the project offers local preference with the initial placement only. There is no requirement that subsequent vacancies be filled locally. While the town is providing opportunities for affordable housing, is it for Amherst residents?

The word self-sufficiency is peppered throughout the proposal but if I understand the document there is no tenancy length limit. How does this encourage someone to become self-sufficient?

I have concerns about the financial model and the potential financial impact it may have on the town budget. If the project does not meet its financial goals, who is responsible for the debt?

Valley has clearly stated that the management team will be responsible should an issue arise but if the issues are not resolved satisfactorily. Will the town manager have ultimate oversight? If after attempts to resolve issues; ie noise, poor maintenance, etc, can we call on town officials to intercede?

While Valley CDC states research supports affordable housing doesn't negatively impact abutters house values it is my understanding that this maybe a short term phenomena and is dependent on property management. We understand there cannot be any guarantees but the house is our estate and the possibility of this project putting our family's inheritance in jeopardy is troubling. Would be nice to have assurances that should this negatively impact our children's inheritance, we had some recourse.

It would be good to know that town government continues to explore other approaches to increase the number of affordable housing options in Amherst; ie. requiring developers to build one affordable unit for say every two or three high end home they build. Or perhaps landlords whose portfolios include housing for more than 12 people are required to provide affordable housing options for at least a quarter of them. Perhaps as Valley CDC suggests in their proposal, low wage earners from the two biggest employers in town, the academic institutions, would be likely residents, why not encourage them to either provide a living wage or as an alternative assist by subsidizing rental costs. Perhaps they be encouraged build affordable housing on their property?

Barbara Gravin Wilbur

126 Northampton Road

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2020 7:17 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: support studio apt. proposal

Good Morning...
This letter of support came to the Planning email.
Pam

From: Martha Hanner <mhandjh@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 4:24 PM
To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>
Subject: support studio apt. proposal

I strongly support the proposed studio apartments on Northampton Road. The studio apartments are a sensible solution for an urgent need. We must address the homeless crisis in our local community and these studio apartments are an important first step. The location is appropriate, within walking distance of bus stops and Town services.

-Martha Hanner
18 Alyssum Drive
Amherst MA

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2020 7:50 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: Low Income Housing Proposal

This is a letter of support for 132 Northampton Road.

From: Peter Kent-Stoll <peter.r.kentstoll@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2020 10:01 PM
To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>
Subject: Low Income Housing Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing concerning Valley Community Development Corp's proposal to build a housing complex at 132 Northampton Road for homeless and low income people. As a three-year resident of the Town of Amherst, I would like to express my strong and enthusiastic support for this proposal. Housing is a human right. I have witnessed my own rent skyrocket as well new luxury developments constructed around me as there continues to be a vast shortage of affordable housing for low-income and working class people.

As the Town of Amherst celebrates inclusiveness, diversity, and participatory democracy, I urge you to support this plan to fight to actually materialize the rhetoric of equality in Amherst. I know from my research as an urban sociologist that when affordable housing is attacked or not built, it is disabled people, elderly people, poor people, and people of color who are disproportionately impacted this. Thus, to support affordable housing is to support the building of a town or city that promotes a democracy that all can participate in. I trust that you will support inclusiveness and democracy and not the reactionary voices of fear. Thus, I ask you to support Valley Community Development Corp's proposal.

Sincerely,
Peter Kent-Stoll

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2020 7:45 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: affordable housing

This came to the Planning email.

From: Tom McBride <mcbride_tom_christopher@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 15, 2020 8:56 AM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: affordable housing

I say yes to affordable housing. Tom McBride

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2020 2:12 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: 132 Northampton Road

This letter of support came to the Planning email. Also, FYI, I have created a folder within the Planning email where I am putting all these letters to find them easily.

Pam

From: Maura Keene <keenemaura@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2020 8:05 AM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: 132 Northampton Road

I am writing to support this project. It provides needed housing for vulnerable population of homeless and low and moderate income workers. Low cost housing for single member households is strikingly absent in Amherst. Proposed and existing market rate units are unaffordable for many who work in town. I also think this is an ideal location, on a main route within a half mile of the downtown, bus stop, and grocery stores. Objections of residents seem disingenuous since there is only a bed and breakfast contiguous with the property. Amherst College playing fields are adjacent. Housing across the street is mostly rental units. Route 9 is a major commuting road.

I hope the DHCD will see this project as worthy of its support. It has received the backing of the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust and almost unanimous support from the Town Council.

Sincerely,
Maura Keene

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2020 8:57 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: 132 Northampton Road project

Another letter of support sent to the Planning email!

From: Barbara Burkart <barbruth@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, February 8, 2020 7:23 AM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: 132 Northampton Road project

Hi folks,

I'm a longtime resident of Amherst. I fully support this project, with no reservations. Providing affordable housing for folks with few resources feels to me like an ethical imperative, and I put my vote 100% behind this endeavor.

Barbara Burkart
92 Aubinwood Road
Amherst, MA 01002

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2020 8:56 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: Affordable Housing at 132 Northampton Road

This came to the Planning email.

From: Elisabeth Talis <elisabethtalis@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 10, 2020 11:56 AM
To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>
Subject: Re: Affordable Housing at 132 Northampton Road

I am writing to express my support to have the property at 132 Northampton Road converted into affordable housing. Amherst is in dire need of housing for low income individuals. I understood the buildings constructed in North Amherst would provide low income housing. I was extremely disappointed to discover that the cost of those rentals are extremely high- that they are totally inaccessible to people with low incomes. I support increased affordable housing, in our town and throughout Massachusetts.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Talis
203 Middle Street

Malloy, Nathaniel

From: Planning Department Email
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 7:17 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Malloy, Nathaniel
Subject: Fw: In support of SRO project

Good Morning!

This letter of support came to the Planning email.

Pam

From: Cinda Jones <cjones@cowls.com>
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2020 8:15 PM
To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>
Cc: Hornik, John <jhornik123@gmail.com>; Shalini Bahl Milne <shalinimilne@gmail.com>; Lev Ben-Ezra <lev@amherstsurvival.org>; Ziomek, David <ziomekd@amherstma.gov>; John Page <johnpage39@gmail.com>
Subject: In support of SRO project

To: MA Department of Housing and Community Development
Members of the Amherst Planning Board
Members of the Amherst Housing Trust

From: Cinda Jones, 232 Amity Street, Amherst, MA
President & CEO, WD Cowls, Inc., North Amherst

Re: My strong support of your proposed SRO on Northampton Road

I am an advocate for affordable housing in Amherst, and a resident of 232 Amity Street, living exactly one block away from the proposed Studio Apartment Supportive Housing project at 132 Northampton Road in Amherst.

I strongly support this progress toward improving the lives of our community's most vulnerable populations. The 28 small studio apartments being created will be affordable to extremely low to low income individuals, with support services provided on site, in a place that is close to town and bus lines, and therefore jobs, stores, and a supportive community.

Some people say this sort of living arrangement for this sort of population is out of character for our neighborhood. I agree. It's a very good thing. The homeless people who live among us, (some behind Big Y and bus and walk up Northampton Road (past the SRO site) to downtown); and others who live in the bushes behind West Cemetery, or behind the Survival Center in North Amherst, are potentially in for big housing upgrades from

what they've become used to. It's a very good thing that this bold new out-of-character effort is coming to our community.

My hope is that this SRO House is just the first step in making housing more affordable to underserved populations. Next I hope to see from the Planning Board flexible development methods to allow cottage communities for first and last homebuyers, and to achieve workforce affordable housing. We can build small house communities for seniors, and young professionals, and deed restrict them against under graduate student rental occupancy. We can enable our elders to age in place; keep graduates in town raising their families; and have police officers living in our communities again. Let's not rest here.

Thank you for considering and enabling this SRO on Northampton Road. I have just one request: Please expressly condition this permit with assuring that extra efforts are made to work with local non-profits like Amherst Family Outreach and Amherst Survival Center to assure that there's a local preference and mandate to fill the 28 units with our many already-in-town vulnerable community members. When multiple affordable units need to be filled in a short period of time to satisfy lender demands, sometimes it's tempting and feels necessary for managers to look to far- away places to find suitable tenants. Available units are most appropriately reserved for people who currently are struggling within a reasonable radius of 132 Northampton Road.

Thank you for reading my letter in strong support of your initiative. CONGRATULATIONS on getting this far. It's a major achievement.

This email has been scanned for spam and malware by The Email Laundry.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14681

Date Submitted: 3/1/2020

Comment

We are writing to oppose the proposed affordable housing project at 132 Northampton Rd in Amherst, MA.

We in are in opposition for the following reasons:

- 1) Cost vs. benefit. Five million dollars is simply far too much money for a project that will only benefit 28 people.
- 2) Plan. Demolishing and then constructing a new building is a waste of taxpayer money compared to other options.
- 3) Funding source. One-half million dollars from the Community Preservation Act fund drastically depletes this limited fund.
- 4) Other higher priorities. Community Preservation Act funding should be use for other higher priority projects that will benefit hundreds, if not thousands of people. Example includes the long overdue upgrades to Community Field.

Sincerely

Andrew and Katherine Vecchio
Justice Dr
Amherst, MA

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14674

Date Submitted: 2/28/2020

Comment

As a resident of the town of Amherst, a resident of the neighborhood of the proposed affordable housing unit at 132 Northampton Rd., and a concerned citizen, I would like to strongly voice my support of the proposed development. After having read the plans for the apartment complex in detail, I feel it would be a great addition to our community and neighborhood. I fully support the construction of more housing (particularly smaller units with a denser configuration) in the town of Amherst. I also am greatly impressed by plans to include 28 units, which would ease the number of people currently seeking housing in Amherst but cannot secure it. Furthermore, the plan to reserve 10 units for those making 18,000 a year or less, as well as two units for those who are clients of the Department of Mental Health has greatly increased my faith in the project. Not only do I find this kind of housing to be grossly lacking in the town of Amherst generally, it is particularly absent in my neighborhood, which is comprised primarily of single family units. Though I believe these units are also very important for our community, I think they should be accompanied by denser, more environmentally friendly and less costly form of housing that is more accessible to a variety of people. Ultimately, I think this development will be great for low-income and working-class populations in Amherst. Even though I am an employee of Amherst College, earn a middle-income salary and have a post-graduate degree, I have in the past found it extremely difficult to find affordable housing in the town of Amherst. Anything that can be done to alleviate this problem, and make Amherst a more accessible place to live for people with lower incomes, or disabilities would be wonderful for our community, as well as for general equity. I appreciate the chance to voice my approval of the development.

Thank you,
Mary Hicks

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14667

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

Firstly, I would like to commend the Amherst Town council for trying to do something about low income housing in the town, something that needs to be addressed.

Secondly I would like to say that the proposed project has some things going for it in terms of design and the population it aims to help. However, the placing of the proposed project on 132 Northampton Road will massively affect the surrounding neighborhood, which is described incorrectly as 'mixed'. We found that this neighborhood, when canvassed, is overwhelmingly in favor of low income housing, and would actually welcome low income housing within the neighborhood, were it compatible with the demographics that we already have - a family neighborhood.

However, a large structure with single person occupancy, that is likely to be majority male, does not fit with the area, and will significantly impact it, changing the whole feeling of the area.

The town Council has appeared from the outside to have been working with the CDC and to have excluded the local population from this process until it is at an advanced stage. The main arguments seem to have aligned with the 'we are already too far along with this' line of reasoning. The privileged information and support provided to CDC, and the cursory nod to democratic process has left a sour taste in the mouth. The feeling is that the decision has been made in advance, and there is nothing that anyone could say that would change it. This is not the way to run a town. An alternative plan for low income housing in this area would have been welcomed, but it is a plan that is widely opposed.

It is unacceptable that the neighbors have been demonized and labelled as 'refusers' by the council - when all we have wanted was a real say in the process, which has clearly not happened.

I am very disappointed in the process and the decision.

JJW

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14666

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

My name is Nick Ivanovskis and I am an Amherst resident in support of the proposed project at 132 Northampton Rd. This project would assist Amherst's most vulnerable low-income populations and is ideally located in walking distance to grocery stores, public transit, the library, and a community health clinic. I urge DHCD to support this project.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14664

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

I have major concerns about The Valley-CDC, 132 Northampton Rd. proposal and believe , as submitted it should not be approved .

The neighborhood surrounding the site , is a community of single family homes ,

A huge , 28 SRO , on an .88 of an acre of land is vastly out of scale with the other homes in this neighborhood. I believe the building should be smaller in scale ,have fewer single apartments.and have some one bedroom apartments available.

