



TOWN OF ARLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

TOWN HALL, 730 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02476
TELEPHONE 781-316-3090

MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Board of Appeals

From: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Department of Planning and Community Development/ kl

cc: Kelly Lynema, Senior Planner, Department of Planning and Community Development
Daniel Amstutz, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner
Michael Rademacher, Director, Public Works
Wayne Chouinard, Town Engineer
Chief Kevin Kelley, Arlington Fire Department
Deputy Chief Ryan Melly, Arlington Fire Department

Date: August 23, 2021

RE: Thorndike Place Comments from Department of Planning and Community Development

To aid the Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in their review of the Arlington Land Realty, LLC Application for a Comprehensive Permit to develop Thorndike Place, the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has invited Town departments to provide comments and questions on the revised project materials. The comments and questions below incorporate feedback from the Transportation Advisory Committee, the Arlington Fire Department, the Department of Public Works, and DPCD staff, and are organized by topical issue:

- 1. Conservation and Environmental Amenities:** Please refer to comments and recommendations from the Conservation Commission which will be sent under separate cover.
- 2. Circulation, Parking, Access, and Connections:** The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), DPCD staff, and the Arlington Fire Department provided a review of traffic and circulation including reviewing and updated Traffic Impact Assessment Study (TIAS), and provides the following comments:

- The Applicant should add parking space length dimensions to the garage plan on page 3 of the GreenStaxx architectural plans.
- Bike parking is minimal, even if calculated from Arlington's previous bike parking ordinance. By the Department's calculations, two or three short-term bike racks should be located at the main entrance, and at least double the amount of long-term storage being proposed for a development of this size. Seniors also ride bicycles.
- The Smolak & Vaughan narrative notes that "guests, visitors or staff will have available exterior bicycle parking with stations outside the building's main entrance," however only one bike rack is shown. The Applicant should identify the additional bike racks being proposed on the plans.
- The Applicant should clarify what is meant by "stations" in the Smolak & Vaughan narrative. The Department would be interested in a reintroduction of a BlueBikes station as part of TDM, but there is no reference to a station on the plans.
- The 10 EV charging stations proposed are appreciated. The Applicant should clarify the definition of "expansion potential built-in," as it is unclear to where or what spaces the expansion would be going. Additionally, the Applicant should clarify whether other spaces going to be made "EV-ready."
- The number of car parking spaces is acceptable and is more than what is both required and recommended based on ITE data. As described above, the Department recommends adding more bicycle parking spaces given the proximity to the Bikeway and the leveraging of this resource to reduce vehicle trip estimates and proposed parking spaces.
- The reduction in overall car trips—and all trips—is reasonable given the smaller footprint of the proposed development and the reduced number of units.
- The Applicant should clarify if they intend to purchase their own vehicle for jitney service or contract with a service provider.
- The BSC's layout and materials plan is missing call-out for an accessible curb ramp for the ladder-style crosswalk that crosses the driveway to the turnaround (on the lower end of the crosswalk where it meets the other crosswalk). The Applicant should add this detail to the plan.
- The Department understands the concern about the applicability of commuting data to estimate vehicle trips. However, the Department supports the use of VAI's 50% reduction on journey-to-work Census data, with the understanding that the Census dataset is the best available data for calculating vehicle trips for this project.
- The Applicant should clarify the limits of the six-foot privacy fence near the ten-foot-wide driveways for each end duplex unit. Snow removal and ability to open car doors could be difficult with ten-foot-wide driveway due to proximity of the house and fence.
- Driveways fronting on Dorothy Rd. should utilize a two-foot diameter return stone consistent with Town requirements rather than the five-foot diameter curb stones indicated on the plans.

Service and Deliveries

- On the Modular Truck turning movement diagram from VAI (Figure MT-1), the applicant shows that a truck would need to swing into the opposite lane for 200' prior to making the turn onto Littlejohn Street. This risks a head-on collision with oncoming traffic on Lake Street, and it is unlikely that oncoming traffic would be clear long enough for a truck to make this maneuver.
- Lake Street is signed for no heavy trucking. The Department recommends that deliveries be made using smaller trucks if possible.

