

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

Date: December 7, 2017

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

I have reviewed the following new material:

- Response letter from Cuddy + Feder, dated November 28, 2017;
- Updated Full EAF Part 1, dated October 31, 2017;
- Letter from NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, dated November 27, 2017;
- Sheets 1 and 7 of the Site Plan set, with the last revision dates of November 28, 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 cover letter notes several agreed-to changes in response to previous comments, but not yet shown on these submitted plans, including elimination of the tower and one variance, depiction of the view towards the river on the renderings, and relocation of two proposed trees from the central green area. The elevations will also be revised, based on comments by the Architectural Review Subcommittee at its November 20, 2017 meeting.

1. The applicant is requesting the following modification by the Planning Board of the building length limitation and an area variance from the ZBA. The Planning Board will need to issue recommendations to the ZBA on the variance.
  - The RD-7.5 district has a building length limit of 150 feet. The row of townhouses south of the entrance exceeds that length by 19 feet. However, the Affordable Workforce Housing provisions in Section 223-41.10 M allow the Planning Board to modify such dimensional standards to accommodate the permitted bonus unit, which is 24 feet wide. I recommend that the Planning Board approve this reasonable modification.
  - The district requires a minimum separation between buildings of twice the average height of the facing buildings, or 70 feet. The two townhouse rows north of the entrance are proposed to be only 18.9 feet apart. A sketch layout that would comply with the separation requirement was provided at the October meeting, but the applicant prefers to request the variance with support from a church representative and some neighbors.
2. The NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation letter states that the project will have No Adverse Impact, provided a "significant vegetative buffer is maintained between the proposed new construction and the historic church property to obscure views of the project from the church." To comply with this recommendation, the applicant will need to more heavily landscape the property boundary and should consider moving the northern row of townhouses away from the church property line.

3. As to the lower pocket park, the 2017 Comprehensive Plan does show potential pocket parks at two locations along Beekman Street, but those sites are directly along the sidewalk with good visibility from streetlights into the park. The proposed location is in the woods elevated at least 12 feet above the sidewalk with no open visibility from the public way, making security questionable. My suggestion is that the lower woods feature an informal path with several benches overlooking a restored cemetery.
4. The City's consulting traffic engineer suggested a crosswalk at Rombout Avenue and the applicant is willing to apply to the DOT. The crosswalk should be supported by the Board and shown on the plans with a note that it is subject to DOT approval.
5. 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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