

TOWN OF NEEDHAM, MA

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

500 Dedham Ave
Needham, MA 02492
781-455-7500

PLANNING

July 19, 2013

Jon Schneider, Chairman
Board of Appeals
Town Hall
Needham, MA 02492

Dear Mr. Schneider:

At its meeting of July 9, 2013, the Planning Board reviewed the application of Greendale Avenue Venture, LLC, c/o Mill Creek Residential Trust LLC, 15 New England Executive Park, Burlington, Mass., owner, for a comprehensive permit under G.L. Chapter 40 B, Section 21 for construction of a 300-unit rental development, 75 of which will be affordable to families of low or moderate income, in a Single Residence A district on 6.02 acres of land located at 692-744 Greendale Avenue. The documents submitted for the Board's review are as follows:

1. Application Notebook for Site Plan Review completed by the applicant dated April 12, 2013.
2. 692 & 744 Greendale Avenue application for Comprehensive Permit Site Approval Submitted by Mill Creek Residential Trust, LLC, in a black binder;
3. Stormwater Management Report and Environmental Impact Analysis, prepared by Tetra Tech dated 4/12/13;
4. Lot Consolidation Plan of Land, compiled by Tetra Tech for Greendale Avenue Venture LLC, signed and stamped by Robert F. Daylor, PLS, dated 4/12/13, 1 page;
5. Comprehensive Permit Plans, Needham Mews Residential Development, 692 + 744 Greendale Avenue, prepared by Tetra Tech for Greendale Avenue LLC, consisting of 12 sheets dated 4/12/13;
6. Architectural Plans, Needham Mews, 692 + 744 Greendale Avenue, Needham, MA, Application for Comprehensive Permit Site Approval, prepared by TAT The Architectural Team for Greendale Avenue Venture, LLC, consisting of 31 sheets: dated 4/8/2013;
7. Landscape Plans and Materials Plans, prepared by TAT The Architectural Team, Consultant: Stantec Consulting Services, consisting of 3 sheets: dated 4/8/2013

On June 18, 2013, the applicant met with the Planning Board and made a presentation of the proposed project. Following a presentation by the applicant, the Planning Board made the following recommendations divided into the following two categories: (1) recommended site design plan revisions based upon the plans submitted to date; and (2) additional plan support and information required to ensure a comprehensive review.

The Planning Board expressed concern with the following site design features. The following items should be addressed by the applicant and incorporated into a revised set of plans submitted for further review by this Board.

1. The Board expressed concern with the density and scale of the project as proposed. The Board recommended that the project be scaled back so as to provide for a project scale and density more in keeping with that of the abutting residential neighborhood, other 40B projects recently approved and the Town's apartment district zoning standards. The Board notes that the project proposes a density of fifty units per acre. This is five times larger than the density recommended in the Town's 40B guidelines of 8 to 10 units per acre and nearly three times larger than the maximum density currently authorized in the Town's apartment district of 18 units per acre. Accordingly, the Board recommended that the project density be reduced to enable a development that better addresses their concern regarding project scale, density, and height. Density and site design needs to assure a development that fits into the abutting neighborhood and is consistent with the Town's overall zoning scheme.

Table 1, Multi Family Housing Inventory, Needham, 2013, which follows below on page 3, contains a listing of the multi-family dwelling inventory in Needham organized by zoning district. Project data includes: total number of units, total lot area in both square feet and acres, and units per acre. Shown in blue is the proposed 40B project at 692-744 Greendale Avenue. Shown in orange are the Town's approved 40B projects at 21 High Street, 199 St. Mary's Street, 207-213 Garden Street, 1035 Central Avenue (Nehoiden Glen), 32 Junction Street, and 300 Second Avenue.

As noted below on page 3, the number of 40B dwelling units previously permitted in a Single Residence B district ranges from a low of 8.2 units per acre (199 St. Mary's Street) to a high of 13.3 units per acre (Nehoiden Glen, 1035 Central Avenue). Within Needham's A-1 and A-2 apartment districts density ranges from a low of 5.9 units per acre at North Hill to a high of 22 units per acre at Rosemary Lake Apartments. Clearly the density proposed at Needham Mews of 50 units per acre far exceeds the standard implemented in Needham's Single Residence and Apartment districts.

2. The Board expressed concern with the proposed building elevations and how six apartment buildings, three of which are proposed at four stories, would interface with a neighborhood of predominately single family dwellings. Concern was raised as to massing overall and to the visual effect the three buildings fronting on Greendale Avenue would have in particular as they are shown with a front yard setback of 14 feet where the standard for the Single Residence A district is 30 feet and with a proposed building height of 44 feet where the standard for the district is 35 feet. The Board recommended that alternative building designs be explored so that massing and height more in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood can be developed and further that the front yard setback and height standard for the Single Residence A district is respected along Greendale Avenue. Site design needs to assure that the proposed structures fit into the surrounding neighborhood both in terms of massing and setback.

