



To: Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation

From: The Gutierrez Company

Subject: The Residences at Spot Pond
Response to Comments on Initial Application

Date: April 4, 2024

On behalf of Fellsway Development LLC, the Applicant, this memorandum contains responses to comments on the application for a Comprehensive Permit submitted to the Stoneham Zoning Board of Appeals for The Residence at Spot Pond. This document responds to the following two Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation comment letters listed below:

- Letter dated January 11, 2024 from Chris Redfern, Executive Director, Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation, RE: Recommendations for The Residences at Spot Pond Development
- Letter dated March 7, 2024 from Chris Redfern, Executive Director, Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation, RE: Review of The Residences at Spot Pond lighting and planting plans

Recommendations for *The Residences at Spot Pond Development (January 11, 2024)*:

In response to the comments from the Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation as outlined in the letter from Executive Director Chris Redfern dated January 11, 2024 (transposed and italicized below), the Applicant provides the following comments and responses:

We recommend that the Gutierrez Company work directly with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to plan and construct a publicly accessible trail head within the project boundaries to provide safe access to the Fells to new and existing residents, and to promote sustainable use of the Fells. The trail head should include amenities such as ADA compliant public parking spaces, trash receptacles serviced by property management, and an informational kiosk.

- The Residences at Spot Pond is proposed on the former Boston Regional Medical Center hospital building property; a parcel located entirely bounded by Executive Drive and adjacent to the existing medical office buildings and Woodland Road. The project site does not directly abut or connect to any of the Middlesex Fells forested or trail areas. Existing access to the Fells Reservation land is via other existing parcels (Sterling Hill, Alta Clara, MWRA) not under the Applicant's ownership or control. Nonetheless, the Applicant supports the Friends of the Fells' efforts to identify new and/or improved public access to the Fells Reservation land and will continue to work cooperatively with the Town of Stoneham, the Friends of the Fells and other interested parties to promote sustainable use of the Fells.

We recommend that the Gutierrez Company work with DCR, Friends of the Fells, and other stakeholders to thoughtfully consider the interface between the Fells forest land and the project area. For instance, the property boundary's fencing should be improved and maintained to protect the Fells from the creation of multiple "social" unauthorized trails, which can fragment habitat and cause erosion. Also, an increased buffer between the development footprint and the property boundary would provide options for natural infrastructure (rain gardens, swales) to filter run-off, control erosion, and increase overall natural green space within the project boundary.

- As indicated above, the Residences at Spot Pond is proposed on the former Boston Regional Medical Center hospital building property; a parcel located entirely bounded by Executive Drive and adjacent to the existing medical office buildings and Woodland Road. The project site does not directly abut or connect to any of the Middlesex Fells forested or trail areas. Existing access to the Fells Reservation land and all boundary fencing is via other existing parcels (Sterling Hill, Alta Clara, MWRA) not under the Applicant's ownership or control. The Applicant concurs with the Friends of the Fells efforts to protect the Fells and will make informational and educational materials about the Middlesex Fells Reservation, including publicly available access to trails, available to residents. The proposed redevelopment of the site will remove the existing hospital building, power plant and support buildings and will greatly enhance stormwater runoff quality with the introduction of improved catch basins, water quality treatment units and recharge of stormwater into the ground. The Applicant has provided a comprehensive stormwater design and evaluation which has been peer-reviewed and will be revised as required to satisfy both the peer-review and Town of Stoneham Stormwater Board requirements.

We recommend that the parking space requirement (1.7x per unit) be negotiated to a lower number to accommodate some of the recommendations outlined in this document.

We understand that the increase in parking and traffic from the current density of the project (378 units) will require a permit from DCR (302 CMR 11.00) and review under MEPA (301 CMR 11.00). We recommend that the scope of the review conducted by MEPA and DCR include the character of Woodland Road and intersections in adjacent communities (Medford, Melrose) to analyze the regional impact of the proposed density. If significant impacts are found, we recommend lowering the density of the project to address these impacts.

- The Applicant supports the Town's parking requirement of 1.7 spaces per unit as this is consistent with market demand and use. However, subject to a grant of a waiver from the Board of Appeals, the Applicant is amenable to eliminating the 82-space parking area (located on Map 27, Lot 3CM) and only building if the spaces are required or needed. As part of the application for a Comprehensive Permit, the Applicant submitted a Traffic Impact Assessment for the Residences at Spot Pond, prepared by Langan Engineering & Environmental Services, Inc. The Traffic Assessment has been peer-reviewed and found to be "prepared in a professional manner and following the applicable standards of care" including the Massachusetts Department of Transportation design standards, Town of Stoneham zoning requirements and accepted traffic engineering and transportation planning practices. The Traffic Assessment, as confirmed by the peer review, documents that the proposed residential development results in much less traffic than reuse as a hospital or office, and no greater traffic than the previously approved life

science/R&D use. Following completion of the Comprehensive Permit process, the Applicant will comply with state environmental review and state agency permitting requirements as applicable.

