

Alison Steinfeld
Planning Director
Town Of Brookline
333 Washington Street 3rd Floor
Brookline, MA 02445

September 5, 2014

FINAL PEER REVIEW - DESIGN
The Residences of South Brookline

INTRODUCTION

As requested by the Town of Brookline, Touloukian Touloukian, Inc. has reviewed the Applicant's proposed Hancock Village 40B Residential Development Project. This letter is provided to outline our final comments and to make recommendations regarding the architectural and landscape design of the Project.

Our role as Peer Reviewer is to provide an independent opinion of the proposed Project. Our main objective is to provide an assessment of the conceptual design for the proposed site and buildings within the neighborhood context, particularly with respect to abutting properties and natural resources.

Since April, we have visited and walked the site, reviewed revisions to the proposed Project, and attended working sessions with Town staff and members of the Applicant's design and development teams. We have had an ongoing exchange of information and productive conversations. On June 19, 2014, we presented before the ZBA an Introductory Peer Review to outline our main design criteria for reviewing the Project. We discussed our understanding of the existing site conditions and introduced 8 initial design principles, 7 of which would form the basis for our review. *Please see Appendix A for a summary of the Introductory Peer Review.*

In our Preliminary Peer Review presented to the ZBA on July 23, we recommended considerations and questions regarding the Project and its details. On August 13, the Applicant presented a response to our Preliminary Peer Review, addressing many but not all of our considerations and questions, and providing solutions to selected issues.

Since August 13, we have received revised site plans and sections, building plans, sections, and elevations, rendered images, animations, and presentations by the Applicant. These documents will form the basis of our Final Peer Review. *Please see Appendix B for a detailed list of these materials.*

Our Final Peer Review provided within this letter is both an evaluation of the Applicant's response and an assessment of the Project provided in four sections. The first will describe the Existing Conditions and Historic Context of the site and the second will be an Overview of the Project Program. The third and fourth sections will present our review of the Low-Rise Infill Development and the Mid-Rise Apartment Building. For these components, we will provide a summary of the recommendations from our Preliminary Peer Review followed by the Applicant's responses to these recommendations. An outline of further questions and considerations, including the points from our Preliminary Peer Review to which the Applicant has not adequately responded, and additional recommendations arisen out of the Applicant's subsequent revisions will conclude these sections.

Our goal, rather than to enumerate every space, corner, and contour, is to concentrate on primary issues with examples of where the applicant has been responsive and has adequately addressed the issues, and examples where further questions and considerations could be pursued.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

As in any complex project, there are many layers of information required to gain a sufficient understanding of the Project and its appropriateness. We believe that a thoughtful design review begins with an examination of the existing context and surrounding neighborhood characteristics.

The existing site of the proposed Project is an undeveloped green space bound on the west by Beverly Road, Independence Drive, Hancock Woods II, and Hancock Village, and on the east by Independence Drive, Russett Road, the VFW Parkway, and Hancock Village. The existing conditions mediate between the Garden Village model of housing embodied by Hancock Village and the fabric of single-family homes along Beverly and Russett Roads.

The original Hancock Village model is defined by a flow that separates pedestrians from automobile traffic by placing parking at its perimeter, leading residents to their homes along a forecourt, and then directly outwards to an expansive communal landscape. The Garden Village model firmly connects all three elements together in an interwoven relationship that extends into the neighborhood context. The surrounding single-family homes, characterized by varying forms and diverse materials, situate residential architecture between front and rear yards and beneath a light-filtering tree canopy. There is a beautiful landscape of mature trees, rolling topography, and rock outcroppings embedded in both Hancock Village and the neighborhood context,

establishing a balance between the natural resources of the site and the built environment.

Any development project on this site could have a substantial impact on the Garden Village model's expansive communal landscape and these natural resources by altering the topography and disrupting the mature vegetation which lend the site its unique character. Since the beginning of our review process, the Applicant has made progress and should continue to develop the design of the Project to mitigate these impacts to the maximum extent possible and to maintain and improve meaningful connections between the adjacent residential development, new development, remaining open space, and the existing communal landscape.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT PROGRAM

The proposed development consists of a low-rise infill development and a mid-rise apartment building.

