



# Ashland DRC Review Comments on 501 Pond Street

In reference to Committee Meetings on 6/2/2022 and 6/16/2022

We want to start at the outset thanking the Owner, Developer and their Team for the time and attention they are giving to this project. We all recognize that these large projects take a lot of time to thoughtfully design and integrate into existing neighborhoods, and we all are working together to get the best possible project for Ashland.

## Architectural

- The building appears to be in scale with the neighboring Valley Farm. We recommend that the applicant take photos of the existing site with surrounding built context, and provide photo-montaged renderings to the Board and DRC. We are asking for a photo montage of Valley Farm and the Trask development. What does it look and feel like to be on that street – give it a real/ actual context.
- The appearance of a hip roof at the center of the Pond Street elevation is dissimilar from the architecture of the building. The applicant confirmed that the perspective elevation was not rendered correctly and should be updated to reflect the roof plan.
- We suggested that the applicant consider all non-gable roofs to be replaced by a standing seam metal mansard, which could be more of a wall cladding than roofing. The high-slope would not impact rentable SF. However, the applicant noted that the Planning Board had suggested that idea and was dismissed through subsequent renderings and meetings. Overall, the massing and rooflines as presented on 6/16/2022 are acceptable pending review of the photomontaged renderings.
- The applicant presented an increase in the amount of glazing at the retail level. This appears appropriate.
- We urge the Planning Board to consider the size of the retail spaces and the likelihood that the provided SF will be leased by potential businesses. We are still concerned that the balance of commercial to residential is leaning too heavily in favor of the residential.
- We commented on the blue siding that extends down to the ground floor from the levels above. The applicant agreed that the entire commercial ground floor should be gray brick rather than residential siding.
- The canopy structure over the commercial retail space has been improved by flat roofs. However, there is a missing opportunity to connect the building with the site by taking the wooden language of the site pergola and incorporating it into the commercial canopy structures.
- As reviewed at 6/2/2022 DRC meeting: The tower at the southeast corner is out of place and the roof form is not thought through from an architectural and water management standpoint. We recommended that the applicant mirror the gable



# Town of Ashland

## MASSACHUSETTS

from the northeast corner to the southeast corner to simplify the building massing. No one retail space is more important than any other. The wood canopy structure at the ground floor should be enough to designate the commercial development, i.e. the tower structure is superfluous, as we noted above.

- On 6/16/2022, the applicant provided new renderings: Option 2 was preferred by the DRC, with the shorter, more contemporary corner.
- We like the wood pergola as proposed in the 6/2/2022 meeting; however, it may be too tall at 10'-0" and could be reduced in height. However, if it is covered with a variety of native and non-native vines, there would be continuous flowering early through late in the season and it would greatly add to the aesthetics and habitat values of the entry to the woonerf area.
- We like the woonerf concept as it has become more refined. We are asking for more wood to be incorporated into the Canopy, trellis and pergola in that area.
- The town (like many others) has recently passed a **Net Zero** resolution to improve our carbon sequestration and do our part to mitigate climate change and to work on reversing decades of habitat degradation that plays a big role in this crisis. We feel strongly that the buildings beat a minimum **Solar Ready** (preferably solar panels installed at occupancy to begin offsetting electrical usage from the grid.) We would like the applicant to seriously consider having net zero electrification of the building (all the units be electrical). We would expect that the solar panels could be ballasted, low profile to better hide them from view.

## Landscaping

- We very much appreciate the plant list provided, and the appearance of the density of the plantings. We are looking forward to seeing a couple of sample area planting plans to assist with visualization. We are also looking forward to seeing the refined renderings and elevations with tree heights at planting, and then at 5 or 10 years on to clarify how this will fill in as the landscape matures to the town.
- We are asking that you keep as many existing trees, and sumac shrubs as possible. Oak to the back left (mark with snow stakes each winter), (that is abutting Putts and More, Birch and Cedar(s) along Pond Street, and "Sumacs island" on the border of shared driveway with Putts and More.
- **Screening**
- We appreciated the applicant taking our early concerns about the hedge in the back and agreeing to match and add additional trees to wrap around the back and corner of the lot that abuts the Putts and More, removing the vestiges of asphalt that used to be a cut-through from Ledgemere in the back into this area.
- We have asked for the Valley Farm side to be densely hedged with a double row of evergreens (preferably mixed species) to screen their residents and common rooms from the lights of cars pulling into park. The single line of same species monoculture hedge is not our favorite as it is especially vulnerable to pathogens and pests, and is not a more robust and thicker hedge with two rows with the trees staggered from each other. A double row with various species and cultivars of evergreens could be pretty and a nice addition to the aesthetics while also providing excellent screening and more landscape habitat.



## Lighting

- We are requesting that the landscape plan be superimposed over the lighting plan to ensure that the plants will not grow into the lights. We are asking for Bollards to be introduced at areas that are not achieving 1 foot-candles along the pedestrian paths. Ensure that there is a light above each egress door.
- Lighting should not bleed into the senior residence next door.
- The applicant confirmed that the lighting along the face of the building would be pole lights with a cut-off that will not produce glare into residents' units. However, we question whether pole lights within feet of the building façade are appropriate. We suggest that further discussion be had about providing cut-off pole lights at the site perimeter, and low-scale pedestrian bollards and/or downwash façade lighting be used along the building face and along pedestrian walkways. We further asked the applicant about providing mini bollards for additional woonerf lighting.

## Parking Lot

- In keeping with Net Zero and mitigating the effects of climate change, we are asking that developers take serious strategies to stack functions, reduce heat island effects and use techniques like permeable paving, bioretention areas with filter strips or sediment forebays as part of your requirements to meet the NPDES regulations of the Clean Water Act. These areas are considered BMP's by the MA Stormwater Handbook, and can be planted with trees, shrubs, and perennials, many of which are native, and provide seasonal color and interest. (MA SW Manual – Vol2, CH2, Structural BMP's).
- **EV ready** – EV charging stations. Provisions should be provided to allow for expandability. The applicant plans to open up all stations to public use. We ask the Planning Board to review whether it would be more appropriate to dedicate some EV spaces to residents, avoiding conflict with the public's usage. We would prefer that the entire lot be EV ready as we expect that in the future the residents will be using more of them. We also feel that some of the EV ready stations should be close to the entrances for both commercial and residential usages.
- We are recommending using an idea that another developer is using which is to add 6" sleeves into the beds bordering the parking lot stubbing up into "sprinkler" box type structures that are flush with the ground, but ready for future use.
- The size of the compact parking spaces were reviewed. We noted circulation issues if a large vehicle parks in these spaces at peak times. The applicant conducted a traffic study that should be requested and peer reviewed by the Planning Board.
  - Considerations for acceptance of the compact parking: 1) enforcement of the parking by the management team and 2) potential contingency for the applicant's redesign of the landscaping, which may create a hardship in terms of the site layout.
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- We are asking the applicant to look at the **snow storage** areas as we think that they are inadequate. Furthermore, they might block the access to the dog park in the back. Please provide the calculations for each snow storage area.
- Signage – please ensure that signage is in place that directs commercial traffic to the woonerf. Please provide signage designs/plans.



# Town of Ashland

M A S S A C H U S E T T S

## Dog Park

- While we appreciated the applicant providing a dog park, with a waste station we strongly feel that this should be a natural area, not fake turf. Fake turf will be unbearably hot in the summer and extremely unpleasant, in addition to many other undesirable factors. Residents will take their dogs to the woonef area rather than use that space if it is unpleasant. Consider adding in a lawn area filled with trees, benches and large boulders and logs that will provide interest and seating for dogs and their owners.