Parking . In my opinion, could be a major issue .14 (7 paved)

Parking spots for ; 28 single tenants, over night guests, daily staff,

Outside supportive services- Where are all of these cars going to park?There is no way to guess how many cars will be on site.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14663

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

Terrible idea- not congruent with the neighborhood, and will affect our property values.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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Aimee Gilbert Loinaz and William Loinaz
14 Orchard Street
Amherst, MA 01002

February 26, 2020

Dear Members of the Project Eligibility Committee,

We write to you as abutters of the proposed 28 unit SRO supportive housing development at 132 Northampton Rd. in the Town of Amherst. We have several concerns related to the project proposal that we feel warrant attention before the distribution of such a significant amount of public funds to the Valley Community Development Corporation of Northampton. Our specific concerns relate to the misrepresentation of our neighborhood in the proposal, as well as the proposed size and structural model, oversight of the vetting process for new tenants, and the inadequate supportive service plan.

Firstly, Valley Community Development Corporation (VCDC) states in its application that the neighborhood abutting its property is comprised of "majority" rental properties. This is categorically untrue. The majority of properties are owner occupied. Our own property was mistakenly counted by them, among others, as a rental property, when in fact we purchased the property in 2011, and have lived in residence ever since. VCDC also only marked the properties along busy Route 9 from University Drive to the West to South Pleasant Street to the East as their surrounding neighborhood. Perhaps this is convenient for them because it brings "the neighborhood" closer to some commercial properties and amenities at the respective ends of their defined area. The true neighborhood, as residents live it, includes the side streets of Orchard, Dana, Lincoln, Woodside Ave., and Blue Hills Rd., and excludes the intersection of University Drive and Rt. 9 (where a large supermarket and extended care facility are situated). This intersection is inconveniently located at a distance from 132 Northampton Rd. down a steep hill. Most of the homes in our actual neighborhood, including the rentals, are occupied by families, with over 60 minor children among them. We point this out to correct what we believe to be a mischaracterization by the developer for the benefit of their application.

Our next concern relates to the size of the proposed development, as well as its structural model. At 28 units, the proposed development is larger than any of the other properties managed by VCDC, and is over the zoning limits for this property, for which the developer will need to apply for an override from the Amherst Zoning Board. It is certainly outsized for the neighborhood, with the only comparable building being the Amherst College Field House. The latter is used for non-residential athletic purposes by Amherst College, and sits on a large property of playing fields and open space. In addition to the density of residents for the relatively small size of the property at 132 Northampton Rd., this brings into question the soundness of the developer's financial model. VCDC states that they need to have a large set of units to offset the costs of operating the facility. They plan on a mixed-income model, with higher income renters subsidizing the operation. With a model that does not have a ceiling for lower income residents, their budget margins are extremely tight. In their much smaller Northampton facilities, they rely on the City of Northampton to finance a portion of their operations. The Town of Amherst has no current plans to further fund this development, and it would not be prudent to rely on such assistance in the future. VCDC has not demonstrated current financial support for their project from other sources, excluding in kind services that are neither guaranteed nor specifically outlined in their proposal.

We are also wary of VCDC's vetting process. Although they state that they will broadly advertise the availability of units, they also rely on regional service providers to recommend residents, and will use an outside company located in Boston, which oversees hundreds of properties, to screen potential tenants.

We are extremely concerned that there is potential for discrimination and violations of the Fair Housing Act under this plan. In their application, VCDC has identified, for their 10 units reserved to serve the homeless population, a new category from their previous proposals of "at-risk for homelessness." While we have no problem in theory with including this at-risk group, we question why VCDC has not adhered to commonly accepted HUD guidelines to prioritize the chronically homeless, and give secondary preference to homeless individuals who meet the criteria for funding. This funding is intended for those having existed in uninhabitable spaces for a recognized period of time, with the exception of domestic violence survivors who are automatically eligible. We question whether their plan is transparent enough to be compliant with the Fair Housing Act, and believe it is vulnerable to mismanagement. While prioritizing the chronically homeless would require better financial planning, it would be well aligned with the best practices and purposes of supportive housing.

In conversations with neighbors, VCDC stated that those tenants in need of services would come recommended from regional service providers with a plan in place. They would be served for less than a year by the referring agency, and then the tenants would be directed towards other local services at their own initiative. In permanent supportive housing, it is our understanding that the best practices involve completing a comprehensive needs assessment after a tenant has been accepted (again with adherence to the FHA in mind), and that comprehensive services will then be targeted to identified needs. The tenants are entitled to these services for the duration of their stay. VCDC acknowledges in its proposal that over 40% of their residents will come with challenges, including substance use disorder, which is consistent with their other tenant populations from previous proposals for Northampton. It is evident that recovery has not been steadily achieved by tenants in their Northampton properties. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council recognizes that recovery from the trauma of homelessness, with or without the co-morbidities of substance use disorder and mental illness, is a cyclical process, with expected decompensation from previously needed adaptive skills. For those with substance use challenges, relapse is part of the natural process. This must be addressed by a multi-year timeline of support.

The developer has not set forth a comprehensive service plan, and although they stated in their proposal that they don't need to provide one at this time, they had assured neighbors that such a plan would be part of this proposal. The service plan provided in the current proposal is not much different than the preliminary proposal presented to the Town of Amherst in 2019, albeit with some extra hours for a resident service provider. We believe that a full-time resident service provider is necessary to meet the needs of the most vulnerable residents. A plan must also be in place to address tenants who may be in crisis when the Resident Service Provider is not on site. We find the current service plan vague and reliant on too many outside, non-accountable partners. While memorandums of understanding are a start, they do not constitute a comprehensive plan.

As abutters to the proposed development, we have a vested interest in the success of any publicly funded use of the property at 132 Northampton Rd. We recognize the need for affordable housing in Amherst, as well as the dire circumstances of the homeless population. At this time, however, we do not feel that the Valley Community Development Corporation has presented a viable proposal in terms of the location, size, structure, fair tenant selection process, or supportive service plan. We ask that the Department of Housing and Community Development not approve project eligibility for the 132 Northampton Rd. project until the concerns presented above have been adequately addressed.

Sincerely,
Aimee Gilbert Loinaz and William Loinaz

Print

132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14661

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

Hello,

I was hearted that Valley CDC increased the number of onsite support hours as compared to the original plan. I still would like to see more onsite support--especially overnight and when Amherst College has sporting events. There is no guarantee that the state will actually begin construction on 116, or even will construct the sidewalks. The site remains far away from buses, shopping and medical support facilities.

Thank you,
Hallie Hughes

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14660

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

I have two major concerns.

1) Viability of the financial plan. This developer has previously owned/run a number of studio apartment buildings, but has never run a project in which the income bands are mixed in the proposed way, including 10 units targeted to very low income individuals with a preference for those emerging from homelessness, and 16 units targeted to individuals earning up to ~\$50,000. Given the significant overnight disturbances seen in the police call logs for this developer's existing properties, can the developer be sure that the mixed income model will succeed? If it does not succeed, what will be the alternative financial plan? For example, if the units targeted for higher income individuals are not all filled, will they be made available for rental by voucher instead of by cash, and if so, does the developer anticipate that this new arrangement might entail a different (more intensive) service plan than is currently proposed? How would that be financed?

2) Parking. The zoning code for Amherst suggest two spaces per housing unit, which would come to 56 spaces for this 28-apartment development. The plan currently entails 0.5 spaces per unit, giving 14 spaces altogether, and the developer justifies this by noting that many individuals with low incomes do not own cars. But, if there are often two or more service providers on site, this really leaves only 12 parking spaces. If anyone is visiting, that number shrinks below 12. It seems doubtful that this will be enough spaces, given that 16 units are to be made available for individuals earning up to \$50,000. Crucially, there is no overnight on-street parking allowed in the surrounding neighborhoods from November through April. What will happen if more than 50% of tenants own a car? What will happen if the tenants would like to accommodate overnight guests who arrive by car? (The most recent plan now states clearly that overnight guests will be allowed).

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14659

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

1) Why are there no family units included in this development? This has been consistently identified as the highest priority of the state and town. The biggest shortage statewide is for housing for families transitioning from homelessness. This is an excellent location for families: there are 21 resident children within 500 ft and 40-50 kids living within 0.3 mile. The state should work with the developer to ensure that the highest social needs are actually being met in return for 6 million in funding.

2) The parking situation is completely unrealistic and wildly out of step with local guidelines and the actual availability of public transportation. Local code calls for 2 parking spaces per unit (that would be 56 spaces). Yet there are only 7 paved spaces (and 7 unpaved spaces) planned for this development. There is no on-street parking nearby and no on-street parking at all during snow emergencies. Parking will be needed for guests, service providers, the on-site manager and the building management and simply will not be available.

This development is not actually accessible to public transportation; it is not on or near a bus line. I ask the state to figure this out for themselves by trying to chart how a resident would realistically get to the grocery store, the nearest local health center, or a workplace in Amherst or any of the surrounding towns using public transportation. I would like this development to be able to work for local residents but I think there is a lot of wishful thinking here about accessibility. Future residents of the development deserve oversight by the state on these issues.

3) Many detailed comments were given by neighbors over the summer in presentations to the Town Council at a public meeting but are not included in the PEL application. This information can be found here under the heading "Presentations by Community Members at June 24th Open Meeting of Residents." <https://www.amherstma.gov/3489/Northampton-Road-Project>

I support affordable housing at 132 Northampton Rd but I do not wish to include my name because of the repeated misrepresentation of comments intended to help improve this development.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14658

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

I remain concerned about the lack of nighttime supervision, which seems to me very likely to pose problems not only for the neighborhood but for residents themselves, who will be subject to any disruptions or dangers posed by those who accompany residents back to their apartments. The blind eye being turned to drug problems in this population, which includes people who have admitted to a history of opioid use, seems to me irresponsible.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14657

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

Massachusetts DHCD personnel should be aware that there are likely a significant number of people in the community surrounding the proposed development who have concerns about the development, but are at this point too afraid to raise their concerns publicly. This is because of an extremely aggressive bullying and shaming campaign that has been waged by those in favor of the plan against anyone offering constructive criticism. Neighbors offering opinions that fall anything short of unconditional support for the plan in its current form have been shouted at in the street, called names in writing, mocked on social media, and freely criticized in the local press by journalists who have written opinion pieces without seeking comment from, or checking their facts with, any of the neighbors whom they are characterizing. Given the hostile rhetoric, some neighbors with occupations that make them publicly visible are now afraid for their jobs. This bullying has been carried out not only by local housing activists and journalists but also by at least one member of paid Town staff. Furthermore, even though concerned residents notified the Town Council leadership and Town staff leadership of the Town staff member's bullying behavior, and even though those leaders acknowledged privately that this behavior was unacceptable, the member of staff in question appears to have remained in that paid position.

Thus, although we are now advised by the Town Planning staff and Town Council to air our concerns in this public comment period (and again, later, in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals) most neighbors with concerns do not feel able to do so. This is undoubtedly a failure of the democratic process that has been contributed to by our Town Council and Town Staff. It does a disservice both to abutters of the proposed development, who have a clear stake in the success of this project, and to future residents of the development itself, because the plan is unlikely to be scrutinized in the kind of detail that would lead to crucial improvements under the normal circumstances of having an open, healthy dialogue surrounding an ambitious new community project.

If the DCHD personnel would like to open a dialogue with neighbors who are afraid to come forward, they should feel free to contact me: it may be possible to work out a way to allow all voices to be heard, in keeping with the principles of open, public comment but minimizing the effects of local bullying. Alternatively, several neighbors gave presentations at the community meeting on June 24th 2019, and the slide shows containing the data analyses and constructive criticism are available at the following link: <https://www.amherstma.gov/3489/Northampton-Road-Project> under the title "Presentations by Community Members at June 24th Open Meeting of Residents at Bangs Community Center". To the best of my knowledge, this link was included in the Project Eligibility Letter application from Valley CDC, but the presentation slides themselves were not.