The design of the low-rise infill development in the existing green space between Hancock Village and Beverly Road and between Hancock Village and Russett Road includes driveways, pedestrian walkways, and 225 surface parking spaces, landscaping and fencing buffers, and 9 2-1/2-story infill buildings containing between 4 and 8 units each. Together these infill buildings contain a total of 44 units, with a distribution of 1-bedroom, 1-bedroom with loft, 2-bedroom, 2-bedroom with loft, 3-bedroom, and 3-bedroom with loft units. There are a total of 98 bedrooms and 22 lofts.

The design of the mid-rise apartment building on the rock ledge to the south along Asheville Road includes driveways and landscaping, rock-pile and retaining walls, 2 levels of structured garage with 144 parking spaces, and 5 stories of apartments. These apartments contain a total of 140 units, with a distribution of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units for a total of 223 bedrooms.

In total, the Project consists of 369 new parking spaces, 10 buildings, 184 units of housing including 37 affordable units, and 321 bedrooms and 22 lofts.

The Applicant has conveyed that the Project proposes a distribution of the land area with building footprints covering 71,358 sf or about 19% of the property, access roads and parking covering 94,702 sf or about 25% of the property, and the remaining open space covering 213,564 sf or 56% of the property. Of this open space, 138,845 sf or 36% of the property is usable open space.

The Project has a significant percentage of building footprints and impervious materials relative to open space. The Applicant should consider developing the project design in ways that could minimize the amount of impervious materials and increase the amount of useable open space. The Project also has a high density of

units in the mid-rise apartment building that results in an increased massing and scale relative to the neighborhood context. Considerations to minimize these impacts will be reviewed in the following sections.

LOW-RISE INFILL DEVELOPMENT

In our Preliminary Peer Review, we introduced several considerations and questions to improve the low-rise infill development component of the Project and to minimize its impact on the existing neighborhood context and existing environmental conditions. The following is an overview of those primary points to which the Applicant responded with a description of our understanding of their response in italics below each:

- Consider using tree islands to minimize the visual impact of large areas of parking.
 - *The Applicant added a total of 4 new tree islands across the site, including 3 on the west lot behind Beverly Road, and 1 on the east lot just west of Asheville Road.*
- In order to minimize the impact of vehicular headlights shining into abutting properties and enhance visual privacy between the site and abutting properties, consider lowering the proposed grades and raised berms, reducing the amount of fill transferred to this part of the site, reversing the orientation of vehicle parking, implementing a more effective privacy fence design, and providing additional, taller, and more dense landscape buffering.
 - *The Applicant responded by:*
 - *Adding evergreen hedges on the west lot along the north edge of the parking lot.*
 - *Increasing the number and size of screening trees at the edge of the property.*
 - *Increasing the height and opacity of the fence lining the edge of the property from a 4ft solid fence with 2ft open latticework to a 7ft solid fence.*
 - *Lowering some of the grades on the parking lots between Independence Road and Asheville Road by 2ft at the end of the lot near Independence Road and by 5ft at the end of the lot near Asheville Road.*
 - *Providing a rendered animation showing the headlights of one vehicle parking at night as seen from above and from Beverly Road.*
 - *No design options were provided for reversing the orientation of vehicle parking.*
- Consider re-evaluating the design of the parking grades and the distribution of parking spaces in order to reduce the impacts of driveway access and parking area by redistributing the number of parking spaces to be in proportion to the number of proposed housing units.
 - *The Applicant reduced the parking count from 420 spaces to 369 spaces, removing a total of 51 parking spaces, including 31 spaces on the west lot adjacent to Beverly Road.*

