

AMHERST STUDIO HOUSING
*SINGLE PERSON STUDIOS WITH
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES*

Questions from
September 10th



1. SHOW ALTERNATE LOCATIONS FOR SMOKING AREA

Previously Proposed

SMOKING AREA OPTIONS

A Previously Proposed Location

- 11' from building face (Northampton Road facade)
- 14' from nearest window (bench)
- 59' from nearest door (Northampton Road Exit door) (75' to Patio Door)
- 18' from nearest property line
- Approx 22' to Amherst College parking spaces, 6' to Garden Beds

Pros:

- Away from residential neighbor to the east
- Away from the Amherst College track
- Away from the air intake

Cons:

- Close to the New Apartment Building

B Designate Property Smoke Free

Pros:

- No smoking outside on the property

Cons:

- If a resident smokes will seek the sidewalk or other public areas to smoke



SCALE 1"=25'-0"
(If printed full size @ 11" x 17")
0 12.5 25
North
Prepared by
Heritage Surveys

SMOKING AREA OPTIONS

C Alt Location Adjacent to Stormwater

18' from building face (Northampton Road facade)
 19' from nearest window
 27' from nearest door (Northampton Road Exit door)
 18' from nearest property line
 14' from roof overhang, 88' to Patio
 Approx 38' to Amherst College parking spaces, 20' to Garden Beds

Pros:

Away from residential neighbor to the east
 Away from the Amherst College track

Cons:

Closer to the air intake area
 In the Front Yard Zone

D Alt Location and Different Structure

35' from building face (Northampton Road facade)
 45' from nearest window
 40' from nearest door (Northampton Road Exit door)
 77' from nearest property line & Northampton Road Sidewalk
 28' from roof overhang
 31' to parking spaces

Pros:

More fitting with the character of the neighborhood
 Perceived as a garden element and residential in scale
 Use free standing arbor and or bench- material TBD

Cons:

In front yard



SCALE 1"=25' 0"
 (if printed full size @ 11" x 17")
 0 12.5 25
 Feet
 Prepared by
 Heritage Surveys

SMOKING AREA OPTIONS

E Alt Location Adjacent to Abutter

59' from building face (Parking lot Side of Building)
60' from nearest window
84' from nearest door (Main Entry)
6' from nearest property line (Roughly 125' to abutter's house)

Pros:

Not in Front Yard
Away from the Amherst College facilities
Away from Patio

Cons:

Cross Drive to Reach Destination
Closer to Residential Neighbor's Yard

F Alt Location Adjacent to Patio

25' from building face
38' from nearest window
27' from nearest door (Patio Door)
16' from nearest property line (Roughly 108' from Track/22' Parking)

Pros:

Not within view of Northampton Road
Away from Residential Neighbor
Away from ERV intake

Cons:

Closer to Amherst College Track and Parking



SCALE 1"=20'-0"
0' 12.5' 25'
Prepared by
Heritage Survey

EXAMPLE – SMOKING BENCH LOCATION AT SERGEANT HOUSE



Tenant Referral and Selection Process

2. Please explain the specific caveats for the tenant selection process for persons with bad credit

- *As Valley previously presented to the Zoning Board:*
 - *An applicant's rental history, credit history, references, interview and follow-up communication must demonstrate that the applicant is capable of meeting the terms and conditions of occupancy, with reasonable accommodation if necessary.*
 - *Applicant must provide all required information and documentation to cooperate with background check and income eligibility*
- During discussion in the September 9th meeting, members of the board wanted more information about exceptions made for an applicants with poor credit.

Tenant Referral and Selection Process (cont'd)

Regulatory Guidance on Screening Criteria

- For all publicly-funded affordable housing projects, the industry resource for written guidance on screening criteria is the *HUD Occupancy Handbook 4350.2*
 - 4350.2 is a regulatory guide and this guidance will be applied to the entire Tenant Selection Plan and Screening Criteria for the proposed property.
- HUD's guidance on Selection Plans and Screening Criteria is built on three primary aims:
 1. It must be “consistent with the purpose of improving housing opportunities”
 2. It must “be reasonably related to program eligibility”
 3. It must address “an applicant’s ability to perform the obligations of the lease”
- It is not uncommon for applicants to inquire with Property Management ahead of time to see if their history will be cause for denial. Property Management responds to such inquiries in a way that does not discourage applicants, but rather lets them know that their application will be viewed as a whole.

