



**OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
TOWN OF BELMONT**

19 Moore Street  
Homer Municipal Building  
Belmont, Massachusetts 02478-0900

**Historic District Commission**

February 19, 2020

To: Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development  
From: Lauren Meier ASLA and Lisa Harrington, co-chairs, Historic District Commission  
RE: HDC Comments on proposed zoning overlay, McLean District, Zone 3

The Historic District Commission (HDC) offers the following comments on the February 7 draft of the proposed McLean District Zone 3 Overlay District. The HDC received the draft at our February 11 meeting, and discussed recommended changes at a posted meeting on February 19. Please note that these comments are framed by a number of considerations. The entire McLean campus including the open space and Rock Meadow is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic District Commission also acts as the Town's Historical Commission to advise on matters related to Belmont's historic resources. Most importantly, the HDC is a party to the MOU with McLean, through Attachment G: Historic Preservation Agreement, dated November 22, 1999. Finally, since the McLean Zoning District was established, the HDC has had a very productive and successful working relationship with both McLean Hospital and Northland Residential regarding the rehabilitation and stewardship of their historic buildings and landscape, and we look forward to continuing that collaboration.

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

We encourage the Planning Board to review the specific language in the existing McLean District By-law and MOU with regard to the treatment of historic resources and the role of the HDC as well as the description of historic buildings and landscapes in the National Register nomination. Please note the following sections related to the McLean District and the HDC:

**McLean District Zoning By-Law** (adopted 1999 Special Town Meeting; amended 4/29/2019; approved 9/5/2019)

**6A.4 Design and Site Plan Review**

*When the Applicant submits a preliminary concept plan to the Planning Board, the Applicant shall at the same time provide a copy of such submission to the Conservation Commission, the Historic District Commission, the Community Development Office, the Town Administrator, the Police Department and the Fire Department (the "Commenting Agencies"). The Planning Board will provide advice and guidance to the Applicant after an opportunity for the Commenting Agencies and the public to provide written comments on the preliminary concept plan.*

**Memorandum of Agreement** between The Town of Belmont and The McLean Hospital Corporation (dated November 22, 1999)

**Attachment G: Historic Preservation Agreement**

*4. McLean will consult with, and will require any of its developers to consult with, the Commission prior to undertaking any external alterations, demolition, and/or new construction affecting any Historic Building, Historic Landscape, or Historic Landscape Element for the purpose of avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse effects to these historic resources... The Commission's review of all plans presented to it by McLean or its developers will be based on the principles and guidelines embodied in the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation...*

*10. Belmont designates the Belmont Historic District Commission as the Town body responsible for seeing that the provisions of this Agreement are carried out in a spirit of good will and mutual cooperation.*

**SPECIFIC COMMENTS** – these comments are specific to the proposed Zone 3 Overlay. HDC explanation/ commentary is also provided in blue.

**6H.1 Purpose**

5. Ensure high quality site planning, architecture, and landscape design that is consistent with the distinct visual character, **historic significance**, and identity of the McLean District.

**6H.4 Use Regulations**

4. Reuse of Existing Structures (note re-working of this paragraph)

**The existing historic Chapel Building shall be retained and preserved.** A bonus density of two (2) dwelling units **may** ~~shall~~ be granted based on rehabilitation and reuse of the ~~existing building known as~~ Chapel Building, provided that the rehabilitation and reuse is consistent with the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, **subject to review as defined in Section 6H.5.3.1 (Design Standards, General Guidelines)**. These units may be constructed within either Subdistrict or both, provided that the total number of additional units does not exceed two (2).

**HDC Commentary**

Eliot Memorial Chapel (1906) by Wheelwright & Haven is a contributing resource in the McLean NR District.

The Chapel Building should be required to be retained and preserved

The two (2) additional dwelling units should not be guaranteed, but rather offered as a result of appropriate rehabilitation.

HDC has added language in 6H.5.3.1 regarding design review.

## 6H.5 Performance and Design Standards

### 1. Performance Standards

- f. ) **A twenty-five (25') foot wide** landscape buffer shall be installed between Olmsted Drive and the townhouses located in Zone 2 of McLean District.

#### HDC Commentary

25' is a reasonable dimension to allow space for a medium street tree canopy. 50' would be preferred and would provide sufficient space for a robust tree planting and a native shrub border.

### 2. Building Design

- a. The façade shall have ~~both horizontal and vertical elements to break down the scale and enhance the appearance~~ **sufficient architectural detail to mitigate issues of scale and to enhance overall aesthetic appearance.**

- b. **Architectural Features and** External Materials and appearance (combined two sections)  
**Architectural features and p**predominant wall finishes shall be ~~or have the appearance of wood, brick, or stone~~ **compatible with the existing historic architecture and other structures in the McLean District.**

#### HDC Commentary

Suggest combining items 2b and c. Goal should be integrated, compatible design.

- ~~c. —Architectural Features  
Architectural features shall be compatible with other structures in the McLean District.~~

### 3. Design Standards

#### 1. General Guidelines

INSERT after first sentence: **Consistent with Attachment G: Historic Preservation Agreement, McLean or its developers will consult with the Historic District Commission regarding the proposed design plans including both architecture and landscape elements. The HDC shall determine if proposed renovation of the historic Chapel Building meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.**

#### HDC Commentary

This is consistent with existing MOU, HPA and past practices for the residential subdistricts. HDC is well versed and equipped to address issues of architectural review.

#### 4. **Lighting Light and Glare**

The lighting requirements of ~~§5.2~~ **§5.4.3** of this Zoning By-Law shall apply to buildings within a MDZ3OD development project.

## 6H.7 Design and Site Plan Review

1. b.) determine the adequacy of measures proposed to mitigate construction period impacts on the natural **and historic** features...

- c) determine the adequacy of measures proposed to mitigate the effects of the development on significant natural, **historic**, and landscape features of the site, including **the sloping topography**, the preservation of specimen trees **and native woodlands**.
  - j.) determine the appropriateness of the relationship of **proposed new** structures and open spaces to the natural landscape, ~~and~~ existing buildings, **and historic campus**.
  - l.) determine that sight lines to and from existing historic structures and landscape features are not adversely affected.**
3. f.) Proposed site grading, including existing and proposed grades at property lines. The topographic plan shall have ~~3~~-**2**'-0" contours