- Consider re-evaluating the design of the low-rise infill buildings in relation to the natural topography by adjusting the entry and egress points around each proposed low-rise residential building and by adjusting building layouts.
 - *The Applicant feathered grades in some but not all locations to reduce the effect of steeper slopes adjacent to the parking and buildings, creating improved transitions in the new landscape, and adjusting the egress design of the infill buildings to meet egress requirements.*
- Consider the location of trash collection throughout the site.
 - *The Applicant added one trash enclosure near Independence Drive.*
- Consider the impact of the retention basin and determine how much standing water could be in the basin.
 - *The Applicant stated that in the event of a 100-year storm, water would drain from the retention basin within 14 hours.*
- Consider enhancing the quality of materials and varying the architectural details of the low-rise infill buildings to be in keeping with the diverse architectural character of the abutting single-family homes.
 - *The Applicant proposed an alternate design for select infill buildings, changing the exterior cladding from a combination of brick and siding to an all-brick facade. This design has been applied to 4 out of the 9 infill buildings. No other modifications were provided.*

The following are further considerations based on the Applicant's recent revisions and considerations from our Preliminary Peer Review that have not been adequately addressed by the Applicant, listed in order of priority from highest to lowest:

- L1 Review and study the impact of the access drive and parking area vehicular lights shining into the neighboring properties. Although additional landscape buffering, screening, and fencing has helped to minimize this impact, and a rendered animation was provided by the Applicant showing the minimal impact of one vehicle, further evaluation should be undertaken. Additional animations, in all seasons and simultaneously at multiple vehicular locations, should be provided to ensure that no vehicular lighting either from direct or ambient glare could effect the privacy of neighboring properties.
- L2 Review and study the impact of the noise effects into the neighboring properties from vehicular movements and associated sounds from radios and people. The intent is to minimize disruption and enhance privacy to the neighboring properties.

- L3 Consider further review and study by the Civil/Stormwater Management Peer Reviewer to evaluate optional drainage strategies that could assist in lowering the proposed grades of the parking access drive and parking area. The Applicant has communicated that the raised grades are associated with the underground drainage design. Currently some of the grades are higher than the existing conditions and have caused unnatural relationships between the proposed and existing grades, loss of existing mature trees, additional tree wells, and issues with maintaining privacy from vehicular lights. Further design considerations should be evaluated to minimize these impacts.
- L4 Consider minimizing the continuity of sheet parking by breaking the parking area into smaller parking fields connected by access drives. Evaluate techniques to lower the proposed grading with consistent connections to existing grades, accessibility requirements and recommendations from the Civil/Stormwater Management Peer Reviewer.
- L5 Consider additional walkways to allow pedestrian access across parking driveways to remaining useable open space and from new infill buildings across access driveways to existing courtyards, particularly on the west lot. The Applicant should consider strategies that will slow down vehicular traffic, induce movement to the perimeter landscape, and improve site connections and pedestrian safety.
- L6 Consider additional tree islands to minimize the visual impact of repetitive parked vehicles. It is recommended that tree islands are spaced at a maximum of 10-12 parking spaces and within an area for adequate root zone growth.
- L7 Consider preserving more mature trees on the lot between Asheville Road and the VFW Parkway by re-evaluating proposed grading, relocating walkways and driveways, and/or changing the placement and footprints of the low-rise infill buildings. It appears that there is a large number of mature trees seen from the public way that are being removed in this area.
- L8 Evaluate the viability of retaining existing trees on the proposed grades. Consider removing tree wells while still maintaining tree preservation.
- L9 Continue to develop the architectural quality of the low-rise infill buildings by enhancing the quality of materials through architectural asphalt shingles, painted aluminum windows rather than vinyl windows, varying roof lines and additional trim details. Vary the architectural details to be consistent with the abutting single-family homes. Consider enhancing the architectural quality of secondary entrances and "side elevations" seen from the public way, such as the 8-unit building facade seen from Independence Drive.

L10 Consider the design of the low-rise buildings to have a better relationship with the natural topography, as observed in the siting of the existing Hancock Village townhouses: that is, have building forms, roof lines, entry/egress points step to follow natural topography. Consider how the grades meet the building more naturally around its perimeter.

L11 Consider the implementation of bike racks to accommodate alternative modes of transportation.

L12 Consider providing an existing tree protection plan for the revised design.

