

TOWN OF
STONEHAM

MASSACHUSETTS 02180

www.stoncham-ma.gov

OFFICE OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Telephone: 781-279-2680

FAX: 781-279-2681

Email: esinclair@ci.stoneham.ma.us

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BY HAND DELIVERY

May 29, 2014

Thomas Gleason,
Executive Director
MassHousing
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Project# SA-13-007 "The Commons at Weiss Farm"

Dear Director Gleason:

On behalf of the Stoneham Board of Selectmen, I write to you in regard to the above noted matter.

You will recall that on April 2, 2014, you wrote to the Town and John M. Corcoran and Company requiring John M. Corcoran and Company to meet with the Board of Selectmen and present their intentions with regard to the above noted project. While the Town was disappointed that your letter allowed the developer to simply present the plans that they already submitted to MassHousing—thus defeating the very purpose of obtaining municipal input *before* submitting plans to MassHousing—we appreciated your recognition that we were deprived of an opportunity to formally comment on the proposed project.

By agreement between the developer and the Town, we scheduled the developer's public presentation for May 19, 2014.

Prior to the May 19, 2014 meeting, the Town engaged the services of a well-respected architectural and land planning firm (CBI Consulting, Inc., Boston) and worked closely with the firm to identify design possibilities for the project locus that were absent from the developer's submission to MassHousing. CBI completed a detailed study of affordable housing projects on comparable locations and provided the Town with an excellent critique of why the Weiss Farm

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proposal represented poor planning, poor design and development incompatible with the Town of Stoneham. We have included CBI's presentation with this letter.

On May 12, 2014, we met with representatives of the developer to present CBI's report, discussed the same in detail and left the meeting with the understanding that the developer would respond to the numerous detailed and constructive suggestions we offered.

Seven days later, on May 19, 2014, the developer appeared in Stoneham for the presentation required by MassHousing and agreed to by the parties. The hearing room was filled, the Board of Selectmen were in attendance as was the Town's Standing Committee appointed to assist in the review of this proposal. This fanfare was met with a less than ten (10) minute presentation—illustrating a conceptual plan containing no (zero) architectural layouts or designs, by the developer's architect (Cecil Group).

There was no presentation from the developer's engineer (e.g. to address well documented traffic issues), no presentation from the developer's environmental consultant (e.g. to address well documented flooding issues and impacts to acres of federally regulated wetlands), no presentation from the developer's principal (e.g. to address the unit mix, rental rates, local preference or any related matter) and there was no presentation from the developer's "financial consultant" (e.g. why the development required the proposed density to keep the project from being uneconomic. In fact, the developer's "financial consultant" stated that he could not explain why 264 units were necessary to keep the project from being uneconomic).

Adding insult to injury, the developer's president, three days prior to the May 19, 2014 presentation, sent the Town Administrator an email stating, "I want to acknowledge and thank you for the work that the Town and its consultants have done to give us a better idea of what the Town believes would be more appropriate at Weiss Farm with respect to land planning and architecture. Our presentation at Monday evening's meeting will necessarily focus on the plan revisions we made during the winter at the request of the reviewing staff at MassHousing. Though it won't be evident from our presentation on Monday, I want to assure you that the suggestions are being taken seriously and will be fully investigated." Email from Richard High, president, John M. Corcoran & Co. to David Ragucci, Stoneham Town Administrator, May 16, 2014, 11:33 am.

One would hope that when the president of a large development company assures a Town that its comments are "being taken seriously", the result will be compliance with such assurance. That would be wrong. What we witnessed on May 19, 2014 was a "presentation" that insulted the entire Board of Selectmen and the Town of Stoneham. We suggest that MassHousing should be equally insulted.

The Town, using public resources, provided the developer with development options and opportunities that the developer failed to present, let alone consider. The Town, using public resources, analyzed the locus and comparable locations and projects that the developer willfully chose to ignore.

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Quite simply, the developer's May 19th presentation was an embarrassment and in complete derogation of MassHousing's regulations. The developer was required to present the plans submitted to MassHousing to the Town. It did not.

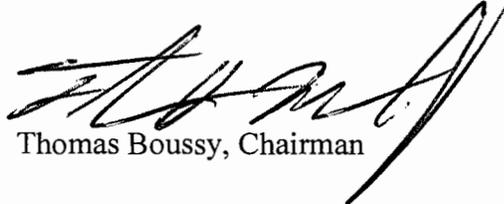
We are, once again, asking MassHousing not to issue project eligibility approval for this project. We restate each and every comment made in our previous comment letters—restated because each and every comment previously made remains the same.

We know MassHousing takes its gate keeper role during the project eligibility process seriously. But such a seriousness of purpose cannot be reconciled with the project currently before MassHousing and with the knowledge that the developer—ordered to present its project to the Town—refused to do so. It cannot be that after all the issues the Town has raised regarding this project, coupled with MassHousing's requirement that the developer appear before the Town to make a formal presentation of its proposed project, MassHousing considers a ten (10) minute conceptual presentation by the developer's architect sufficient.