Tenant Referral and Selection Process (cont'd)

Permitted Screening Criteria Commonly Used by Owners
(Excerpts from HUD Occupancy Handbook 4530.2 Rev-1)

Screening for credit history

Examining an applicant's credit history is one of the most common screening activities. The purpose of reviewing an applicant's credit history is to determine how well applicants meet their financial obligations. A credit check can help demonstrate whether an applicant has the ability to pay rent on time.

- A. Owners may reject an applicant for a poor credit history, but a lack of credit history is not sufficient grounds to reject an applicant.
- B. As part of their written screening criteria, and in order to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly, owners should describe the general criteria they will use for distinguishing between an acceptable and unacceptable credit rating. Owners are most often interested in an applicant's credit history related to rent and utility payments. A requirement for applicants to have a perfect credit rating is generally too strict a standard.

Permitted Screening Criteria Commonly Used by Owners (Excerpts from HUD Occupancy Handbook 4530.2 Rev-1)

- C. Owners may determine how far back to consider an applicant's credit history. Owners generally focus on credit activity for the past three to five years. It is a good management practice to give priority to current activity over older activity.
- D. Owners may have to justify the basis for a determination to deny tenancy because of the applicant's credit rating, so there should be a sound basis for the rejection.

Screening for rental history

In addition to determining whether applicants are likely to meet their financial obligations as tenants and pay rent on time, owners are also interested in whether applicants have the ability to meet the requirements of tenancy.

- A. Owners must not reject an applicant for lack of a rental history but may reject an applicant for a poor rental history.
- B. As part of their written screening criteria, and in order to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly, owners should describe the general criteria they will use for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable rental history.

Tenant Referral and Selection Process (cont'd)

Sample Written Criteria

This is an example of a summary screening criteria for an existing SRO property managed by HMR:

Each applicant will be screened as follows:

1. Complete application
2. Income eligible
3. Verification of homelessness (for set aside units)
4. Previous landlord references, if any, in order to determine ability to care for apartment
5. Screening through landlord reporting database for evictions, arrests/convictions, credit history
6. Successful pre-screening and referral by service provider
7. Successful interview by management staff
8. Intentionally providing false information on application is grounds for denial

Tenant Referral and Selection Process (cont'd)

- Screening Criteria is written and shared with interested applicants for purposes of transparency
- The key phrase in the HUD Occupancy Manual 4350.2 related to Screening Criteria is “consistently applied to all applicants”

F. Permitted Screening Criteria Commonly Used by Owners

1. Overview. Owners are permitted to screen applicants for suitability to help them to determine whether to accept or deny an applicant's tenancy. Owners should consider at least developing screening criteria related to the following factors and may establish other criteria not specifically prohibited in paragraph 4-8 below. All screening criteria adopted by the owner must be described in the tenant selection plan and consistently applied to all applicants.

Mitigating Circumstances

- There is no way for a Property Manager to anticipate every possible situation and spell out the details for exceptions that might be made to
- Written Screening Criteria and procedures are expected to be distinct enough to consistently determine eligibility ... while also allowing for a range of reasonable methods for documenting acceptance or denial.

In carrying out the selection of tenants under the Plan, and in a manner consistent with the Guidance, the Agent must consider mitigating factors that rebut the presumption that an applicant shall be unable to meet the requirements of tenancy. Mitigating factors may include a showing of rehabilitation or rehabilitating efforts and must be balanced against the potentially disqualifying behavior or circumstances. In considering both the disqualifying behavior and mitigating factors, the Agent shall determine if there is a reasonable risk that the applicant shall be unable to meet the essential requirements of tenancy.

-- MASS HOUSING TENANT SELECTION PLAN – REFERENCE GUIDE, 2018

- In evaluating mitigating factors to determine exceptions to screening criteria, Property Management utilizes uniform procedures with all applicants to prevent discrimination and avoid fair housing violations.

