



FOXBOROUGH HOUSING AUTHORITY

90 N. CARL ANNON COURT

FOXBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS 02035
TELEPHONE 508-543-5960 FAX 508-698-0480

"Equal Housing Opportunity"

February 15, 2023

Barnart Ovrut, Chairperson
Zoning Board of Appeals
40 South Street
Foxboro, MA 02035

Re: Walnut Street Foxborough –40 B application

Dear Mr. Ovrut:

Foxborough Housing Authority (FHA) is committed to the development of **200 senior affordable housing** on 16 acres of land FHA owns. This property is located at the intersection of Commercial Street (Route 140) and Walnut Street. In order to allow development of this affordable housing, the sewer main extension is required. This development was proposed by a Foxboro town agency to fulfil a significant need for affordable senior housing in Foxboro. This proposed 40B development is very different than other existing and proposed 40B developments, in Foxboro, due to being Town solicited development.

Please consider the expeditious approval of this unique 40B proposed development as part of expanding the long-term commitment from the Town of Foxborough to the Foxborough Housing Authority. FHA has not added to their housing inventory in over 40 years. The brief history of this proposed Walnut Street Senior Housing development is further outlined in this letter. Additionally, FHA will receive land lease payments of \$100,000 per year from the developer when both phases are completed. These lease payments will be used to fund ongoing maintenance needs for our existing properties that are desperately needed. **Currently, FHA has 179 total units, that only 104 units are elder housing units. This proposed development will double our inventory of affordable housing in Foxboro.** FHA has not added any senior housing since Carl Annon Court was built in 1975.

The land was conveyed from the Division of Capital and Asset Management (DCAM) to the FHA for the sole purpose of affordable housing. The housing plan must be approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development. Funds received from the lease shall be retained by FHA and used for state-defined purposes under 121B and applicable regulations. If the parcel is not used for affordable housing, it reverts back to DCAM.

The FHA has been working on this affordable housing development since **2013**. FHA & the Town provided funds to retain the services of Bay Colony Group (engineers) to perform a site feasibility review for the property. At that time, based on Title 5 requirements, it was estimated that 90 beds could be accommodated on the site. In 2016, the 16-acre parcel was conveyed to the Town of Foxborough's Housing Authority through Chapter 314 of the Acts of 2016.

As you are likely aware, a Housing Authority is quasi-state, public authority constituted under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 121B. The FHA does not fall under the Town of Foxborough's governmental jurisdiction. Despite this, the Town and FHA have collaborated heavily on the Walnut Street project for years. The Town has contributed significant funds and staff time towards this effort. However, an infrastructure project this large is not able to be absorbed by the Town of Foxborough, especially given that the

intersection/signal work is entirely within the State's/MassDOT's jurisdiction. The proposed sewer extension will also provide service to an existing Housing Authority property on the other side of Walnut Street experiencing septic failure, as well as to a drug treatment center, Stewart Health Care facility and possibly the Shopping Center where Ocean State Job lot is located. Availability of sewer might increase capacity for existing users located in sensitive environmental areas. Installation of the sewer system will remove any environmental concerns with a failed septic system within 500 feet of Robinson Brook.

In 2020 the Town was awarded a Housing Choice Capital Grant, which allowed us to proceed with the signal design for the intersection and sewer extension design, which increased the site's development capacity from 90 beds to up to 250 housing units. In 2021, the FHA undertook an extensive process to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a development team to create senior affordable housing on the Walnut Street site. MassDevelopment provided a grant for the development of the RFP and a second grant to assist the FHA with the process of interviewing and identifying a developer. MassDevelopment hired Innes Associates, a Massachusetts planning and design firm, to assist the FHA. MassDevelopment hired FXM Associates to analyze the pro formas of the submitted proposals.

The Town of Foxboro with the assistance of Town Planner Paige Duncan and Representative Barrows and State Senator Paul Feeney have been able to secure **\$5.5 million dollars in funding for infrastructure improvement for this senior affordable housing development.**

Walnut Street Joint Venture (WSJV), a group of six firms, has been chosen as the developer for the project site. The team is led by the Peabody Properties, Inc., Affordable Housing and Services Collaborative, Inc., and the Onyx Group as a minority developer. Other team members are NEI General Contracting, Utile, Inc., LWDA, BLW Engineers, Inc., RSE Associates, Building, Fire & Access, Inc., Kessler McGuinness Associates, Weston & Sampson, New Ecology, Inc., Lam Partners, Acentech, and Kalin Associates. The developer additional has hired local engineering firm Bay Colony Group and Attorney Frank Spillane to assist with the approvals. This combination of contractors, engineers, architects, and specialists will collaborate on this project. The FHA will be working primarily with two project managers for WSJV project, Betsy Collins from Peabody Companies and Michael Mattos from Affordable Housing and Services Collaborative. **The developer and FHA have held three neighborhood meetings where the abutters requested changes to building heights, landscape buffers and to move the building further away from their properties on North High Street. All of these requests have been incorporated into the final development plans, including reducing the number units from 250 apartments to 200 apartments that are being presented here tonight.**

WSJV proposed a two-phase project. The expectation is that the project will be fully complete in 2026; Phase I is expected to be complete in late 2025. Both the developer, FHA and the town are working diligently to obtain signalization of the Walnut Street / Commercial Street (Route 140) intersection and extension of the sewer, this critically important affordable housing project. However, the signalization is ultimately exclusively Mass DOT decision. **This is currently the largest proposed, all affordable Senior Housing rental development in Massachusetts. FHA has requested that Foxboro residents be granted 70% preferential treatment for first time leasing these units to Foxborough seniors. Currently, there are over 2,000 families on the State waiting list for affordable housing with 170 are Foxborough senior residents. Many seniors have been on this waiting list for years.**

In summary, FHA is committed to developing this **senior affordable rental housing** development for this Walnut Street Development with benefits to the community. Thank you again for your consideration of this critically important housing development. Request that ZBA approve this developer's 40 B application expeditiously.

Foxborough House Authority
Gregory P. Spier, Chairperson