



CAPTAIN ANDREW TOBIO  
FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

## BELMONT FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Town of Belmont Planning Board  
19 Moore Street  
Belmont, MA 02478

Dear Planning Board,

These requirements and recommendations can be brought up during the site review with the planning board. The Northland Residential Corporation reached out to the Belmont Fire Department early on in project development, and there have been ongoing conversations since that time. The Department's ability to access and ultimately transverse the property is not negotiable. The specifications of Belmont Ladder 1 and Belmont Ladder 2, currently the two largest vehicles in the Belmont Fire Department fleet, were used by the Northland Residential Corporation to demonstrate accessibility on the property. Other Belmont apparatus or National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) minimum specifications can and should be provided for confirmation of accessibility of all Belmont Fire Department vehicles. Current and future fire apparatus would be required to meet these NFPA minimums. The somewhat narrow width of Olmstead Drive would only be an issue if vehicles are parked on Olmstead Drive. The Northland Residential Corporation plans to work with McLean Hospital, incorporating signage that would prohibit parking on Olmstead Drive. Parking on the fire access roads or other areas on the site should not hamper apparatus placement in any other ways.

The current project design encompasses a fire lane on the outside parameter of the project. This request, which was honored, benefits the Department in two ways. The Department gains access to an additional side of the apartment complex, and a fire break is established between this development and undeveloped land. Although the hope is to have a twenty foot fire lane, the Department would be open to reasonable discussion if this cannot occur. Northland has

confirmed that roads will be a minimum of twenty-two feet paved, and driveways that access more than one dwelling unit will be considered fire access roads with a minimum width of twenty feet. The mountable Cape Cod berm on either side of the road has been changed to a sidewalk on one side of the road and granite curbing on the opposite side. This will allow for a sidewalk on one side of the entire development. Mountable curbs would have given apparatus the option to climb the curb with limited damage to apparatus as a last resort, but the chosen curbing is no different or better than a majority of all roads in the community. The roads and fire access roads must be able to handle the jack point loads of aerial apparatus. In the latest meeting with the Northland Residential Corporation, the Department learned that the underground parking structure is only beneath the buildings, meaning the parking area above would be able to support the weight of the jacks on an aerial ladder. Should this change for any reason, the Department would need assurance that these loads can be carried.

The desire to allow travel between the McLean Hospital property and The Residence at Belmont McLean District Zone 3 has been discussed, but it will be necessary to collaborate further in the future. The Department would like the ability to respond from the McLean Hospital property to Zone 3 and vice versa without having to exit one property and approach from an entirely different way. This will allow for significantly reduced response times in certain circumstances. There were early discussions of some type of gate that would allow emergency access and restrict others, but who ultimately has responsibility of said gate is still somewhat unclear. The Department does understand the nature of this request and is amenable to working towards the best solution for everyone involved.

Once combustibles are on site, water for fire protection must be established. A temporary or permanent water supply is acceptable initially. Ultimately, with the permanent water supply, there needs to be accessibility to a new looped water main on the property. The Northland Residential Corporation needs to communicate with the Belmont Water Department to ensure that these mains are coming from the proper water source that is capable of handling the development. It is also recommended that permanent hydrants be 50 feet or less from any fire department connections for the apartment building. The short distance allows fire apparatus to supplement the fire protection systems quickly, and limit the amount of large diameter hose in a somewhat restrictive access road.

The plan review of the fire alarm systems and the fire protection systems have not occurred. The Northland Residential Corporation is willing to add fire protection systems to all of the townhouses, even when not required by the fire code. The addition of fire protection systems in

the Chapel renovation portion of the project is not solidified. It is the recommendation of the fire department that all buildings in the development have fire protection systems, regardless of code requirements, to eliminate confusion. The Northland Residential Corporation did this by choice in Zone 2. There were preliminary discussions of central station monitoring, of both the fire alarm systems and the fire protection systems, for the entire development to generate an automatic fire department response.


The Department continues to recommend the use of ignition resistant or noncombustible siding, such as HardieBacker or another cement board. This has become a higher priority with the potential elimination of the retaining wall behind buildings 10 through 14. The retaining wall would have had the ability to slow fire spread from the unmaintained vegetation behind them. 527 CMR 1.00, Chapter 10, addresses the use of mulch around buildings. The requirement to leave 18 inches between mulch and combustible materials on the building does not apply to buildings containing 6 or less dwelling units. The Department recommends that mulch is prohibited within at least 18 inches of any building on this development, regardless of the number of units in the building. This request applies even if there is compliance with the suggested use of noncombustible siding. Additionally, the Department is not resistant to maintained vegetation or screening between properties, but would like to see future plans for landscaping. The goal is to have potential contributors to fire spread reduced or eliminated. Other aspects of this landscaping may also impede access to any structure immediately or in the future with normal, expected growth.

As the project comes together additional concerns need to be discussed. There needs to be some clarification of the parking at the townhouses. The Department does have reservations with vehicles parking directly in front of the garages at the townhouses, underneath the front decks. Fire spread is a concern if a car fire were to occur. This is depicted in Section 7 of the application package under A-5.01. Northland Residential Corporation was made aware of the Town General By-Law that addresses the requirement for public safety radio coverage in buildings and structures. This may require the use of a Bi-Directional Amplifier (BDA). If photovoltaic panels are added to any structure, the fire department would like to have input on disconnect locations. Even if these buildings are simply made ready to accept photovoltaic panels, there should be preparation for future disconnect locations. Electric vehicles and their charging stations can also be a challenge to fire fighters. Charging stations located for easy access, in close proximity to the garage exit, would be beneficial. Strategic placement of these chargers and vehicles will assist fire fighters if presented with a vehicle fire. In extreme cases,

vehicles that need to be dragged out of the garage for extended cooling following a fire, can be accessed and removed much easier if they are closer to the garage exit. At this point in the project, a traffic signal is not planned for Olmstead Drive and Pleasant Street. If a traffic signal is incorporated in the future, the fire department wants to ensure that the Opticom Emergency Vehicle Preemption is consistent with what is already in Town. Finally, when blasting is going to occur during site preparation, the Department must be given advanced notice to allow ample time for a detailed coordination of this effort.

Throughout the project the Belmont Fire Department will ensure compliance with and enforce Chapter 148 of the Massachusetts General Law, 527 CMR 1.00 Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code based on the 2015 edition of NFPA, fire protection portions of the Massachusetts State Building Code 780 CMR, and applicable Town of Belmont bylaws. Other Department recommendations and requirements have been highlighted in this letter. The Department looks forward to working with the developers and other Town agencies throughout this project. Please contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Andrew Tobio

Captain

Fire Prevention Bureau