

**ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Additional Comments received in advance of the June 25, 2020 public hearing:

1. Steve George, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 23, 2020;
2. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 23, 2020;
3. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 23, 2020;
4. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
5. Burd & Jim Schlessinger, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
6. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
7. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
8. Stephen George, Comments Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 22, 2020;
9. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
10. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
11. Anonymous, Comment Submitted via Town Website, Dated June 24, 2020;
12. Comments from Aimee Gilbert Loinaz, Memo, Dated June 24, 2020;
13. Comments from Barbara Gravin Wilbur, Email, Dated June 24, 2020;
14. Comments from Al & Barbara Gravin Wilbur, Memo, Dated June 24, 2020;
15. Comments from Gaye Pistel, Email, Dated June 24, 2020;
16. Comments from Ginny Hamilton, Memo, Dated June 24, 2020;
17. Comments from John Willoughby, Email, Dated June 24, 2020;
18. Comments from Kate Troast, Memo, Dated June 24, 2020;
19. Comments from Burd & Jim Schlessinger, Email, Dated June 25, 2020;
20. Comments from Dorothy Pam, Email, June 25, 2020;

**Print****132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15284**

---

**Date Submitted: 6/23/2020****Comment Form**

Please include the attached document in the ZBA consideration of the proposal for 132 Northampton Road.

Thanks!

- Steve George, 23 Dana St., Amherst

Please type comments in the box above.

**Attachments**

ZBA\_132NhamRoad.pdf

Please upload

attachments above

**132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15286**

---

**Date Submitted: 6/23/2020**

**Comment Form**

Dear ZBA,

Thank you for your service to the community.

I write regarding the application of Valley CDC for a comprehensive permit for 132 Northampton Rd. I am a close neighbor but I do not wish to give my name or address due to fear of reprisals. I support the use of this parcel for affordable housing and ultimately hope that you will grant Valley CDC a permit.

However, I write to ask that you actually meaningfully and systematically consider the real concerns and questions that have been repeatedly raised by neighbors and abutters of this development since last April.

These questions are not about whether affordable housing at this site is a good idea. Clearly, there is an affordability problem in Amherst and there should be more opportunities for low and middle-income individuals and families to live here. Rather, these questions are about the \*specific\* details of \*this\* proposal and what those details mean for its success. Success for the ZBA should mean high quality of life both for the residents who will live at 132 Northampton Road and for the existing residents and visitors to this neighborhood.

The sense of the neighborhood is one of immense frustration with the town and developer, not for wishing to create affordable housing, but for refusing to acknowledge or respond to obvious flaws in the specific design. Town residents have repeatedly written comments, made presentations, attended meeting after meeting since last April, when Valley CDC shared plans with abutters \*after\* already securing the key vote from the CRC committee. Each time we are told that it is "not the right forum." At each meeting or in each interaction, comments are heard but then not responded to and seemingly forgotten by the next meeting. Various town committees have repeatedly passed the proposal through without looking at a single detail or asking a single probing question. Everyone wants to pat themselves on the back for helping create affordable housing and no one wants to ask serious questions, particularly given the vicious personal attacks against anyone who has asked questions about any aspects of the proposal.

I hope this stage in the process will be different. At last summer's open meeting regarding this proposal, Town Council President Lynn Greismer assured neighbors and abutters that specific details of the proposal would be seriously considered during the ZBA's hearing process. I would like to believe that, but I must say truthfully that I will only believe it when it actually happens.

Assuming that the ZBA IS going to take this seriously, there are many questions and concerns that have been raised through public comment thus far. These could be addressed with appropriate corresponding conditions on the permit without in any way stopping or stalling the development. Specifically:

--> How does the developer define "success" for this development.

This is a unique supportive housing proposal which is different from any other developments in town. What are the metrics by which Valley CDC will measure whether they are providing enough support? Specifically, how will they judge whether the level of on-site staffing provided is adequate? Appropriate conditions to consider would be requiring Valley CDC to report annually on pre-determined set of metrics and formally requiring them to provide on-site staffing for a certain number of hours per week. Valley CDC claims they are already going to be doing these things, so putting them in writing should not be onerous.

--> Mitigating any future financial burden for the town.

Valley CDC says they do not anticipate asking the Town for additional resources. Neighbors are skeptical, feeling that more transportation and support services are likely to be needed for success. Is Valley CDC willing to back up their claims with money on the table? An appropriate condition would be to ask Valley CDC's to put the overhead and developer's fees earned in this project in escrow for the first five years of the development. These funds would then be available to the town if they need additional funds.

--> Planning for parking overflow.

Valley CDC is confident that their number of parking spaces is adequate. Neighbors are again highly skeptical because the walkability of this parcel is not at all similar to Valley's existing properties in Northampton. An appropriate condition would be to specify in writing where any overflow vehicles from the development would be parked. E.g. perhaps Amherst College would allow them to be parked in the closest parking area (at Pratt field).

--> Composition of the development.

Valley CDC claims that family units are not financially viable. This is disappointing given that these are the most needed type of housing in the state and the neighborhood is predominantly family housing. Has the Zoning Board actually seen their alternate budgets? Given that Valley CDC already increased the amount of money being asked for from the state, why could they not ask for more funds and meet the need for family affordable housing? The Zoning Board could require a small number of family units.

--> Size of the units

The town manager has described this development as providing "transitional housing" due to the small size of units. Why not increase the size of the units and lower the density so that residents have higher quality of life and there is less transition? Can we really not do better as a society than 230 sq. ft. per person?

--> Transportation needs: How will residents with limited physical mobility get where they need to go?

0.6 miles uphill from the Big Y Plaza is only "walkable" for the very able-bodied, particularly in the ice of the winter and the heat of the summer. The bus stops that are noted by Valley CDC as being so numerous and close by are also up a steep hill and/or over a non-accessible sidewalk. To get to a grocery store by bus requires a 0.5 mile (12+ minute) walk 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. 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. The day to day transportation needs of future residents should be considered by the ZBA and solutions should be worked out, such as a daily shuttle to the Big Y provided by the on-site staff member.

--> Three sides of this parcel face the public and the fourth faces a homeowner.

Valley CDC repeatedly tries to gloss over this point in presentations, talking about things being "tucked away" or "at the back of the parcel." There IS NO back of the parcel! There is no part of this parcel that is private or shielded from view! It is essentially part of Pratt field, which is constantly in use as an athletic facility and de-facto public recreation facility. Does the ZBA even know this? How will they consider this as they review design decisions?

