



Design Review Committee

Memo

TO: John Danehey, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: Michael McGowan, Chairman
Design Review Committee
RE: Herring Brook Village Proposed Chapter 40B Development
DATE: 11/20/2006

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. The Design Review Committee hopes these comments will be helpful and welcomes a meeting with the applicant to address any of the items in this memo, if this is desired by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Committee met November 15 to discuss the proposed Chapter 40B Development, Herring Brook Village. The applicant's representative was informed of the meeting but was unable to attend. We had a number of very significant concerns which are outlined as follows;

Need for Additional Information

Because the proposed development is much larger than surrounding buildings, the applicant should provide;

1. A three-dimensional massing model of the project and buildings nearby. This will show the relationship of the project to its site and these surrounding buildings.
2. Samples of the exterior materials in the colors to be used.
3. Site plan showing relationship of the project to the surrounding homes and businesses within a +/- half mile radius.
4. A three-dimensional view and elevation views of the project from Rt. 3A.
5. Photograph examples (if any) of similar building designs, preferably by this architect, built in other communities.

Overall Density Concerns

1. Density is extremely high compared to allowed densities of one unit for 40,000 sq. ft. in this Zoning District. The density of sixty units on slightly over four acres of upland is essentially 15 units per acre. For comparison, Oceanside Village has an overall density 5.5 units per upland acre and Whitcomb Pines has a density of approximately 4 per acre on the developed area (net of open space given to the town.) **We strongly recommend the project density be reduced.**
2. The small upland area and general location of buildings near the street makes the density seem

greater. No open space will be visible from Route 3A. Three buildings fronting Rt. 3A are so close as to appear as one continuous building upon approach. In addition to reducing the density, this can be addressed by several recommendations in **Scale and Massing**, below.

Scale and Massing

1. The size, height, and overall scale of the buildings here greatly exceed that of other buildings in the area, and are not consistent with the context of the area.
2. The proposed height of four stories at 48' (we believe would be among the tallest, if not the tallest, building approved in town to date) is simply inappropriate for the scale of Scituate. We recommend the height be reduced to conform to Section 620.1.
3. The mass of the buildings is likely to appear overwhelming so close to Route 3A, a road which the town has long tried to protect through zoning requiring a 100' building setback.
4. The heavy massing could be softened by more articulation from the street side and variations in the roof line. If an additional internal stairway could be added, it would be possible to reduce the length of the hallway and break apart the single large structures into two smaller buildings and provide more appropriate human scale.
5. If possible, we would like to meet with the applicant's architect to explore this alternative.

Materials/Building Details

1. The buildings should be surfaced in natural materials to harmonize with the traditional character of buildings in Scituate.
2. There is a strong need for greater variety in materials in the indentations in the façade to create street interest and break up the scale. The stone treatment of the first floor exterior appears attractive but the applicant should provide more information on the type of material for the buildings.
3. There should be some variety in colors used, within a unified color scheme.
4. The windows on the exterior of the hallway appear to be very large and out of scale for this location. The continuous hallways will have a hotel appearance especially at night because of the consistent level of lighting and visibility of interior doors at night.
5. The treatment of façade mounted mechanical units should be clarified.
6. Clarify details of the Chemical/Control building.

Site Design

1. This corridor serves as a gateway to Greenbush, poised for revitalization and growth with the start-up of commuter rail, and the entire town. An attractive setting for buildings is particularly important here. The front buildings are much too close to Chief Justice Cushing Highway given the town's longstanding efforts to preserve a green belt along this road.
2. The staggered layout is a positive feature, but rather than a single large building very close to Route 3A there should be several with a smaller number of units which allow some open space to be seen.
3. Some parking spots are poorly located for safe traffic flow and convenience. Exiting some spaces will require backing into a heavily traveled driveway.
4. The radii for turns should reflect the speed of traffic on Chief Justice Cushing Highway, and it may be necessary to obtain a turning lane on the northbound side of the road. Have state approvals been obtained for curb cuts for the intensification of use on Route 3A ?
5. The proposed footbridge is a desirable feature, but may be required to justify the number of units outside a village center, by demonstrating access to transit.

6. We strongly recommend the project comply with Section 620.3 rear and side yard setbacks.
7. We strongly recommend the project comply with Section 610.2 for a 100 foot setback from 3A.

Public Safety Concerns

- 1) **Flooding:** It is clear this site is environmentally sensitive, with a large amount of land in the flood plain. The applicant should show the effect of the large area of fill on natural drainage patterns.
- 2) **Fire Protection:** It appears there is no access to the rear of buildings as typically required by Fire Department.

Landscaping

1. Additional, dense screening is needed where adjacent homes are close to the project.
2. Trees are shown within the septic leaching field, which would not be able to be planted there.
3. A landscaped path should be designed to provide adequate pedestrian access with stairs to navigate significant slopes.
4. Some landscaping within the parking lots would help soften the appearance of the large buildings and parking areas. Salt-tolerant and/or native species should be used.
5. The use of rain gardens and natural drainage should be explored.
6. We strongly recommend the project comply with Section 620.4 for visual and acoustical buffering.

Basic Amenities

1. There are very few basic amenities available for what is a relatively a large development.
2. Some type of children's recreation, such as a play area or playground, should be clearly identified.
3. The location of any handicapped units and the relation to the designated parking spaces should be shown.
4. Clarify the location of the affordable units.

Concerns for review by other Boards and/or Committees

1. We recommend obtaining a peer review of the proposed system for stormwater management.
2. We recommend obtaining a peer review of the applicant's traffic study.
3. We recommend review by a professional engineer of the effects of fill in the flood plain on natural drainage patterns.

cc: Board of Selectmen
Planning Board
Janet Stearns, Stockard, Engler & Brigham