

To: John Gunn, Chair, and the City of Beacon Planning Board

Date: January 5, 2018

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

I have reviewed the following new material:

- Response letter from Cuddy + Feder, dated December 22, 2017, along with a project narrative and LWRP and Certificate of Appropriateness justifications;
- Updated Full EAF Part 1, dated December 22, 2017, and draft Parts 2 and 3;
- NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation updated letter, dated December 21, 2017;
- Sheets 1-8 of the 11-sheet Site Plan set, with the last revision dates of December 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.

Comments and Recommendations

1. 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, along with a SEQRA Determination. The applicant has provided sufficient justification for the SEQRA Determination.
2. The applicant is requesting a modification by the Planning Board of the building length limitation and an area variance from the ZBA. The Planning Board should decide on the building length issue and provide a recommendation 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. The applicant has requested a variance with support from a church representative and other neighbors.
3. After comments by a number of neighbors, the applicant is now proposing to eliminate the lower pocket park, the rear path along the cemetery, and the retaining wall stairs. I suggest that the Board retain the stairs down the wall and an informal path into the woods. This would allow residents access to the lower part of the property with views of the cemetery. By not connecting the path all the way down the steep slopes to Beekman Street, any potential attractive nuisance for the area could be avoided.

4. The City's consulting traffic engineer suggested a crosswalk at Rombout Avenue, which will be used by pedestrians crossing Wolcott Avenue and heading to the new stairs at Ferry Street towards the Train Station. The crosswalk should be shown on the northern side of the intersection to provide better sight distance to the south, with a note on the plans that it is subject to DOT approval.
5. The building elevations have been revised, based on comments by the Architectural Review Subcommittee at its November 20, 2017 meeting. The Subcommittee will meet on January 11 to consider the recent changes to the architecture.
6. The NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation has reviewed the revised landscaping plan along the northern border with the historic Reformed Dutch Church and issued a December 21, 2017 letter, stating that the project will have No Adverse Impact. The northern plantings include 5 Eastern White Pine trees, 4 Dogwoods, 2 Sugar Maples (not clearly shown on sheet 3), and 28 Rhododendrons.

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

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