Rosie Cowell
104 Dana Street, Amherst MA 01002

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AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY
33 KELLOGG AVENUE
AMHERST, MA 01002

February 27, 2020

SUPPORT LETTER FOR VALLEY CDC DEVELOPMENT AT 132 NORTHAMPTON ROAD

The Amherst Housing Authority Board of Commissioners enthusiastically supports the Valley Community Development Corporation's proposal to build a twenty-eight unit Single Room Occupancy Dwelling on Northampton Road in Amherst. The Housing Authority is a key player in the effort to assist low income families and individuals to secure affordable housing in Amherst. We see the urgent need for affordable housing for our voucher holders. Unfortunately, many of our voucher holders cannot find affordable apartments in Amherst and must move from this community to other towns and cities. For example, in 2019 the AHA issued thirty Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers and only eleven voucher holders were able to lease-up in Amherst. Eight voucher holders found affordable housing in surrounding communities and the remaining eleven vouchers expired.

The Valley CDC is a community leader in providing well-constructed, safe and secure housing for low income people. In 2005, the AHA and the Valley CDC collaborated in developing eleven units of housing for families and single adults at 683-687 Main Street. We were impressed with the CDC's expertise as a developer and their sense of long term responsibility to the tenants, the Housing Authority and to the Amherst community.

We are eager to support the CDC and to work with them to bring a valuable housing resource to the Town of Amherst.

Thank you,

Michael Burkart
Chair, Amherst Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Print

132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14653

Date Submitted: 2/27/2020

Comment

I have concerns about Valley- CDC affordable housing project at 132 Northampton Road. I believe , the state should not support this project as submitted.

* This is an established , residential neighborhood. 28, very small Single apartments on a .8 acre lot is of high density. Why not fewer apartments and some one bedroom.?

* Only 14 parking spaces for 28 residents, staff, visiting service personnel and overnight guests. VCDC can not estimate how many cars. Where will everyone park.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14646

Date Submitted: 2/25/2020

Comment

I want to voice my strong support for the 132 Northampton Road Project. I live about 1 mile from the project and have been an Amherst resident for more than 15 years.

Amherst is a wonderful community. However, like many cities and towns in the Commonwealth, it lacks affordable housing and does not even come close to meeting the demand.

The Northampton Road Project is a step in the right direction by offering affordable housing options to our low income neighbors. Valley Community Development Corporation has a good track record. The location is close to downtown, medical services and grocery stores. Onsite support services will be available to stabilize tenants.

The project is critical to address the needs of our low income neighbors and to alleviate homelessness. I urge the town to ensure 132 Northampton Road becomes a reality and to work with developers to create further affordable housing options for individuals and families.

Sincerely,
Marion Hohn

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14645

Date Submitted: 2/25/2020

Comment

I believe that the project design by Valley CDC should not be approved as submitted, for the following reasons:

The neighborhood in which this project will be sited is a family neighborhood. Although the proposal describes the setting as a "Northampton Road corridor," in reality this is a neighborhood comprised of family residences with many children.

Because this is a family neighborhood, the proposed density is too high. A 28-unit SRO is too many single people (primarily men), in small units. As a supporter of affordable housing, I would like a smaller number of apartments, to include some one-bedroom units. One-bedroom apartments would allow low-income single mothers, with custody of a child, to live there.

The mass of this apartment building seems out of keeping with neighborhood homes. The developers should be required to provide 3-D models of this proposed project to give a sense of the mass of this building. To avoid an unplanned hodgepodge, the mass of the building should be carefully reviewed to make certain it is in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood of family homes.

R. Lindsey
56 Dana St.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14644

Date Submitted: 2/25/2020

Comment

Good afternoon,

As an Amherst resident, I am writing to offer my strong support for the affordable housing project proposed at 132 Northampton Road. I believe that all members of our community, including and most especially those transitioning out of homelessness or those who are low-income, ought to be able to secure a roof over their heads. These neighbors have the same inherent worth and dignity as residents of Amherst who can afford the astronomical rent required to live in our town.

We are made stronger by diversity in our community. This includes economic diversity. By creating 28 new units of affordable housing, we are making Amherst that much more accessible to folks from different backgrounds and marginalized identities. The Amherst I'm proud to live in is one that supports all our neighbors and works tirelessly to ensure that all have access to housing that they can afford.

All the very best,
Emerson Finkle

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14641

Date Submitted: 2/25/2020

Comment

I support this development. It's clear that we need this kind of housing available in town. The location is as ideal as any we'll find given it abuts Amherst College field on one side and is set back and on a busy, major thruway in and out of town. It's convenient to public transportation and to downtown. I don't doubt the arguments against the location are genuine and that there will be drawbacks for some residents. But our town policy to provide more affordable housing must take priority or we will never meet the town's housing needs.

Thank you,
Andra Rose, 64 Amity Place

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14640

Date Submitted: 2/25/2020

Comment

I believe in the affordable project on Northampton Road. Amherst has backpedaled on housing for way too long.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14638

Date Submitted: 2/24/2020

Comment

To whom it may concern,

Amherst is an amazing area, packed with three different institutions of higher education, professors, staff for these institutions, and- of course- college students. I start with this to say that students flood the area creating a melting pot of diversity and young minds- many of which want to be involved in positive change in the community. Unfortunately, we also create disturbances and massive perturbations in the housing market here- and many times not for the best. Many apartment style housing units are tailored for students and the cost reflects the population it is appealing to. This creates huge inequities for the natives of Amherst who need housing that doesn't appeal to seasonal college students but who need permanent AND affording housing in the area. To further compound this problem is the fact that some housing projects like this one meet criticism from some students or professors who fear a project like this would upset the microcosm of the College campus, without realizing that College campuses in the area exacerbate the very problem they are hesitant to accept the solution to. I can only say that there is a moral obligation to have housing that appeals to natives of Amherst who may be low income and depend on housing like this. And, I can only add that the disparaging comments from individuals on these College campuses are tented with ignorance of what being low income means and with the privilege that is sometimes associated with a place at an institution of higher education. A community like Amherst is great because it supports all members of the community not just those pursuing degrees!

Best,

Isiaha Price
Amherst College '21

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14637

Date Submitted: 2/24/2020

Comment

I strongly support the 132 Northampton Road building project. The Town of Amherst needs to encourage affordable housing projects, like this one, to be built in the town centers, near public transportation, food stores and health care. It is very important the Town plan projects and support projects that very low to middle income individuals and families can benefit from. We do not want Amherst real estate to outprice hard working people with minimum wage jobs. This particular project is exemplary because of the social services and supports that are built into the rental program.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Fricke

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14632

Date Submitted: 2/24/2020

Comment

I support the Valley Community Development Corporation's application to the Department of Housing and Community Development for project eligibility determination under the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program for 132 Northampton Road.

Recent studies have put numbers on how bad the discrepancy between incomes and housing costs have become. In Massachusetts, the fair market rent for a studio apartment is \$1,272; that tenant needs to earn \$24.46 an hour. Those hourly wages mean an annual income of \$51,000. We all know there are many many people who do not earn anywhere near that amount. The estimated median income for renter households in Massachusetts is \$45,209.

This project will make it possible for the town to provide stability, both of a place to live and services to help keep a place to live, for 28 individuals at the extremely low-and low-income levels of 30, 50 and 80% of the Area Median Income Levels. The Town has demonstrated financial support and garnered funding sources totaling approximately \$750,000 for the project. The Town has worked with neighbors regarding neighborhood impact by holding public hearings, forums and district meetings that have resulted in some changes in the proposal details.

I believe that the Valley Community Development Corporation's project is consistent with our critical community needs and urge your approval of their application.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.
Elisa K Campbell
27 Pine Grove
Amherst, MA 01002

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14630

Date Submitted: 2/23/2020

Comment

Make 132 Northampton Road A Non-Smoking Property

The property is in a neighborhood that is a majority family homes. There are more than twenty children living close to the site and thirty to forty more living within 0.3 miles.

The other neighbor is Amherst College, with the college football stadium right behind 132 Northampton Road. I have attached a photo of the tail gate yesterday, 2/22/20, for the Amherst Men's Lacrosse scrimmage.

Instead of providing a smoking bench on the property as shown on the site plan, I request that consideration be given to making 132 Northampton Road not only a non-smoking building but a non-smoking property.

This would be a concession to the surrounding neighborhood and a sign of good faith going into the partnership of this development being situated in this neighborhood.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

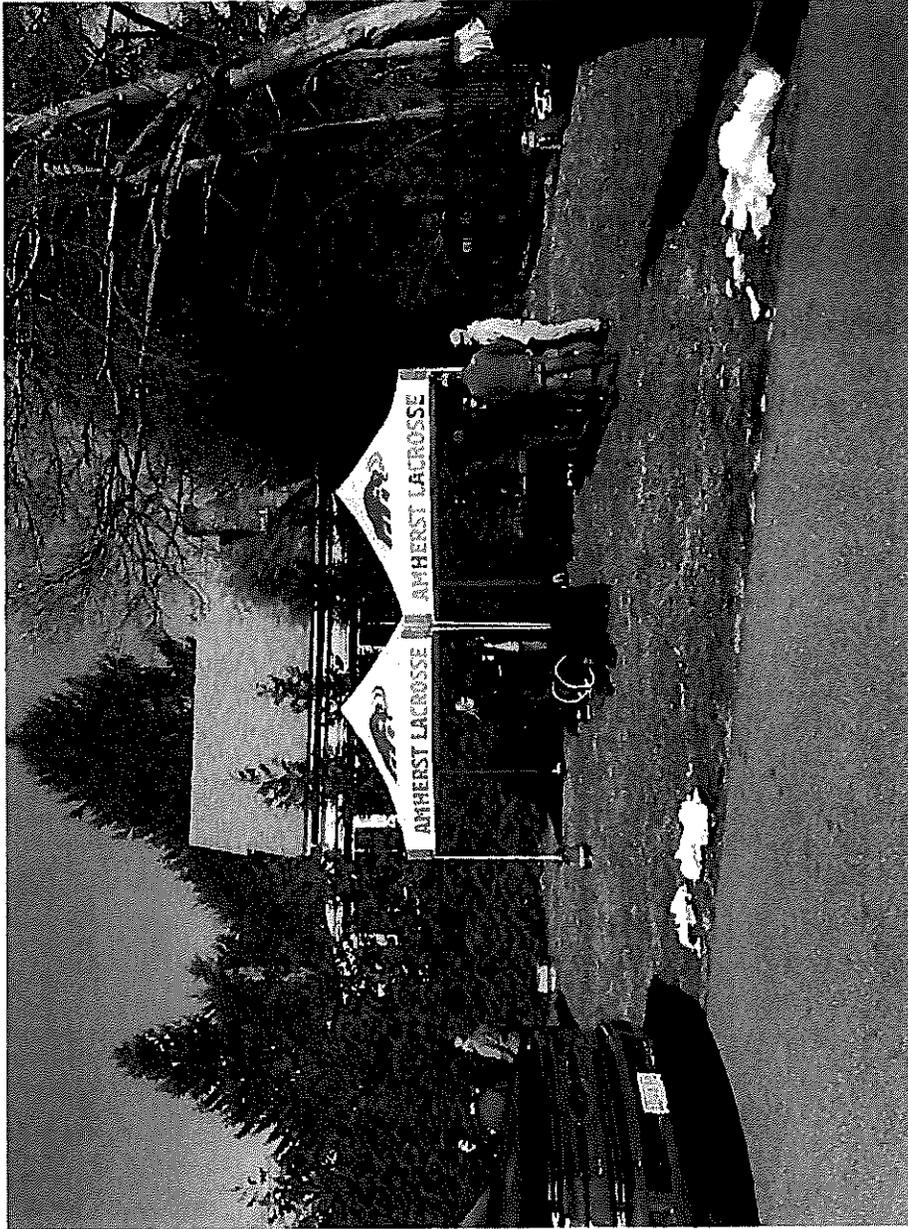
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Need for Bus Access and Adequate On-Site Parking

There are no bus stops on this section of Northampton Road and the site is up the hill from the nearest shopping plaza. Carrying groceries up the hill will be difficult, particularly during winter months.

Vehicular and bus access for this site will be important for the residents to shop, go to appointments, and to go to work.

There is no on street parking along Northampton Road or anywhere near the site.

For each of the 16 low to moderate income studios renting for \$740-\$795/month it makes sense to have an on-site parking space. In addition on-site parking is needed for weekday staff and overnight guests.

For those without cars, it will be important to have van service to and from the site.

Ideally a bus stop will be created close to the property as well.

Comment

I (with my wife and family), live at 99 Dana Street, 5 houses from the proposed Valley CDC 132 Northampton Road development project.

We chose to live in Amherst because of the nurturing community environment and because of the community ethos of social responsibility for children and adults across age ranges and regardless of circumstances or need.

