



ARLINGTON REDEVELOPMENT BOARD

TOWN HALL, ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02476

781 - 316 - 3090

July 7, 2020

Christian Klein, Chair
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Arlington
51 Grove Street
Arlington, MA 02476

RE: Arlington Land Realty, LLC Application for a Comprehensive Permit to develop
Thorndike Place – Comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals

Dear Mr. Klein and Members of the Board,

To aid the Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in their continued review of the Arlington Land Realty, LLC Application for a Comprehensive Permit to develop Thorndike Place, the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) met on Monday, July 6, 2020, to review the comments previously submitted relative to this case and discuss whether updates were necessary. The ARB has the following updated comments and questions on the proposed project, organized by topical issue:

- 1. Wetland Impact, Restoration, and Access:** The ARB defers to the Conservation Commission on measures that can be used by the developer to protect the wetlands. However, has the following questions and concerns:
 - a. Is the designated 11.5 acre open space publicly accessible? If not, then what will be the restrictions on public access?" Will structures, such as a boardwalk or pathway, be built and by whom? Locations and access points for the proposed wetland paths should be confirmed. We recommend access from Thorndike Field, as well.
 - b. How will the existing wetlands be cleaned and modified?
 - c. How will the wetlands function following clean-up? How will the flow of water through the wetland be improved and what are the related impacts of these improvements downstream?
 - d. If the 11.5 acres are deeded or permanently restricted, who will own and maintain the wetland after occupancy? The ARB recommends that the Open Space Committee engage in discussions with the developer with the goal of preserving and providing public access to this open space resource.
 - e. With additional residential development occurring along Route 2 in Cambridge and Belmont, what are the cumulative impacts on stormwater and the wetlands?

- 2. Traffic, Circulation, and Access:** The ARB defers to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on matters relative to traffic and circulation. TAC conducted a thorough review of the Traffic Impact Assessment Study (TIAS) and provided a comment letter to the ZBA. The ARB has the following questions and concerns:
- a. A new TIAS should be conducted to take into account a number of issues:
 - i. Lake Street is one of the most congested streets in Arlington. The ARB is concerned about added traffic on this street and in the neighborhood. A revised TIAS should adequately consider the project's impact on Lake Street.
 - ii. The developer should consider direct access from the project to Route 2. With additional residential development occurring along Route 2 in Cambridge and Belmont, what are the cumulative traffic impacts? A revised TIAS should consider the recently built and planned development in Cambridge and Belmont along Route 2. If Route 2 access is considered as an option for the project, then the TIAS should fully explain the impacts of traffic with and without the route 2 access.
 - iii. The TIAS should take into account the heavy use of Thorndike Field by sports teams after school, overlapping with the evening peak traffic hour.
 - iv. The new TIAS should be reviewed by Beta Group.
 - b. The application includes a high parking ratio of 1.4 spaces per housing unit. The ZBA should request information about the reasoning and justification for this amount of parking. The ARB recommends that Transportation Demand Management (TDM) be applied to this project. TDM is recommended to reduce vehicle use on the site, and also increase the use of transit, bicycles and walking. In relation to TDM matters:
 - i. What on-site amenities will the developer provide to encourage bike use, e.g. covered bike parking?
 - ii. What is the connectivity between the project and the bike path, bus, and subway transit routes? How will residents be able to connect with those amenities? Will the pedestrian overpass on Route 2 be restored to encourage access? What is the projected bike path use and ridership as a result of this project?
- 3. Design:** The ARB has the following questions and concerns:
- a. The ZBA should request full-size plans. The following design documentation should be provided: site plan, floor plans, (all levels,) with building dimensions, building sections with floor to floor and overall building height dimensions, building façade elevations with materials indicated and specified, building massing / 3-D views, building mechanicals and placement of mechanicals with noise estimates and hours for testing for generators and similar, parking plan, lighting plan and landscaping plan. The massing plan should show the view along Dorothy Road. A building model would also be useful for understanding overall site impact and scale and samples of the actual building materials and colors should be provided.

