



Mr. Ed Augustus, Secretary
Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities
100 Cambridge St. Suite
Boston, MA 02109

RE: Ayer Commons

February 12, 2024

Dear Secretary Augustus,

NOAH is very pleased to submit our application for funding to support this all affordable development not far from Ayer's new commuter rail station in downtown Ayer. This would be about a mile from Fort Devens. The town has been very receptive to our proposal. In fact, they directed us to this area so that they could eventually point other developers to build in this previously industrial area. To the town's credit, they have been very helpful at all levels throughout the process of securing entitlements. The 40b with their ZBA went smoothly and cooperatively. Town Meeting voted *unanimously* to award the project \$400,000 in CPA funds! We are proud to be working with the administration, their staff and various committees.

Specifically, **Ayer Commons** will be Passive House but developed in two phases on a 10.59-acre visible site located at 65 Fitchburg Road (Route 2A) in Ayer, MA near the Devens Reserve Forces Training Area-North Post site. Phase I will be comprised of five 2-story walk-up buildings, one central 3-story elevated building, and a 1-story 2,850 sf community center with amenities. Ninety-three surface parking spaces will be provided for Phase I, which will be at no cost to the residents.

Of the 64 units in Phase I, 16 units would benefit from Section 8 and MRVP rental subsidy and rented to those at or below 30% AMI, an additional 6 units will be rented at or below 50% AMI, 21 units will be rented at or below 60% AMI, and 21 will be Workforce units rented at or below 70% AMI. 43 units, in total, will be restricted for a minimum of 30 years at or below 60% AMI under the LIHTC program. All 64 units in Phase I will count toward Ayer's Subsidized Housing Inventory which is presently slightly below the 10% state-wide goal.

All 64 units will be designated as income averaged affordable LIHTC units with 43 family units at or below 60% AMI and 21 Workforce units at or below 70% AMI. 16 of the units (25%) will be affordable to extremely low-income individuals and families at or below 30% AMI, including 6 of the two- and 6 of the three-bedroom units (75%). For these 16 units, the 8 Section 8 and 8 MRVP Project Based rental subsidies are being requested. An additional 6 units will be affordable to low-income individuals and families at or below 50% AMI at unsubsidized rents, including 2 of the two- and 2 of the three-bedroom units (67%). An additional 21 units will be affordable at or below 60% AMI at unsubsidized rents.

NOAH is seeking approximately \$1.4 million in 4% federal tax credits (resulting in approximately \$13 million in equity at \$.95) through the use of MassHousing tax exempt volume cap bonds; \$1 million in state tax credits



(resulting in \$4.1 million in equity at \$.82); and \$5.65 million (approximately \$88,000 per unit) in funding from EOHLC in any combination of HOME, HTF, AHTF, HSF, FCF and HIF funds for Phase 1 of the Ayer Commons development. Eight (8) Section 8 and eight (8) MRVP Project Based rental subsidies are also being requested as part of this OneStop+ application.

Ayer Commons received an award of \$400,000 in CPA funding from the Town of Ayer's Community Preservation Committee in October 2022 prior to the Town approving a Comprehensive Permit Application under MGL Chapter 40B for the entire Ayer Commons development in January 2023. The 10.59-acre site located at 65 Fitchburg Road in Ayer was acquired in March 2023 at a \$1.7 million acquisition price. With site control and zoning approvals, as well as design development plans and specifications, in place, Phase 1 of Ayer Commons is ready to proceed.

The future Ayer Commons Phase II project will provide 42 additional housing units, 44 covered parking spaces, and 20 surface parking spaces. If we are fortunate, Phase II would break ground 2 years after the completion of Phase I. We have not yet designed Phase II as yet.

Ayer Commons has been designed to reinforce the existing character of Ayer's residential streets. The architect for the development evaluated a number of massing studies to achieve the preferred placement of the buildings in relation to the site location along Fitchburg Road, its solar orientation, views, and the creation of a residential community within the site. The proposed Phase 1 townhouses will be constructed along the front edge of the site facing Fitchburg Road. The five (5) 2-story residential buildings will create a typical residential front defining the "street wall" as any residential development would. Behind the five front buildings, Phase I will also include a 3-story central residential building and a 1-story community building. The community building will be centered in the middle of the development and will offer amenity spaces, community gathering rooms, and landscaping to support the recreational playground area.

The architectural design of the buildings employs the use of pitched roofs at the best angle to take advantage of southern orientation for the placement of solar panels. The buildings' facades have been designed to maintain a warm and inviting residential aesthetic, using wood textures and a variety of cement panels, both vertical and horizontal. The buildings' design also incorporates balconies to enhance the residential feel and to allow residents to enjoy views and natural sunlight. The project will be Passive House certified. The ownership entity will pay for all utilities except for convenience electric which will be paid for by the residents.

The units will have open-concept kitchens and will be furnished with stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, a dishwasher, and central air conditioning. All units will be pre-wired for telephone and cable television hookups. At a minimum, the 3-BR units and all handicap accessible units will have washer/dryer hookups. Some units will include balconies, walk-in closets, and islands or breakfast bars. Bathrooms will include a vanity, vinyl or tile flooring, and fiberglass tub surrounds. All units will contain luxury vinyl plank flooring in the living and bedroom areas. The development will be pet-friendly with breed and size restrictions and an additional monthly fee, which is to be determined; the property will also feature a dog run.

One advantage the town appreciates is that we will also be preserving about 5 acres of wetlands on the site. We are exploring geo-thermal for the project. Two firms assure us we can create this option even though the project



was designed all-electric. We will be watching the Department of Energy and Department of the Environment to see how GHG funds and credits will be deployed. We are also open to exploring options when the State's new Climate Bank opens at Mass Housing.

The property will be third-party managed by Peabody Properties, which manages three other NOAH projects. All residents will have access to NOAH services including free homebuyer classes, 24-hour maintenance/emergency services, convenient online financial transactions, special supportive services such as assistance with filing for unemployment, health care or quasi-legal matters, and translation services as needed for non-English speaking families.

In addition to the onsite amenities and walkable property, the residents of Ayer Commons will benefit from the close proximity of the site to many amenities in town. The site is located within .2 miles from Shop and Save and Family Dollar, .3 miles from Tiny Restaurant, .8 miles from Dunkin Donuts and 1 mile from Billiards Café; other proximate amenities include two salon/barber shops, a bank, a Catholic church, a car servicing station, and several other stores. The site is also conveniently located on Route 2A and near Route 111 for motor vehicle commuters, but future residents also benefit from easy access to public transit; the Ayer MBTA commuter rail station is 1.1 miles to the east towards the center of Ayer, providing service to Boston and Wachusett.

We anticipate that the GC would be from mid-Central Massachusetts and be able to hire both local trades but also affirmatively meet all WMBE requirements. The project is expected to cost approximately.....\$26.2M not including soft costs of approximately 20%.....

To repeat, the project has received its 40B comprehensive permit from the Town of Ayer ZBA and a unanimous Town Meeting commitment of \$400,000 in local CPA funds for Phase I alone. The town is anxious to proceed for us to proceed. So are we! Please let us know if we can provide any further information.

Very Truly Yours,

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