The proposed development is advertised as housing to serve individuals at risk. We strongly support Amherst in moving toward providing appropriate housing for individuals at risk. We are proud to be part of a community that recognizes affordable housing as a right and seeks to provide resources toward this end.

However, the design and implementation of the proposed development falls drastically short in several vital measures of positive impact both on the individuals at risk. It also dramatically threatens the friendly and open vibrancy of our community, that essential part of our community that enables our strength to reach out to serve individuals at risk.

Positive impact on the individuals at need is lacking in the proposed development in these characteristics:

1. It would house many more individuals than other developments on whose success this design seeks to emulate.
2. There is no fulltime live in resident management.
3. There is no fulltime social work presence.
4. There is no required monitoring against return to alcohol or drug dependency.
5. The part time social work presence is not permanently guaranteed in the contract budge. It I dependent on grants which might not be renewed, which then would leave no social work presence.
6. There is no bus stop near enough to allow travel to buy essentials and return to home without long walk carrying heavy bags.
7. Inside common space is too small. Friendly congregation would be forced outside.
8. There are only single men. Statistics predict that most will have chronic psychiatric disease, history of drug abuse and history of violence.

The likelihood for substance abuse relapse for the proposed population is ~70%. The likelihood of violence against a stranger should there be relapse is ~30%. The characteristics in the list above make it likely that social mixing for individuals in the development will be predominantly among themselves, and less with individuals with families, and less with individuals without history of drug abuse. Shopping will be difficult. Travel to work and for healthcare appointments (critical for this population) will be difficult. This lack of positive community models and difficulty in basic activities of daily living will make the risks of relapse and subsequent violence in the community even higher.

The proposed development thus falls far short of providing optimal service to individuals at risk it proposes to serve or to preserving the friendly and open vibrancy of our community. Many who would enter the development would come directly from a detox center, or perhaps from a halfway house designed as a temporary holding residence before re-entry as a permanent member of a community. The proposed development should be just such a permanent residence that decreases the likelihood of relapse and increases the likelihood of successful permanent reentry into the community. Because of the characteristics listed above, it falls short: opportunities are missed for reducing the likelihood of relapse and reducing the likelihood or related violence in the community.

For this reason, the proposed development has an inordinate likelihood of failure. The failure would first become evident with the congregating of men on the sidewalk along the development and in the Amherst fields that the development abuts, fields that are now open to the surrounding community. Should there be even a small incident outside the rules of Amherst College, the fields would likely be shut to the public, situation is likely to make the existing community less friendly and less open. Community members will become less likely to reach out to our underserved population.

The proposed regulations of the development state that an individual who relapses must move out. However, given the lack of fulltime social work presence, detection of relapse would be suboptimal. Given Massachusetts laws protecting renters, the removal of an individual who has relapsed from the development would certainly be delayed. This would expose the surrounding community to an individual statistically at high risk for violence, given his relapse into drug abuse.

In general, of course, this is a risk that a community must take when accepting its social responsibility to help the particular individuals at risk we are discussing. However, the wise community accepts such a social responsibility not only with sympathy but also with discernment. We propose that approval of the proposed project should be contingent on the following conditions:

1. The development should be smaller.
2. Social work presence should be guaranteed within the ongoing costs in the contract with the development company, independent of need for grant renewal. There should be consultation with a social work expert on the frequency, duration and focus of social work contact with each renter in the development. This should also be in the contract.
3. A sufficiently large common space (or common spaces) should be designed within the facility to allow cordial gatherings outside individual apartments.
4. Drug and alcohol testing should be mandated.
5. A program, at the Bang Center, should be proactively organized and funded for periodic mixers between individuals in the

development and volunteers in the community, to promote mixing between residents of the development and the larger community.

6. The development should include landscaping of a flat semi-circle inset at its boundary with Route 9. Design should be together with consultation with PVTA and approved as adequate for a bus stop. Design should be together with consultation with the fire department and approved as adequate for fire or other emergency.

7. Agreement should be reached with PVTA to add a bus stop at this semi-circle location.

8. Process for removal of an individual who relapse, or for probation and then removal if probation fails, should be established. The process should be proactively approved by the part of the state beaurocracy responsible for reviewing eviction proceedings

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Comment

We live at 99 Dana Street, 5 houses from the proposed Valley CDC 132 Northampton Road development project.

The Valley CDC 132 Northampton Road development project is advertised as housing to serve individuals at risk. We support Amherst in moving toward providing appropriate housing for individuals at risk. We are proud to be part of a community that recognizes affordable housing as a right and seeks to provide resources toward this end.

However, the design and implementation of this proposed development falls drastically short in several vital measures of positive impact first to the individuals at risk and second to our community. It threatens the friendly and open vibrancy of our neighborhood, that is an essential part of our community that enables our strength to reach out to serve individuals at risk.

Positive impact on the individuals at need is lacking in the proposed development in these characteristics:

1. It would house many more individuals than other developments on whose success this design seeks to emulate.
2. There is no 24 hour live in resident management.
3. There is no full-time social work presence.
4. There is no required monitoring against return to alcohol or drug dependency.
5. The part-time social work presence is not permanently guaranteed in the contract budget. It is dependent on grants which might not be renewed, which then would leave no social work presence.
6. There is no bus stop near enough to allow travel to buy essentials and return to home without a long walk carrying heavy bags.
7. Inside common space is too small. Friendly congregation would be forced outside.
8. The occupants will be mostly men. Statistics predict that most will have chronic psychiatric disease, history of drug abuse and history of violence.

The likelihood for substance abuse relapse for the proposed population is ~70%. The likelihood of violence against a stranger should there be relapse is ~ 30%. The characteristics in the list above make it likely that social mixing for individuals in the development will be predominantly among themselves, and less with individuals with families, and less with individuals without history of drug abuse. Shopping will be difficult. Travel to work and for healthcare appointments (critical for this population) will be difficult. The lack of positive community models and difficulty in basic activities of daily living will make the risks of relapse and subsequent violence in the community even higher.

The proposed development falls far short of providing optimal service to individuals at risk and threatens the friendly and open vibrancy of our neighborhood. Some of the individuals who would enter the development would come from being homeless. The proposed development should be a permanent residence that decreases the likelihood of relapse and increases the likelihood of successful permanent reentry into the community. Because of the characteristics listed above, it falls short: opportunities are missed for reducing the likelihood of relapse and reducing the likelihood of drug use or related violence in the community.

For this reason, the proposed development has an inordinate likelihood of failure. The failure would first become evident with the congregating of men on the sidewalk along the development and in the Amherst fields that the development abuts, fields that are now open to the surrounding community. Should there be even a small incident outside the rules of Amherst College, the fields would likely be shut to the public, which would reduce access to open space for our neighborhood and create a situation likely to make the existing neighborhood less friendly and less open. Community members might become less likely to want to reach out to the underserved population.

The proposed regulations of the development state that an individual who relapses must move out. However, given the lack of full-time social work presence, detection of relapse would be suboptimal. Given Massachusetts laws protecting renters, the removal of an individual who has relapsed from the development would certainly be delayed. This would expose the surrounding community to an individual statistically at high risk for violence, given his relapse into drug abuse.

In general, of course, this is a risk that a community must take when accepting its social responsibility to help the particular individuals at risk we are discussing. However, the wise community accepts such a social responsibility not only with sympathy but also with discernment. We propose that approval of the proposed project should be contingent on the following conditions:

1. The development should be smaller
2. Guarantee permanent, live-in, 24 hour management.
3. Social work presence should be guaranteed within the ongoing costs independent of need for grant renewal. There should be consultation with a social work expert on the frequency, duration and focus of social work contact with each renter in the development.
4. A sufficiently large common space (or common spaces) should be designed within the facility to allow cordial gatherings outside individual apartments.
5. Drug and alcohol testing should be mandated.
6. A program, at the Bang Community Center, should be proactively organized and funded for periodic mixers between individuals in the development and volunteers in the community, to promote mixing between residents of the development and

the larger community.

6. The development should have a vehicular pull off from Route 9. Design should be together with consultation with PVTA and approved as adequate for a bus stop. Design should be together with consultation with the fire department and approved as adequate for fire or other emergency.

7. Agreement should be reached with the PVTA to add a bus stop at this location.

8. A process for removal of an individual who relapses, or for probation and then removal if probation fails, should be established. The process should be proactively approved by the part of the state bureacracy responsible for reviewing eviction proceedings.

Sincerely,
Michael Rossen MD, PhD
99 Dana Street
Amherst

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14624

Date Submitted: 2/22/2020

Comment

I am in support of affordable housing and I agree that Amherst needs it. That being said, I am not in support of changing zoning laws that allow the building of a monstrosity in a small neighborhood, the majority of which is owner occupied, single family homes. This project would significantly alter the neighborhood in which families have spent decades building into the community that it now is. I strongly believe that the proposed project size and location are inappropriate for 132 Northampton Road.

While my first choice would be for relocation to a more appropriate site that could better accommodate the town's need for affordable housing, one alternative is to decrease the number of units proposed. The number of single room occupancy units in this proposal is 4 times what is normally allowed on a lot of that size in the RG zone. To increase the number of units to 28 is an increase in occupancy by 460%. This is an unreasonable amount to subject existing neighbors who have lived in their quiet homes for almost 50 years. Affordable housing for families would make much greater sense and would mesh with the existing neighborhood.

Valley CD's description of the neighborhood to support their project greatly mis-represents the actual neighborhood surrounding 132 Northampton Road. Valley CDC defines the rte 9 strip as the neighborhood to 132 Northampton Road. As someone who grew up in this neighborhood, I can assure you, while many homes on rte 9 are a part of our neighborhood, the rte 9 strip is not our neighborhood. A more accurate description includes the many side streets of Orchard, Woodside, Dana, Blue Hills and Amity. As a child, we would venture off into the neighborhood to knock on friends and neighbors doors and gather kids to play games at the football field. While I agree that rte 9 is a busy road, the surrounding side roads are not and are filled with family friendly quiet backyards to play in. This inaccurate description of the neighborhood should be modified before considering the approval of this project and making unnecessary zoning changes.

My family's home, the immediate neighbor to 132, was built in 1880 and my parents have lived there since 1973. Their home is part of the historical district of Amherst. The proposed project site was the original carriage house to our historic home. Their home hosts a private backyard with gardens and grass and a patio. The proposed 28 unit project would greatly impact what has been their home for the last 48 years. It would take a one family home, increase its footprint size and increase occupancy by 460%. Adding a large 28 unit complex to any neighborhood is going to permanently alter the landscape and neighborhood. It's disheartening to know that an aging couple who have invested their life and their assets into the improvement of this neighborhood and their home can quickly get their home altered so greatly by the erection of a 28 unit apartment complex.

Valley CDC proposes a small parking lot claiming many occupants will not have cars and therefore will not need a lot of parking. If this is the case, transportation would be by foot, or bike. The proposed site is on a very busy road with no crosswalk and a 10-15 minute walk to the nearest bus stop or shopping plaza. To go west and reach a sidewalk, one would need to cross rte 9 to reach the shopping plaza .6-.8 miles away. A long journey on the way back up the hill. I know from years of experience this is a dangerous road to cross. The lack of crosswalk to reach the sidewalk, poor lighting and speed at which vehicles travel this state highway, will remain hazardous for pedestrians and should not be encouraged.

I do not support this project moving forward and ask that you too consider this. Please do not approve this project.

Respectfully,

Hillary Wilbur Ferro

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14620

Date Submitted: 2/22/2020

Comment

To Whom It May Concern:

- Contrary to what Valley CDC reports, in fact the surrounding neighborhood is made up of mostly single family or duplex homes making the lot at 132 Northampton Road part of a family residential neighborhood as opposed to predominantly rental properties. It is more than "the Northampton Road corridor" cited by Valley CDC.
- Valley CDC's statement that the area has a high volume of rental properties suggests that the population is inherently transient. My family lived in Amherst College rental housing (Woodside and Lincoln Ave.) for 12 years. Amherst College rental housing in this neighborhood is NOT college student housing with residents turning over every year, nor is it the general public renting these spaces.
- A 28-unit apartment building does not belong in any residential neighborhood. An appropriate addition would be something like the John Nutting apartments in Amherst which serve families who have a member with a disability. Or family housing units for immigrant families moving to the area. Family apartments are the key for this area to remain a viable and vibrant neighborhood.
- Valley CDC suggests that 7 apartments, each with 4 inhabitants, would amount to the same as 28 single units. That is like comparing a home to a hotel room. By making that comparison they are missing the point of this housing development integrating successfully with the surrounding community.
- Supporters of this project point to the urgent need for more affordable housing in town, and extol 132 Northampton Rd's unbeatable location for services. Refuting that claim, the town did not include affordable units in either newly completed or upcoming construction downtown. These buildings are much closer to required services and transportation.