--> Compliance with HUD guidelines for smoking

HUD guidelines and guidelines in the Town of Amherst specify that buildings must be smoke-free and that there must be 25 ft. buffers between smoking areas and public buildings. Valley CDCs proposal is NOT in compliance with these regulations. The smoking pavilion is about 15 ft. away from the building. It is 15 ft away from the adjacent athletic facility. The ZBA should require that Valley CDC at least meet HUD guidelines or that they make this a smoke-free community if no space can be found on the parcel that is 25 ft away from the building and abutters. A smoke-free community would meet the needs for supportive service to those who need to be away from the triggers and toxins of smoking. It would also be far more respectful to the immediately adjacent existing athletic and recreational uses. Given that Valley CDC states that there will be far more applicants to this site than units available, requiring a smoke-free community should have no bearing on the financial viability or success of the development.

--> Local preference: what are the pros and cons of local preference?

Why is there no preference to house people experiencing homelessness in Amherst in the current plan? How does this meet a local need if there is no local preference and thus no or almost no local recipients of the benefits?

Please type comments in the box above.

#### Attachments

No files are attached.

Please upload attachments above

## 132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15287

---

Date Submitted: 6/23/2020

**Comment Form**

I am an abutter to this development. I unfortunately feel it necessary to withhold my name, in order to avoid the vituperative attacks that have many times been issued against neighbors with questions or concerns. Having initially had many concerns about this project, I am now cautiously optimistic that it may be well run by Valley CDC and it has the potential to integrate well into the neighborhood. However, I have a number of questions/comments for consideration by the ZBA.

1. Valley CDC have a service and support plan that is designed to focus primarily on the 2 DMH clients and the 10 tenants occupying the units reserved for those emerging from homelessness with very low incomes. The other 16 units are planned for individuals with incomes up to 80% AMI (i.e., higher incomes) who are presumed not to need such support. However, I am not aware of any 'rules' of the development that mandate that those 16 units which are planned for occupation by tenants earning up to 80% AMI \*cannot\* be rented to tenants who are highly vulnerable and in need of high levels of support. If it turns out that the level of available parking is inadequate, or there is frequent indoor smoking, or overnight noise disturbances (as documented at Valley CDC's other properties in Northampton), is it possible that the model could be tipped by market forces in the direction of all 28 units being occupied by vulnerable individuals with high support needs? If so, how would Valley CDC finance the necessary increase in supportive services? Is there a way to document the level of support needed by each tenant? If so, should the ZBA consider implementing rules surrounding the number of tenants allowed at each support level, requiring Valley CDC to return to the ZBA with a revised support plan if they wish to deviate from those rules? It seems that the supportive services are crucial to the success of this development, and to the well-being and safety of all of its residents. The plan for these supportive services therefore needs to be extremely explicit and foolproof.

2. I would like the town to express a 70% local preference for the 10 units for individuals emerging from homelessness: as a town, we should be housing those individuals who already live among us.

3. Is there adequate space for clearing and piling up the snow, if there is a heavy snowfall in winter? It may be that there is room at the South end of the driveway, but I am concerned that large piles at the South end might be incompatible with the turn-around space. Piling it up at the Northampton Road end would make an already potentially dangerous vehicle exit worse. Piling it into a section of the parking spaces would reduce the number of spots at exactly the time of year when overnight parking on the streets is not allowed. This seems necessary for the ZBA and the developers to consider - could they make a snow pile zone on the property?

Please type comments in the box above.

**Attachments**

No f...osen

Please upload  
attachments above

**132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15288**

**Date Submitted: 6/24/2020**

**Comment Form**

See attachment

Please type comments in the box above.

**Attachments**

Memo about 132  
Northampton Rd.pdf

Please upload  
attachments above

## 132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15290

---

Date Submitted: 6/24/2020

### Comment Form

We live 350' from 132 Northampton Road, near-abutters to the proposed project. We would like register our thoughts and concerns with the ZBA as it appears to be in your hands now.

From the outset the project was presented to us as a fait accompli. Money had been spent, money (from the Town of Amherst and the State) had been promised, and money was going to be made. This was not a great example of representational government and may impact the neighborhood well into the future.

The 4-story construction plan was being called a 2-1/2 story building to lessen the proposed impact.

During a meeting in April 2019 with Valley CDC one of us asked whether there were enough homeless and very low-income people in the immediate area to fill the rooms that were to be built. We were told, "No." Asked further, Valley CDC said they would recruit folks from Holyoke and Springfield to fill the building. So, the plan is to import some seriously service-needy folks in order to make the project profitable.

It would seem that the very least the ZBA could do would be to, as others have said, establish a 70/30 preference for current residents of Amherst and individuals employed in Amherst.

Surely, we all are aware that there is an ongoing Pandemic. We know that the optimal conditions for spreading the pandemic are PRECISELY the conditions that are proposed for this new construction. A large group of unrelated people living in VERY close proximity. If successful, it will become a veritable hub of social activity.

Further, many will not have cars and will theoretically walk to services both in Town and in Hadley (University Drive) through this old neighborhood. Unless Covid-19 is truly vanquished – and Dr. Fauci and others have not told us to expect any such thing, what is being proposed is an ongoing 'super-spreader' event. In our neighborhood.

Please delay approval at least until Covid-19 is no more. Before moving forward, before spending more money, a durable, working vaccine that covers the whole population is necessary. You may have noticed that many of the letters you have received are from us older folks, who are in greater jeopardy than many others.

Respectfully submitted,  
Burd and Jim Schlessinger  
93 Dana Street

Please type comments in the box above.

### Attachments

No files open

Please upload  
attachments above

## 132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15292

---

Date Submitted: 6/24/2020

**Comment Form**

Please see attachment

Please type comments in the box above.

**Attachments**

Not in compliance with  
HUD guidelines.pdf  
Please upload  
attachments above

**132 Northampton Road - Comments on 40B Comprehensive Permit Application - Submission #15293**

---

**Date Submitted: 6/24/2020**

**Comment Form**

Photos of the adjacent uses of the "side" and "back" of 132 Northampton Rd.

Please type comments in the box above.