The developer has failed to comply with MassHousing's basic requirements for obtaining a project eligibility letter, failed to comply with MassHousing's recent requirement to present its proposal to the Town and failed to comply with normative site planning and design considerations in a modern era. The developer's plans are unacceptable and it has shown nothing but contempt for the process and the Town of Stoneham. Once again, we ask that MassHousing withhold project eligibility approval until the applicant provides the Town a presentation of the plans submitted to MassHousing or, more appropriately, deny project eligibility approval for this project.

Very truly yours,

On behalf of the Stoneham Board of Selectmen,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Boussy', written over a white background.

Thomas Boussy, Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Steven Cicatelli, Esq., counsel for the Applicant
Senator Jason Lewis



The Commons at Weiss Farm

DEVELOPMENT PRECEDENT STUDY

CBI Consulting Inc.

Michael Teller, AIA, LEED AP, Principal

Matt Richardson, Designer





WEISS FARM

LYNNFIELD COMMONS

Lynnfield, MA

Size: 200 units



This complex comprised of monolithic, long apartment unit blocks may be suitable along a high volume roadway and business district such as Route 1. The proposed buildings at Weiss Farm closely resemble this development; while they might work at the Lynnfield site, they would not be compatible with a neighborhood such as Franklin Street.

ARBORPOINT APARTMENTS AT MARKETSTREET LYNNFIELD

Lynnfield, MA

"The community offers 180 residences all directly adjacent to MarketStreet Lynnfield, the area's premier retail destination featuring great shopping and restaurants."

Size: 180 units



ARBORPOINT APARTMENTS



The apartments at Market Street are less than half the size, and are one story less than the proposed buildings at Weiss Farm. The apartment blocks of this type might work at a setting with adjacent retail such as Lynnfield, but may not be compatible in a neighborhood setting like Franklin Street. The Arborpoint apartments have some relationship with development due to the large, primary retail component. The total development is also designed to deal with the very large influx of daily traffic.

RESIDENCES AT STONEHAM SQUARE

Stoneham, MA

“The Residences at Stoneham Square is a newly completed condominium complex, located at 426 Main Street in the historic “Stoneham Square”. This building has been an iconic part of Stoneham’s history since it was built in the 1800’s and used as a shoe factory.

Size: 42 units



As part of a revitalization project, the Residences at Stoneham Square fit into the town center. A five story building of this scale is appropriate in a general business district, but not in a smaller scale single family residential neighborhood.



ARMSTRONG PLACE SENIOR HOUSING

San Francisco, CA
Client: BRIDGE Housing

Size: 116 affordable units

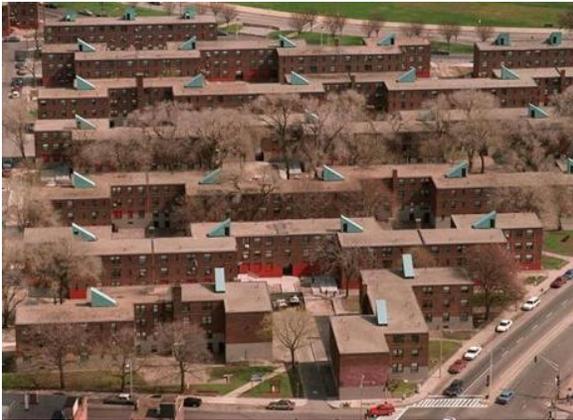


While this HUD development does not fit the Weiss Farm neighborhood aesthetic, its massing and form promote a higher level of design appropriate for the West Coast. Some of the desirable features that Armstrong Place incorporates are a courtyard park, integrated parking and a broken down organization which gives breaks, bends and corridors along the property.

OLD COLONY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

South Boston, MA

Size: Existing = 840 units
New Total = 650 units (approx.)



OLD COLONY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

NEW MASTERPLAN

Old Colony is a newly constructed affordable housing development which promotes neighborhood integration above all. The project was able to fit a variety of building types of reasonable scaled for an urban neighborhood combining an integrated park space.

ALLSTON GREEN DISTRICT – THE EDGE APARTMENTS

Allston, MA

“New ground-up 79 unit apartment building with parking, fitness center, and amenity space. LEED Platinum.”