Valley CDC characterizes the make-up of the neighborhood that surrounds 132 Northampton Road with a particular spin. The specific high density, single-room plan is not structurally compatible and does not "integrate into existing development patterns" of the neighborhood. (Eligibility criteria for PEL application support.)

Thank you for considering various viewpoints.

Sincerely,

Yanik Nichols
48 Dana St., Amherst MA 01002

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14616

Date Submitted: 2/21/2020

Comment

My name is Jared Nussbaum and I am an Amherst resident in support of the proposed project at 132 Northampton Rd. Affordable housing is an important part of any town and any city. It is our responsibility as residents to ensure that those who are most vulnerable are taken care of and not left to scrape by. In our national housing crisis there is nothing more important than building more places to call home, especially as prices keep rising, and opposition stays loud, and waitlists for subsidies gets longer. This crisis doesn't go away if we just ignore it and wait for residents elsewhere to take on the task. This project doesn't just provide a place to stay but would assist Amherst's most vulnerable low-income populations meet their needs by being ideally located within walking distance from grocery stores, public transit, the library, and a community health clinic. I urge DHCD will do the right thing and support this project to strengthen this community.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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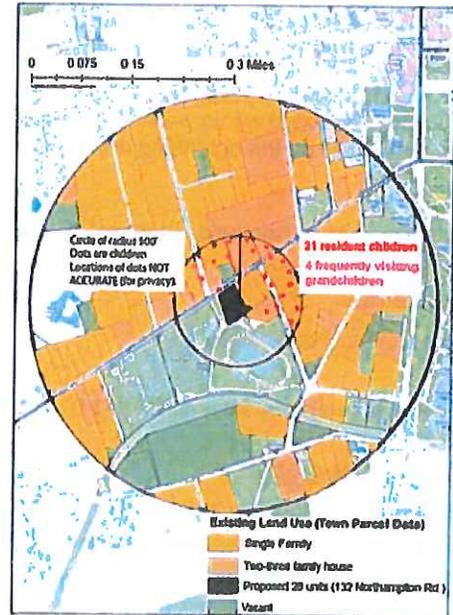
To: DHCD staff, site visit to 132 Northampton Road, Amherst

February 10, 2020

The Neighborhood: two views

Developer's definition of neighborhood: "Northampton road corridor" (the rectangle).
 Neighbors' definition: places close to the site (the circle)

Map at same scale showing land use: dominated by single-family residences (shaded yellow)



Some of the Developer's claims (PEL application)	Neighbors' corrections
The neighborhood is the Northampton road corridor	The neighborhood is the circle around the site
The neighborhood includes many high density rental uses	The neighborhood is majority <u>family residences</u> , with > 20 children living close to the site and 30-40 more living within 0.3 miles (see map above)
Properties within 300 feet "include a majority of residential rental units"	Properties within 300 feet include a <u>minority</u> of residential rental units
Adjacent property "includes commercial use as an Inn/Bed & Breakfast"	Adjacent property currently has <u>no</u> B&B or other commercial use – it is a single-family residence
The site is at the "nexus of General Residence, Neighborhood Residence, and Educational" zones	The site is at the <u>outer edge</u> of General Residence, adjacent to Neighborhood Residence zone
The site has an "excellent walkable location and proximity to amenities and services" including shopping plazas and bus stops	Elevation of the site is 100 ft. above the shopping plazas. No bus stops on this section of Northampton Road. All bus service is greatly reduced in summer. Closest stops are more than 10 min walk.
Site is "only ¼ mile from a well-used bike trail."	Public entrances to the bike trail are 0.4 and 0.5 miles from the site.
A 78-unit assisted living facility is "located only 1,100 feet from this site."	The facility is 4,000 feet from the site on foot or by car

The parcels within 300 ft as abutters of parcel 14C-8: 132 Northampton Rd are:

Immediate abutters:

- 14A-173: 126 Northampton Rd.: Single family owner-occupied home (Wilbur).
- 14C-9: 23/25 Two-family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (2 units)
- 14A-140: 143 Northampton Rd.: Two-family multi-generational owner-occupied home (Atteridge) (2 units)
- 14A-299: adjacent undeveloped lot owned by Atteridge

Abutters within 300 ft.:

- 14A-306: 17 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Wells)
- 14A-175: 14 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Loinaz-Gilbert)
- 14A-174: 22 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Lopez)
- 14C-15: 30 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Hughes-Diamond)
- 14C-16: 40 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Stavchansky/ Stavins)
- 14A-142: 104 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home: (Cowell/Huber)
- 14A-141: 110 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home (Porter)
- 14A-135: 105 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home (Kurtulis)
- 14A-136: 111 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home (Xiao)
- 14A-171: 115 A,B,C,D,E, 117 Northampton Rd: non-owner occupied rental building (Cook) (6 units)
- 14A-139: 155 Northampton Rd. Single family home: for sale
- 14A-138: 163 Northampton Rd. Single family owner-occupied home with apartment (Haughton) (2 units)
- 14A-137: 169 Northampton Rd. Single family owner-occupied home: (Whaples)
- 14A-176: 104 Northampton Rd.: Single family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (1 unit)
- 14A-170: 99 Northampton Rd.: Two-family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (2 units)
- 14C-14: Pratt field/Conway field house: Amherst College (no occupants or housing units)

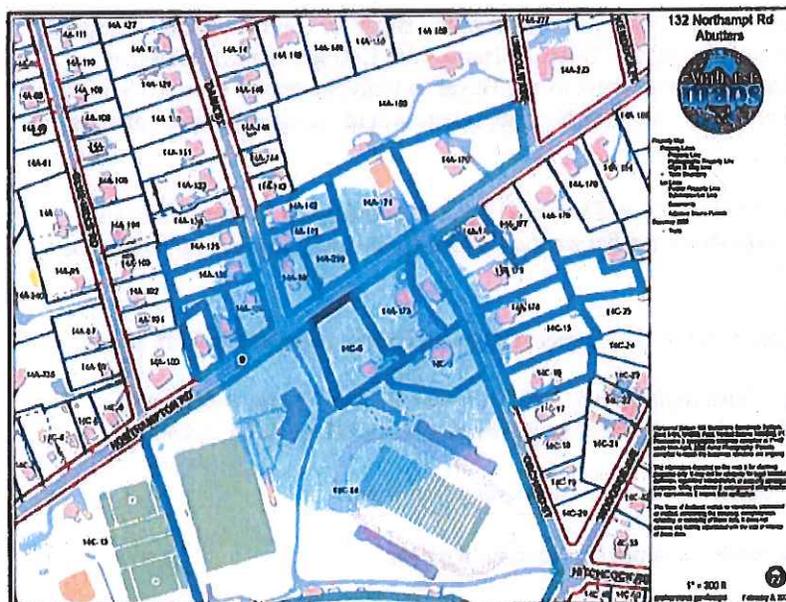
Totals:

20 parcels, 27 housing units

Of which:

13/20 parcels currently owner-occupied

15/27 housing units currently owner-occupied



Map courtesy of Town Planning Department

February 2020

Dear Town Planner's office,

Valley CDC's application is inaccurate or misleading with respect to several facts about the surrounding neighborhood. Corrected information is listed below in response to Valley CDC's text (*shown in italics, with page numbers from their application*).

I believe this information to be accurate and hope that the Town Planner's office will convey it to the State. I also support affordable housing at this site. However, I do not wish to share my name for fear of reprisal.

Valley CDC: "The site was selected primarily due to its excellent walkable location and proximity to amenities and services. It is located within ½ mile of Amherst Center and just over ½ mile from two major shopping plazas. It is within ½ mile of several public bus stops and only ¼ mile from a well-used bike trail." (p. 2)

Response: There is no access to the bike path at the point that is 0.25 mile away except by clambering down a footpath on private property next to the bridge over the bike path. The actual points of access are 0.5 miles (Snell St. and Rt. 116) miles and 0.4 miles away (end of Hazel Avenue; requires crossing and re-crossing Rt. 9).

The parcel is located on a steep hill, where sidewalks are often icy or impassable in winter. To get groceries from the Big Y, a resident could 1) Walk down to the Big Y and back up. Google maps estimates this is a 15 minute walk each way. Carrying groceries, it could be a 20+ minute walk because of the elevation gain back up the hill. 2) Walk 12+ minutes up Northampton Rd. and down Lincoln Ave to the #33 bus. This bus runs at most every 35 minutes and doesn't start until 11 am on weekends. The sidewalks on Lincoln Ave are not improved or accessible.

Buses in Amherst provide very limited service, particularly in the summer. To get to UMass by bus, a resident would need to walk to the downtown post office (0.7 miles) and catch the Rt. 30 bus (which departs every 15 minutes). Other parts of UMass would then be accessible by a further shuttle.

Buses to Northampton run 2-3 times per hour and either depart from the Big Y or from Amherst College. These buses run only ~ 1 time per hour in the summer. Buses to Hampshire College and Mt. Holyoke depart every 30 minutes from a stop that is a 10 min walk away. Buses to Holyoke depart every two hours and only twice on the weekends. Bus service to other surrounding towns would require multiple changes of bus line.

Valley CDC: "The neighborhood is mixed residential. The site is located at the nexus of three different zoning districts (General Residential, Neighborhood Residential, and Educational) and is itself within the General Residential (R-G) zone." (p. 4)

Response: This parcel is at the very edge of the R-G zone. It is immediately adjacent to R-N zones.

Valley CDC: "Abutters to the property (Town definition of 300' from the property bounds) include a majority of residential rental units with the largest parcel being the Amherst College fields. Within this 300' bound:

- o Most uses are residential (consistent with the proposed development) and are single or small multi-family buildings.*
- o The majority of housing units are not owner-occupied (consistent with the*

proposed rental housing development). Many of the rental properties are owned by Amherst College."

Response: Using the town's property card information, there are 20 parcels that are within 300 ft of 132 Northampton Rd. Of these, 13 are owner-occupied homes. Of the remaining seven: 1 is a single family home for sale; 1 is a vacant lot owned by the occupant of the adjacent lot; 3 are faculty/staff rental houses owned by Amherst College; and 1 is the Amherst College field house. There is only one parcel in this set that is comparable in use to the proposed development: a single structure with 6 rental units. (See parcel list at end of document).

Even if you count units and you count the home for sale as a rental, there are a minority of non-owner occupied units. There a total of 12 rental units out of 27 total housing units.

Valley CDC: "Valley has delineated the primary neighborhood for this proposed development as the Northampton Road corridor between University Drive to the west and the Amherst Town Center to the east. This is the major transit connector and is where future tenants will primarily drive, bike, and walk. The character of this corridor is renter-occupied housing. Of the 45 parcels on this section of road, only 14 (31%) include an owner occupant. Of the total residential units (144) on Northampton Road, only 14 are owner occupied (less than 10%)."

The primary neighborhood for this proposed development is defined in terms of distance to the building and the foot traffic that actually occurs in this location. Corrected information was presented over the summer but Valley CDC did not respond to these requests. Foot traffic actually goes mainly to and from the athletic fields from the surrounding streets, and from these locations to the center of town, UMass, and Amherst College. These streets and routes are Dana St., Orchard St., Woodside Ave, Lincoln Ave, and Blue Hills Rd., in addition to Northampton Rd. We expect foot traffic by new residents to be consistent with current foot traffic, given the shortest routes to useful bus stops, local employers, and local amenities.

The neighborhood as defined by being within 0.3 miles of distance and by foot traffic is overwhelmingly family-occupied residential uses, with a clear majority of owner-occupied structures. There are 21 resident children and 4 frequently visiting grandchildren within 500 ft. of the development. There are an estimated additional 30-40 children living in the radius within 0.3 miles. The Town Planner's office could confirm this using the municipal census if they wish.

Valley CDC: "The house sits to the rear of the parcel" (p.1)

This parcel has no true "rear." It abuts heavily trafficked athletic facilities including a footpath used by walkers and joggers, and a road with student/coaches vehicle traffic.

Valley CDC: "Located only 1,100 feet from this site is a 78-unit assisted living facility that contains efficiency, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom rental units, and is home to an estimated 85 seniors."