**Attachments**

Photos132 Northampton  
Rd.pdf  
Please upload  
attachments above

From: Stephen George, 23 Dana St., Amherst MA 01002

June 22, 2020

To: Zoning Board of Appeals

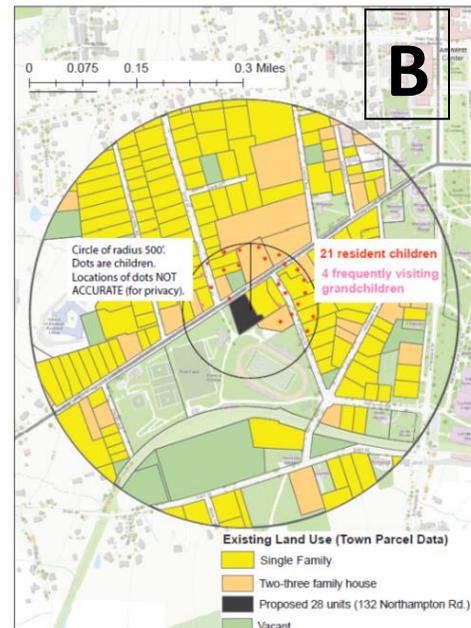
Re: Valley CDC proposal for 132 Northampton Road

*Please consider (1) reducing the density of units, and (2) requiring inclusion of some units suitable for families.*

Obviously affordable/low income housing is appropriate for this site and indeed potentially any site. The ZBA is permitted to waive normal zoning requirements in this situation. However, the policy of the Town of Amherst as stated in the Master Plan is to “maintain Amherst’s existing community character” and to “ensure new development is in accord with existing neighborhood character.” The proposed density of units and the SRO character of the proposed facility do not seem consistent with those Master Plan principles.

### 1. Neighborhood

Since I’ll refer several times to the neighborhood of 132 Northampton Road, I would like to make clear what I believe this neighborhood is. The developers define the neighborhood as a corridor along Northampton Road 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). I suggest a more appropriate definition of neighborhood would include the whole area near the site (circle in maps “A” and “B”). The scale is the same in both A and B. I’ll refer below to the land-use and other information in figure B.



## 2. Density of units

An apartment in R-G on a lot the size of 132 Northampton Road appears to be limited to a maximum of 7 dwelling units (bylaw Section 3, 3.323; Section 6 Table 3). Thus the proposed apartment has 4 times the normally allowed dwelling unit density. The ZBA can legally allow this, but the deviation from normal zoning is very large. What is the purpose of even stating the allowed density in the bylaw if it can be overridden so overwhelmingly, especially since any apartment in R-G, even one that conforms completely to the bylaw, requires a Special Permit?

During the Planning Board discussion of the proposal, the developers' presentation mentioned that they would be asking the ZBA for unspecified waivers of several zoning requirements. However, the waivers were not mentioned, let alone specifically discussed, in the Planning Board's subsequent discussion. Thus the Planning Board's vote to recommend the proposal to the ZBA should not automatically be interpreted as an endorsement of this large waiver.

The developers have made two arguments as to why a four-fold deviation from the normal density requirement should be allowed. I would like to respond to both.

(1) They have written that an apartment with 7 family units could have 28 total occupants, like the proposal for 28 single-occupancy units, so the proposed density should not be objectionable. (Recently they have said that overnight 'guests' will be allowed in the supposedly single-occupancy units, so the number of actual occupants may exceed 28.)

*Response:* The Town bodies that discussed and approved this section of the zoning bylaw could have limited the density of occupants rather than the density of dwelling units if they had wanted to. Evidently the limitation on dwelling unit density was intentional. Also, from the point of view of neighbors like myself, having 7 families living at this location would be preferable to 28 single people, given the character of the neighborhood (see below).

(2) The developers say other buildings in the area, namely 3 Amherst College student dormitories and an assisted living facility ("The Arbors") are similar in occupant density to what is being proposed, so the planned density is not excessive in the context of the neighborhood.

*Response:* The Arbors 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 neighbors have been unaware that it even exists. Students living in the dorms are constantly making use of the vast resources on the nearby campus for study, fitness, recreation, and socializing, very unlike the isolation and sparse amenities available to future residents of the proposed facility. In terms of impact on the neighborhood, neither student dorms nor The Arbors are comparable to what is being proposed.

## 3. All-SRO vs. mixed (family + single occupancy) units

The neighborhood as defined by the developers (the corridor in figure A above) has many student rentals. However, the more usual idea of neighborhood (circle in Figs. A and B) is mostly family residences, many owner-occupied, as Figure B shows. Many children live within

500 ft. of 132 Northampton Road. Thus the neighborhood is not similar to the more urban locations of the Valley CDC's otherwise comparable facilities in downtown Northampton and the center of Florence. If the ZBA accepts the Master Plan recommendation to "ensure new development is in accord with existing neighborhood character," you should require that the proposed facility include apartments for families.

The developers say the project would not be financially feasible unless it remains SRO-only, and I realize that financial feasibility is a legitimate factor for the ZBA to consider in the context of a 40A proposal. I have great respect for the work of the Valley CDC and for the organization's staff who are making this proposal. I also do not have the financial expertise to analyze the finances in this situation. I would like to note, however (1) that there is recognized need for more affordable housing for families in Amherst, and (2) that affordable housing projects elsewhere – including at least one of the Valley CDC's own projects in Northampton – do combine single and family units. Therefore I hope that the ZBA will make its own independent and informed judgment about the financial feasibility of a project that includes family apartments.

Thank you for considering my arguments for reducing the dwelling-unit density of the proposal and for including family as well as single-occupancy units.