Size: 79 units



SOURCE: Boston Redevelopment Authority

GLOBE STAFF

Allston Green District construction

- 1 THE ELEMENT,**
65 Brainerd Road, 100 units
Green roof with garden; deck;
insulated floor-to-ceiling windows;
bike storage; Zipcars
- 2 THE EDGE,**
60-66 Brainerd Road, 79 units
Rooftop solar panels; electric car
charging stations; individual water
meters; recycling facility on each floor
- 3 THE ICON,** 75 Brainerd Road
(pending approval), 100 units
Small high-efficiency units; rooftop
solar panels and deck; recycling
facility on each floor

RENOVATED BUILDINGS

- 4 THE GATEWAY,**
1298-1302 Commonwealth Ave.,
80 units
Utilities cost-sharing pact; bike
storage; fitness center
- 5 THE MATRIX,**
8 Griggs St., 20 units
Super insulated facade; high-
efficiency heating, windows
- 6 THE METRO,**
74-86 Brainerd Road; 83 units
High-efficiency heating, windows
- 7 RETAIL STRIP**
1304-1312 Commonwealth Ave.,
4 retail units
Hubway bike rentals, coffee shop;
convenience store



Sitting on the line between Boston and Brookline, The Edge apartments are one component of the Allston Green District development that is integrated into an urban neighborhood.

AVALON AT ASSEMBLY ROW

Somerville, MA

SOMERVILLE—The "mini-city" that is Assembly Row continues to take shape: "Tenants have started moving into the Avalon at Assembly Row, a 195-unit luxury development — part of an urban village development with walkable streets and ground-floor shops." [Herald]

Size: 445 units (56 affordable)



This large scale redevelopment of East Somerville is an example of a comparable sized housing complex to the one proposed, but fits and functions within a dense urban setting. While a significantly larger mixed-use development is appropriate for this area of Assembly Square Somerville, it is not appropriate for the Town of Stoneham, much less the Weiss Farm site.

SPENCER GREEN

Chelsea, MA

“Spencer Green features 48 new affordable apartments on the site of the former Chelsea Armory, with 8 units priced for extremely low-income households. Fresh modern design encourages resident engagement and connection to the community. Green and environmentally sustainable building practices are employed throughout.”

Size: 48 units



This small scale affordable development in Chelsea responds to the neighborhood scale and incorporates sustainable practices. The buildings are split into multiple unit blocks and open up on the corner with park and playground areas which improve the existing streetscape and allow for a more connected community.

MAVERICK LANDING

East Boston, MA

"This transit-oriented neighborhood of 426 mixed-income units arrays along Boston's Inner Harbor, replacing an obsolete 1940s public housing "superblock". Despite its density of 44 units per acre, the site blends substantial public open space with restoration of the historic street grid, and offers rental townhouses, midrise apartment buildings, and a seven-story condominium building at the water's edge. Maverick Landing is the first LEED certified affordable housing development in New England, engaging "healthy home" design and construction."

Size: 396 units



Although on in an urban area, this development includes public park space and courtyard corridors between each block of units. The buildings fit into the existing neighborhood context and scale. As a transit oriented development two blocks from the Blue Line, a higher density is appropriate, and supportable by the surrounding area and infrastructure.

AMES SHOVEL WORKS

North Easton, MA

“Historic rehabilitation of a mid-19th century national landmark manufacturing complex into 113 modern residential units providing more than 1.5 acres of open space for the neighborhood.”

Size: 113 units



The Shovel Works development is a successful example of adaptive reuse within an historically significant property. The green space is incorporated into the development and the lives of the residents.

QUINNIPIAC TERRACE

New Haven, CT

“The award-winning Quinnipiac Terrace transformed an obsolete City owned housing project into a 226-unit "community of choice," including both rental and homeownership opportunities, and mixing families and senior residents. Taking advantage of its attractive riverfront site, the plan reintroduced the neighborhood street grid, relinking the adjacent Fairhaven neighborhood, and creating views to the river with its enhanced riverfront park.”

Size: 226 units



Quinnipiac Terrace is a neighborhood revitalization project which succeeds due to its site awareness and building diversity including row houses and some multifamily structures. This generated a positive extension to the established adjacent community and waterfront.

OLMSTED GREEN

Mattapan, MA

"The sustainably designed 42-acre site, formerly Boston State Hospital, tightly clusters 520 residential units around garden courts oriented to long views of the pastoral setting, preserving existing trees and much open space. Mixing affordable rental and homeownership opportunities into distinct districts – including the "urban farm" and the "village center" - the architecture of the homes reflects the breadth of New England design traditions."

Size: 520 units



Green-minded affordable townhomes, multistory apartments, and site are blended into the large 65-acre Mass Audubon Preserve and fits the scale and aesthetics of New England.

WINDSOR AT OAK GROVE

Melrose, MA

“Oak Grove Village marries 550 one and two-bedroom apartments with a Main Street retail center and recreational clubhouse - all within a 10 minute rapid transit ride into downtown Boston. Although the bulk of parking is hidden in garages underneath each building, streets are designed to allow parallel parking near unit front doors. The abundantly landscaped commons, interior courtyards, patios, walking paths and bridges along the canal edge establish a rich pedestrian-oriented neighborhood.”

Size: 550 units (14 affordable)



Deacon Square The Promenade Avenue Lofts Lynde Court



The Oak Grove Village is comprised of multiple building typologies, retail, and usable park space. It is a community within itself and fits in the Smart Growth model. It is also adjacent to the Orange Line.



Thank you!