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May 1, 2023

Mehreen N. Butt, Chair  
Town Council  
Town of Wakefield  
1 Lafayette Street  
Wakefield, MA 01880

RE: **Proposed 40B—The Residences at Nahant  
Wakefield, MA  
MH ID No. 1181**

Dear Councilor Butt:

MassHousing is currently reviewing an application for Site Approval submitted by The Residences at Nahant LLC (the Applicant). The proposed development will consist of 120 units of rental housing on approximately 1.72 acres of land located at 119-135 Nahant Street in Wakefield, MA.

The site approval process is offered to project sponsors who intend to apply for a Comprehensive Permit under Chapter 40B. MassHousing's review involves an evaluation of the site, the design concept, the financial feasibility of the proposal, and the appropriateness of the proposal in relation to local housing needs and strategies. As part of our review, we are soliciting comments from the local community, and we would appreciate your input. You also may wish to include in your response, issues or concerns raised by other Local Boards, officials, or other interested parties. Pursuant to the new Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B regulations (760 CMR 56.00) your comments may include information regarding municipal actions previously taken to meet affordable housing needs such as inclusionary zoning, multifamily districts adopted under G.L. c.40A and overlay districts adopted under G.L. c.40R. Your comments will be considered as part of our review.

We have been informed by the Applicant that the Town has received a copy of the application and site plans for The Residences at Nahant. Please inform us of any issues that have been raised or are anticipated in the Town's review of this application. We request that you submit your comments to this office by Wednesday, May 31, 2023, so we may process this application in a timely manner.

During the course of its review, MassHousing will conduct a site visit, which Local Boards, as defined in 760 CMR 56.02, may attend. The site visit for The Residences at Nahant has been tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 8 at 2:00 pm. Please notify me promptly if any representatives of your office or if other Local Boards plan to attend the scheduled site visit.

Please note that if and when an application is submitted for a comprehensive permit, assistance is available to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to review the permit application. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership's (MHP) Ch. 40B Technical Assistance Program administers grants to municipalities for up to \$15,000 to engage qualified third-party consultants to work with the city's ZBA in reviewing the Chapter 40B proposal. For more information about MHP's technical assistance grant visit MHP's web site, [www.mhp.net/40B](http://www.mhp.net/40B) or e-mail MHP at [emcgurren@mhp.net](mailto:emcgurren@mhp.net).

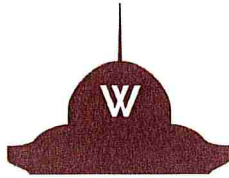
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate email me at [kmiller@masshousing.com](mailto:kmiller@masshousing.com).

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kat Miller  
Planning and Programs Specialist

cc: Stephen P. Maio, Wakefield Town Administrator



## TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

Stephen P. Maio, Town Administrator  
smaio@wakefield.ma.us

Sherri A. Dalton, Executive Assistant  
sdalton@wakefield.ma.us

May 31, 2023

Katherine Miller  
Planning and Programs Specialist  
Mass Housing  
One Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Re: Proposed 40B 119-135 Nahant Street Wakefield, MA

Dear Ms. Miller,

We are requesting an extension for the Town comments as part of the Project Eligibility Letter (PEL) from Mass Housing for the proposed 40B residential development, The Residences at 119-135 Nahant Street. In the event that an extension is not granted, please accept this letter as **preliminary** comments which are subject to revision by the Wakefield Town Council.

The applicant is The Residences at Nahant LLC.

A site visit occurred on May 8, 2023. The applicant was represented by Attorney Jason Panos, Anthony Capachietti of Hayes Engineering, and Stefano Basso of SV design. The Town of Wakefield was represented by Police Chief Steven Skory, Deputy Chief Craig Calabrese, Fire Chief Michael Sullivan, Deputy Fire Chief Thomas Purcell, Fire Prevention Office David Shinney, Town Engineer William Renault, Community and Economic Development Director Erin Kokinda, Town Administrator Stephen P. Maio as well as Wakefield Town Council members Mehreen Butt, Michael McLane, Edward Dombroski and Robert Vincent. Mass Housing was represented by Katherine Miller.

This proposed development is located within two districts in our zoning map, Single Residence (SR) and Business (B), within an area with two-story and three-story houses as well as a 3-story condominium complex occupying which was the neighborhood elementary school. The applicant is proposing a six-story apartment building consisting of 120 units on a site consisting of 1.72 acres. In response to concerns expressed over the size of the project and at the May 8, 2023 meeting Mass Housing requested that the applicant supply a massing plan. To date that plan has not been presented to the Town. From a Town's perspective, this information is critical, as we have immense concerns about the massing of this project within this current neighborhood and cannot give complete feedback until this is provided. It was assumed that the plan and the project in general would be presented to the Town Council at its May 22, 2023 meeting. At the sole request of the applicant, that presentation has been delayed until June 12, 2023.