Sincerely,

Stephen George

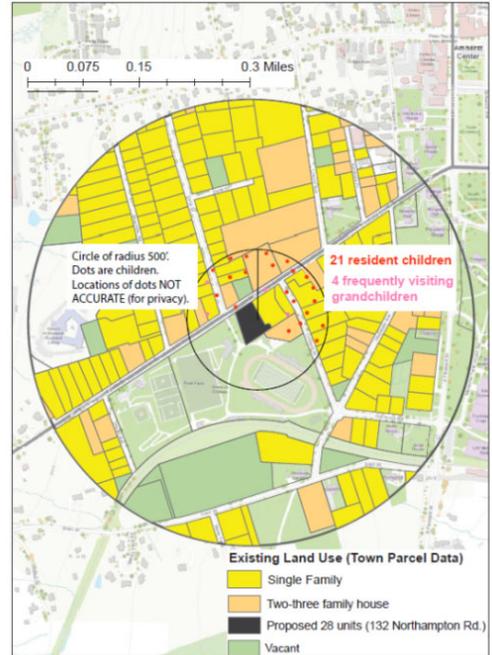
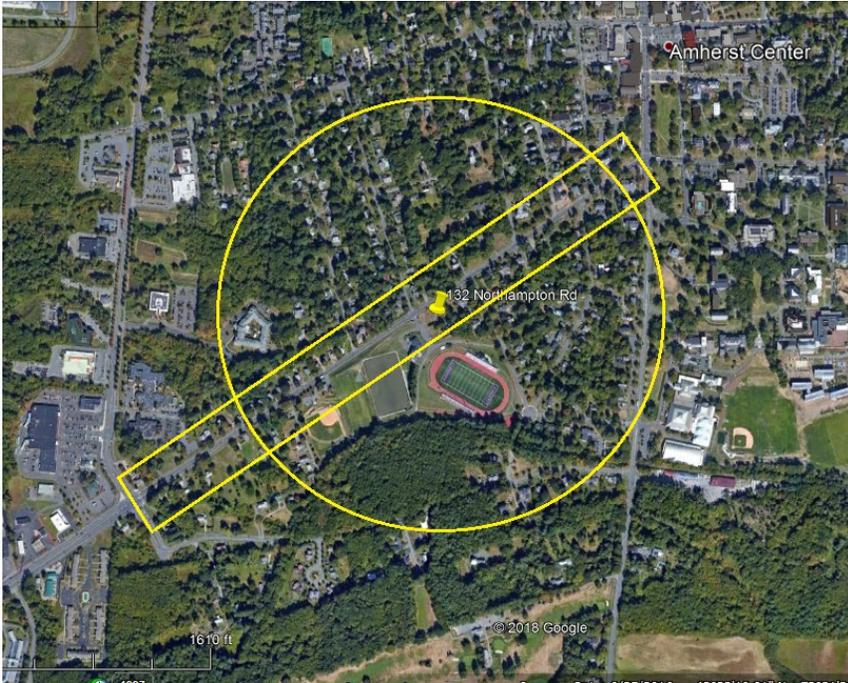
23 Dana St., Amherst

## 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:**

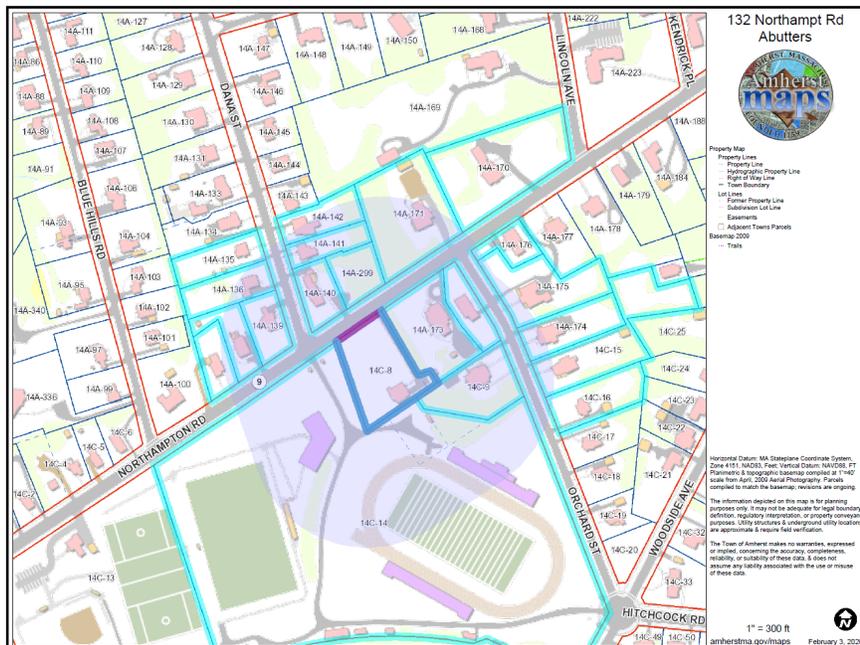
- 14A-173: 126 Northampton Rd.: Single family owner-occupied home (Wilbur).
- 14C-9: 23/25 Two-family Amherst college faculty/staff rental property (2 units)
- 14A-140: 143 Northampton Rd.: Two-family multi-generational owner-occupied home (Atteridge) (2 units)
- 14A-299: adjacent undeveloped lot owned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

COMMUNICATION SENT TO LAURA BAKER, VALLEY CDC.

POSTED HERE AFTER RECEIVING A REPSONSE FROM THE DEVELOPER THAT THEY WILL NO LONGER COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH TOWN RESIDENTS ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT AND THEY SUGGEST I POST HERE.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Laura,

I hope you are doing o.k. in these difficult times. I support the use of a 40B override at 132 Northampton Rd. to increase affordable housing and feel there are many good aspects of your plan for affordable housing. I particularly appreciate that Valley CDC did respond by increasing the commitment to on-site support for residents of the development. I hope that you will further consider how you will define the success of the supportive housing element of this development. What are the metrics you will consider for success? What changes will you make if this success is not being met?

I would also like to raise two specific issues with you in advance of Thursday's hearing with the ZBA.

1) I would like to request that you please provide correct descriptions of the use of adjacent parcels when presenting your applications to the Zoning board. I assume that you do not mean to make false or misleading statements and are simply unfamiliar with the actual uses of the adjacent site.

Specifically, the area that is closest to your proposed smoking pavilion is not "just a parking lot." In fact, there usually are not cars parked there, as you stated when presenting to the Planning Board. This is because the only people allowed to park there on a regular basis are the coaches, who are very few in number and often don't drive. The only times there are a substantial number of cars parked next to the 132 Northampton Rd fence is on game days when this lot is used for accessible parking.

Crucially, the most frequent use of this space is as a pedestrian way. Each day in the fall, spring and summer, students walk down Rt. 9 to practice or to games along this route (I would guess about 1/3-1/2 of the total number of students coming to practice each day). Students gather in this area coming from and going to games to board buses, and fans frequently park nearby and walk through this entrance to games. Sometimes there are tailgates or registration for events in this area. In addition, neighbors frequently walk or jog here in the mornings and evenings; many with kids (you are welcome to ask Councilor George Ryan to verify this; I have seen him repeatedly using this route in the past weeks.) Therefore, I ask that you also accurately describe this area as a pedestrian way in addition to a parking area when you present to the Zoning board. Nearly all of the foot traffic that comes down Rt. 9 past the front of 132 Northampton Rd. turns into Pratt field (which is natural, since that is also where the sidewalk ends).

The side facing the track is also a pedestrian walkway. It is not used only infrequently for large events (although it is true that when there are large events, there are generally tents set up right there). It is used every day by athletes going to practice and by people from all over town who come to walk at or around the track. It is used all summer for camps and other events.

