



Memorandum

Project: The Meadows @ Acton
263 Great Road
Acton, MA

Plans Submitted: Hardcopies - of Submittal Package

Proponent: Steve Steinberg

Architect: Peter Conant

Date of Review: 5/16/2012

To: Board of Selectman/Zoning Board of Appeals
From: Design Review Board (DRB)
Re: Review Comments on "The Meadows" 40 B Housing Project
Attendance: Holly Ben Joseph (DRB), Kim Montella (DRB), Chris Dallmus (DRB),
David Honn (DRB), Steve Steinberg (Developer), Peter Conant (Architect)

Project Description

- The project is located at 263 Great Road
- The project consists of 25 residential buildings on a long, narrow site perpendicular to Great Road, including two existing houses to be renovated (One by Habitat for Humanity), two duplex units for rental with the remainder of the buildings to be single family units for sale. The majority of the houses have two car garages. Seven of the 25 units are considered affordable under the 40B program.

Site Plan Comments

- It was noted that the site is very densely developed with side yard setbacks well below code minimums. There were numerous instances of garages from one property being 10 feet or less from a neighboring house. This density will create a wall-like appearance while driving and walking around the complex preventing views into the woods beyond. In order to alleviate this condition while maintaining the same number of housing units, it was suggested that one or one-and-a-half car garages be substituted for two car garages.
- It was suggested that the first three houses on the right side of the entry drive could be staggered (instead of the front facades aligning) to relieve the wall-like appearance noted above.

- The new unit and its driveway located adjacent to the existing house in the center of the site plan should be repositioned so that the existing house is more prominent and both units gain more privacy.
- Due to the project's density, there is an excessive amount of pavement since each house has its own driveway. It was suggested that driveways could be shared between two houses. The proponent was referred to a recently built housing project on River Street in the South Acton Historic District where this was done.
- As many mature trees should be retained as possible.
- Drainage retention basins should be reconfigured into more natural shapes instead of the rectangles depicted on the plans.
- The sidewalk shown on one side of the street was considered sufficient and aesthetically desirable.

Building Comments

- A perspective was shown by the architect that depicted numerous housing styles with multiple variations on each style. Rather than a multitude of styles, the consensus among the parties was that this size project would benefit from and be greatly enhanced by using only two basic style types-Greek Revival and Colonial. Each of these types would have multiple iterations which would make them unique such as variations on the size and type of porches, exterior materials, dormers, roof configurations, trim, colors, etc.
- It was considered desirable to vary the orientation of the gables to the street; sometimes perpendicular, sometimes parallel.
- It was noted that 6 over 6 windows would be more appropriate for the Colonial style and 2 over 2 windows for the Greek Revival style. 1 over 1 windows were noted as incorrect and undesirable. The proponent was referred to the River Street project for window suggestions.
- It was noted by KM as a realtor, that the two car garages are out of the norm for the size of the units proposed (1800-2000 SF). The volume of the two car garages inappropriately dominates the volume of the houses. See garage suggestions above. The Board appreciated that the garages were pushed to the extreme rear of the units.
- Front porches of a useful size and with sufficient architectural detail were deemed essential to create a scale appropriate for residents walking along the street, providing a semi-private buffer between the street and the front door of the house as well as promoting a "neighborhood feel".
- The proponent was encouraged to save resources by simplifying the house volumes and devoting his resources to quality windows, materials and architectural details appropriate to the style type.

Submitted by:
Design Review Board