

PLANNING BOARD



19 WASHINGTON STREET
SHERBORN, MASSACHUSETTS 01770

Richard Novak, Chair
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Sherborn

December 2, 2020

Dear Mr. Novak and Members of the ZBA,

The Planning Board has studied and discussed the current proposal submitted to the ZBA by Baystone Inc. for the 120-unit affordable rental housing development, Coolidge Crossing. With this letter, we wish to reiterate our support of the project and to summarize some relatively modest changes and additions that we feel would improve the function and attractiveness of the development.

The project has been significantly improved over the past year in response to the concerns of several Sherborn Boards including the Planning Board. The visual impact of the development has been improved by addition of land area and division of the apartments into 3 smaller buildings, placement of buildings farther from Coolidge Street, and location of a modest-sized community building near the street. Parking areas are now much less visible from Coolidge St. The building arrangement allows all the apartments to have pleasant views and balconies. The community building amenities for adult residents are thoughtfully planned, and all buildings are joined by pedestrian walkways.

The Planning Board endorses these design features and enthusiastically supports the project. Nevertheless we have identified some additional changes that we believe would significantly improve the living experience and convenience of the residents, and may make the development more attractive to potential renters.

* The bus stop turnout should be adequate for entry of a bus from either direction and safe for pickup of passengers, especially children. A school bus or MWRTA bus should be able to pull in, load passengers at a location shielded from moving traffic, and safely re-enter Coolidge St.

* The apartments are likely to attract residents of diverse ages, including elders and young adults, and some of the latter will have babies and/or young children. As now drawn, the building entryways are not designed to accommodate temporary parking for unloading groceries and/or toddlers at the door in bad weather, and there is no interior entryway space for temporary placement of groceries, strollers, etc. while the car is moved a more distant parking space.

* The apartment buildings would be more functional and livable if there were a small space with seating near the entryway for residents to stop and chat with a neighbor, sit down to wait for a friend or a ride, or let small kids play together. The community building is great for adults, but too far from the apartments to serve parents of small children, especially in cold weather.

* The planned landscaping softens the visual impact from Coolidge Street. However the back wall of a parking garage behind the outdoor pool area faces the street. The parking garage wall should be of a visually attractive material and/or masked by plantings to improve the overall appearance of the development from the road.

* The Planning Board requests the following additional features that would benefit the future residents of the project by enhancing their recreational options and integration into the Sherborn community:

1. There should be a paved walking path into the adjacent age-restricted development, as well as unpaved trail connections to the Peter's Hill conservation land trails. It is understood that such connections are intended but they are not yet shown on the plans.
2. There should be a bicycle rack near each building and near the community building.
3. There should be a safe pedestrian and bicycle connection to Sherborn Center along Coolidge Street. This is on the Town's "wish list" and was promised by the former developer, Trask. A contribution to the Town by the current developer toward this pathway would help make it happen.

We believe these suggested changes are modest, feasible and in the best interest of all, and will serve as additional evidence of the developers' thoughtful anticipation of residents' needs.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marian Neutra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "N".

Marian Neutra

Chair, Sherborn Planning Board