

To: Jay Sheers, Chair, and the City of Beacon Planning Board

Date: October 6, 2017

Re: **River Ridge Townhouses, Subdivision and Site Plan**

I have reviewed the following new material:

- Response letter from Cuddy + Feder, dated September 26, 2017;
- Updated LWRP Consistency Statement, dated September 25, 2017;
- Two alternative layouts to avoid a variance requirement, undated;
- Two examples of retaining wall systems; and
- The Site Plan, Landscape and Lighting Plan, and Grading and Utility Plan of the 11-Sheet Site Plan set, dated September 26, 2017.

### **Proposal**

The applicant is proposing to construct 18 for-sale townhouses on a 2.95 -acre consolidated parcel in the RD-7.5 zoning district and in the Historic District and Landmark Overlay Zone. The project includes a new stairway to Ferry Street and a walkway and pocket park near Beekman Street.

### **Comments and Recommendations**

The applicant is looking for the Board's direction on several critical layout questions that involve potential variances before moving forward on more detailed plans:

1. The RD-7.5 district has a building length limit of 150 feet. Both rows of townhouses exceed that length, especially so if the L-shaped row is considered one continuous building.
2. The district requires a minimum separation between buildings of twice the average height of the facing buildings, or 70 feet for 35-foot-high buildings. Breaking up the buildings to avoid the 150-foot limit makes the 70-foot separation limit difficult to meet.
3. The previous renderings showed a tower element near the northern end of the parcel that appears to exceed the district's maximum height limit of 35 feet.

I agree that the Board has the ability to waive the length of the row south of the entrance under the Affordable Workforce Housing provisions in Section 223-41.10 M, since the extra 17 feet allows for the permitted bonus unit. However, the L-shaped row should be divided to avoid an extremely long elevation and excessive variance. The applicant could relocate the connecting utility building and request a 50-foot variance from the 70-foot building separation requirement.

Two variance-free alternatives have been provided, neither of which is preferable from the applicant's perspective. Alternative A fragments the development, builds on the lower steep slopes off Beekman Street, has garage doors facing the street, and would result in the loss of a significant number of on-street parking spaces. In Alternative B two of the townhouses infringe on the central greenspace and would partially block river views through the site.

I have attached two additional options. The first would move the two townhouses in Alternative A back, framing the central green and view with side buildings. The original layout has the green surrounded by asphalt and parking spaces. This option would separate the buildings by 60 feet, requiring a more minimal 10-foot variance. The second option turns the rear buildings toward the river views, offers more greenspace, and meets the building separation requirement.

Whichever layout the Board prefers, the northern tower element should be eliminated, since it would require another variance and would compete with the historic church spire.

4. Building elevations will need heights, colors, and materials noted.
5. The trees over 8-inch diameter to be incorporated into the development and those to be removed should be clearly shown on the plans.
6. The Traffic Impact Study should be reviewed by the City's consulting traffic engineer.
7. Since this property is in the Historic Overlay Zone and within the LWRP boundary, the Board will need to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness and LWRP Consistency Statement.

If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me.

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c: Tim Dexter, Building Inspector  
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