Emergency Vehicle Access

- The Applicant should clarify whether a truck will be able to circle the roundabout. If not, indicate if a truck will be able to make a three-point turn and exit onto Dorothy Rd going forward or if it will need to back out.
- The Applicant should clarify whether the access road behind the principal structure can support the weight of a fire truck and demonstrate how the turning radius of the emergency access can accommodate a large fire truck.
- Additional details regarding maintenance of the access road and path would be helpful. The emergency access path around the rear of the building is 20 feet wide, while the walking path is six feet wide. Please clarify how the emergency access road will be maintained, including whether the 20-foot path will be plowed in the winter.
- The Applicant should identify the nearest hydrant and the connection to the FDC on the plans.

3. Utilities: The Department of Public Works has the following comments:

Sewer

- Sewer service connections require a wye connection and not a saddle at the sewer main.
- Each sewer service shall require a cleanout located within 10ft of the foundation consistent with Town requirements.
- Oil/Gas separator location and design elevations should be included in garage utility plans.
- A camera inspection should be performed for the sewer and drain lines in the immediate vicinity of any proposed work. Video catalog should be maintained, and a post construction camera inspection shall be performed to ensure that work associated with the project did not negatively impact the adjacent utilities.

Water

- All water main connections to the Town main located in Dorothy Road shall include a triple water gate configuration and utilize a Tee connection.
- The proposed water service for the duplex units indicates a 4" DICL pipe. This configuration may be oversized for a duplex unit. A water shut off shall be located at the back side of the sidewalk for each duplex service line.
- It is recommended the 8" water line be looped between the two connections to Dorothy Road to improve water quality and redundancy and feed the proposed fire

hydrants with 6" lines.

4. Stormwater: The Department of Public Works has the following comments:

- Each infiltration system should include an accessible observation port at grade and monitor pipe extending to the bottom of stone elevation for inspection purposes.
- All Area drains and catch basins shall have suitably sized sumps to capture and remove sediment.
- The Estimated Seasonal High Groundwater Elevation should be utilized for the design of each infiltration system and building foundation. No building floors shall be installed within the ESHGW level. Subsurface infiltration systems shall maintain a minimum 2ft offset for the ESHGW and as needed include groundwater mounding calculations. Proposed elevations should be indicated for each basement floor, garage floor and infiltration system.

5. Design: The Department has the following comments:

- Consideration should be given to the color schemes of the main building and townhomes. For the main building, the Applicant should consider incorporating accent colors to denote where the main entrances are located. Additional color or material variation to highlight key locations of building interest and introduce more variation in the façade, such as by altering the color or material of the vertical elements leading up to the peaked roof elements, could improve the current institutional aesthetic of the building. For the townhomes, providing variation in the color of the individual townhomes should be considered to better incorporate the structures into the surrounding neighborhood.
- Additional renderings, particularly of the access and entry at the main building, would be helpful in conducting this review.
- The ZBA should request a lighting plan and a landscaping plan for the full development. The Dorothy Street rendering and elevations suggest an intent to plant a hedge wall around the sides and front of the townhomes, which walls them off from the surrounding neighborhood. Alternative landscape treatments should be considered for the townhomes to improve their interface with the surrounding properties.
- Tree plantings are recommended to be provided along Dorothy Road to support local environmental sustainability and resiliency goals. It is recommended to provide tree plantings within the front setback, rather than in the grass strip to allow for better root development and tree health. Any tree location and/or species proposed within the public right of way shall be reviewed and approved by the Arlington Tree Warden.
- The Applicant should provide a signage plan for the main structure.

6. Affordable Housing: The Department has the following comments:

- The Town's 2016 Housing Production Plan (HPP) outlines affordable housing needs. Senior housing is one of the recommendations for implementation in the HPP, which recommends that to meet the needs of the senior population, the Town should

support the development of accessible units, assisted living facilities, and independent living facilities for people at all income levels.¹

- Per the Town’s Inclusionary Zoning requirements, the Department recommends that the Applicant clearly show that the affordable apartments and townhomes 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.
- 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 Department 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.
- Although the Department of Housing and Community Development allows for municipalities to dedicate up to 70% of affordable housing units in a development for local preference, the Fair Housing Action Plan recommends that the Town lower the percentage of what is required for local preference. The plan states, “by preferencing existing residents who are disproportionately not members of protected classes, the local preference policy could exacerbate existing patterns of segregation.”² Therefore, the Town should consider lowering any local preference requirement in the Decision.

¹ 2016 Housing Production Plan, Strategy 8, page 64.

² Fair Housing Action Plan, pg 13, pp 58-59, 72, 105. Available at <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/57214/637641171662530000>