It seems premature to expect a cogent response from the Town until the information regarding the project is presented to the entire Town Council.

However, there were multiple concerns expressed at the site visit from town departments relative to increased traffic as well as pedestrian, vehicular and pedestrian safety, fire safety and apparatus access, lack of access to public transportation, complete lack of green space on the site proposed plan, the potential negative impact on the town's water and sewer services as well as the sheer size which is difficult to comment on without the massing plan.

Currently, approximately 85 residential structures front on Nahant Street. The proposed 6 story 120- unit structure would more than double that amount. Nahant is a very well-travelled street and is the primary cross link between the High School and Middle school. Our police chief travelled Nahant street on a weekday at 7:30 AM and was forced through 8 cycles of traffic lights at the Nahant and Main intersection. The site plan also displays inadequate parking. This will result in forcing the parking of cars on the already congested side streets. The commuter rail is close to a mile away and many will simply not walk that far. Also, it has been our experience that these size developments create many calls for service further straining a lean police department.

While, there will be a number of fire code compliance issues that will be required should a building occur on the site, for this purpose we will limit comments to the site plan presented. It is critical that fire apparatus is able to access all four sides of the building. The current plan only allows fire apparatus access on two sides of the building. The current "hammerhead" turn-around design in the parking lot is also unacceptable. Access to the roof is also extremely difficult, a full-size roof access door would be required as a minimum. Finally, a fire hydrant will be required within 100 feet of the building.

There also exist grave concerns regarding the impact of this project on the Town's infrastructure. The Town has concerns on the project's impact to the existing water distribution system. The Nahant Street water main has had multiple breaks within recent years. The Town expects the additional water demand required for the project to worsen this condition. The Nahant Street water main has been highlighted as the 16th priority project within the Town's 2020 Townwide water main capital improvement plan, but is currently not funded.

The Town also questions the viability of the conceptual stormwater management infiltration system included within the project plan. The site has several ledge outcrops including one adjacent to the conceptual system. The proposed site's design and scale will only allow for underground infiltration in one location. Stormwater management is an important site constraint for this parcel due to the site being higher in elevation compared to all of the abutting single-family homes.

It is worth noting in this letter and future correspondences that the Town of Wakefield is and remains proud of our commitment to the creation of both market-rate and affordable housing. In 2015 the Town adopted an inclusionary zoning/mixed use district contiguous to our commuter rail station. This zoning bylaw includes an 18% affordability component, and has helped contribute to the creation of over 1300 housing units (419 or 32% affordable). It is important to note that this location is not located in that inclusionary zoning district (although we do require affordable components to any development over 4 units). Nor is its location within one half mile of the Train Station as contemplated by the currently amended Mass General laws chapter 40A (MBTA Communities).

Over the last two years, the Town has approved two 40B projects creating 78 new units for our community. In October of 2019 Wakefield approved a 173 unit 40B project, construction was delayed until 2022 and we anticipate occupancy late 2023 or early 2024. Even though we are just shy of the 10% subsidized housing inventory due to some timing delays in construction if we were to count all approved housing, a 10.59% SHI index is indicated. If we were to include those projects currently in the hearing process we indicate a SHI of 10.05% based upon the new 2020 census numbers. In fact, our progress in housing production has been so prolific that Wakefield was designated a Housing Choice Community on April 18, 2023. We also believe that Wakefield has made recent progress toward the statutory minima in accordance with 760 CMR 56.03(5). We will confirm these numbers and plan to file accordingly. But, at this point, we believe that our progress trumps the applicant's desire to disregard local zoning and utilize the comprehensive permit process.

Despite, the content of this letter and specifically since as of this writing, the applicant has not presented its project to the Town Council, we are asking for an extension of fifteen days from our Town Council meeting on June 12, 2023 to June 27, 2023.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to provide sensible and affordable housing to Wakefield.

Very truly yours,



Stephen P. Maio  
Town Administrator





## TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

Stephen P. Maio, Town Administrator  
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Sherri A. Dalton, Executive Assistant  
sdalton@wakefield.ma.us

August 18, 2023

Katherine Miller  
Planning and Programs Specialist  
Mass Housing  
One Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108

**Re: Proposed 40B 119-135 Nahant Street Wakefield, MA**  
**The applicant is The Residences at Nahant LLC.**

Dear Ms. Miller,

Please accept this letter as the Town of Wakefield's comments per the above-referenced Project Eligibility Letter Application (PEL), following a site visit and presentation to the Wakefield Town Council.