1,100 feet is a misleading "as the crow flies" distance. Walking or driving to the Arbors without trespassing puts it a 0.8 miles or more than 4000 feet from 132 Northampton Rd.

The parcels within 300 ft as abutters of parcel 14C-8: 132 Northampton Rd are:

Immediate abutters:

- 14A-173: 126 Northampton Rd.: Single family owner-occupied home (Wilbur).
- 14C-9: 23/25 Two-family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (2 units)
- 14A-140: 143 Northampton Rd.: Two-family multi-generational owner-occupied home (Atteridge) (2 units)
- 14A-299: adjacent undeveloped lot owned by Atteridge

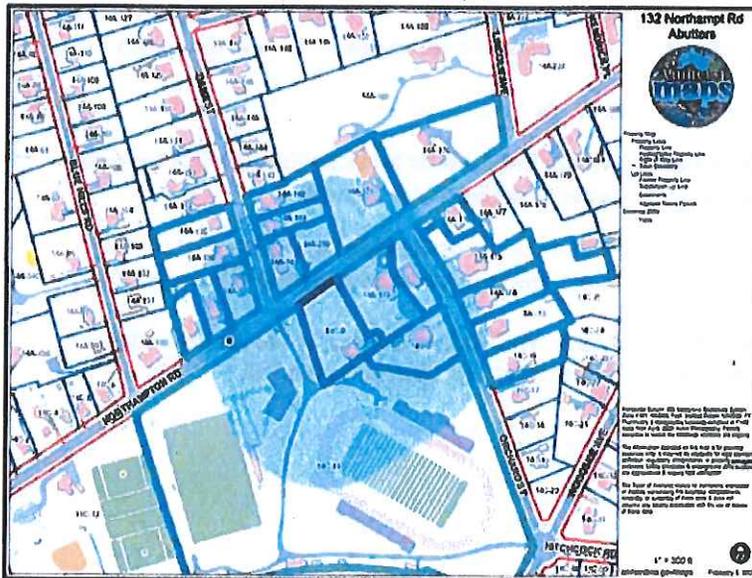
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Totals: 20 parcels, 27 housing units

Of which:

- 13/20 parcels currently owner-occupied
- 15/27 housing units currently owner-occupied



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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14610

Date Submitted: 2/20/2020

Comment

Positives:

1. The gardens, outdoor paths and covered patio are great and will add to the residents' enjoyment and feeling of home.
2. Good effort to fit into the neighborhood and break up the building so it doesn't seem generic or overly big.
3. Good amount of parking for tenant's, their guests and staff.
4. Very much appreciated the specific responses to community concerns in the application materials.

Suggested Changes:

1. Cover the smoking area so tenants aren't standing out in rain, sleet or snow while they smoke. Smoking is a hard habit to quit and people shouldn't be forced out into every weather element, especially if they are older or handicapped. This was my client's experience in a public housing project and the authority agreed to put up a roof or shed.
2. Add some 1 bedroom units, so tenants can have overnight visits with children if they are trying to regain visitation or custody — or if they simply have children. It's hard to regain visits or custody and important that kids visit their parents in their homes. This gives the building some flexibility and doesn't force tenants to move out of Amherst if they need a bedroom.
3. Consider the option of having a live-in superintendent if things don't work out as Valley CDC expects. This is the largest project of this type they have operated and it is possible that more supervision will be needed. A 1 bedroom unit will keep this possibility open.
4. The building's overall style is good and avoids the deaf look of much public housing . I strongly suggest dressing the building up with some more architectural details and adding windows to blank walls. The neighborhood has Victorian homes and Colonial buildings with extra styling. The entrance, windows and soffits are places to make the building more interesting and attractive to tenants, neighbors and the community. If a building is big and looks interesting, people will be less opposed to it and other buildings like this. I think this can be done without a lot of additional expense.

Thank you.

Janet McGowan

Amherst Planning Board member (comments offered as an individual and not on behalf of the Planning Board)

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14605

Date Submitted: 2/20/2020

Comment

I am writing in support of the application of Valley CDC to DHDC.

With regards to project eligibility criteria c) I can speak as a near-neighbor of the site. Immediately, north of Northampton Rd is a neighborhood of primarily owner-occupied single family homes. I live in this neighborhood. On the north side of Northampton Rd the neighborhood-type transitions to a predominance of rental properties. The proposed project is located on the south side of Northampton Rd. It will generally fit in with the existing housing type along Northampton Rd and integrate well with the existing development pattern. I am a frequent walker through our neighborhood. I experience the existing transition from the quiet single family section to the properties along busy Northampton Rd (Rte 9). The addition of the proposed project will make no significant change in the current development pattern.

I look forward to interacting with our new neighbors.

David Ahlfeld
59 Blue Hills Rd
Amherst, MA

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14595

Date Submitted: 2/17/2020

Comment

The Valley CDC development at 132 Northampton Road is of critical importance to the community. As an Amherst College student, I and many of my peers will be disappointed if this development is rejected.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

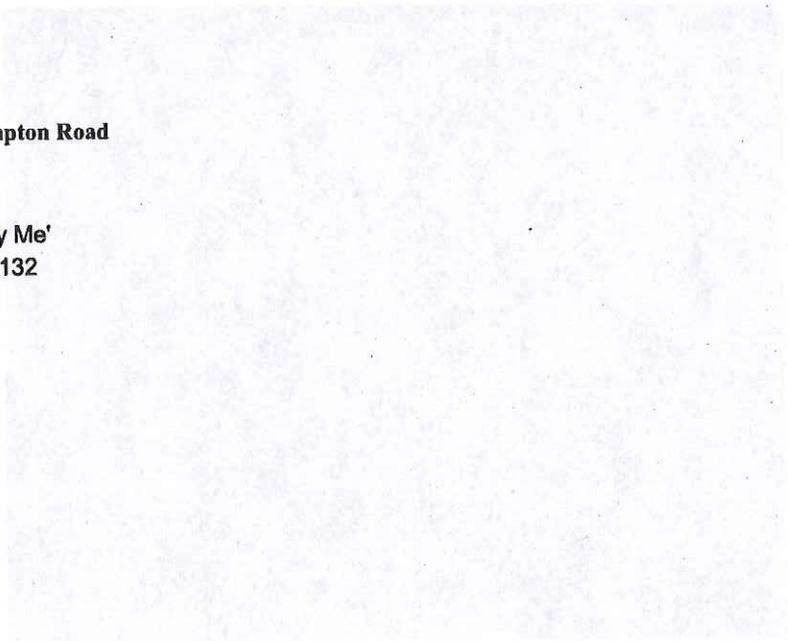
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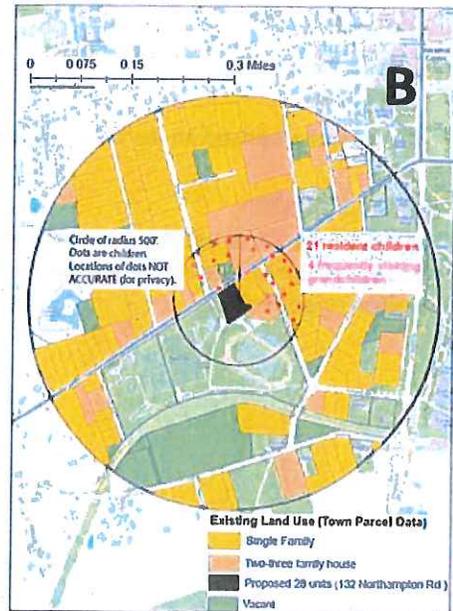


The eligibility criteria for PEL application support include (c) that the project design is “generally appropriate for the site on which it is located,” including its “integration into existing development patterns” of the neighborhood. This proposal does not convincingly meet the criteria for two reasons: (1) only single individuals rather than families will be housed, and (2) there are too many dwelling units.

To begin with, the developers’ concept of the neighborhood differs from ours. The developers define the neighborhood as “the Northampton Road corridor between University Drive to the west and the Amherst Town Center to the east.” From their description of land uses, it is clear that by “corridor” they mean a narrow rectangle including only the properties that front on Northampton Road (rectangle in map “A” below). We suggest a more appropriate definition of neighborhood would include the whole area near the site (circle in maps “A” and “B”).



Rectangle: Developer’s concept of neighborhood
Circle: neighbors’ concept



Land use map of the same area at same scale: dominated by single-family residences (shaded yellow)

The developers’ idea of the neighborhood as a narrow rectangle allows them to claim that “the character of the neighborhood is renter-occupied housing.” Using our more normal definition of neighborhood as all nearby locations, the character of the neighborhood is owner-occupied family housing (see listing of properties within 300 ft. of the site at the end of this document). This is significant because the proposed project would provide only single-occupancy units, most of which will be occupied by single men, as the developers acknowledge.

The developers cite several nearby properties to argue that their proposal is within the range of existing land uses in the neighborhood. These are 3 Amherst College student residence halls housing up to several dozen students each, and an assisted-living facility housing 85 seniors. We believe these are not comparable to the proposed project. The assisted living facility is accessible only via University Drive rather than via neighborhood streets, and many occupants rarely leave the premises. It has so little impact on the neighborhood that some residents have been unaware even of its existence. Students living in the residence halls have access to vast resources for study, fitness, recreation, and socializing on campus, very

unlike the isolation and sparse amenities available to future residents of the proposed affordable housing facility. Thus the proposed facility is not like anything in the neighborhood. The fact that the developers try to deny this makes us wonder whether they are being realistic about other aspects of the project.

As noted above, we also object to the high density of dwelling units in the current plan: 28 dwelling units on a parcel of about 37,000 square feet in Amherst's General Residence (R-G) zone. As acknowledged in the application, an apartment in the R-G zone on a lot of this size is limited to 7 dwelling units, not 28. The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has the authority to allow more units, but it is highly unusual to allow 4 times the number of normally allowed dwelling units. This issue will be adjudicated by the Amherst ZBA if the project reaches that stage, but we bring it up here to indicate an objection that we and others have. In their application, the developers make the argument that a 7-unit apartment building for families might house 28 or more occupants, so their 28 single-occupancy units should be acceptable. Not so: the proposal would be much more acceptable if it called for 7 family apartments because that would be consistent with the character of the neighborhood. The concern is specifically with a high density of single men living in a place that is quite far from shopping, public transport, public spaces, and medical care.

The table below lists specific entries in the PEL application that we would like to correct. Some factual errors are not the developer's fault – they used available town data that was incorrect or out of date. The attached page gives accurate information about ownership and occupancy for land parcels within 300 feet of 132 Northampton Road.

Some of the Developer's claims (PEL application)	Corrections
The neighborhood is the Northampton road corridor	The neighborhood is the circle around the site
The neighborhood includes many high density rental uses	The neighborhood is majority <u>family residences</u> , with > 20 children living close to the site and 30-40 more living within 0.3 miles (see map above)
Properties within 300 feet "include a majority of residential rental units"	Properties within 300 feet include a <u>minority</u> of residential rental units
Adjacent property "includes commercial use as an Inn/Bed & Breakfast"	Adjacent property currently has <u>no</u> B&B or other commercial use – it is a single-family residence
The site is at the "nexus of General Residence, Neighborhood Residence, and Educational" zones	The site is at the <u>outer edge</u> of General Residence, adjacent to Neighborhood Residence zone
The site has an "excellent walkable location and proximity to amenities and services" including shopping plazas and bus stops	Elevation of the site is 100 ft. above the shopping plazas. No bus stops anywhere on Northampton Road in Amherst. All bus service is greatly reduced in summer. Closest stops are more than 10 min walk.
Site is "only ¼ mile from a well-used bike trail."	Public entrances to the bike trail are 0.4 and 0.5 miles from the site.
A 78-unit assisted living facility is "located only 1,100 feet from this site."	The facility is 4,000 feet from the site on foot or by car

In the end we will do our best to be good neighbors to whoever lives at 132 Northampton Road. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Stephen and Kathleen George
23 Dana St., Amherst

The parcels within 300 ft as abutters of parcel 14C-8: 132 Northampton Rd are:

Immediate abutters:

- 14A-173: 126 Northampton Rd.: Single family owner-occupied home (Wilbur).
- 14C-9: 23/25 Two-family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (2 units)
- 14A-140: 143 Northampton Rd.: Two-family multi-generational owner-occupied home (Atteridge) (2 units)
- 14A-299: adjacent undeveloped lot owned by Atteridge

Abutters within 300 ft.:

