



## DRB Memorandum

Project Location: Post Office Square, Acton, MA

Architectural Plans: Artform Home Plans - no dates

Engineering Proposal: Eastern Landscape Survey Assoc., Inc., Dated: Revised from the March 28th, 2012 set

Developer: Philip Singleton, Charing Cross Realty Trust

Second Review of Project

**Date of DRB Review: 10-17-2012**

The DRB met with proponents Danielle Singleton, developer, Jim MacDowell, Engineer; Wendy Welton, Architect; on the above date to review project and drawings for a second time.

The conversation of this meeting focused on discussions of the layout and house type, and how to reduce the amount of walls of the site. The engineer provided background information and said that a main driver of the site layout was the septic system. In addition, the septic system and homes had to be at higher elevations due to a high water table, thus requiring the larger amount of retaining walls. The walls will probably be reconstituted blocks along the back property lines, and natural fieldstone along the street and in other highly visible locations. The DRB and proponents worked together to make the layout more site sensitive and to reduce the amount of walls and impervious surfaces.

The DRB makes the following comments:

- DRB suggested switching units 9 and 10 so that the higher buildings could be consolidated which allows for a reduction in the amount of walls needed.
- In situations where retaining walls are over 3' in height, the engineer suggested the walls be terraced, using two walls of lower heights. Railing would then not be needed along the tops of walls and the overall visual impact of the walls would be softer.
- Along the north side of the site, the retaining wall at the property line is, in some locations, eight feet in height. The architect suggested one solution to reduce the height of the walls would be to use a house style with a front facing garage thereby allowing the back of the homes to be built into the existing slope and significantly reducing the amount of excavation and retaining walls required. The garage faces would be attractive - partially concealed with a balcony above and detailing. The developer did not originally consider front facing garages because he assumed front facing garages were frowned upon in Acton. The sentiment of the board was that while the previous statement is true, making the home fit best with the topography of the site is a higher priority. Danielle Singleton will forward images of these building styles to the DRB.
- If a side garage rather than front garage is used on Lot 2, moving the driveway to the other side of the house would require less site work.
- The DRB recommends all porches have a seven foot depth to make them usable. The architect stated that the building finishes, porch styles, shingle and siding colors, and window grids will vary, and the DRB supports the diversity this will provide for the development as a whole.
- The architect stated the siding of the homes would most likely be vinyl sided. In order to upgrade the look, the trim around the windows will be wide, giving the siding a more wood-like appearance.
- Impervious Surfaces: We discussed reducing the amount of paving in the cul-de-sac by either making a planting circle in the center of the round, or replacing the asphalt at the center of the round with a decorative pavement such as cobblestones. The proponent will check to see if the fire department will allow a planting circle. In addition, using front facing garages will reduce the amount of square footages of driveway pavement and will allow for more usable yard space and planted areas, and flexibility of siting on the lot.

- The DRB suggested removing the end portion of the sidewalk next to the septic wall since the walk wasn't servicing any homes. Removal would allow for a planting bed in front of the wall, which could help to lessen the wall's impact at the cul-de-sac.
- We discussed whether the septic field would need a fence along the top of the retaining wall, since the wall reaches a height of almost 8' on the south end. If the septic field will be open for people to use (which the DRB recommends), then the board recommends a fence be added.

The DRB thanks the proponents for their attendance and openness in discussion. We agreed that it would be beneficial to set up another working session once the layout is revised to incorporate the ideas discussed in this meeting. This next meeting will be scheduled once the revised plans are completed.

Respectfully Submitted, Design Review Board

Members in attendance: Conor Nagle, PE; David Honn, RA; Peter Darlow AIA LEED; Holly Ben-Joseph, PLA,; DRB BoS Liaison: David Clough