The side of your property facing up the hill is immediately adjacent to a residential neighbor (the Wilburs). Please stop characterizing their property as a commercial bed and breakfast or a "former" bed



Please know that smoking is prohibited in all public places in the Town of Amherst and within 20 ft of public buildings (<https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3395/AMENDED-ETS-APRIL-2010?bidId=> ) for health reasons: “The Board of Health of Amherst does hereby find that: Conclusive evidence indicates that intentional and unintentional inhalation of tobacco smoke causes cancer, respiratory and cardiac diseases, negative birth outcomes, allergies, and irritations to the eyes, nose and throat. Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) has been designated as a Class A carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency (1993). There are no known safe levels of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.” (<https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1013/Tobacco-Control-Regulations?bidId=>) The UMass Amherst Campus is entirely smoke-free, as is the Amherst College athletic facility that immediately abuts 132 Northampton Rd. (<https://www.umass.edu/tobaccofree/tobacco-free-umass-amherst> . )

Please also consider that a security guard or police officer is posted at the entrance to the immediately adjacent facility for several hours in a row during games (which occur every other weekend in the fall and spring and sometimes on weeknights) in order to provide accessible parking. This person will likely be the most exposed to the second-hand smoke from your facility, other than the residents themselves.

A smoke-free facility would be safest for your residents, and most respectful to these service members as well as to the existing uses of the adjacent site as a smoke-free athletic facility.

You have repeatedly emphasized that there are many more potential applicants to this development than available units. You have also repeatedly emphasized the very careful screening process for residents. If true, these factors mean that moving to a smoke-free community is feasible and will not affect the financial viability of your development or its success. In fact, this would meet the needs of people who need supportive housing and also need to be free from toxic smoke and associated triggers in order to succeed. Few such opportunities exist across the state and this would provide an important safe-haven for those in need.

Could you please specify how you plan to meet HUD guidelines for this property?

View along edge of 132 Northampton Rd. fence. Tall bushes are approximately where planned smoking area is.



View of “back” of 132 Northampton Rd. parcel: pedestrian walkway immediately adjacent to property fence.



Aimee Gilbert Loinaz  
14 Orchard Street  
Amherst, MA 01002

June 24, 2020

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

I write to you as an abutter of the proposed 28 unit supportive housing development at 132 Northampton Rd., as well as a public health practitioner with over 15 years of experience serving vulnerable populations, including those living in extreme poverty. I share the goal of creating successful, integrated affordable housing in Amherst, but do have specific concerns about the project proposal and management plan submitted by the Valley Community Development Corporation (VCDC) of Northampton.

Firstly, my concern relates to the size of the proposed development, as well as its structural model. At 28 enhanced single room occupancy units, the proposed development is larger than any of the other properties that VCDC has had experience in managing, and is over the density limits for this property. 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 very 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 number of units to offset the costs of operating the facility. They plan on a mixed-income model, with higher income renters subsidizing the operations. With no guarantee of placing higher income residents, and only non-guaranteed support services offered by providers whose own operating budgets are subject to economic volatility and annual cuts, VCDC's financial 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 assume such assistance in the future. VCDC has not demonstrated continued financial support for their project from other sources, or how they can run a self-sustaining operation without any guaranteed support.

Since March of this year I have spent countless hours of my professional time directly immersed in the coordinated response to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth. One of the most tragic outcomes of the outbreak in Massachusetts has been the disproportionate impact of the virus on vulnerable citizens living in densely populated congregate settings, including public housing and low-income apartment buildings. There is so much more to learn regarding the impact of COVID-19 and other potential outbreaks, and how the move towards densification of municipal centers should be considered from a public health perspective in coordination with a climate change perspective. Lessons learned from the current pandemic will undoubtedly inform building design and operations moving forward. It seems particularly unwise at this time to support overriding density requirements to accommodate a developer's weak financial model. The health and welfare of residents should be paramount to a financial operating plan that is designed to use density for income purposes.

Beyond the size and financial model of the development, I am very wary of VCDC's tenant vetting process. In the most recent planning board meeting they stated that the 43% of units for the most vulnerable residents would only be available to those who are recommended through a loose and non-binding relationship with service providers. The providers will then commit to providing services for 9-

12 months only. This preferential placement plan appears outside the scope of equal access, and I find it hard to understand how this is legally or even professionally acceptable. In permanent supportive housing, best practices recommended by HUD involve completing a comprehensive needs assessment after a tenant has been accepted through unbiased criteria, and comprehensive services are then targeted to identified needs. These tenants are entitled to these services for the duration of their stay.

In their recent proposal, VCDC acknowledged the 43% of residents representing their most vulnerable sector will come with challenges, including substance use disorder. This 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 time needed to decompensate from previously needed adaptive skills. For those with substance use challenges, relapse is part of the natural process. The 9-12 months proposed in VCDC's current plan is inadequate by any professional standard. I am extremely concerned that there is potential for discrimination and violations of the Fair Housing Act under VCDC's tenant selection plan and constrained timeline of support. I question whether their process is transparent enough to be compliant with the FHA, and believe it is vulnerable to mismanagement.

The developer has in fact not set forth a comprehensive service plan. The 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 unguaranteed hours for a resident service provider. It also does not provide for tenants who may be in crisis when the Resident Service Provider is not on site. The current service plan is vague, non-binding, and reliant on too many outside, non-accountable partners.

One final concern I have regarding the development involves the proposed smoking policy. For a designated outside smoking area to comply with HUD rules for PHA administered buildings, a 25 ft distance from the building, as well as the same distance from the property boundaries are required. While section 8 housing is excluded from this plan, HUD strongly encourages all housing accepting public funds to become tobacco free properties. From a public health perspective this is certainly the policy trend, and it is intended to provide protection for vulnerable populations living in congregate settings. Tenants certainly have the legal right to smoke, but not at a distance that can cause harm to others. In terms of public health, I do believe not meeting the minimum standards of HUD would be an outlier for new construction. There is strong and growing scientific data supporting tobacco free policies and the increased risk of the carcinogenic load on vulnerable populations in shared residential settings.

As an abutter to the proposed development, I am invested in the success of the project at 132 Northampton Rd. I recognize the need for affordable housing in Amherst, as well as the dire circumstances of the homeless population. With this in mind, as well as the detailed concerns outlined in this letter, I propose utilizing section 53G of Massachusetts General Laws pertaining to Chapter 40B to ask for an independent review of VCDC's proposal in the areas of land use and population density, a fair tenant selection process, and a service plan meeting the requirements of permanent supportive housing. I additionally request the use of the Pro Forma process to provide details of VCDC's financial model. I believe this level of transparency and objectivity is critical to the success of this project.

