

Acton Community Housing Corporation
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TO: Ken Kozik, Chair, Acton Board of Appeals
FROM: Nancy Tavernier, Chair, Acton Community Housing Corporation
SUBJECT: Comments - Hearing #13-06 Comprehensive Permit 6 Post Office Square
DATE: December 27, 2013

The Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) voted in August 2012 to recommend the twelve unit 40B proposal, Post Office Crossing, located at 6 Post Office Square. This project is a DHCD Local Initiative Program (LIP) project also called a Friendly 40B. We first started meeting with the developers from Charing Cross Realty Trust of Salem, MA in April 2012. There were three meetings with the ACHC, two meetings with the department heads, an information session for abutters, town board members, and the general public, and two meetings with the Design Review Board. There were design changes recommended during the review process but there were no major concerns raised at any of those meetings.

The developers followed ACHC's Guidelines for Affordable Housing Development and the project was also consistent with the Selectmen and Planning Board's Comprehensive Permit Policy which states a preference for small scale in-fill development of twelve units or less.

The Post Office Crossing site is a vacant 3.6 acre parcel located across from the Post Office and to the left of the Wellesley Therapeutic Services building on Post Office Square. The development is proposed to be twelve single family homes, including three affordable units, each with roughly 2400 square feet of living space. Each will have three bedrooms, garages, and a fee simple form of ownership. There are no direct residential abutters. While the land is zoned for light industrial it is the Comprehensive Permit process that allows it to be used for housing. As part of the Comprehensive Permit requirements, 25% of the units must be sold as affordable deed restricted units to first time homebuyers. These working families must meet income and asset guidelines to qualify for purchase, with incomes up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The maximum income for a household of four is \$67,350.

Whenever the ACHC reviews 40B developments, we look for the positive features above and beyond the provision of affordable units. The first feature for this project was the willingness by the developer to do a Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Local Initiative Program (LIP) project which creates a collaborative process with the town in exchange for a streamlined approval process. The approval process was very smooth with the Board of

Selectmen voting to sign the LIP Application in October 2012. The developers willingly accepted suggestions on design and site layout that came from the ACHC, the attendees at the information session, and the Design Review Board. Another plus is the location, which is in close proximity to existing infrastructure such as a traffic light and sidewalks to be used to access services in Acton Center and Great Road. The most important feature that led to the support of the ACHC and the Selectmen was the developer's willingness to commit to doing a full LEED certified project. It is our expectation that all twelve homes, including the affordable units, would be LEED certified.

After the Selectmen endorsed the project in October of 2012, the proposed development seems to have languished. The LIP application was not filed with DHCD until March 2013. The LIP application was extremely comprehensive and essentially ZBA-filing-ready at that time. A DHCD site visit was made in May 2013 at which time more information was requested of the developer. The site eligibility letter was issued by DHCD in August 2013. The application for the Comprehensive Permit was filed with the ZBA on November 13, 2013.

We note that there are several important pieces missing from the application, most notably the architectural plans, the landscaping plan, and information on plans for LEED construction. These were all previously included in the LIP application. We are not certain whether the filed plan is the same one that we originally endorsed so we are submitting a qualified recommendation for Post Office Crossing at this time. We would expect to comment further once the missing pieces are filed with the ZBA. We will then review the proposed project to be sure it matches the original plan that was unanimously endorsed by the Selectmen and the Acton Community Housing Corporation.