We recommend modifications to Woodland Road to improve pedestrian and bike safety and access to and from the project site and the Fells generally, and to mitigate potential traffic impacts. We recommend that mitigation measures agreed to as a part of this project should generally follow and support the vision for Woodland Road as conceived in the Spot Pond Circumferential Trail Study. Elements to consider include traffic circles, bike lanes, sidewalks, and a pedestrian crosswalk with signals. We recommend that significant public outreach via multiple public hearings/design charrettes be developed to receive public input on proposed modifications to this historic parkway.

- The Applicant supports the Town's efforts and vision identified in the 2023 Spot Pond Circumferential Study. As indicated above, traffic from the proposed Residences at Spot Pond will be significantly less than the existing hospital or previously approved office use, and therefore there will be significantly lesser traffic impact. Nonetheless, the Applicant will provide traffic evaluations and recommendations as requested by the traffic peer review and as required by the Town.

We recommend using only responsibly sourced native plants in landscaping, and that rules be put into place to prevent ongoing landscaping and maintenance from impacting the surrounding forest (e.g., prohibiting the storage or disposal of green waste on-site or into the forest, limiting use of fertilizers and pesticides, and invasive plant management).

- We concur with the Friends of the Fells desire to use only native, non-invasive planting species. And, as subsequently noted by the Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation in the March 7, 2024 letter, the submitted planting plan does not include any such plant material. Ongoing landscaping and maintenance will be compliant with all local regulations and industry standard best practices, including legal off-site disposal of waste, limited fertilizer and pesticide use, and invasive plant management. Please also refer to the response below to the detailed plant material review as outlined in the March 7th letter.

We recommend that no anticoagulant rodenticide be used in the demolition and construction phases of this project, as well as post-construction ongoing operation and maintenance, to protect wildlife from secondary exposure (particularly raptors that feed on and control rodent populations).

- The Applicant acknowledges the unwanted relay toxicity risk associated with typical anticoagulant rodenticides and commits to using traps and/or non-second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide (SGARs) as needed for rodent control.

We recommend developing a lighting plan to minimize light impacts to wildlife in the surrounding forest land.

- As confirmed by the Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation in the March 7, 2024 letter, the lighting specifications indicated on the lighting plan are compliant with Dark Sky lighting standards, and Dark Sky lighting standards help minimize negative impacts to wildlife.

We recommend that at least one indoor meeting space be included in the development plan to be used by community groups.

- The proposed project includes significant indoor and outdoor amenity areas for future residents and will include both individual workspaces and gathering space.

Review of The Residences at Spot Pond Lighting and Planting Plans (March 7, 2024):

In response to the comments from the Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation as outlined in the letter from Executive Director Chris Redfern dated March 7, 2024 (transposed and italicized below), the Applicant provides the following comments and responses:

Friends of the Fells has reviewed the lighting plan and has confirmed that the lighting specifications indicated on the plan are compliant with Dark Sky lighting standards. Dark Sky lighting standards help minimize negative impacts to wildlife, and we are pleased to see the lighting plan will support protection of birds, bats, insects, and other wildlife that are impacted by artificial lighting sources.

- The Applicant acknowledges the positive impacts of specifying Dark Sky compliant exterior lighting as included on the submitted plans.

In developing recommendations for the project's planting plan, we have consulted with Walter Kittredge, a professional botanist and retired Curatorial Assistant at the Harvard University Herbaria and Libraries. Mr. Kittredge has spent decades researching plant species in the Middlesex Fells and suggests substituting locally native species for some of the native cultivars in the plan (see table below). Locally native plants are more likely to support native populations of wildlife. Additionally, their use provides an opportunity to educate the public about locally native plant species, which can encourage their use in other settings, thus increasing the value of other landscaped areas for local wildlife. We noted that the planting plan does not include invasive species that could easily colonize the habitats adjacent to the project.

- The Applicant's landscape architect is reviewing the recommended modifications to the plant species. It is expected that many of the requested substitutions will be able to be accommodated by the Applicant and will be included in the updated plan set. As noted by the Friends of the Fells, the submitted planting plan does not include invasive species.

The applicant provides the above responses for the Board of Appeals consideration in approval of a Comprehensive Permit.