



CITY OF MELROSE

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

JENNIFER GRIGORAITIS
Mayor

City Hall, 562 Main Street
Melrose, Massachusetts 02176
Telephone - (781) 979-4440
Fax - (781) 662-2182

April 22, 2024

Ms. Katherine Miller, Planning and Programs Specialist
Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Response to Modified Site Approval Application for Summit Ridge, Melrose, MA

Dear Ms. Miller:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the modified request for Site Approval for The Summit Ridge Development proposal submitted by Ronald Lopez of Summit Development, LLC. Please consider these comments prior to issuing a decision as to project eligibility of the revised proposal.

Our understanding is that this proposal seeks to decrease the number of residential units from 36 to 28 by eliminating units 1 through 7, and unit 36, from the original plans dated October 21, 2023. These units will be replaced by two common gathering areas and one no build zone. The elimination of these units corresponds with a reduction in the total number of affordable units from 9 to 7 units, and number of parking spaces from 73 to 51 spaces. Other changes include the addition of five visitor spaces and the alteration of the grade of the proposed turnaround.

Although the removal of units in the steepest location and the addition of two common gathering spaces are positive changes, the revised plans do not address the most significant challenges associated with this 40B development and do not alleviate our concerns as explained below.

Land Alteration: The proposal will still require a substantial amount of hammering and re-grading to prepare the site for building each set of town houses, which jeopardizes the safety of abutters and will compromise the quality of life for neighbors that live on this narrow, steep street. A reduction of 8-units does not meaningfully reduce the site work required to prepare the land for new construction.

Stormwater: The revised proposal does not provide any additional information about the proposed drainage fields, nor does it address the City's stormwater concerns. The updated plans are also inconsistent; the site plan indicates that a drainage field will be located underneath the common playground, but this drainage field is not shown on the utility plan. Notwithstanding this incongruence, it remains unclear how the drainage fields will

function given the site's topography and the Applicant's failed past attempts to design an adequate stormwater system for developments with much less density.

Design and Consideration of Conservation Land: The number of proposed units is still excessive and entirely inconsistent with the pattern of housing in the surrounding area. The Applicant has made no attempt to revise the project's design and propose innovative plans that respect and work with the landscape to limit the destruction of existing natural and scenic features while still providing housing.

Access: The provision of 51 parking spaces will still overload Summit Avenue, which is a steep, narrow street. The number of visitor spaces remains insufficient for the number of proposed units considering that there is limited space for cars to park in the street without restricting access for emergency vehicles, trash, mail, and delivery trucks. The sidewalk width does not comply with ADA standards and the number of curb cuts impedes pedestrian safety. It appears that the Applicant did not respond to the Town of Wakefield's concerns about maintaining access to the abutting town-owned parcel from the existing paper street. The legal and practical need for this access is not possible with the project as proposed and should be explored.

Infrastructure: A water booster station will still be required for 28 units, which indicates that the reduced density continues to exceed the site's capacity to support the number of housing units at such an elevation. The Applicant made no attempt to relocate the equipment and concerns about noise disruption to the existing neighborhood have not been addressed. The revised unit count will not significantly reduce the truck traffic, which will degrade the condition of the recently paved street and will affect the neighbors' quality of life.

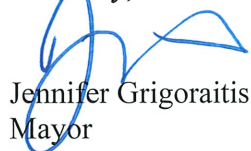
Consistency with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles: The modified application does little to change our original assessment that this development fails to meet the State's sustainable development principles. The revised plans continue to propose an inappropriate amount of density on a challenging site in a location that does not comport with best land use or environmental planning practices. The principles of the Comprehensive Permit policy that allow the supersession of local zoning requirements to provide affordable units in appropriate locations do not fit for this development. The addition of seven affordable units at the expense of the neighborhood and the environment is unjust and does not support smart growth principles. The proposed revisions are not only immaterially less destructive, but the reduction in affordable units further eclipses any potential benefits that this project might provide.

As I stated in my previous letter, the City of Melrose is not averse to growth and has a long history of promoting the development of multifamily housing and the creation of affordable housing opportunities. The Summit Ridge development runs contrary to the progressive planning initiatives the City has undertaken and will create a host of public health and safety concerns that do not exist in the area today. This project would irrevocably damage the surrounding natural environment while providing a negligible

number of affordable homes. I am disappointed that the revised proposal makes no attempt to substantially address our concerns and I cannot support this 40B proposal as designed.

We appreciate that MassHousing acknowledges the challenges and concerns with the Summit Ridge Development proposal and asked the Applicant to modify his plans. Regrettably, the modifications fall far short of what is necessary to alleviate the serious threats to the health, safety and natural environment posed by this development. We continue to believe that the Melrose Zoning Board of Appeals will be unable to mitigate against these threats by imposing conditions on this development due to the destruction required to build this dense project and the limits to the infrastructure required to support the development once it is built. For these reasons and those outlined in previous correspondence dated February 16, 2024, we continue to encourage MassHousing to deny project eligibility for this proposal.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Grigoraitis
Mayor

cc: Manjula Karamcheti, Ward 1 City Councilor
David Roache, Chair, Zoning Board of Appeals
Michael Paiewonsky, Chair, Melrose Conservation Commission
Shannon Phillips, City Solicitor
Denise Gaffey, Director & City Planner
Lori Massa, Senior Planner
Maya Noviski, Assistant Planner