Sincerely,  
Aimee Gilbert Loinaz

**From:** [Barbara Gravin Wilbur](#)  
**To:** [Pollock, Maureen](#); [Brestrup, Christine](#)  
**Subject:** apologies for the late submission  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 24, 2020 10:18:49 PM  
**Attachments:** [Comments to ZBA re 132 Northampton Road.docx](#)

---

I realize we may have missed the deadline and what is contained is probably not new and I have a feeling that the decision to move forward without any additional requests for modifications regardless of what those most impacted by the project have to say. I assume that if all those on the board could honestly say they would welcome the opportunity to have a family next door morph overnight to 28 to 34 people (including staff and support personnel) coming and going in their backyard, then I say, they can vote in good conscience. If they would object, I hope they would request to make changes to make it more palatable.

Have a good night.

Barbara Gravin Wilbur

My husband and I are immediate abutters to the proposed project currently being reviewed by the ZBA, 132 Northampton Road. We reside at 126 Northampton Road. We have been in Amherst since our undergraduate days in 1968. The changes to the community, the economy and the landscape have been significant, some positive and some perhaps not so positive. It is 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? Is this model the ideal response to affordable housing? Is it part of sustainable plan that focuses on the needs of town families as well as those who live alone? Has the ZBA seen a 5 year or 10 year plan that addresses adequately Amherst's need for affordable housing?

As community members, we support affordable housing for others in our community. It is my understanding that the project offers local preference only during the first round. 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. It isn't clear to me how this encourages self-sufficiency.

While we have concerns about the financial model and the potential financial impact it may have on the town budget given the current pandemic, can the ZBA request to see a plan prior to approval that outlines their plan for keeping the environment safe for the residents similar to what soldier's homes are being asked to do? Who will bear the expense for instituting this plan? If the project does not meet its financial goals, who is responsible for the debt? Will it depend on more tax payer dollars, if not by the town than by the feds for additional housing subsidies?

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.

We assume it is within the purview of the zoning board to continue to explore other avenues to increase the number of affordable housing options in Amherst. Examples include 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 if 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 those institutions 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?

Al and Barbara Gravin Wilbur.

**From:** [Gaye Pistel](#)  
**To:** [Pollock, Maureen](#)  
**Cc:** [brestrupe@amherst.gov](mailto:brestrupe@amherst.gov)  
**Subject:** ZBA open comment  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 24, 2020 3:06:51 PM

---

Thank you for your service to the town of Amherst and taking the time to read my letter.

During the winter months, through my church's outreach program, I am a volunteer at the COTS program in Northampton. This "dry", smoke-free shelter interviews each guest before entrance, making sure they are sober, doing ok and safe. Through the night a staff member is present. I see first-hand why 24-hour support, to a very vulnerable population, is invaluable.

VCDC does not have, nor have they presented a concrete, social service or support plan. 28 hours (no overnight / weekend) on staff per week for a very vulnerable population is just not adequate. When this was questioned at a previous meeting, VCDC said they do not have the funds. I find it unbelievable that a 5.5 million dollar, beautiful designed, thoughtfully landscaped development (with a pergola covered smoking bench) has such minimal support / social service plans? Who is supporting these residents?

I do not feel the VCDC has been honest about the complex needs of the future residents.

My request for the ZBA; Please, have a solid support and Social Service contract in place with more hours before approving this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Gaye Pistel  
72 Dana Street

Sent from my iPad

June 24, 2020

Dear members of the Amherst Zoning Board of Appeals,

I'm writing to express my wholehearted support for the Valley CDC housing development at 132 Northampton Road. I urge you to advance this project as presented and without delay.

I will count on others to detail for you the clear evidence of the need for this project, the appropriate fit with our town priorities, and the human and financial costs of delay, particularly in our current public health and financial crisis. Instead, I will use this space to share my past professional experience as it relates to your legal obligations under anti-discrimination laws. A decade ago, one of my last responsibilities as the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston was to train eastern MA Planning Board and ZBA members about their civil rights obligations. While this letter does not do justice to the full training, please allow me to touch on some key points for those of you in decision-making roles.

Your actions related to housing are covered by the Federal Fair Housing Act. Passed in 1968, the Fair Housing Act bans discrimination based on race and national origin, as well as sex, religion, and handicap or disability, among other protected statuses. Massachusetts law is even older, dating to the 1940s, and adds additional protected classes. In 1990, the ADA further clarified the rights of people with disabilities. And 21 years ago, the Supreme Court handed down the Olmstead decision regarding community housing for people with disabilities, including mental health. In Olmstead, the Supreme Court stated that failing to house people with disabilities "in the most integrated setting appropriate" violates the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Our Constitution protects free speech. So some abutters can say they prefer women tenants instead of men, or families instead of individuals with mental health disabilities or histories of substance abuse, to live in this program. But for you, as government officials, if you were to act on these opinions from some abutters—if you were to make a decision about who can live at 132 Northampton Rd. based on their sex or their disability—to do so would run counter to federal and state laws that protect housing choice.

Put another way, the law is on your side to approve this project as proposed, without reductions in size, number of units, or other variations that could limit who may live there.

Thank you for serving in this important role for our town, particularly in these challenging times.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Hamilton  
140 Middle Street, Amherst

P. S. I hope you will take a few moments to read my reflections, shared in *the Bulletin* last spring, about my positive experience living across the street from a project similar to what Valley CDC is planning. One of my intentions in sharing my experience in that column was to hopefully calm the concerns some residents have about their future neighbors. I have pasted the text below.

[Amherst Bulletin, June 19, 2019 “We don’t get to choose our neighbors”](#)

Before moving to Amherst, we lived in a tidy residential neighborhood of Boston. Our one-block, one-way street was a mix of single family homes, duplexes, and triple-decker condos, almost all of which were owner occupied. The exception was the shuttered Catholic elementary school on the corner and its accompanying parish house. We were the kind of neighbors who greeted each other from our postage-stamp gardens, and did it up for Halloween. When an early-morning kitchen fire trapped residents on their third-floor porch, neighbors had a ladder in place before the fire department arrived.