Table 1: Multi Family Housing Inventory, Needham, 2013

Project name	Number units	Total area (sq ft)	Total area (acre)	Units/acre
A-1				
The Highlands	35	106,595	2.45	14.3
Webster Green	78	192,439	4.42	17.6
Rosemary Ridge	105	330,620	7.59	13.8
Rosemary Lake Apartments	205	398,062	9.14	22
Charles Court	119	291,416	6.69	17.8
Elizabeth Condominiums	23	54,450	1.25	18
A-2				
North Hill	350	2,593,562	59.54	5.9
SRB				
21 High Street (40B)	6	26,571	0.61	9.8
199 St. Mary's (40B)	12	63,844	1.46	8.2
207-213 Garden Street (40B)	6	27,132	0.62	9.7
797 Highland Avenue	8	26,579	0.61	13.1
Nehoiden Glen 40B	61	200,376	4.6	13.3
Avery School	24	64,671	1.48	16.2
SRA				
692-744 Greendale Avenue (40B)	300	261,360	6	50
Chestnut Street Business (40B)				
32 Junction Place (40B)	5	11,200	0.26	19.2
Hillside Business				
Hillside/Hunnell	8	12,000	0.27	29.6
General Residence/Industrial				
Denmark Court	17	60,548	1.39	12.2
New England Business Center				
Charles River Landing	350	345,866	7.94	44.1

3. The Board expressed concern with the extent of land disturbance proposed, the substantial reduction in open space, and the lack of access to abutting conservation land through effective trail linkages. The plan indicates that almost the entire site is proposed to be disturbed (92.3%). The area around the existing house at 692 Greendale Avenue accounts for 5.9% which was previously disturbed; leaving only 1.8% of the site undisturbed. Additionally, the plan provides for the construction of a retaining wall surrounding two-thirds of the property thereby severing access along the existing Greendale Avenue Trail. The Board felt that it was imperative that the existing Greendale Avenue Trail system remain intact. In addition to assuring the continuation of the Greendale Avenue Trail, the Board would encourage the Board of Appeals to explore improvements to the Trail system consistent with the Trails Master Plan. Such trail improvements to include trail connections to the Mitchell School and to Cutler Lake through a trail extension along Kendrick Street. Such continued trail access and improvements should prove beneficial, not only to the Needham Community, but to Needham Mews occupants as well. Finally, the project should be redesigned to minimize the disturbed area on the site consistent with Sustainable Development

Principles. A vegetative and treed buffer should be provided along the Route 128 edge of the property to assist in the filtering of emissions from the Highway.

4. The Planning Board expressed concern with the convenience and safety of pedestrian and vehicular movement within the site and on adjacent streets. As relates pedestrian circulation the Board notes that the development is located within walking distance to several schools. The Planning Board recommended that a public sidewalk be constructed along Greendale Avenue from the proposed development to Bird Street. The Board further recommended that a traffic signal be installed at Bird Street with an exclusive pedestrian phase to allow safe crossing for the pedestrian or that another suitable means of providing safe access be provided. Additionally, a system of pedestrian walkways should be provided on the project site linking the proposed development with the Greendale Avenue sidewalk above described. Finally, to reduce traffic congestion along Greendale Avenue and related roads, the Planning Board recommended that the applicant be required to become a member of the 128 Business Council. The 128 Business Council is a Transportation Management Association offering shuttle service to the Newton Highland Green Line Station and the New England Business Center. Service is offered by the Council during both the morning peak hour from 6 a.m. to 9:40 a.m. and again during the evening peak hour from 3:45 p.m. to 6:30. This service helps to reduce the use of single-occupancy vehicles and thus would contribute to an improvement in the overall flow of traffic.

5. The Planning Board noted the location of a Sewer Easement which bisects the subject property and which lies beneath the buildings and other vital elements of the project. This issue will have a significant impact on the overall design of the project. The Board acknowledges that the Board of Selectmen has submitted a letter to the applicant's subsidizing agency MassHousing requesting that MassHousing withhold or rescind its Project Eligibility approval if Site Control is not established. In the interim to address this concern, the Board of Appeals may wish to consider, as recommended in a Memo to Board of Appeals from Jay Talerman, Special Counsel the following options: directing the Applicant to redesign the project so as to comply with the Easement; or taking no action until all other evidence is received; or implementing some combination of the above-noted options.

6. The Board is concerned that the project is not utilizing recommended low impact development strategies as relates the paving program for driveways, walkways and other hard surfaces. Accordingly, the Board recommended that the development incorporate permeable paving strategies for the internal site driveways, parking area, walkways and other hard surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff volumes, increase recharge through infiltration and to minimize pollutants introduced into stormwater runoff from the parking area through direct infiltration. Permeable paving techniques to consider should include porous asphalt, pervious concrete, paving stones, and manufactured "grass pavers" made of concrete or plastic.

7. The Planning Board noted a letter from Anthony DelGaizo, Town Engineer to the Needham Board of Appeals, dated May 16, 2013 which letter detailed a number of deficiencies in the plan set as submitted. The Planning Board notes in particular the issue of Hardy Street (a paper street) which was laid out and accepted as a public way and has never been discontinued or abandoned. This issue is of particular concern to the Planning Board given its role with regard to the same under the

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Subdivision Control Law. The Planning Board notes that the final plan set will need to address the issues raised in the referenced correspondence.

Additional plan support information is required to ensure a comprehensive review. The following items should be provided by the applicant for review and comment by this Board:

8. The Board is concerned with how visitor parking and trash and snow removal will be handled. The Board notes that no information has been provided relative to these items and notes that the final plan will need to address this issue. The Board further notes that insufficient area has been provided for snow storage and notes that the final plan will need to provide for this storage in a way that does not impede pedestrian and vehicular access and parking.

9. The Board is concerned that there is no dedicated outdoor play space for the population of children who will occupy the development. The Board notes that the final plan will need to address this issue.

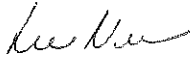
10. The Board notes that it did not receive a Fiscal Impact Analysis as part of this submittal. The Planning Board recommended that the applicant be required to submit a Fiscal Impact Analysis so as to identify the net fiscal impact associated with the proposed 300 unit 40B rental development and the reasons for the projected outcome.

11. The Board understands that the BETA Group has been retained to perform a traffic peer review. The Board will send along its comments and recommendations regarding traffic impacts following its receipt and review of the anticipated traffic peer review report.

Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any further questions.

Very truly yours,

Needham Planning Board



Lee Newman
Director of Planning and Community Development

cc: Planning Board