

To: Members of the Planning Board  
From: Belmont Housing Trust  
RE: Development at McLean  
Date: 11/9/21

The Housing Trust has played a key role in the proposed development at McLean, shaping it to meet Belmont's needs, and conducting a public education effort that helped this proposal to win with 98% of the Town Meeting vote.

The Housing Trust is thrilled that the proposal will:

- Provide affordable options to own and rent.
- Provide some apartments that are affordable to households with very low incomes.
- Create opportunities for downsizing and opportunities for households of all types.
- Move Belmont towards a more sustainable future
- Provide revenue for Belmont
- Advance Belmont's count toward our 10% affordability benchmark set by state law.

Below are the Housing Trust's recommendations for both the Homeownership and Rental components.

With regards to homeownership, the Housing Trust recommends:

- Unit finishes for affordable homes be built for durability and lower long-term replacement costs. This includes using Corian or quartz rather than laminate for countertops and that all homes have age-friendly elements, such as grab bars, walk-in showers with tile and/or Corian and quartz finishes. If there are second bathrooms, we recommend that it include tubs with tile finishes.
- For the distribution of affordable homes, the Housing Trust supports having a 1 bedroom home that is affordable because it will lower the price point and could be attractive to a large number of Belmont seniors who are living alone or as couples. The Housing Trust also recommends that the development include a 3 bedroom affordable homeownership dwelling as this is consistent with Belmont's Inclusionary Zoning bylaw.
- With regards to the location of homes, the Housing Trust recommends that at least one of the affordable homes be an end unit rather than all interior dwellings. This ensures that the affordable homes are not distinguishable from the market rate homes.

Below are the Housing Trust's recommendations for the rental portion of the development:

- With regards to unit composition, where there are 3-bedroom units, 10% of the units should be affordable.
- The developer has already indicated that the affordable apartments will float as vacancies occur. That is consistent with prior decisions made by the Housing Trust with respect to other developments.
- The initial distribution of affordable apartments should mirror the locations of market rate units throughout the buildings so that they are indistinguishable by location.

- For accessible units, the Housing Trust recommends that a minimum of 5% of the units (6 units) should be constructed in such a way that they are adaptable. Marketing plans should include language on the ability to make adaptable units fully accessible.
- 50% of the accessible units should be affordable so that there is an overlap of affordability and accessibility.

Other areas that we would like to raise include the potential for more affordable apartments to be included in the development. This could come from funding the Town has available through the HOME Consortium or the developer could apply for CPA funds that the Housing Trust will soon make available for developers to apply for.

The Housing Trust would also like to be involved in the review process for the Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing Plan. It is important that the word gets out far and wide when these homes are ready to be sold and rented. The Housing Trust has performed this function in the past and would like to be included in the process for this development. In addition, all affordable rentals should be listed on the Housing Navigator MA website. Affordable homeownership units should be listed on the Massachusetts Access Housing Registry.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Housing Trust is eager to see this development move forward quickly so that there are more affordable opportunities here.

In addition, this proposal will move Belmont towards our 10% benchmark and can help Belmont to achieve safe harbor status with the state. This means that Belmont will have more control for 1-2 years in determining how affordable housing is developed. It is important to note that being in a safe harbor allows us to deny a proposal through 40B. We will need to use that time to put policies in place that will put Belmont on a path to proactively create affordable housing. This includes zoning changes and funding.

Getting this project approved is a big step. Next, we need to implement other strategies named in our Housing Production Plan to allow for housing that creates opportunities for all who need it. This includes seniors, families with children, people with disabilities, people with low and extremely low incomes, and a diversity in housing stock that fosters more diversity in our population.