- 14A-306: 17 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Wells)
- 14A-175: 14 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Loinaz-Gilbert)
- 14A-174: 22 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Lopez)
- 14C-15: 30 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Hughes-Diamond)
- 14C-16: 40 Orchard St. Single family owner-occupied home (Stavchansky/ Stavins)
- 14A-142: 104 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home: (Cowell/Huber)
- 14A-141: 110 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home (Porter)
- 14A-135: 105 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home (Kurtulis)
- 14A-136: 111 Dana St. Single family owner-occupied home (Xiao)
- 14A-171: 115 A,B,C,D,E, 117 Northampton Rd: non-owner occupied rental building (Cook) (6 units)
- 14A-139: 155 Northampton Rd. Single family home: for sale
- 14A-138: 163 Northampton Rd. Single family owner-occupied home with apartment (Haughton) (2 units)
- 14A-137: 169 Northampton Rd. Single family owner-occupied home: (Whaples)
- 14A-176: 104 Northampton Rd.: Single family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (1 unit)
- 14A-170: 99 Northampton Rd.: Two-family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (2 units)
- 14C-14: Pratt field/Conway field house: Amherst College (no occupants or housing units)

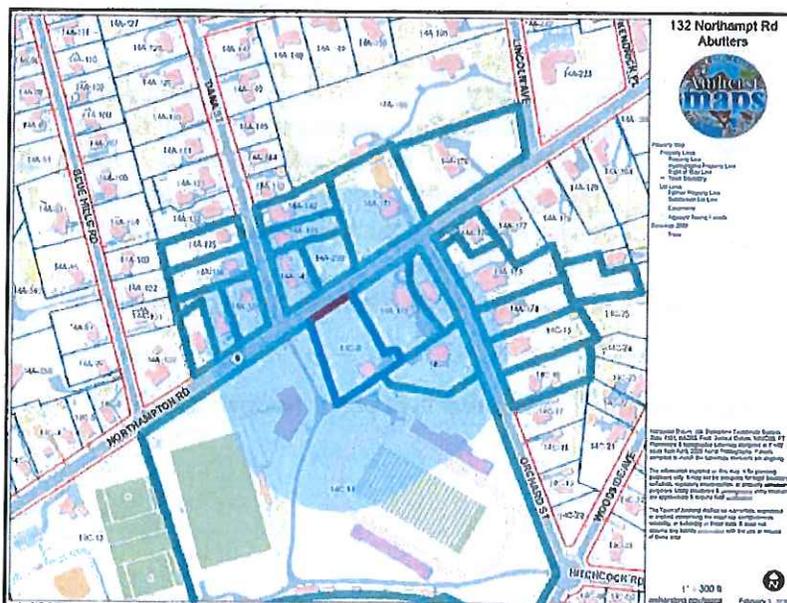
Totals:

20 parcels, 27 housing units

Of which:

13/20 parcels currently owner-occupied

15/27 housing units currently owner-occupied



Map courtesy of Town Planning Department

Print

132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14591

Date Submitted: 2/16/2020

Comment

The League of Women Voters of Amherst supports the Valley Community Development Corporation's application to the Department of Housing and Community Development for project eligibility determination under the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program for 132 Northampton Road.

We have carefully followed this project since its inception. The critical need for housing units in our town is well-documented elsewhere. The Town has committed to providing stability of place and services to 28 individuals at the extremely low-and low-income levels of 30, 50 and 80% of the Area Median Income Levels, including some units for the homeless. The Town has also demonstrated financial support and garnered funding sources totaling approximately \$750,000 for the project. In line with our policy, the Town has worked with neighbors regarding neighborhood impact by holding public hearings, forums and district meetings that have resulted in some changes in the proposal details.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of policy issues and influences public policy through advocacy and education. Since 1966 we have advocated for low-and-moderate income housing through a mix of rehabilitating structures, zoning and land use policies for housing support, open space and effective permitting systems that support a suitable living environment affordable to all.

We believe that the Valley Community Development Corporation's project is consistent with our critical community needs and urge your approval of their application.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Sincerely,
Adrienne Terrizzi
Spokesperson, LWV of Amherst

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14590

Date Submitted: 2/15/2020

Comment

We expect there will be affordable housing at 132 Northampton Road, and we will do our best to be good neighbors to everyone who eventually lives there. However, we disagree with several aspects of the proposal, including the proposed density (number of dwelling units) and the limitation of the project to single occupants rather than families. We will address those two objections in a separate comment. Here we would like to comment on items (b) and (d) listed under "Project Eligibility."

(b) Re: Appropriateness of the site, "taking into consideration information ... regarding municipal actions previously taken to meet affordable housing needs."

Supportive housing is needed in Amherst, and the town has arranged for several developments in areas of Amherst outside the town center to have affordable units. However, three 5-story apartment complexes in the very center of town have recently been approved (Kendrick Place and One East Pleasant Street completed, and one on Spring Street in late planning stages) without a single low-income unit being included. Each of these buildings required the town to waive zoning requirements such as for parking and setbacks. These zoning dispensations could have been used to negotiate the inclusion of affordable units, but this was not done. Passing up this opportunity does not seem consistent with claims by proponents of the 132 Northampton Road project that affordable housing is a top priority for the town.

The three recent town-center apartment buildings are all on bus routes, unlike 132 Northampton Road. Those apartments are also much closer to stores, services, a medical clinic, and public spaces than 132 Northampton Road is. The proposal praises the 132 Northampton Road site for its "excellent walkable location and proximity to amenities and services." The town center apartment locations are clearly superior to 132 Northampton Road in all of these respects, but nothing was done to include affordable units in those apartment developments. Again, this calls into question the town's actual priorities regarding affordable housing.

(d) Re: Financial feasibility.

The developers are experts in this area and we are not. However, we are skeptical that it will be as easy as claimed to find people in the higher target income levels (up to \$50,000 per year) willing to live in a 14' x 16' cubicle with very few on-site amenities. To be sure, we know of no other single-occupancy units in Amherst with such a low rent, but with one or more roommates and living outside the town center, people could find a more accommodating and spacious place at a lower cost per person. Perhaps some will seek to use the proposed facility as a "crash pad" a few nights a week while working and/or studying in Amherst, but spend the rest of the time somewhere else in a more commodious place, e.g. a parent's home. We realize that the developers do not intend the facility to be used as student housing, but for some with part-time jobs while doing graduate work e.g. at UMass Amherst, the distinction between student and worker is not sharply defined. Those people deserve good housing too, but that is not the population this proposal says it aims to use taxpayer money to help. Thus we are not convinced the financial model will work out as proposed.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Stephen and Kathleen George
23 Dana St., Amherst MA 01002

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14581

Date Submitted: 2/13/2020

Comment

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness ("Network") in support of the Valley CDC's proposal to develop 28 supportive studio apartment units at 132 Northampton Road.

The Network, which includes hundreds of partners from every sector across the four Western Counties (please see our attached Leadership Council fy), creates collaborative solutions to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach.

The need for this housing is urgent and critical. Based on a recently released report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, we know that for every 100 extremely low income households in Massachusetts there are only 48.6 units available. In Amherst the gap is even larger, with only 42 units available for every 100 extremely low income individuals.

We are extremely fortunate to have Valley CDC in our community, leading the way in the local response to this affordable housing crisis. This particular proposal is extremely sound, reflecting evidence-based best practices: well-designed housing units with available support services in a location that is accessible to public transportation and employment.

The Network and its many partners stand at the ready to assist in making this development a success for residents and neighbors alike.

Thanks very much for your consideration.

Best,
Pamela

Pamela Schwartz, Director
Western MA Network to End Homelessness
pschwartz@westernmasshousingfirst.org
413-219-5658

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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Housing First
for Hampden, Hampshire,
Franklin and Berkshire Counties

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness Leadership Council

In support of the Network's mission to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach that makes homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

Tanisha Arena, Executive Director, [Arise for Social Justice](#) • Jim Ayres, Vice-President for Programs and Strategy, [Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts](#) • Paul Bailey, Executive Director, [Springfield Partners For Community Action](#) • John Bidwell, Executive Director, [United Way Of Hampshire County](#) • [The Honorable Natalie Blais](#), Representative, 1st Franklin • Kathryn Buckley-Brawner, Director, [Catholic Charities, Diocese Of Springfield](#) • [The Honorable Dan Carey](#), State Representative, 2nd Hampshire • Joanne Campbell, Executive Director, [Valley Community Development Corporation](#) • Dave Christopolis, Executive Director, [Hilltown Community Development Corporation](#) • Christa Collier, Executive Director, [Northern Berkshire United Way](#) • [The Honorable Jo Comerford](#), Senator, Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester • Ben Cluff, Veterans' Services Coordinator, [Department of Public Health](#) • Jessica Collins, Executive Director, [Public Health Institute of Western MA](#) • Steve Connor, Director, [Central Hampshire Veterans Services](#) • Patricia Crosby, Executive Director, [Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board](#) • David Cruise, President, [Hampden County Regional Employment Board](#) • Rabbi Justin David, [Congregation B'Nai Israel](#) • Elizabeth Dineen, Executive Director, [YWCA Of Western Massachusetts](#) • [The Honorable Mindy Domb](#), Representative, 3rd Hampshire • Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director, [Franklin Regional Council of Governments](#) • Doreen Fadus, Executive Director, Community Benefit and Health, [Health Care For The Homeless, Mercy Medical Center](#) • [The Honorable Anne Gobi](#), Senator, Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Middlesex • Judge Robert Fields, [Western Division Housing Court](#) • [The Honorable Michael Finn](#), State Representative, 6th Hampden • David Gadaire, Executive Director, [MassHire Holyoke](#) • Peter Gagliardi, Executive Director, [Way Finders](#) • Melanie Gelaznik, Executive Director, [BerkshireWorks](#) • [The Honorable Carlos Gonzaléz](#), Representative, 10th Hampden • Brad Gordon, Executive Director, [Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority](#) • Gina Govoni, Executive Director, [Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority](#) • Michael Hagmaier, Executive Vice President, [Soldier On](#) • Sharon Hall-Smith, Division Director, [Gandara Center](#) • Dave Havens, Director Of Homeless Services, [Mental Health Association](#) • Clare Higgins, Executive Director, [Community Action](#) • [The Honorable Adam Hinds](#), Senator, Berkshire Franklin Hampshire Hampden • Stephen Huntley, Executive Director, [Valley Opportunity Council](#) • Lori Ingraham, Assistant Treasurer, [Easthampton Savings Bank](#) • Joan Kagan, President and CEO, [Square One](#) • Jennifer Kinsman, Senior Vice-President Community Impact, [United Way Of Pioneer Valley](#) • Charlie Knight, Former Consumer, Springfield • [The Honorable Eric Lesser](#), Senator, 1st Hampden and Hampshire • Jay Levy, Regional Manager, [Eliot CHS -Homeless Services](#) • Joanne Marqusee, President and CEO, [Cooley Dickinson Health Care](#) • [The Honorable Paul Mark](#), Representative, 2nd Berkshire •

(See Reverse)

Tom Matuszko, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission • Gerry McCafferty, Director, City Of Springfield Office Of Housing • Bill Miller, Vice-President, Clinical and Support Options • Earl Miller, Director of Recovery, MA Department of Mental Health • Peter Miller, Community Development Director, City Of Westfield • Laurie Millman, Executive Director, Center for New Americans • Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director, The Food Bank Of Western Massachusetts • Michelle Morris, CRA Mortgage Loan Originator, Berkshire Bank • Mayor Alex Morse, City Of Holyoke • Mayor David Narkewicz, City Of Northampton • Theresa Nicholson, Director of Housing Services, Center For Human Development • Elton Ogden, President, Berkshire Housing Development Corporation • Lizzy Ortiz, Homeless Services Coordinator, Health Care For The Homeless, Mercy Medical Center • Yasmin Otero, Assistant Director, Department Of Transitional Assistance • Jesus Pereira, Veterans Services Director, City of Holyoke • The Honorable Smitty Pignatelli, Representative, 4th Berkshire • The Honorable Angelo Puppolo, Representative, 12th Hampden, Phil Ringwood, Executive Director, DIAL/SELF Youth and Community Services • Frank Robinson, Vice President, Public Health, Baystate Health • Kimberly Robinson, Executive Director, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission • Marcia Roddy, Regional Director, Department Of Children And Families • Christina Royal, President, Holyoke Community College • The Honorable Lindsay Sabadosa, Representative, 1st Hampshire • Jay Sacchetti, Vice President Shelter/Housing, ServiceNet • Yves Salomon-Fernandez, President, Greenfield Community College • Mayor Domenic Sarno, City Of Springfield • James Seney, Program Manager, VA Central Western Mass. Health Care System • James Sherbo, Senior Vice President, PeoplesBank • Sarah Tanner, Interim Executive Director, United Way of Franklin County • The Honorable José Tosado • Representative, 9th Hampden • The Honorable Aaron Vega, State Representative, 5th Hampden • The Honorable John Velis, Representative, 4th Hampden • The Honorable Joseph Wagner, Representative, 8th Hampden • Rose Webster-Smith, Program Coordinator, Springfield No One Leaves • The Honorable James Welch, Senator, Hampden • Pamela Wells, Resident Services Manager, Springfield Housing Authority • The Honorable Bud Williams, Representative, 11th Hampden • Twjana Williams, Western MA Regional Supervisor Department Of Housing and Community Development • Candace Winkler, Executive Director and CEO, Berkshire United Way • Steve Winn, Vice-President, Behavioral Health Network

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14571

Date Submitted: 2/9/2020

Comment

I am writing in support of the 132 Northampton Rd. project to provide single room occupancy for individuals who are in need of housing. Any one of us could be one of these individual or have a family member who needs this opportunity to help them make it. We are a community of neighbors and I welcome our future residents into the community!