During our decade there, Pine Street Inn, the largest homeless shelter and supportive housing provider in Boston, took over management of the parish house. Even after Pine Street Inn developed the property into 26 single-room-occupancy (SRO) units—all for very low income individuals coming out of homelessness and back into permanent housing—neighborhood property values continued to rise. According to Zillow, our two-bedroom condo is now worth almost twice what we sold it for six years ago, even though it’s across the street from this supportive housing program.

The SRO residents were good neighbors. A multiracial mix of men and women, most kept to themselves. One had no choice but to be more visible, given his use of a wheelchair to get around. Come winter, he and I bonded over the frustrations of snow mounds hindering stroller wheels for me, and so much more for him. Another resident was more outgoing, starting a dog-walking business. His gentle smile and pack of fluffy charges drew my toddler’s attention and gained his trust and friendship. Good neighbors.

The problem neighbor? The 20-something next door who moved back in with his parents and seemed to be dealing drugs out of their living room. The disruptive neighbors? Those across the fence who blasted “Sweet Caroline” and sang along, drunkenly out of tune, during every Red Sox game.

We don’t get to choose our neighbors, not by law and not by our professed moral code. Laws preventing housing discrimination protect the right of housing choice for people with disabilities,

including mental health and substance abuse. Case law supports the integration of congregate living and supportive housing into residential neighborhoods. Even municipalities and municipal officials have legal obligations to promote integrated housing, particularly municipalities that receive federal community development block grant funds, which Amherst does.

We don't get to choose who lives next door. Neighbors who start their Harleys at the crack of dawn on Sundays, or who set up the karaoke machine in the backyard, or who own a particularly yappy Chihuahua, may also lend a cup of sugar and take in your mail during vacation. Neighbors who can't afford market rents nearby or who may be in recovery may also care for Fido, share tomatoes from their garden, and cheer your morning with friendly conversation.

What if homeowners propose significant structural changes? Yes, we get to have our say. And the neighbors of Valley CDC's project at 132 Northampton Road will have their say in the zoning process just as if the new owner of the modest cape next door were proposing a McMansion.

But we don't get to have a say in who lives there.

Bio: Ginny Hamilton worked at the intersection of civil rights and housing for over 12 years, including as the Director of Public Policy for Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless and as the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston.

**From:** [John Willoug](#)  
**To:** [Pollock, Maureen](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Comments on 123 Northampton Road  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 24, 2020 9:02:49 AM

---

I just wanted to say to the zoning board that after the disappointment of finding out that we do not have a democratic governing system in Amherst any more, and that the talks about 132 Northampton Road were merely dressing put on to cover up the fact that a deal was already done with Valley CDC and the decision was made to put this structure in place, it is ironic and doubly painful to know that there is not requirement for a particular number or percentage of potential residents of the proposed property to be Amherst-based!

If there is one thing that has come out of this so-called 'debate' about the development, it is our realization that there is a genuine need for housing that serves the homeless or low-income groups. We as a neighborhood fully acknowledge that, and would have welcomed alternative plans, despite being named and labelled as 'refusers' and racists along the way. We came into the 'debate' with open minds, and we are only sorry that Amherst Government did not.

But if the housing development that is to be foisted on our neighborhood does not actually do much to serve the homeless or low-income people from WITHIN this town, I do not know the town's reasons behind forcing it on us, other than advancing CDC.

Will you please make a majority of the positions for Amherst/Hadley based individuals?

John Willoughby

6/24/2020

Dear Amherst Zoning Board of Appeals,

I commend Amherst for wanting to provide low-income housing for individuals at risk. I am proud to be part of a community that recognizes affordable housing as a right and seeks to provide resources toward this end.

It's great to have a developer interested in building in Amherst to meet the need of a vulnerable population. However, the Town should be careful about the details of what they are getting.

Looking at the proposed architectural plans for 132 Northampton Road, an abundance of resources are being allocated by the developer for the site and the building. However, the end product is a very dense building with very small units on a site that lacks privacy on three sides.

It is a highly visible site and next to an Amherst Landmark, the gates to Pratt Field and the Amherst College Football stadium.

- \* 88 acre site
- \* 10,941 SF building
- \* 28 studio units:
  - \* 26 units that are 230 SF each
  - \* 2 handicap units that are 393 SF

Since the first time I heard about the project I have thought that this is an odd location for it. I am very familiar with the surroundings since I live nearby and spend a lot of time walking around this area. What I find odd is that this site is adjacent on two sides to Amherst College's football stadium where there is typically a lot of noise and activity during football games, homecomings, alumni tailgates, etc. All this activity will be in the backyard of this project.

Anyway apparently some people find this an ideal site.

Only single people will be able to live in this building. Only the two handicap units have the square footage that meet health standards for more than one person. The others are too small. The project does not offer the flexibility for a person living there to stay if they develop a relationship, need to take care of a child or other relative. They would need to move.

I think it would be an improvement to include at least a few units that are large enough for 2 people in order to accommodate some different circumstances, especially for the 16 units for working residents. However, this ideal site apparently is too small to have any larger units. What if there were fewer units and each had more square footage? Wouldn't there be a cost savings if there were fewer than 29 bathrooms and 28 kitchenettes? Valley CDC has not been flexible at all about the size and number of units.

This is a project with a very specific population, only single people. Some will be coming out of homelessness and some will supposedly want to live here because the rental prices are more affordable and they want to live alone instead of sharing a place with others. They will be living in a very small studio space of 230 SF.

The individuals who would enter this development from homelessness will need considerable support to successfully transition to independent living. Also, since they are only a subset of the people living in this building, undoubtedly there will be management issues. On site management will only be 28-30 hours per week. No nights or weekends. I don't have confidence that this is sufficient.

I believe that the Support Services for this development should be carefully reviewed. Right now the Town of Amherst has no projects of this type - Low Income Housing Plus Support Services. Valley CDC has never before managed a project of this size. Their other SRO's are smaller except for one that they are in the process of building. There are letters of support from area service agencies but there are no written contracts. Also, note that Valley CDC subcontracts the management of its buildings.

I believe that the proposed development should be a residence that we are confident will increase the likelihood of successful permanent re-entry into the community for those at risk who will be moving there. I am concerned that the support services offered are not well enough defined.

I recommend that the ZBA get a third party Chapter 53G review of the proposed service plan prior to approving this project. The funds for the third party review are available and since the Town already has over 12% low income housing there is no reason to rush this project through without being sure that the residents will get the supportive services that are essential to their success.

I am certain that Valley CDC will argue that everything will be perfect and that they never have problems with any of their projects. Of course that is not possible.

