

To: Barnett Ovrut, Paige Duncan and Members of the Planning and Zoning Boards

From: Residents of North High Street

Date: April 3, 2023

Subject: Walnut Street 40B/ Senior Housing

Dear Barnett Ovrut, Paige Duncan and Members of the Planning and Zoning Boards,

Following the site walk we have come to understand that building #3, companion drive and landscaping are even closer that we had previously thought. This is resulting in a thinner buffer and greater visibility of building #3 than originally expected. We are pleased the town and FHA have chosen such a well qualified team of individuals to work on this project. We know they are up to the task of addressing the issues presented by the current proposed location of building #3.

We feel closer adherence to the Town and FHA's RFP Conditions for Site: Integration into the Community will ultimately result in a stronger project that is better suited for residents of the development and better integrated into the surrounding North High Street neighborhood.

"Conditions for the Site : Integration into the Community"

- *"The development should be well integrated into the wooded site and adjacent neighborhood."*
- *"Members of the community value the existing wooded location and do not wish to disrupt views from Walnut Street or from those homes along North High Street that abut the property."*
- *"Significant natural buffer between existing neighborhood on North High Street and new development."*
- *"The height of the buildings shall be no more than 60 feet from the top of the highest ridge from the average grade. The tallest buildings shall be located closer to Route 140. Buildings closer to the North High Street neighborhood shall step down in height to be respectful of the adjacent residential community. The goal is to minimize visibility from the adjacent neighborhood."*

The proposed planted buffers are appreciated and will screen lower levels, however, the higher elevation of abutting homes makes this effort less effective and doesn't address screening at upper levels. Leaving a deeper woodland buffer substantial enough to preserve a line of mature evergreen trees is the most economical way to screen the development at the upper levels. Upper and lower level screening would provide residents of the development and North High Street with privacy and preserve the year round woodland views for both. It would also protect remaining trees from the natural forces of saturating rain, drought and ever increasing wind. These environmental stressors have recently taken down several trees along the abutting North High Street

property line.

The development proposal would be more thoughtful if other options were entertained. With no abutters on lower Walnut, Route 140 and the ramp to 95 it appears an alternate design with less impact on the surrounding neighborhood is possible. This is conceivable by concentrating all units in three separate buildings close to or within the planned footprint of the currently proposed buildings #1 and #2. This would involve increasing some or all buildings to 4 stories. Exploring this option might be a solution to building #3's current proposed placement which makes it clearly visable through a thin buffer to the adjacent North High Street neighborhood.

This option could

- have the same number buildings, units, green space, amenities and parking.
- fit within or close to the current footprint along lower Walnut and Route140 where there are no abutters.
- preserve a more substantial woodland buffer and views for residents of The Development and North High Street.
- provide a more substantial buffer for isolated wetland
- allow trees planted on green to provide additional visual buffering of buildings from the North High Street neighborhood.
- allow the lower elevation at the 140 side of the development and distance to soften the view of buildings

We ask that you respect our neighborhood by protecting its natural beauty as much as possible while balancing the needs of the proposed development. This will ultimately result in a more harmonious and successfully integrated project that would benefit both residents of the proposed development and North High Street.

Sincerely,

The Residents of North High Street

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