A site visit occurred on May 8, 2023. The applicant was represented by Attorney Jason Panos, Anthony Capachietti of Hayes Engineering, and Stefano Basso of SV Design. The Town of Wakefield was represented by Police Chief Steven Skory, Deputy Police Chief Craig Calabrese, Fire Chief Michael Sullivan, Deputy Fire Chief Thomas Purcell, Fire Prevention Office David Shinney, Town Engineer William Renault, Community and Economic Development Director Erin Kokinda, and Town Administrator Stephen P. Maio, as well as Wakefield Town Council members Mehreen Butt, Michael McLane, Edward Dombroski, and Robert Vincent (a majority of the Town Council). We appreciate that you, Ms. Miller, represented Mass Housing during this visit.

At a duly noticed Town Council meeting on August 14, 2023, Attorney Panos, and Messrs. Cappachietti of Hayes Engineering, and Basso of SV Design presented the project. A video of that meeting can be viewed via this [link](#) so that you can discern the content and tone of the presentation. The meeting was attended in person by approximately 30 concerned residents.

This proposed development is located within two districts on our zoning map, Single Residence (SR) and Business (B). It is within a predominantly residential neighborhood, populated mainly by two- and three-story houses and a three-story elementary school building which has been converted into condominiums (The Franklin). It is important to note that The Franklin structure has been in existence since the early 1900s and is built on a slope running away from Nahant Street, so the building appears as two stories from the street, with a third story behind the frontage on Nahant Street following the topography of the land.

Currently, approximately 85 residential structures front Nahant Street. The revised five-story 100-unit structure would more than double that amount. Nahant is a well-traveled street and one of Wakefield's primary east/west crosslinks. It is also one of the most congested roads in town.



## Original Application and Site Visit Observations

The applicant initially proposed a six-story apartment building containing 120 units on a site of 1.72 acres. In response to concerns expressed over the size of the project at the May 8, 2023 site visit, you requested that the applicant supply a massing plan. (That plan was included in the August 14, 2023 presentation).

Multiple concerns were expressed at the site visit from Town departments relative to increased traffic; pedestrian and vehicular safety; fire safety and apparatus access; lack of access to public transportation; complete lack of green space; negative impact on the Town's water and sewer services; as well as the sheer size of the project. I have attached a copy of the preliminary comment letter sent to Mass Housing dated May 31, 2023, for reference, as this letter focuses on the updated Project Eligibility Application and plan presented to the Wakefield Town Council on August 14, 2023.

## Updated PEL and Presentation to Town Council on August 14, 2023

The applicant offered a presentation indicating a minimally revised project to the Town Council on August 14, 2023.

The revised project comprises 100 residential units in a five-story building featuring a stepped-back fifth-floor roof line. The building remains exceptionally close to Nahant Street, with the footprint virtually unchanged from the original submission. Although there is a slight reduction in parking spaces, the site plan is all but devoid of green space. Unfortunately, the updated PEL application fails to adequately address most of the comments stated at the site visit and in the foresaid May 31, 2023, letter. In part, and perhaps by way of explaining the lack of adequate responses, the applicant included the following slide in his presentation:

*Town Manager Stephen P. Maio issued a letter to Mass Housing with preliminary concerns. Many of the matters raised are not a subject for Project Eligibility Review however, we address the following:*

- *Massing, scale and density were reduced by removing a floor and modulating the roof line*
- *Roof access and an additional hydrant were added to the plan*
- *Site Circulation and turning for fire apparatus has been improved*

Despite reducing one floor, the massive five-story building remains too large for the area. The Site Sections plan (A3.02) clearly shows that the five-story building looms over neighboring properties, particularly abutters at 143 and 109 Nahant Street. The applicant attempts to compare the project favorably with The Franklin at 100 Nahant Street; however, even that comparison displays an almost 20-foot difference in height. Finally, the artist renditions included in the presentation cannot hide the shadows from the building engulfing Nahant Street and any potential pedestrians or cyclists. The project needs more open space, and the plans feature mature trees that cannot be planted due to utility poles in the area.

The site plan also needs to contain more parking. The applicant stated that the building is one-half mile from a local supermarket, though eventually clarified that the distance is "as the crow flies" and that a resident would have to travel farther to use roadways and sidewalks. The property also is a mile from the commuter rail, which will cause many to drive, further adding to an already congested situation.

