



**DRB Memorandum  
Grandview Acton  
361 – 363 Great Road**

**July 24, 2019**

**May 28, 2020**

This is a combination of two separate reviews of the proposed Grandview Project, a Local Initiative Project (LIP), “Friendly” 40B.

July 24, 2019:

DRB members in attendance: Holly Ben-Joseph (Chair), Peter Darlow (Assistant Chair), Kim Montella, and David Honn.

The project’s proponent in attendance: Mark O’Hagan of MCO Housing Services

Documents Reviewed:

- Bullet Item Summary (1 page) prepared by MCO Housing Services
- 6 Page Untitled Plan Set (Dated July 18, 2019 by Stamsky & McNary) comprised of Architectural Rendering of Building from Proposed Parking Lot, Floor Plan showing 8 Condo Units per floor, Architectural Rendering of Building from Proposed Front Yard, Simple Site Layout Plan showing preliminary locations of building, driveway, parking area, and proposed drainage basin & septic areas, Overview Map of area with proposed preliminary site improvements superimposed on it, and same Overview Map with pictures of surrounding existing property improvements referenced thereon.

The existing site is currently comprised of approximately 4 acres on two lots with a small bungalow and semi-circular driveway on it. The topography generally slopes up towards the back of the site from Great Road (towards the North) and there is a slight plateau on the site where the proposed building is currently sited. The remainder of the site is wooded. The site is surrounded by several condominium complexes (Wampus Avenue, Meyer Hill, and Brook Run) as well as a couple of single-family homes and a small professional building across Great Road.

It is proposed to demolish the existing bungalow and erect a five (5) story building that will consist of 32 condo units (2 bed, 2 bath, 1600 – 1700 SF, garden –style units w/ balcony or patio, all handicap accessible, with covered parking on the first floor & elevator). 8 of the units are proposed to be affordable units (\$200K price point) while the remainder will be market rate (\$460K +/-, pricing according to the proponent). All units will be age restricted, meaning at least one of the Owners has to be 55 years old or older. The underground parking area will provide approximately 36 parking spaces and the exterior surface lot behind the building has approximately 40 additional spaces. There will be 4 stories of condos with 8 units on each floor.

The site is near some Town amenities such as shopping, playing fields, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and access

to Rtes 2 & 495.

The following are the DRBs comments on the development as presented on July 24, 2019:

1. The orientation and height of the building are concerning. The DRB proposes that the proponent attempt to orient the long side of the building more aligned with Great Road and look to push the building back from Great Road. If that's possible, the approach to the building will be more pleasing to future residents and the view of the mass of the building will be somewhat mitigated. Also, by moving the building back as far as possible, more existing mature trees and landscaping can be maintained which will also help. The DRB does understand that the topography may inhibit these requests.
2. The height of the building is of concern...as per the proponent, the height of the building will exceed 40 feet and the first floor level of the building will be set upon a plateau that is located approximately 25 feet above the average adjacent grade of Great Road. The DRB requests a scaled drawing study of the façade of the building in relation to Great Road (from both travel directions) to determine how the mass of the structure relates to the surrounding neighborhood area.
3. The DRB recommends significantly reducing the number of surface parking spaces (total parking is currently well in excess of two spaces per unit) and reworking an entrance drop-off area that would accommodate shuttle vehicles. Further, pushing any surface parking to the back of the site will help to alleviate any steeper driveway slopes. It is recommended to introduce several landscaped breaks between the clusters of parking to break up the severity of the wide open surface parking lot.
4. The DRB would like the existing mature trees/shrubs along Great Road to be maintained – the proponent agreed.
5. Since the location is close to existing shopping, playing fields and the rail trail, it would be nice to provide a way for the future residents to access these neighborhood features without having to walk along Great Road. The proponent did mention a potential for a walking path that could connect to the adjacent Wampus Ave. Complex to the northeast of the site. We encourage the developer to continue investigating this option.
6. Regarding the architecture, it is proposed to give the entrances more importance – they seem to be almost an afterthought as they are not celebrated and certainly lack a scale aligned with the buildings height and mass.
7. On the building interior, it is suggested to look into a way for providing some natural light and window views into the corridors and/or vestibules.

May 28, 2020:

DRB members in attendance: Peter Darlow (Chair), Holly Ben Joseph, and David Honn.

The project's proponent in attendance: Mark O'Hagan of MCO Housing Services

Grandview Acton Documents Reviewed:

Layout Plan, dated February 25, 2020 and revised May 19, 2020, prepared by Stamski and McNary  
Landscape Plan, dated May 28, 2020, prepared by Places Associates.

The design has progressed modestly with respect to the overall building design with a noted relocation of the

elevator core from the North end to the South End of the building. Otherwise the proposed building remains essentially as previously reviewed in July 2019.

The site documentation has been progressed with development of site drainage, the project's on site septic system, initial thoughts on landscape, further definition of the surface parking area, inclusive of entrance ramps, clarity on parking amenities, site lighting, dumpster corrals, and retaining structures to allow for building the parking lot into the hillside, and the introduction of a walkway from Great Road up to the on grade parking area. The recently revised site drawings reflect commentary received from the planning board, the health department, the civil engineering peer review, and the first review meeting with the zoning board of appeals.

The following are the DRBs comments on the site development drawings reviewed May 28, 2020:

8. Adjacent to Great Road, along the existing bank, a reinforced lawn is proposed. Not knowing how well this can be maintained, due to the steeply sloping bank, it is recommended to consider using more of the wildflower pollinator mix as has been proposed for atop the septic system. It is understood the intent is to maintain the existing conditions as much as is feasible, thus this comment pertain primarily to areas that will be disturbed.
9. The selections of evergreen trees will not thrive, as these particular two Spruce species have recently been disease prone. It is recommended to shift to Fir (Abies) varieties.
10. The DRB recommends taking a careful look at the plantings scheduled for the drainage basins that the building tenants will be looking down upon. Given many similar basins at other recently developed projects in town have turned out to be very ragged visually, there needs to be an effort to develop a groundcover that can be readily maintained.
11. The DRB recommends an effort be made to construct some leveled out space to offer the residents some opportunity for outdoor recreation, perhaps as simple as a flattened lawn for a barbeque and picnic area.
12. The proposed retaining walls, close to 10 feet in overall height above the first floor level on grade parking will have an important visual impact. The proponent has not yet determined how these will be treated, other than to state they will not be simply poured concrete walls as they are an important visual for the development of the property.
13. Though the proponent mentioned during the review that the wooded section to the North of the retaining walls, upslope, will be retained, the DRB would like to understand whether the woods will be cleaned up and perhaps rid of invasives.
14. Reiterating a request to provide a visual study of how the building will be perceived when approaching from either direction on Great Road, the DRB is concerned of the significant overall height and mass of the four story façade sitting atop the parking garage on the hillside. Especially should the existing trees along the edge of Great Road not be able to be maintained, which can otherwise provide some shielding of the building's bulk when seen from Great Road. Additionally, given the building's orientation, it is important to determine whether when driving East on Great Road, if the entrance to the parking garage becomes a primary view the town will have of the project.
15. One consideration offered to help mitigate the overall building height visually, is to introduce a secondary finish material, such as a masonry at the first floor level, to help soften the severity of the current façade's overall height. The proponent agreed to discuss with his design team and have a look at this.

The DRB appreciates the proponent coming to the Board back in July of 2019 and again on May 28, and looks forward to working with him as the project continues to progress.

Respectfully Submitted  
Design Review Board