Tenant Referral and Selection Process (cont'd)

Sample of Mitigating Circumstances

Sample language from an existing SRO property managed by HMR:

Credit. An Agent may consider an applicant's credit history, but such information may ONLY be used in lieu of rental history to determine an applicant's ability to pay rent when rental history is not available. Where bad credit is the basis for rejection, mitigating circumstances may include:

- (i) a representative payer or other reliable third party who would take written responsibility for payment;
- (ii) evidence that such poor credit was the result of a disability that is now under control; or
- (iii) evidence that credit problems were the result of other circumstances that no longer exist and there is reason to believe that applicant will now pay rent promptly and in full.

Tenant Referral and Selection Process (cont'd)

Verifying Mitigating Circumstances

4. Mitigating Circumstances. Mitigating circumstances shall be verified. The individual performing the verification must corroborate the reason given by the applicant for unacceptable tenancy-related behavior and indicate the good prospect for lease compliance in the future because the reason for the unacceptable behavior is either no longer in effect or is otherwise controlled.

- The Agent shall have the right to request information reasonably needed to verify the mitigating circumstances, even if such information is of a confidential nature (e.g. verifications from medical professionals that provide confidential information).
- If the applicant refuses to provide or give access to such further information, the Agent may choose not to give further consideration to the mitigating circumstance.

Tenant Referral and Selection Process – Summary

- Best practices will be used during lease-up and ongoing rentals at 132 Northampton Road in accordance with fair housing law and HUD Guidance (4530.2)
- As such, procedures for Screening Criteria and verification of mitigating circumstances will be handled in a way that is consistently applied to all applicants to determine an applicant's ability to perform the obligations of the lease.

Consideration of extenuating circumstances in the screening process

Owners may consider extenuating circumstances in evaluating information obtained during the screening process to assist in determining the acceptability of an applicant for tenancy. If the applicant is a person with disabilities, the owner must consider extenuating circumstances where this would be required as a matter of reasonable accommodation.

Excerpt from HUD Occupancy Handbook 4530.2 Rev-1

- Notices of rejection will include specific reasons for denial, the right to request a reasonable accommodation, and the opportunity to appeal.

Discussion regarding density of housing of proposed project

- ❑ As is very often the case with affordable housing development, the proposed project is denser than surrounding uses.
- ❑ Because each unit within the proposed development is very small and intended for single person occupancy, Valley compared the density of the proposed development with the density of bedrooms in other properties along Northampton Road.
- ❑ Density at these properties ranged from a low of 1.21 bedrooms per acre to a high of 62.90 bedrooms per acre, with a median of 10.56 bedrooms/acre. The proposed development is 32 bedrooms per acre. The six-unit rental condominium across the street, for example, contains 14 bedrooms. Likely occupancy at this nearby property is 14-20 persons.

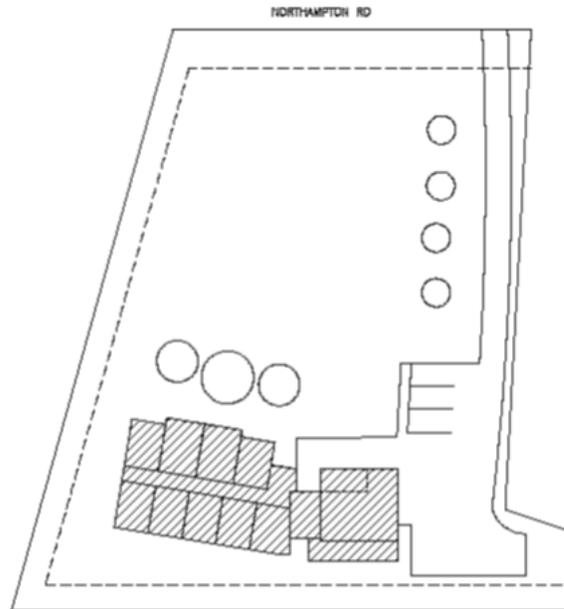
Lot Size in R-G Zone

- The parcel at 132 Northampton Road has sufficient lot size to accommodate 7 townhouse or apartment style units. Townhouses and apartments are allowed in R-G with a Special Permit.
- In R-G, minimum basic lot area = 12,000 sf
Each additional unit in an apartment building requires an added 4,000 sf.
- Both the above dimensional requirements can be modified through a Special Permit.
- The lot size of the property at 132 Northampton Rod is 37,347 sf (or $12,000 + 6.3 \times 4,000$) = 7 townhouses or apartments without any dimensional modifications as to required area.
- If these 7 units were 3-or 4-bedroom apartments, the property would likely house at least 28 residents and have a similar density of occupancy as the proposed development. (According to Amherst Zoning Bylaw 12.172 up to 4 unrelated individuals can live in one dwelling unit, or (12.171) a group of persons of unpeified size who are related.)
- 7 apartments would require (2) parking spaces / unit, or 14 parking spaces total.

