

MEMORANDUM

Date: 13 April 2015

To: Emilie Cademartori, Town Planner
Town of Wenham

From: Timothy Smith, Senior Architect

Re: Maple Woods Housing, Wenham
Recommendations for Zoning Approval Conditions

Dear Ms. Cademartori,

As you know, the Town of Wenham requested that we execute and prepare a review of the site and building design of the Maple Woods Development for the purposes of advising the Town on design issues for their consideration. We submitted a design review synopsis (dated April 2, 2015) to the Town of Wenham on April 3, 2015 for your use and review. The Developer and Architect for this project has reviewed these comments and provided a detailed response to each issue that had been raised by the design reviewers. We have assumed that the original review document and the response document have been reviewed by members of the Town's Zoning Board of Appeals.

Furthermore, The Town of Wenham has requested that we summarize the analysis and provide recommendations as a condition of approval by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The project design will continue to be developed and detailed. As may be clear to most, the current drawings are preliminary in nature and illustrate key concepts and objectives of the developer, as well as demonstrate the effort to date in placing the building on the site in a location that optimizes the natural topography and features while minimizing the visual impact to neighboring abutters and landholders.

The major portion of our original comments were generated in response to ambiguities that are typical for the preliminary nature of the design; the comments do not reflect an indication of any major deficiencies. In general, we believe this project reflects well on the Developer and on the Town and has demonstrated a positive process for 40B development.

In our opinion, there is nothing in this proposal that should cause the Town to refuse approval at this stage.

However, a good number of the Developer's responses to design concerns were that they "will consider in the next phase of design"; this is perfectly reasonable but it doesn't provide a guarantee to the Town that suggested improvements will actually be made or considered.

Depending on the nature of the design issues, The Town may opt to procure additional third-party design review services to help inform the Town of outstanding issues and/or provide the Town with an added level of confidence of the project's potential for success. In lieu of a peer review of a future design phase it will be up to the Town to determine what items have been adequately addressed. That said, the ambiguous nature of a preliminary design suggests that further review and attention from the Town will be required as the project moves forward. The design items identified in our review document may provide a checklist of outstanding concerns that the Town and Developer alike may consider, review, prioritize, and implement.

In summary, we find that issues concerning the appearance, size, and location of the new development are minor in nature given the Developer's plan to maintain the height restriction of this zoning district, and understanding that the concealed nature of this building is screened by natural landscaping from public rights-of-way, and considering that the proposed exterior forms and materials are consistent with the local vernacular architecture.

For the purposes of this stage of approval, we recommend the following:

1. General, we respectfully suggest that the Developer keep the Town Planner [Cademartori] fully informed of design progress, changes, upgrades, materials, etc. and that, prior to the development of contract documents, the Town procure or perform a thorough additional design review.
2. Site Work and Landscaping/Plant List: The plant list is incomplete; proposed plantings and compliance with Town requirements should be reviewed by the Town Planner when the list and planting layout is complete.
3. Building Interiors: Demonstrate to the Town Planner the capacity and usability of apartments used primarily for disabled residents (Group 2 units).
4. Building Exterior: Demonstrate how compact roof-top equipment will be screened from view. We recommend that the appearance and materials be fully described and illustrated for review by the Town Planner.

Attachment: Maplewoods Design Review document, revised April 13, 2015