

12/12/05 - (6)

*Madison  
Place*

APPLICANT RESPONSE

~~12/27~~

**TO:** The Board of Selectmen for the Town of Acton  
**FROM:** 737 Main Street, LLC: Jennifer Shea, Dennis Ring, Jay Peabody  
**DATE:** November 23, 2005  
**SUBJECT:** Responses to Town Staff Comments Regarding "Madison Place", A Local Initiative Program

On November 28, 2005 we will be presenting a brief summary of the status of our application for a Local Initiative Program (LIP) for Madison Place.

Under the guidance of the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) we are confident that we have progressed to the stage of requesting the Chairman of the Board's signature on our LIP application. Enclosed herein please find the following for your review:

1. Madison Place Conceptual Marketing Brochure (inside front cover of portfolio)
2. Town Comment
  - a. ACHC Letter to Board of Selectmen (11/17/05)
  - b. ACHC Comments on Proposal (11/17/05)
  - c. Engineering Comments on Proposal (10/19/05)
  - d. Natural Resources Dept. Comments on Proposal (10/18/05)
  - e. Municipal Properties Dept. Comments on Proposal (10/18/05)
  - f. Planning Dept. Comments on Proposal (10/27/05)
3. Applicant's Response to Town Comment
4. Revised Plans (incorporating changes resulting from ACHC & Town Staff meetings)

In addition, please note that all abutters to the proposed project were sent an informative package (cc'd to BOS) and invited to a presentation. Of over twenty-five abutters only two attended. One abutter was in favor of the project. In our opinion, the other protested any type of change and took issue not specific to this project but to the Town's master plan.

In summary, Madison Place is a small scale, development of 8-units which will provide 2-units of affordable housing to the Town of Acton (\$181-203k). We anticipate the project will command similar interest and market value (\$550-570k) as Franklin Place, a recently completed project on Main Street.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to meeting with you next week.

The following is our response to Town comment:

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## **Acton Community Housing Corporation (11/17/05):**

1. In order to provide the project with a unique identity the exterior façade of the front elevation will be modified to include such changes as: front entry design, front & garage door style, color schemes, exterior lighting style, etc.
2. Affordable units will not be placed in the same duplex, adjacent to each other or in close proximity to each other.
3. In exchange for an expedient approval process we agree to negotiate lower pricing for affordable units. Once the proforma is finalized a sliding scale will be provided to better illustrate this.
4. See #3 above.
5. No comment required.
6. Recommended interest rate and condo fees will be used in future proforma.

## **Engineering Department (10/19/05):**

7. The road bounds in the vicinity of the northerly driveway entrance are shown on the revised plan, and a note has been added indicating that they will be preserved during construction.
8. A central mailbox facility, similar to that provided in Franklin Place, has been added to the plan. It is our intention to consult with the Postmaster regarding the final location as the project progresses.
9. The roadway within the project has been re-named "Hadley Lane", and a proposed street numbering system has been added to the plan. Unless there is serious objection from the Police or Fire Departments, it is our intention to maintain "Madison Place" as the name of the project for sales and marketing purposes.
10. A grass strip has been added between the proposed sidewalk and Main Street.

## **Natural Resources Department (10/18/05):**

1. No response necessary
2. It is our intention to file a Notice of Intent as required for the work located in the 100' Buffer Zone.
3. The upland area behind Units 7 & 8 will be utilized for mitigation of storm water run-off, i.e., the proposed infiltration basin. It is our feeling that, with proper screening from Main Street,

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the lawn area over the leaching system will provide adequate, open play area for children in the development. The wooded area at the rear of the development also provides recreational opportunities other than those requiring open fields. In addition, the proposed project is located less than ½ mile from NARA Park.

4. See the following section regarding the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

## **Municipal Properties Department (10/18/05):**

1. See the following section regarding the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
- 2.-5. The Landscape Plan has been revised to address the comments and concerns raised by the Director of Municipal Properties.

## **Planning Department (10/27/05):**

1. See the following section regarding the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
2. Per conversations with Nancy Tavernier of the ACHC and Town staff, expediting the permitting process may result in our ability to offer the affordable units at a cost lower than the regulatory maximum sales price.
3. It is our intention to comply with all local zoning requirements, especially as they relate to engineering design, to the maximum extent possible.
4. The sight distances from both entrance driveways comply with the Subdivision Rules and Regulations, and are shown on the Plan & Profile Sheet.
5. In our opinion, the 20' road width is more conducive to access by emergency vehicles, and for overflow, on street parking.
6. The additional parking spaces that were shown on the conceptual landscape plan have been eliminated.
7. The Landscape Plan has been revised to address the concerns raised by Town staff.
8. We have a difference of opinion as to the aesthetics of the garage doors on the front elevations of the units. In fact, the success of the Franklin Place project indicates that this is not an issue.

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## **Health Department:**

The Health Department was represented at the meeting, but provided no written comments. During the presentation, it was noted that the design of the septic system would comply with Title V and the local regulations, and that no variances or waivers would be required.

## **Fire Department:**

The Fire Department was represented at the meeting, but provided no written comments. The Fire Chief expressed concern over the location of the proposed fire hydrant within the development as it related to the direction of fire trucks approaching the site. The proposed fire hydrant has been relocated to the southerly driveway entrance in order to address this concern, and we will confirm the desired location prior to submitting the final plans. He also noted that the proposed street name was in conflict with an existing street in Town, Madison Lane. Please refer to our response to the Engineering Department item 3, above. Finally, there was some discussion regarding access to the future rail trail, which we have addressed in the following section.

## **Building Department:**

The Building Department was represented at the meeting, but provided no written comments.

## **“Bruce Freeman Rail Trail”:**

Many of the staff comments suggested incorporating a connection from Madison Place to the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The suggestions ranged from providing an informal path for the use of the neighborhood, to public access easements and construction of an emergency access road to the future bike path. After considering the suggestions and reviewing the site, we do not feel that the property offers suitable access options for a number of reasons:

- The entire portion of the site between the limits of the developed area and the railroad right-of-way consists of either Bordering Vegetated Wetlands, 100' Wetland Buffer Zone, 200' Riverfront Offset or Estimated Habitat for Rare & Endangered Species. Our project was designed specifically to limit encroachment into these resource areas and habitat.
- The topography of the site includes slopes ranging from 15% to over 50%. Site work and grading to create a road or path that is suitable for emergency access would require significant disturbance of the resource areas and habitat listed above.

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- Madison Place is located approximately 0.6 miles from the railroad crossing at Route 2A, and 0.4 miles from the railroad crossing at Route 27 near the entrance to NARA Park. In our opinion, these existing, at grade crossings are the most suitable locations for emergency access onto the future rail trail.
- According to the feasibility study prepared by Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, LLC, connections to the proposed bike path across private property would need to be evaluated by the EOTC, and be required to comply with ADA Accessibility Guidelines. As stated above, the severe slopes at the rear of the project would make this difficult, and cause significant disturbance of the resource areas and habitat.
- Madison Place abuts a 1-mile section of the proposed rail trail that is anchored by NARA Park to the north and Veterans Memorial Field to the south, which, in our opinion offer better opportunity to access the future trail. This is supported by the feasibility study, which mentions these locations specifically as Possible Facility Access Points.

In conclusion, we support the Town's efforts with regard to the planning, design and construction of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, but we do not feel that providing access from our project is feasible or desirable. We would, however, be open to discussing alternatives, such as a donation to fund the design or construction of a portion of the rail trail, or improve access at an existing, public facility or parking area.