TOWN OF NORFOLK

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June 7, 2018
Gregory Watson, Manager of Comprehensive Permit Program
MassHousing
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

RE: 194 Main Street- Applications for Project Eligibility/Site Approval Letter

Dear Mr. Watson:

Again, the Town is excited to receive the Planning for Production Grant for Norfolk Center from MassHousing. Many of the constraints that the grant will evaluate are waivers being requested as part of the 40B project. As you may or may not know, the applicant evaluated several different development options for this property under the Town's current Zoning Bylaws. For a variety of different reasons those projects didn't proceed. I'm hopeful, the grant will make some recommendations so various properties in Norfolk Center can be permitted under the Town's zoning bylaws and rather than 40B.

Zoning Waivers

I.a.4- Building Scale- Building scale is an important piece of fitting the development within Town Center. This proposal would be the largest private building in Norfolk Center. Building footprint is only one piece of building scale. Limiting the footprint size doesn't necessarily achieve the objection the Town is trying to regulate with this requirement. Topography, surrounding buildings, landscape design, the relationship between the street and the building and building setback all play a part in building scale. If the project gets site approval we will dig deeper into the design once filed with the Zoning Board of Appeals. This proposal will help our grant discussion as well.

I.4.a.5- Pedestrian Access- This requirement is more geared towards mixed use and commercial projects; however, pedestrian access is an important design component especially for Norfolk Center. Similar to building scale topography, surrounding buildings, landscape design, the relationship between the street and the building and parking all play a part in how pedestrian access the building. If the project gets site approval we will dig deeper into the design once filed with the Zoning Board of Appeals. This proposal will help our grant discussion as well.

I.4.a.6- Building Height and Façade- How a building is designed is a major part of height. Not all buildings over 40 feet tall are alike. We currently don't have design guidelines but will be developing them as part of our grant. I think it would be helpful to see some alternative façade designs including a pitched roof if the project gets site approval. This can be handled once the project is filed with the Zoning Board of Appeals. The development of design guidelines for multi-family housing was a recommendation of the approved 2017 Housing Production Plan. Depending upon the timing perhaps the design guidelines will be well underway and can be used as part of the permitting process for this project.

I.4.a.9- Residential Use- If the project gets site approval; the Zoning Board of Appeals will review the site and architectural design. The waiver makes sense.

I.4.a.10 Street Specifications- If the project gets site approval; the Zoning Board of Appeals will review the access ways and parking design to ensure they meet good design principles. The waiver makes sense.

I.4.a.11 Residential Density- If the project gets site approval; the Zoning Board of Appeals will review the density as part of the permitting process. The density will be evaluated further.

I.4.1.C. Greenbelt- If the project gets site approval; the Zoning Board of Appeals will review landscaping and where appropriate screening is needed for the site.

I.4.b.1.D Landscaping Requirements- If the project gets site approval; the Zoning Board of Appeals will review the landscape design as it relates to the site and the surrounding area.

I.7 Uses Permitted and Regulated in the B-1 District- The waiver makes sense since the use is not presently allowed under the zoning. The 2017 Housing Production Plan did recommend this type of housing and in Norfolk Center.

2017 Housing Production Plan

Age restricted housing in Norfolk Center is a goal of the plan. It will provide housing options for seniors to age in place above and below 80 percent of median family income. If Norfolk residents 55 and over sell their homes in order to rent in this development it may free up moderately priced single family homes in town. Adding housing to Norfolk Center will help support local businesses, add vibrancy and hopefully encourage new commercial businesses.

Pro-Forma

I'm hoping the proposed market rate rents are supportable. The Avalon Sharon and Avalon Natick aren't necessarily similar products. Both offer extensive amenities that this project offers. A quick survey of luxury apartments closer to Norfolk has lower market rate rents. While Norfolk Center has an excellent amenity which is a very short walk to Norfolk station; the development itself doesn't offer all of the luxury apartment amenities which is totally understandable. However, I remain optimistic Norfolk Center will support the market rate rents. If so, this will be a very good sign for further economic development in Norfolk Center.

Additional Comments:

If the project receives a site approval letter, I look forward to working with the applicant and his team.

Sincerely,

Richard J. McCarthy, Jr.
Town Planner

Cc. Jack P. Hathaway, Town Administrator
Chris Wilder, Zoning Board of Appeals, Chairman