Fit Test / Maximum Build-Out

- Immediately surrounding properties have fewer units than the proposed development.
- Early in project planning, Valley's architect prepared conceptual "fit tests" for the site to determine how many units could be constructed on the site. (See following slides.)
- Given the site's size, absence of unbuildable areas, and availability of public water and sewer, these fit tests showed that as many as 50 or more small studio units could be constructed if site were "built out" to its full potential.
- Because the size of a 50+ unit building felt out of proportion to the area, Valley selected a smaller build-out of 28 units, with an overall building square footage and number of bedrooms closer to neighboring properties.

Early Fit Tests – Options A, B, and C



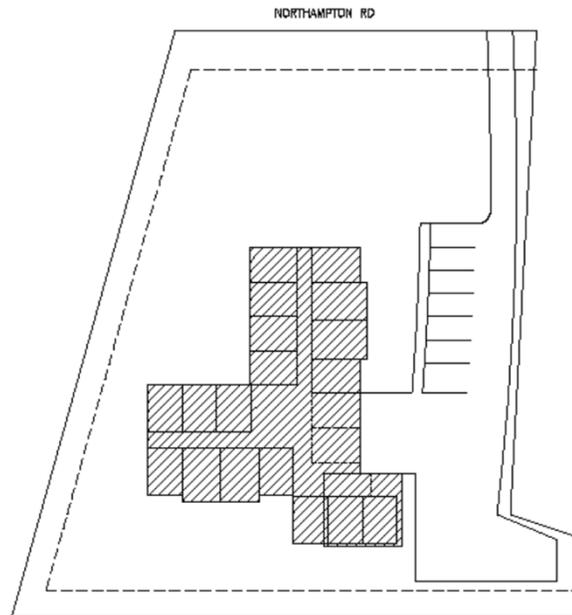
OPTION A

2 STORIES – 19 UNITS (2) HC ACCESSIBLE
3 STORIES – 28 UNITS (2) HC ACCESSIBLE
3-5 PARKING

TOTAL BLDG. FOOTPRINT = 4,220 SF
TOTAL IMPERVIOUS SURFACE = 5,200
6,420

11% BLDG. COVERAGE (25% ALLOWABLE)
24.8% LOT COVERAGE (40% ALLOWABLE)

1.32 NORTHAMPTON RD AMHERST, MA
SITE PLAN SCALE 1" = 40'
VALLEY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATHLEEN FORD, ARCHITECT 8-18-18



OPTION B

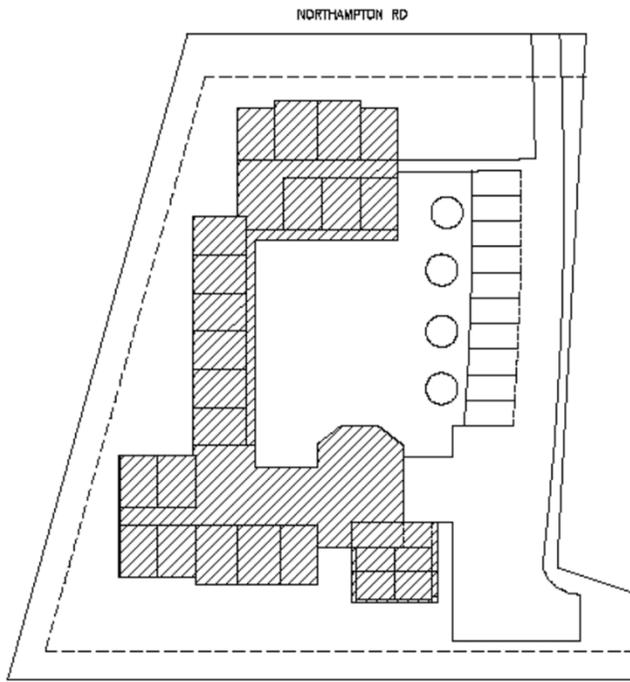
2 STORIES - 38 UNITS (4) HC ACCESSIBLE
 3 STORIES - 33 UNITS (4) HC ACCESSIBLE
 7 PARKING

