

Town of Sudbury

Zoning Board of Appeals

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Memorandum

To: Stephen Garvin, Chair, Planning Board

From: John D. Riordan, Chair, Zoning Board of Appeals

Subject: Zoning Board of Appeals Recommendations on Cold Brook Crossing Master Plan

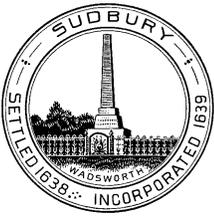
Date: April 23, 2020

Pursuant to the requirements of Sudbury Zoning Bylaw Section 4743A the Zoning Board of Appeals transmits herewith its recommendations and suggested plan modifications to the Planning Board with respect to Master Development Plan and NRROD Project Approval for Cold Brook Crossing, North Road, Assessors Maps C12-0100, C12-0003 and C12-0004, 16 and 36 North Road, Research-1, North Road Residential Overlay District, Melone Smart Growth Overlay District, and Water Resources Protection Overlay District Zone II Zoning Districts.

The Zoning Board of Appeals convened lengthy public hearings to review the Master Development Plan materials on Monday, April 6, 2020 and on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 at which time it closed the public hearing. The Zoning Board of Appeals has put considerable effort into this review and appreciates the opportunity to work with the Planning Board on this important matter. The Zoning Board of Appeals would be happy to respond to any questions the Planning Board might have regarding these recommendations and suggested plan modifications.

cc: Duchesneau, A., Director, Planning and Community Development

Members, Zoning Board of Appeals



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Board of Appeals Written Recommendations to the Planning Board Cold Brook Crossing Development April 23, 2020

Architecture and Aesthetics Generally

- 1. Harmony:** The various buildings should harmonize in style and detail.
- 2. Height/Massing Relief:** The four-story apartment buildings should emphasize strong horizontal lines to bring down the apparent height and should be of the same style.
- 3. Sophistication:** Do not attempt to create obviously colonial features as these buildings are not colonial in nature. The style should have a contemporary feel while relating to the local vernacular. Pursue creativity and sophistication. Avoid faux rusticity.
- 4. Facades:** Multiple facade materials are encouraged, but such palette should still show restraint and create harmony.
- 5. Architectural Consistency:** Multiple architecture firms are shown to be involved at this point, but one architect should be responsible for coordinating all of the architectural design and consistency. Architectural firms should be identified on the plans
- 6. Sense of Place:** Creating a sense of community and place through the architecture must be a top priority. This is a strong and unanimous recommendation by the Board of Appeals. This project is creating a new neighborhood in Sudbury, and can be expected to house many families.
- 7. World Class Quality and Aesthetics:** The Board recommends that the developer meet its publicly stated objective to achieve a timeless design excellence. Seek to make it the most handsome such project they have done. All of Sudbury wants to be proud of this project as an example of what can be done when you do it right.
- 8. Windows:** The end unit windows on the 2nd story right side elevation (p. A-26 of the Architectural Plans) look incongruously small. Windows on p. A-30 were grayed out. The windows shown in the architectural renderings for the SGOD apartment buildings are pedestrian. Windows are a critical face of a building and more attractive windows could have been illustrated.

9. Garage Doors: The interspersing of garage door types (some with windows, others solid) breaks up the monotony of the units. A commitment to this feature shown in the architectural plans should be made, and not wind up on the cutting room floor when the final plans are approved.

10. Signs: The pillars bracketing the stone entry way sign off North Road/Route 117 are overkill. Backlit LED letter signage is understated but elegant, and preferable to the hideous gooseneck and spot lighting that scars much of the Sudbury landscape. Internal directional signs clutter the visuals; street names should suffice, especially in the age of GPS directional capabilities in most every vehicle.

Smart Growth Overlay District (SGOD)

11. Screening: Fast growing screening vegetation such as Baby Giant Arborvitae, Jr. Giant Thuja Arborvitae, or the like should be planted at the southwest corner of the SGOD along North Road/Route 117 to screen the view of the 4-story apartment buildings. It would be a good idea, in fact, to line most of the length of North Road/Route 117 along the berm for an added layer of screening, as well as traffic noise suppression, allowances being made for traffic sightlines.

12. Emergency Access Point: The Board supports a draft alternative layout for the Rte. 117 limited emergency access drive shown at its April 21 hearing that does not require disturbing the contours of the existing berm. The emergency entranceway should be screened as noted in the preceding section.

13. EV Stations: The three identified EV recharging stations in the SGOD complex appear inadequate for the number of residences. The Board recommends increasing this number.

North Road Residential Overlay District (NRROD)

14. Overall Peer Review: The Planning Board (PB) will be engaging expert peer review on fundamental aspects of the development such as storm and waste water management and transportation impacts, it would be worth adding perhaps a limited peer review of the landscape design. ANSI standards should be specified for all tree plantings. Minimum tree heights should be 8-10 feet high.

15. Bedrooms: The Board is concerned about the number of "bedrooms" represented in both the Emery and Pines townhomes portion of the project. The rooms labeled "flex room" are likely in many instances to be utilized as third bedrooms. This potentially could impact both the wastewater treatment facility and the Town's Fiscal Impact Study (especially regarding school-age children). There should be enforceable covenants or other limitations (including monitoring) in the sales agreements with the homeowners regarding the number of permanent bedrooms.

16. Construction Plan Detail: Some reasonable limit on the hours of permitted use of generators in the early phase of construction would be desirable. There should be a deadline for

the removal of construction storage trailers from the site (e.g., issuance of occupancy permits), or sections of the development site.