MID-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING

In our Preliminary Peer Review, we offered several considerations and questions to improve the mid-rise component of the Project and to minimize its impact on the existing neighborhood context and existing environmental conditions. The following is an overview of the primary points to which the Applicant responded, with a description of our understanding of the Applicant's response in italics below each:

- In order to lessen the impact of the apartment building, number and length of retaining walls, and related impacts on existing natural resources including mature trees and large rock outcroppings, consider minimizing the amount of blasting and excavation necessary for construction by eliminating surface parking to the northeast and setting the building back further from Asheville Road to provide more buffer area and reduce its presence on the public way.
 - *The Applicant responded by:*
 - *Removing surface parking to the northeast of the apartment building and shifting the entry road to preserve rock outcroppings and a handful of mature trees.*
 - *Changing retaining walls to rock pile walls for a more natural and contextual appearance.*
 - *Setting the building back an additional 10ft from Asheville Road to increase the buffer area with new landscaping and to reduce its visual presence on Asheville Road.*
- In order to mitigate the visual impact and scale of the apartment building in relation to the adjacent neighborhood character and context, consider lowering the height of the building or stepping the building down at the Asheville/Russett Road approach to minimize the visual impact on the public way.
 - *The Applicant responded by:*
 - *Pulling back 6 units on the 5th floor to improve sight lines from Asheville and Russett Roads.*
 - *No response was provided for stepping the building massing or lowering its height.*
- Consider how the mechanical systems will be located and screened.

- *The Applicant responded by providing condensing units at the center of the building with no additional screening.*

The following are further considerations based on the Applicant's revisions and considerations from our Preliminary Peer Review that have not been adequately addressed by the Applicant, listed in order of priority from highest to lowest:

- M1 While the Applicant has taken steps to reduce the visual presence of the apartment building, further considerations should be taken to mitigate its large scale and height. Its visual presence could be lessened further by considering to lower the brick towers seen from Asheville Road to 4 stories and continuing the 5th-story facade materials above. The applicant could also consider employing architectural techniques to break down the length and repetitiveness of the facade.
- M2 Consider improving the visual impact of the apartment building by stepping down its height from 5 stories to 4 stories on the side facing Asheville and Russett Roads. Alternatively, the Applicant could also consider stepping the building up higher on the southeast side, not seen from Asheville Road, in order to accommodate program removed from the opposite side. While increasing the number of stories above the garage level from 5 to 6 stories may require a change in construction type from fire-retardant wood framing to steel framing, a fire wall could be considered to separate the six story steel construction from the 4/5 story fire retardant wood construction types.
- M3 Consider the four seasons and the visibility of the building during off-seasons when deciduous trees lose their leaves. The Applicant provided rendered views of the apartment building during the summer and winter, showing the exposure of the building from certain views. A majority of the mature trees screening the building are deciduous and during the off-seasons the building does not gain the benefit of landscape screening. Consider larger evergreen screening trees and design options stated above.
- M4 Consider improving pedestrian safety by providing pedestrian access to the apartment building from the Asheville Road and between allocated surface parking and building entry points. Currently the design does not appear to provide adequate pedestrian walkways.
- M5 Currently the Applicant has not provided survey information showing existing tree locations on the site of the apartment building. Providing this information will help determine the viability of saving existing mature trees, as suggested, and explore the possibility of preserving more natural features.
- M6 Consider providing more mature evergreen trees in the buffer zone along Asheville Road in order to help screen the apartment building from view along Asheville and Russett Roads. In addition, consider

adjusting the access driveway to the upper garage level at the foot of the building in order to save additional mature trees. The proposed planting plan at the northeast of the building appears to show tree planting and screening on rock outcroppings. The planting plan at the apartment building also does not show any existing mature trees to remain. Please clarify.

M7 Consider improving the material quality by including aluminum windows instead of vinyl windows, using precast or cast stone instead of fiber cement panels, and matching the brick of the existing Hancock Village. The Applicant should continue to develop the architectural quality of the main building and low rise entry building volume along Asheville Road.

CONCLUSION

In general, the Applicant has responded to our Preliminary Peer Review with some changes to the site and building designs. However, some significant design issues remain and could be considered as noted in our report.

Please contact feel free to contact us with any questions. We look forward to further development of the Project.