TOTAL BLDG. FOOTPRINT = 6,900 SF
 TOTAL IMPERVIOUS SURFACE = 6,700
 13,600

18% BLDG. COVERAGE (25% ALLOWABLE)
 35.8% LOT COVERAGE (40% ALLOWABLE)

132 NORTHAMPTON RD AMHERST, MA

SITE PLAN SCALE 1" = 40'
 VALLEY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 KATHLEEN FORD, ARCHITECT B-18-1B



OPTION C

2 STORIES
 44-46 UNITS (4) HC ACCESSIBLE
 10 PARKING (ON PERVIOUS PAVING)
 TOTAL BLDG. FOOTPRINT = 9,400 SF
 TOTAL IMPERVIOUS SURFACE = 6,600
 14,550
 24.7% BLDG. COVERAGE (25% ALLOWABLE)
 36% LOT COVERAGE (40% ALLOWABLE)

132 NORTHAMPTON RD AMHERST, MA
 SITE PLAN SCALE 1" = 40'
 VALLEY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
 KATHLEEN FORD, ARCHITECT 8-18-18

Small housing units built at high density are eco-friendly

- Small units in a highly energy efficient, compact, dense configuration are desirable from the perspective of energy use per person.
- Dense units conserve land area and allow for more open green space.
- Nationally, planning policy is shifting to favor denser, multi-family development, with some Cities and Towns no longer allowing detached single-family home construction because this housing type is associated with the highest levels of energy use per person.
- The proposed development represents a highly energy efficient way to provide safe, affordable, adequate housing for 28 single person households.

Housing Density in an Area of High Property Costs

- Inverse relationship between property costs and housing density. The more expensive the housing market, the greater the financial pressure for higher density.
- Amherst has one of the most expensive property markets in the Pioneer Valley creating market pressure toward higher density. This is especially true for affordable housing, which has limited resources for property acquisition.
- Typically, Valley spends between \$0 to \$15,000 per unit for acquisition costs and has often developed properties provided by municipalities for \$1.
- The current property at 132 Northampton Road has a fixed acquisition cost of \$14,553 per unit for 28 units. Greatly reducing density would drive this acquisition cost beyond reach for an affordable housing use.

Applicant presents site amenities, architecture, and layout

Current Site Plan

BIKE STORAGE RELOCATION

Revised 09.22.2020

NEW LOCATION OF BIKE STORAGE

PREVIOUS BIKE STORAGE



SCALE 1"=20' 0"
(If printed full size @ 11" x 17")
0 10 20
North
Prepared by
meritage landscape

Architectural Plans

INSPIRATION PHOTOS

Nearby Houses in Amherst:







Large Residential Halls on Smith College Campus:





EVOLUTION OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Plans incorporating renovated existing house (Kathy Ford Architect)