17. Community Center: The community building is an amenity limited exclusively to the age-restricted townhomes and condominium units in Building A. From the standpoint of site plan development and fostering a sense of neighborhood there does not appear to be a compelling rationale for this. It serves only to Balkanize the overall development, creating a “Haves” and “Have Nots” dichotomy within the development. Further, it is squeezed into a less than desirable island location, bounded by a sea of asphalt with extremely limited parking serving it, which is an especially significant issue if this meeting space is to be used by others outside the development, which is contemplated by the LDDA. The Board strongly urges the Planning Board to revisit this troubling aspect of the site plan.

18. Building A NRRD Condos: Access to the Building A condominium units could, in the view of the Board, be improved significantly by repositioning the driveway entrance to the underground parking on the south side of the structure. This would enable a better design for the access to the Community Center (which as noted above should be accessible to all the townhome units) and it would also do a better job of knitting together Building A with the other age-restricted townhomes.

19. Building A Inadequate Package Facility: Additionally, the Board took notice of the lack of meaningful package storage space on the first floor of this structure and found wholly unconvincing the rationale that as a 55+ restricted building the residents would be home all day to get their deliveries.

General Site Plan Comments

20. Layout: Perhaps the layout of the non-age restricted townhome section is dictated by the geometry and topography of the development site but it is unfortunate that a slightly different, less linear clustering plan that might have yielded more open space could not have been envisioned.

21. Recreation/Community: Both the age-restricted townhomes and the apartment areas include some outdoor community gathering/exercise spaces as well as indoor activity spaces. The non-age restricted Pines townhome area are bereft of any such amenities. It is not even clear from the master plan documents that the “open space” leaching field will be accessible to the residents of the non-age restricted townhomes. Regardless, the Board is concerned that this area is woefully inadequate to serve the entire population of this large community. These residences suffer from an obvious lack of breathing room and community gathering/play space.

22. Dedicated Open Space: The Board would like to see that the final plans meet the 10 percent open space dedication requirement of Chapter 40R.

23. Lighting: All outdoor lighting fixtures should be dark sky compliant, which it appears is contemplated in the plan details. The newer generation of 2700-3000 Kelvin “warmer color” products emit less blue light. The lower kelvin lights are cost and energy efficient, safer, better

for human health and wildlife conservation, and contribute less to skyglow. Their energy efficiency is now comparable to the earlier 500K lights and is preferable for a non-commercial development.

24. EV Recharging for the Townhomes: When this development goes on-line in 2021-23 it should include a least a significant percentage of townhomes with EV recharging capabilities. This is consistent with the Commonwealth's carbon emission reduction goals commitment to a green economy and environment. The marginal cost of including the appropriate Level 2 240-volt recharge capability at the time of construction will save homeowners from much more expensive post-acquisition retrofits and will be much safer and subject to inspection and approval by the Building Inspector before occupancy. As a benefit to the development's investors it is likely to increase the selling price of the units so dedicated.

25. Trail Connection: Page 6 (Overall Layout Plan) of the Site Plan shows a Trail Connection in the northwestern corner. The Board of Appeals commends the developer for opening up a dialog up with the Town planners to make this connector a reality. A rudimentary foundation for a future, MassDOT quality surface could be prepared and then serve as a catalyst for future state grant funding (Particularly since the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to which it would connect takes you directly to the West Concord MBTA rail station).

26. Telecommunications Infrastructure: While the plans are being drawn up for the underground utilities servicing the development, particularly the townhome units, is any consideration being given to providing access by both Verizon and Comcast for phone, internet, and cable service? Effectively this would mean both providers could share the underground transit to a hookup in the dwelling unit. The Board recommends that both in the short term and over the long run this will be a better economic arrangement for the consumer/residents of this project. This is not a difficult reach for the developer who shortly after the last units are sold will have no beneficial interest in the new community.

27. Lack of Retail: At the time of the adoption of the LDDA there was a plan to include as much as 2,500 square feet of commercial space in the development. The Board feels that it is unfortunate that this modest commitment has been dropped from the Master Plan. Even a small shop or three, housing a coffee shop/convenience store (similar to the market at 29 Sudbury), perhaps an ATM and maybe an ice cream/candy store would both aid in reducing transportation congestion and create a sense of community.

28. Landscaping Behind the Townhomes: One feature that the Board recommends catch the watchful eye of the Planning Board is the landscaping behind the non-age restricted townhomes. Though the floor plans and rear elevations seem to indicate the small decks attached to each dwelling do not provide access to the green areas behind these homes, there are steps shown on both the Landscape and Layout Plans.

Particularly since no other shared outdoor space is provided for these units, it is critical that these residents have access from their units to the common landscaped areas between the units. At the same time, however, the landscaping design must consider the topography and size and species of the trees in order to provide some level of screening between units. It does little good to place

a six foot tree on the downslope of a deck that is 3-4 feet above grade. Accordingly, the Planning Board might want to consider a limited peer review of the overall landscape plan.

29. Parking for Visitors: The Board of Appeals is concerned over the lack of parking provided for visitors in all districts of the development. There is very little curbside space between the townhome driveways (particularly in the Pines neighborhood), and roads are not wide enough to provide parallel parking spaces on both sides. Also noted by the Board is the apparent lack designated visitor parking spots in the outdoor parking areas around the multistory units and the Community Center. This is more than an inconvenience because it could become an issue for first responders. There does not appear to be any plan for parking in this regard, just an illustration of a certain number of spots solely to meet the minimum mathematical requirements of the zoning bylaw.