I decided to buy a house in Amherst because of the values I heard espoused about community and justice. I have the privilege of being able to buy a house - much later in my years and when my kids were grown - but never-the-less still the luxury of being able to own my own home in a town that I love. We looked at the surrounding towns and they were so much more affordable, but I wanted to live in a place where the community is really about supporting each other and helping those who do not have as much as many of us do.

When I first came to Amherst, granted as a graduate student with my family, we searched for affordable rental housing. It was almost impossible to find a place that was suitable for a family. Yet, we were able to do so and I resolved to make Amherst my home and be part of a community that cares about others.

These apartments are not free housing. Why are we treating this apartment complex differently than others. The residents will be paying rent and will be part of the community fabric if not already.

This is a small step to insuring we have a thriving diverse community, and for increasing affordable housing and for demonstrating that the values we so often talk about are more than talk.

Full disclosure, I am a member of the Amherst Affordable Housing Trust, and am proud of being able to serve the town.

Housing is a social determinant of health and well-being and increasing the health and well-being of our community positively impacts all of us.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute my comments.

Erica

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14569

Date Submitted: 2/8/2020

Comment

140 Red Gate Lane

I support the Studio Apartment Proposal for Northampton Road. This type of affordable housing was identified as a strong need several years ago and this project will fill at least part of the Town's shortage of affordable housing. I think that the concerns of the neighbors are sincere but overblown. Other projects that the Town completed also had concerns raised that did not come to pass.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14558

Date Submitted: 2/6/2020

Comment

318 Lincoln Ave
Amherst, MA 01002
2/6/2020

I am writing to express my strong support for the affordable housing project at 132 Northampton Road, Amherst, MA.

Valley CDC has a strong history of creating affordable housing and has been exploring options here in Amherst for a number of years. This project would be the culmination of those efforts to bring some affordable options to the many who are priced out of the local rental housing market. This project would afford decent housing to both low income working people who are struggling to find any affordable housing option as well as people who have lost their housing and are dealing with homelessness.

I live in the district of the proposed project and have complete confidence in the quality work of Valley CDC and would welcome this project to our neighborhood.

Sincerely,
Priscilla White

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14552

Date Submitted: 2/4/2020

Comment

I believe this affordable housing project is thoughtfully designed and a much needed addition to Amherst housing stock. I encourage Amherst town departments to support this affordable housing development.

Sincerely
Mary Sayer

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14551

Date Submitted: 2/4/2020

Comment

I'm writing to express my strong support for this project. As someone who works (and lives) in town, I see a need for housing daily, and this location offers convenient access to the bike path, public transportation, and other services. It's time for Amherst to actively demonstrate that we don't just talk about justice and civic responsibility, but actively promote those ideals. I am frankly dismayed by the classist and fear-mongering remarks made by some of my neighbors. Equating poverty with crime is ignorant at best. I hope the town does the right thing, and moves ahead with this housing.

Jason Stevens
3 Charles Lane

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14547

Date Submitted: 2/4/2020

Comment

I'm writing to express my strong support for this project. As someone who works (and lives) in town, I see a need for housing daily, and this spot offers convenient access to the bike path, public transportation, and other services. It's time for Amherst to actively demonstrate that we don't just talk about justice and civic responsibility, but actively promote those ideals. I am frankly dismayed by the classist and fear-mongering remarks made by some of my neighbors. Equating poverty with crime is ignorant at best. I hope the town does the right thing, and moves ahead with this important housing.

Lace Stokes
3 Charles Lane
Amherst

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14544

Date Submitted: 2/3/2020

Comment

I am an Amherst resident and a homeowner at 100 Longmeadow Drive. I support the affordable housing project on Northampton Road because there is a severe lack of affordable apartments for extremely low- and low-income people in Amherst. This project would, in a modest way, help to meet that need. The project would include 28 small studio apartments as well as a common room, laundry room, office space for a resident services coordinator, and support services for tenants. Some of the abutters around the proposed Northampton Road project claim to support affordable housing oppose this project. The concerns they cite sound very similar to concerns raised by the vocal minority of my neighbors who opposed the 27 affordable housing units at Butternut Farms. The apartments at Butternut Farms are on our street, and NONE of the dire predictions of the naysayers have ever come to pass. Traffic on our street has not noticeably increased, and our neighborhood is just as safe as it ever was. Our neighbors at Butternut Farms have been active and engaged members of our community, and they are nice people, too. Housing is a human right, and I will support this and other projects that expand housing in Amherst for low income people.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14543

Date Submitted: 2/3/2020

Comment

As a near abutter to the proposed SRO housing on Northampton Rd, I wanted to write to you to clarify that, while there are people who are scared of what it might lead to, many of us think it's wonderful!

As a past member of Town Meeting and the Committee on Homeless, I'm quite familiar with the topics at play here (the actual lot in question, affordable housing, Valley CDC and concerns from abutters). But when I heard about the proposed project (which I walk past every morning) my first thoughts were, "Hooray for Valley CDC!" and "That has to be nearly the perfect location for SRO housing."

"Hooray for CDC" because I know how long they've been working to bring more SRO housing back to our area. And I know the effect that the loss of this form of housing nationwide has had on individuals who are struggling to find housing that they can afford on limited and fixed incomes. Especially in an area with such high rental costs, SRO housing is a critical rung on the ladder that keeps roofs over all of our citizens heads. And having stable housing is foundational to building a healthy life.

"That has to be nearly the perfect location for SRO housing" because it's directly on Rt 9, walking distance to the downtown bus stops (including Peter Pan) as well as the stops, shops (and jobs) along Rt 9 in Hadley. And perfect because, while there are near abutters like myself, there are very few direct abutters. It is very difficult to think of another such parcel near bus lines, in Amherst.

As I'm sure the Valley CDC will tell you, there is no place you can build transitional housing that won't meet resistance from the existing residents who live nearby. But they can also tell you how few (if any) of the feared problems ever materialize and to the contrary, how many lives get changed for the better with the opportunity to live independently in their community of choice.

And trust me, I'm not all sunshine and rainbows here. I live nearby and I acknowledge that there is uncertainty and surely some amount of risk. But I want to live in a town that truly cares for all of its citizens. And that includes individuals from all walks of life. And if I'm not willing to stand up and support that in my own neighborhood, then I'm really only paying lip service to my purported goal.

I want to acknowledge some of the more vocal opposition from other residents in my neighborhood. Well founded or not, the felt fears and concerns are real. But hopefully we can weigh those appropriately (it is very doubtful that they would be oppositional to a similar project in a different location) so that we needn't act up them collectively.

Yes, this is new, yes there are always some risks, but it is also exactly the type of change that is desperately needed in our town and broader society at this point in time. I hope we can take the necessary steps to move this project forward, without the typical death by a thousand delays. I still walk past this property every day and am very excited to see this project finally take shape.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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**Eliot Community Human Services, Inc.
PATH Homeless Services**

1 Prince Street, Northampton, MA 01060 413-587-6427

2/2/2020

Town of Amherst
4 Boltwood Walk
Amherst, MA 01002

RE: Amherst Supportive SRO Housing Project – 132 Northampton Road, Amherst, MA 01002

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for the Amherst Supportive SRO Housing Planning Project - Valley CDC's request to the Department of Housing and Community Development for a "Project Eligibility Letter". This housing development would include set-aside units for homeless individuals, as well as units targeted to other extremely low income individuals. The production of housing in Amherst to serve these populations is a high priority as determined by the Town of Amherst's Housing Production Plan .

Over the past several years, Amherst has been experiencing high levels of homelessness with little or no stock of reasonably priced housing for extremely low income individuals. This planning grant will enable Valley CDC to identify an appropriate site for a 16-40 unit enhanced SRO (efficiency units) that will provide decent safe affordable rental units within walking distance to transportation, jobs, social services, food establishments, entertainment and markets. As part of this planning project, a Supportive Services Plan will be developed, so that homeless individuals moving into this SRO housing will receive supports after placement. Such housing will promote social and economic diversity. For these reasons, we strongly support Valley CDC's request for funding and "Project Eligibility Letter" from DHCD.

Eliot CHS is responsible for the Statewide PATH contract that engages highly vulnerable homeless adults in an effort to support transitions to both housing and treatment. We currently have 2 outreach clinicians that serve the Amherst community, so any development of affordable housing opportunities for this disenfranchised population is critical to their health and well-being as well as to the success of our program.



In closing, we urge you to support Valley CDC's request for a Project Eligibility Letter from DHCD. If you need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay S. Levy".

Jay S. Levy, LICSW
PATH Regional Manager
Eliot CHS Homeless Services

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14538

Date Submitted: 2/3/2020

Comment

I fully support the proposal for the affordable housing development at 132 Northampton Road. There is a dire need for more affordable housing units in Amherst; and we cannot afford to forego any opportunity to support the development of more housing options.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14537

Date Submitted: 2/3/2020

Comment

A quick note voicing my strong support for this project...it is consistent with the town's master plan, the frequently-expressed desire in former town meetings for more affordable housing in town, and with a compassionate attitude toward those struggling to make a better life for themselves against often-daunting odds. I'm not an abutter, but live close enough to the proposed development that I hope to consider the residents neighbors. I think Valley CDC's track record is solid and I trust it to run the project with integrity and transparency.

Steve Braun
180 Lincoln Ave.

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14535

Date Submitted: 2/2/2020

Comment

A gem of a small, very necessary project. A credit to the Town!

Christina Platt
75 Chestnut Street

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14534

Date Submitted: 2/2/2020

Comment

Dear Department of Housing and Community Development,

I'm writing to support Valley Community Development's project at 132 Northampton Road. I've been a resident of Amherst for 47 years and have seen the need for affordable housing increase to the point where low and moderate income individuals and families have to leave town to find housing. This Valley CDC project will help.

Sincerely,

Walt Kohler
15 Ash Lane
Amherst

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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132 Northampton Rd-PEL Comments - Submission #14533

Date Submitted: 2/2/2020

Comment

Good Day to the Honorable Town Council Members:

Thank you for serving our Town especially as a new form here for policy and practice. Sending you the best of luck as you develop functionality !

I wanted to write in support of the Valley CDC plan currently in review. My belief is there are real unmet needs concerning housing across the spectrum within our town (and 5 or 6 immediate towns). My hope is that further efforts begin to show resolve as soon as possible. For me those in most stress need the most immediate attention. Our homeless and those with extremely low income are the most vulnerable. Last summer one a month died. Earlier this year the town had another death. These folks should be accommodated first to prevent further catastrophe.

I commend Valley CDC for the speed with which they were able to secure a possible spot showing compassion to this need. Competition for properties is high here (one of the issues w/affordability through out the affordability span) funding precarious and varied for the needy. They have located a great area for such a project. I hope you can support this effort as nothing exists (beyond a singular & distant facsimile, "the Perry") and as designed - appropriate. It will have a community room, staff area and local 'housing first' familiar staff will serve the portion of residents in need. Other residents will serve as models for stability. It all looks like a project we can finally point to with pride as our Town's response to a problem we have not addressed within our borders otherwise.

Thank you for your time, and attention to this matter.

Cordially
Charles Fuller 3rd
22 Chestnut Ct
Amherst, MA

Please type your comments in the text box above. Letters or additional material can be submitted below. Thank you.

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