Austin Design Initial Plan for New Construction Building

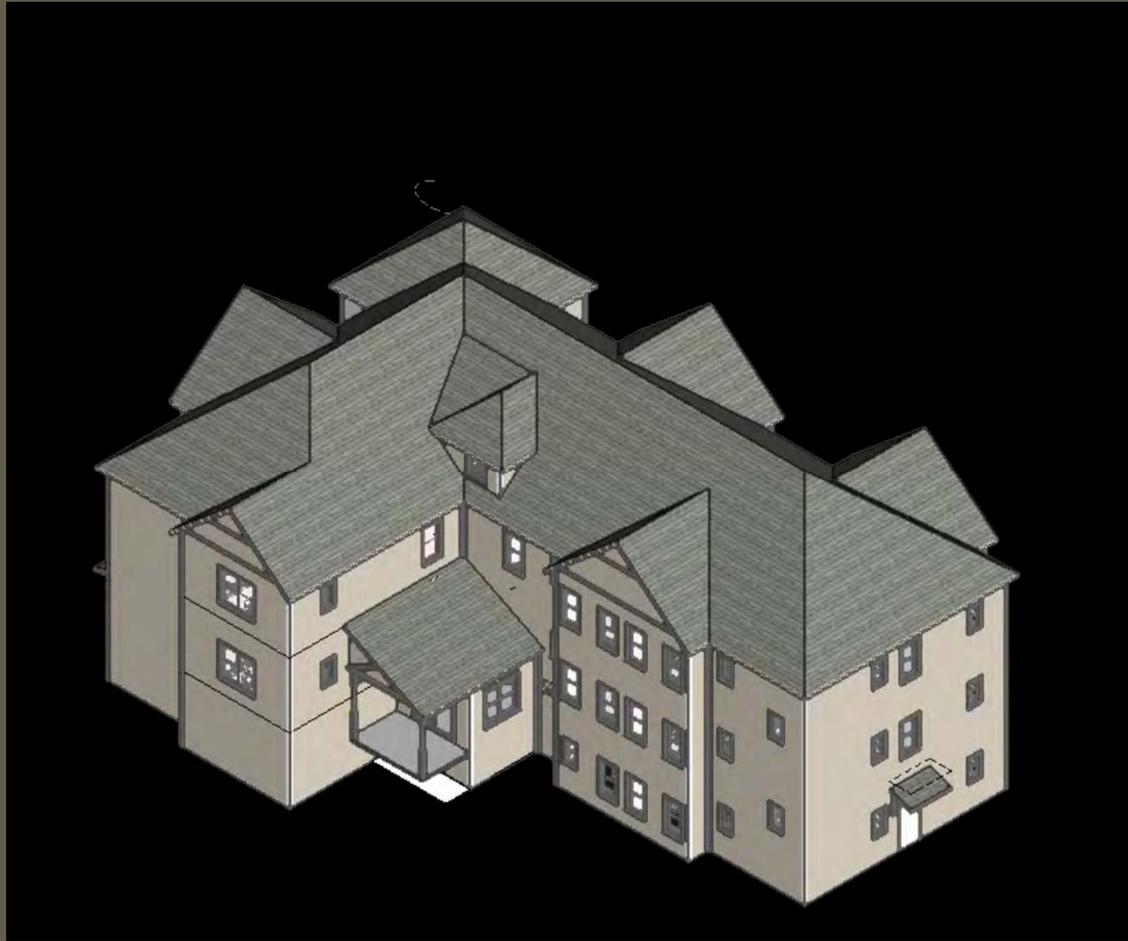








Second Plan Concept – Austin Design



Current Architectural Plans

Style: Traditional / Victorian

Project Name: Amherst Community Apartments | Location: Amherst, MA | Architect: Austin Design Inc.



SOUTHEAST PERSPECTIVE



NORTHEAST PERSPECTIVE



SOUTHWEST PERSPECTIVE



NORTHWEST PERSPECTIVE



AMHERST COMMUNITY APARTMENTS
132 Northampton Rd,
Amherst, MA, 01002

Comprehensive
Permit Submission

8 May 2020



City of Amherst
132 Community Development
208 Pleasant Street, Suite 20
Amherst, MA 01002
413-253-5855

Tighe & Bond

33 Southampton Road
Amherst, MA
01002

STEVENS & ASSOCIATES

100 Northampton Street
Amherst, MA
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Berkshire Design Group

Berkshire Design Group
2 John Pomeroy
Northampton, MA
01061
413-582-7000

Not For Construction



A0.10

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Features for Review:

- Overall architectural style
- Gable roofs; roof pitch
- Building articulation and methods used to break up massing
- Choice of exterior materials
- Window style – 2 over 1
- Trim Details and porches
- Planning Board request to change the horizontal band between 1st and 2nd levels
- Number of windows per unit and window size (maximize natural light)
- Interior Layouts—designed to maximize adjacent open floor space and flexibility for tenants to position furniture
- Ceiling heights in Units



**AUSTIN
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ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN

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515.281.1111

**AMHERST COMMUNITY
APARTMENTS**
132 Northampton Rd.
Amherst, MA, 01002

Comprehensive
Permit Submission

8 May 2020

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AMHERST COMMUNITY APARTMENTS
132 Northampton Rd,
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Comprehensive
Permit Submission

8 May 2020

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**AMHERST COMMUNITY
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132 Northampton Rd.
Amherst, MA, 01002

Comprehensive
Permit Submission

8 May 2020

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