The building remains too close to the edge of Nahant Street (9 to 11 feet). As stated, Nahant Street is a cut-through road between four schools in Town (Wakefield Memorial High School, the Galvin Middle

School, Woodville Elementary School, and the Northeast Metropolitan Vocational Technical School). Thousands of students attend those schools, and a large majority utilize Nahant Street daily. Adding 100 residential units on a winding, narrow road is, frankly, unsafe.

The revised plan does allow for a better fire truck turning radius, but the desire to use every possible area of the lot(s) still results in the reality that fire vehicles can access only two sides of the building. This lack of Fire vehicle access to the entire perimeter creates an unsafe condition. Candidly, virtually all projects which require a special permit are conditioned upon full perimeter access.

The presentation on August 14 did not adequately address other infrastructure needs (water, sewer, and drainage), claiming they would be discussed at Board of Appeals meetings in the future.

The presentation also compared this development to several existing projects in other "residential" Wakefield neighborhoods (please see the Site Context key Map and Existing Development Precedent Images in the submission package). A majority of the "precedent projects" presented in residential areas contained less than half of the requested units as in this application. The remaining arguably comparable projects of this size and mass are located in former industrial/business areas clustered near the commuter rail and were developed via special permits in conjunction with our mixed-use and/or inclusionary bylaw, **not** via the 40B process.

In summation, it was evident that:

- 1) The applicant has ignored previous comments of the Town and/or needs to address expressed concerns adequately.
- 2) The neighborhood in question consists of more modest (in size and height) one- and two-family homes with one grandfathered business.
- 3) Concerns about car, bike and pedestrian safety still need to be addressed.
- 4) Fire apparatus are still unable to service all sides of the building.
- 5) Depending upon the definition, the project remains deficient in open/green space with a percentage in the 4 to 9 percent range.
- 6) The presentation's comparison of this site to other "similar" developments in Town is disingenuous.

According to 760 CMR 56.04(4), one of the factors in determining project eligibility is that *the conceptual project design is generally appropriate for the site on which it is located, taking into consideration factors that may include proposed use, conceptual site plan, and building massing, topography, environmental resources and integration into existing development patterns.*

The comments from members of the Town Council at the site visit as well as the August 14, 2023 meeting clearly indicate that the proposed, albeit revised, project remains far from appropriate for this site for the reasons stated above and in the May 31, 2023 letter. The applicant's contention that many of my preliminary concerns raised "are not a subject for Project Eligibility Review" is erroneous. For context, I include a copy of a site approval letter drafted by Mass Housing on September 21, 2021 regarding another 40B project in Wakefield (O North Ave). In that letter, Mass Housing specified that the developer address comments regarding pedestrian access, emergency access as well as the project's consistency with the overall character of the neighborhood (all concerns expressed by the Town during the eligibility phase). I raise the same issues here. Incidentally, the Town ultimately issued a special permit for Nahant project under Mass General Law C40B on February 8, 2023.



Finally, it is worth noting in this letter and future correspondences that the Town of Wakefield is proud of our commitment to create both market-rate and affordable housing. In 2015, the Town adopted an inclusionary zoning/mixed-use district contiguous to our commuter rail station. This zoning bylaw includes an 18 percent affordability component and has helped create over 1,300 housing units (with 419 units or 32% affordable). It is important to note that this location is not in that inclusionary zoning district, nor is the project located within one-half mile of the train station as contemplated by Mass General laws chapter 40A s3A (MBTA Communities).

Also, over the last two years, the Town has approved two 40B projects creating 76 new units for our community. In addition, in October 2019, Wakefield approved a 173-unit 40B project. Though construction was delayed until 2022, we anticipate occupancy in late 2023 or early 2024. Even though we are just shy of the 10 percent subsidized housing inventory due to some timing delays in construction, if we were to include those projects currently in the hearing process and/or approved but not yet built, we indicate a SHI of 10.05 percent based upon the new 2020 census numbers. Our progress in housing production has been so prolific that Wakefield was designated a Housing Choice Community on April 18, 2023.

Accordingly, Wakefield has made recent progress toward the statutory minima per 760 CMR 56.03(5), permitting 250 SHI-eligible units over the last year. As requested, we have attached a list of these and other affordable housing projects.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to provide sensible and affordable housing to Wakefield. Unfortunately, as presented, this project is not suitable or appropriate for the area in question.

Very truly yours,

  
Stephen P. Maio  
Town Administrator