Sincerely,

Touloukian Touloukian, Inc.

Theodore Touloukian, AIA
As President

APPENDIX A

Summary of Introductory Peer Review Presentation to the Zoning Board of Appeals June 19, 2014

The following is a detailed summary of our Introductory Peer Review, presented before the ZBA on June 19, 2014:

Our goal in the Introductory Peer Review was to identify the key design issues involved in the proposed Project and to outline the parameters to be applied in evaluating its appropriateness. We presented 7 initial design principles:

1. Integrate site access and respect existing character.
 - The design of the Project should take into account that the site is contiguous to a residential fabric of single-family homes.
 - The site perimeter should incorporate appropriate landscape screening and respect property edges.
 - Points of entry should not be abrupt but rather integrated with the existing pedestrian, vehicular, and bicycle circulation patterns.
 - Site lines and views into property edges should strive to maintain the existing character.
2. Respect natural resources.
 - Consider the existing relationship between architecture and landscape.
 - Maintain a majority of existing trees, topography, and rock outcroppings to support the natural character of the site in balance with the built environment.
3. Design effective parking.
 - Assess how vehicles enter the site.
 - Screen vehicle access points and design parking areas with tree islands to provide canopy and screening to adjacent properties.
 - Orient automobiles in order to preserve privacy from headlights shining into adjacent properties and creating light pollution.
 - Locate automobiles in areas that minimize impact on the natural setting.
 - Maximize to the extent possible the proportion of green space to impervious surfaces.
4. Buffer edges.
 - Use landscape and fencing.
 - Identify techniques that maintain privacy without creating hard divisions between properties.

5. Blend with existing development patterns with attention to building placement.
 - Evaluate how the proposed site design and buildings mediate the existing Garden Village model and the residential vernacular of the single-family homes.
 - Create comfortable distances between the proposed buildings and neighborhood properties.
 - Understand the depth of setbacks in proportion to the height of buildings and sight lines from the abutting properties from both an immediate and long-range distance.
 - Study the solar orientation and effects of shadows on the green space and adjacent properties.

6. Relate scale and proportion to the context with attention to building massing.
 - Examine the heights of the proposed buildings relative to the character of the neighborhood.
 - Identify the impact of the scale of the proposed buildings relative to the neighborhood.
 - Create continuity between the building footprints and roof lines with the existing residential character of Hancock Village and the single-family homes.

7. Employ architectural detail in the building design.
 - Apply building materials and details in keeping with the neighborhood.
 - Take cues from the existing residential character.

APPENDIX B

Materials for Final Peer Review

Documents Received Prior to September 5, 2014

The following is a list of materials provided by the Applicant and the Town of Brookline prior to our Final Peer Review on September 5, 2014, in order of receipt. These documents will form the basis of our Final Peer Review:

- Rendered Site Plan
 - 2014.08.14.RoSB_RENDERING (20 August 2014)
- Site Plans
 - 2014.08.19_RoSB_UPDATE (20 August 2014)
- CHR Presentation to the ZBA
 - RoSB ZBA presentation 8 13 2014 final (20 August 2014)
- Building Elevations
 - 8-23-14 apt bldg elevations 201 (25 August 2014)
 - 8-25-14 apt bldg elevations 202 (25 August 2014)
- Building Plans and Sections
 - 8-23-14 roof plan (25 August 2014)
 - 8-25-14 bldg 204 (25 August 2014)
 - 8-25-14 bldg 205 (25 August 2014)
 - 8-25-14 bldgs 201 203 207 209 (25 August 2014)
 - 8-25-14 bldgs 202 206 208 (25 August 2014)
- Rendered Images
 - 2014.08.27_HV_STILLS summer-2 (28 August 2014)
- Overall Site Plan
 - 2014.08.28.RoSB_OVERALL SITE PLAN (02 September 2014)
- Site Sections
 - 2014.08.28.RoSB_SECTIONS L-901a (02 September 2014)
 - 2014.08.28.RoSB_SECTIONS L-902a (02 September 2014)
- Rendered Images
 - 20140903_HV_5STILLS_SUMMER&WINTER (03 September 2014)