- b. The multi-unit building has an institutional aesthetic rather than a residential aesthetic. It does not integrate into the neighborhood or the surrounding landscape with an emphasis on narrow vertical lines created by the dark recesses that encase the glazing in the façade and red windows. It also it not modern or contemporary enough to provide a counterpoint to the older adjacent homes in the community.
- c. A step-back at the fourth story and above of the multi-unit building is not provided. This building could benefit from a break in the vertical continuity in the imposing façade.
- d. The design of the townhouses gives the appearance of three volumes of distinct and disparate architectural typologies haphazardly joined together rather than a cohesive architectural style. The duplexes should be designed so they tie together more cohesively. For reference, the Porches in North Adams, Massachusetts is an example of how a similar architectural style can work in an existing neighborhood.
- e. The raised front porches of the proposed houses along Dorothy Road, as well as the style of the fences on the porches, create an image of the houses being closed-off from the sidewalk, street, and neighborhood. An alternative with more open interface between the houses and their surroundings should be considered.
- f. The developer should consider moving the houses closer to the street with vehicle access to the rear. This could create more open space and community gathering areas.
- g. The developer should consider applying LEED ND guidelines in planning and development for the site.
- h. The ARB would appreciate the ability to provide further comments on the design as plans progress.

4. Affordable Housing: The ARB has the following questions and concerns:

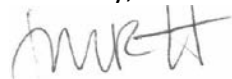
- a. The Town's 2016 Housing Production Plan (HPP) outlines affordable housing needs. Per the HPP, the ARB recommends that all units are deed-restricted as affordable in perpetuity. Further, per the Town's Inclusionary Zoning requirements, the ARB recommends that the affordable units are dispersed throughout the development and comparable to market rate units in terms of quality and character, room size, and external appearance. Parking for affordable units should also be comparable in location and appearance to parking for market rate units.
- b. Additionally, the Town's Inclusionary Zoning requires that 15% of the number of units be affordable to households making at or below 70% of the area median income (AMI). The ARB recommends requiring that the first 15% of the developer's required affordable units be compliant with this requirement, and the remaining 10% be affordable to households earning at or below 80% AMI.

- c. The HPP identified the need for housing for middle-income households. The ARB recommends that at least one or two of the for-sale condominiums be available and affordable to middle-income households. Additionally, the ARB would prefer more for-sale housing units at all price points—market, middle-income, and affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the area median income.
 - d. The developer should provide the Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan to determine the market for these units, pricing and marketing of all units.
- 5. Bicycle Parking:** The ARB encourages the developer to comply with the bicycle parking regulations adopted by the 2019 Town Meeting.
- a. There is no clear bicycle parking provided on the plan set submitted. Although residents should be able to bring their bicycles into their units, it would be beneficial for the developer to provide long-term and short-term bicycle parking in compliance with Section 6.1.12 of the Zoning Bylaw considering the proximity of the developer to the Minuteman Bikeway.
 - b. Long-term bicycle parking primarily serves residents, employees, or other persons who would require storage of a bicycle for a substantial portion of the day, for an overnight period, or for multiple days. Short-term bicycle parking primarily serves visitors, such as retail patrons, making trips of up to two hours to a particular use. The ARB encourages the developer to provide the appropriate number of bicycle parking spaces for long-term and short-term use based on the number of units as well as designing these spaces in compliance with the general requirements, the design requirements, and the locational requirements of Section 6.1.12 of the Zoning Bylaw.
 - c. The ARB also encourages the developer to review the Bicycle Parking Guidelines prepared by the Department of Planning and Community Development: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=48389>.
- 6. General:** The ARB recommends that the developer update their list of waivers requested to refer to the sections of the Zoning Bylaw, which was recodified and adopted by Town Meeting in February 2018.

The ARB is available to discuss any of the above comments and questions with the ZBA. We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the project design further with the ZBA and with the developer.

Thank you for your consideration of the Redevelopment Board's comments and questions.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Raitt

Secretary Ex-Officio

on behalf of the Arlington Redevelopment Board