There is always a risk that a community takes when accepting its social responsibility to help the particular individuals that we are discussing. The wise community accepts such a social responsibility not only with sympathy but also with discernment. I propose that approval of the project be contingent on a confidence about the supportive services plan equal to that about as the building plans.

Sincerely,  
Kate Troast  
Amherst, MA

**From:** [Family](#)  
**To:** [Brestrup, Christine](#); [Malloy, Nathaniel](#); [Pollock, Maureen](#)  
**Cc:** [georgeryanforamherst@gmail.com](#); [dorothybam3@gmail.com](#)  
**Subject:** 132 Northampton Rd public comment form  
**Date:** Thursday, June 25, 2020 11:34:33 AM

---

Dear Ms. Brestrup, Mr. Malloy, and Ms. Pollock

We attempted to submit the following comment form, using the amhersma.gov comment system. We received an email from the town, indicating that our comment form had been received; however it has not appeared on your public comment platform.

We hope you will be willing to read our comments today, prior to the start of ZBA proceedings on this matter.

Sincerely,  
Burd and Jim Schlessinger

### Comment Form

We live 350' from 132 Northampton Road, near-abutters to the proposed project. We would like register our thoughts and concerns with the ZBA as it appears to be in your hands now.

From the outset the project was presented to us as a fait accompli. Money had been spent, money (from the Town of Amherst and the State) had been promised, and money was going to be made. This was not a great example of representational government and may impact the neighborhood well into the future.

The 4-story construction plan was being called a 2-1/2 story building to lessen the proposed impact.

During a meeting in April 2019 with Valley CDC one of us asked whether there were enough homeless and very low-income people in the immediate area to fill the rooms that were to be built. We were told, "No." Asked further, Valley CDC said they would recruit folks from Holyoke and Springfield to fill the building. So, the plan is to import some seriously service-needy folks in order to make the project profitable.

It would seem that the very least the ZBA could do would be to, as others have said, establish a 70/30 preference for current residents of Amherst and individuals employed in Amherst.

Surely, we all are aware that there is an ongoing Pandemic. We know that the optimal conditions for spreading the pandemic are PRECISELY the conditions that are proposed for this new construction. A large group of unrelated people living in VERY close proximity. If successful, it will become a veritable hub of social activity.

Further, many will not have cars and will theoretically walk to services both in Town and in Hadley (University Drive) through this old neighborhood. Unless Covid-19 is truly vanquished – and Dr. Fauci and others have not told us to expect any such thing, what is being proposed is an ongoing ‘super-spreader’ event. In our neighborhood.

Please delay approval at least until Covid-19 is no more. Before moving forward, before spending more money, a durable, working vaccine that covers the whole population is necessary. You may have noticed that many of the letters you have received are from us older folks, who are in greater jeopardy than many others.

Respectfully submitted,  
Burd and Jim Schlessinger  
93 Dana Street

---

**From:** [Dorothy Pam](#)  
**To:** [Pollock, Maureen](#); [Kate R.E. Sims](#); [Katharine Troast](#); [Griesemer, Lynn](#)  
**Subject:** Re: question  
**Date:** Thursday, June 25, 2020 3:17:59 PM  
**Attachments:** [ZBA 132NorthamptonRd](#)

---

Dear Maureen,

I hope you can send this version of my position which includes a clarification that I am speaking my own opinion, not any official opinion of the Amherst Town Council.

Dorothy S. Pam June 25,  
2020

Zoning Board of Appeals, Amherst, MA

Dear members:

First I want to make it clear that I am speaking as an individual. My opinion is my own and does not represent the official position of any town committee that I know of, and certainly not of all members of the Town Council. I am speaking as a resident of Amherst who talks to many people and gathers many opinions. But because I am a member of Amherst Town Council I have studied this matter deeply and that work has helped me form my own opinion.

As an Amherst Town Councilor from District 3 which abuts Valley CDC's proposed affordable housing development at 132 Northampton Road,

I have discussed this project as a member of the Community Resources Committee (CRC), the Finance Committee, the Town Council, and have attended many meetings and information sessions, including the site review meeting. Through all this time, the proposed housing has been presented as providing workforce housing related to the needs of the Amherst community, providing housing for people working at low paid jobs for the local university and colleges as well as the Town of Amherst, providing even more affordable housing for those in need including those recently homeless or in danger of being homeless, those recovering from substance abuse problems, as well as several clients receiving services for mental health.

With the needs of the future residents in mind, I spoke up many times for the necessity of upgrading the amount of oversight and support services to meet the needs of the new residents and can report that the hours for such services have been increased. In addition, I worked with others for changes to reduce possible negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

My concern now is that it be clearly stated that there will be a strong local preference for those who live in Amherst, work in Amherst, or have Amherst connections. At several community meetings under-housed or homeless people spoke about the need for such housing in Amherst. It has always been clear that Amherst CPA money is to be spent for the needs of the town

whether for conservations land, historical preservation, recreation and leisure, and affordable housing. I understand that there will be a lottery drawing those persons who meet the various categories of need, but feel that it is only fair to have at least 70% of those names be from people with Amherst ties.

Not to do so will be a betrayal of trust, the old classic Bait and Switch.

If all this work by Amherst town staff, elected council members, volunteer committee workers, informed residents, does not result in helping people from or with ties to the Amherst community, then it will be very problematic to expect support for future efforts at affordable housing using Amherst Town funds from the people of Amherst, based on my experience talking with them.

On Jun 25, 2020, at 12:18 PM, Pollock, Maureen <[pollockm@amherstma.gov](mailto:pollockm@amherstma.gov)> wrote:

Hi Pam,

I will forward your comments to the Amherst Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) members

Thanks again,

Maureen

Maureen Pollock  
Planner  
Town of Amherst  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002-2351  
Direct Line: (413) 259-3120  
[www.amherstma.gov](http://www.amherstma.gov)  
[pollockm@amherstma.gov](mailto:pollockm@amherstma.gov)  
Pronouns: she/her/hers

-----Original Message-----

From: Dorothy Pam <[dorothypam3@gmail.com](mailto:dorothypam3@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2020 11:43 AM  
To: Pollock, Maureen <[pollockm@amherstma.gov](mailto:pollockm@amherstma.gov)>  
Subject: question

Dear Maureen,

I sent in my statement on 132 Northampton Rd to you, but could not find a way to send it to the members of the ZBA. I would like this to be sent to them individually. Can you tell me how to do it?

Thank you very much,

Dorothy Pam  
Town Council  
District 3