

Mr. Mark Abate
Chairman – Hopkinton Planning Board
Town of Hopkinton
Town Hall
18 Main Street
Hopkinton, MA 01748

25 April 2008

re: Legacy Farms - Planning Board Master Plan Review, SA #74719.00

Dear Mr. Abate:

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments and observations of the Hopkinton Planning Board's informational review process for the Legacy Farms master plan, which includes the preparation of the Open Space Mixed Use Development (OSMUD) district and the Host Community Agreement (HCA). This letter is written from the perspective that Sasaki Associates, Inc. (Sasaki) gained from leading the East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy and Zoning Recommendation process, and, as an advisor to the Hopkinton Planning Board for the above mentioned informational review process.

1. BACKGROUND

The announced sale of Weston Nurseries in 2005 – nearly 5% of the town's total land area – was the impetus for the community-wide discussion and planning process about how to best use this extraordinary resource. If adopted by Town Meeting, the proposed OSMUD zoning district will provide the regulatory and planning framework for Legacy Farms to achieve clearly expressed Town goals for the future of the property. When the sale of Weston Nurseries was announced, the Board of Selectmen created the Land Use Study Committee (LUSC) to determine whether the Town should exercise its right of first referral to purchase the property through Chapter 61A, or to pursue a positive outcome for the Town via new zoning and regulatory measures.

The LUSC and Planning Board took active steps to identify opportunities for the Town presented by the impending sale. To establish the basis for future decision-making, several studies of the property were conducted on behalf of the Town including a fiscal impact analysis prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc. (2005); the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's conceptual planning and development capacity study for Weston Nurseries (2006); and a site planning options study by a graduate studio at MIT's School of Architecture and Planning (2006). To develop more specific recommendations for the property and to engage the community in a public planning process to consider the Weston Nurseries within a broader context, the Planning Board then engaged Sasaki in 2006 to develop a land use and zoning strategy for East Hopkinton. While Weston Nurseries was an important focus of the study, broadening the study area to include East Hopkinton allowed the Town to address land use, demographic, aesthetic, infrastructure and regulatory challenges in a more holistic and long-term manner.

The results of the Sasaki led process include the "East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy and Zoning Recommendations Report", August 2007. Presented in the report are several important findings that can be used to evaluate the Legacy Farms Master Plan process to date. First, identified Town goals that should guide Legacy Farms development are:

- Create neutral/positive fiscal impacts.
- Ensure adequate Town control over the planning and design of the property.
- Preserve the "rural character" of the land including the quality and connectivity of open spaces.
- Provide a diversity of housing types, including higher density and affordable housing.
- Preserve water resources.
- Manage traffic impacts.
- Promote sustainability by conserving water, food, energy and financial resources, and encourage "green" development.
- Plan for future municipal needs and services such as schools, recreation and public safety.

To achieve these goals, the Land Use Strategy recommends that future development in the East Hopkinton study area and on the Weston Nurseries property in particular, should strive to balance open space conservation with future development, namely by promoting the higher intensity use of land identified as "developable". To achieve this, the Strategy proposes adoption of a new zoning overlay district that encourages:

- Conservation of significant open spaces for ecological, visual and recreational purposes.
- Mixing of compatible residential, commercial, and civic land uses.
- Clustering nearly all of the residential development to conserve large continuous open spaces and protect ecological resources.
- Creation of a neighborhood-scale mixed use retail district that will meet Town needs and be fiscally positive without impeding the success of the Center.
- Continued development of Weston Nurseries retail operation and the viable agricultural/horticultural uses.
- Development of campus-style office and R & D uses in appropriate locations.
- An expanded new roadway system to improve pedestrian and vehicular connections and circulation.
- Low impact, development (LID) and "green" building practices and techniques.

The East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy translates the goals described above into plan form by promoting a mix of housing types – including townhouses and attached units, single-family homes and multi-family apartments-in compact, clustered layouts to conserve land and resources. It recommends developing retail and office uses to the degree that they produce a neutral or positive fiscal impact, but discourages retail which will compete directly with businesses in Hopkinton Center. The Land Use Strategy embraces the conservation of open space and natural resources and promotes greenway connectivity wherever feasible. It endorses the protection of scenic roads, the provision of active recreation land, and the

establishment of public-private partnerships to achieve these goals. The goal of each of these strategies is to protect the character of East Hopkinton while promoting market-driven development. By adapting zoning overlays to create a more integrated environment, the Town of Hopkinton will ensure that the study area, when built out over the next several decades, will have a distinct character and a vibrant community life which differs from conventional suburbia. Ultimately, this will have significance not only for East Hopkinton, but for the Town as a whole, and will place Hopkinton at the forefront of progressive planning within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

2. RELATIONSHIP OF THE LEGACY FARMS PROPOSAL TO THE "EAST HOPKINTON LAND USE STRATEGY AND ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT"

Based upon Sasaki's involvement with the information review process; review of the OSMUD and HCA documents; and general observations of the Legacy Farms concept, Sasaki can definitely state that the Legacy Farms concept plan meets and should achieve the Town planning goals discussed above. It is clear that the Legacy Farms proposal is based upon a solid understanding of the planning and design principles expressed in the Strategy and that the OSMUD and HCA will guide the subsequent planning, design, impact mitigation and implementation process in a manner that meets the intention and spirit of the East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy.

Briefly stated, the OSMUD and HCA are consistent with and further advance the East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy as follows:

OSMUD

- Provides for a mix of residential, commercial, village center and civic land uses.
- Residential uses have specific total number limits and mixes for single-family and multi-family units.
- Commercial uses are limited to appropriate locations and size limits. Design review is required to ensure high-quality development.
- Provides affordable housing consistent with Town goals.
- The proposed dimensional requirements for residential, commercial and village center sub districts will achieve the intended "clustered" and village scale planning and design character and outcome for the property, and, provide sufficient transition area between adjacent land uses.
- Parking requirements are appropriately balanced to achieve sufficient but not excessive parking for specific land uses. The Planning Board retains control to require appropriate parking supply, and low impact design.
- The Restricted Land section addresses expressed Town goals for active and passive recreation, conservation, municipal and other identified goals.
- Legacy Farms will meet the high standards and provide the expected community benefits through strong control by the Town, which is provided for in the OSMUD sections on Administration; Master Plan Special Permit; Application for Master Plan Special Permit; Site Plan Review and Design Guidelines.

These administrative procedures, standards and guidelines provide the Planning Board with significant control, jurisdiction and power to ensure that in each subsequent step in the approval process the site-specific submissions for project approval will meet the spirit and community goals expressed by the "East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy & Zoning Recommendations report."

Host Community Agreement

Additionally, the HCA specifically addresses community issues, values and goals that were identified in the East Hopkinton planning process. Specifically the HCA identifies and addresses the following specific concerns:

- Legacy Farms should be developed based on low impact development (LID) design principles that seek to maintain natural systems that are integrated into the landscape.
- The goal for positive fiscal impacts is addressed in considerable detail by a comprehensive Matrix system that ensures positive financial impacts on the Town during both the build-out period and at full build-out.
- Traffic impacts and related improvements are comprehensively considered and addressed. Specific mitigation measures are identified and Traffic Demand Management (TDM) measures to minimize/lessen traffic impacts are required.
- Not less than 500 acres of Restricted Land is required to meet goals for large parcels of contiguous land conservation, recreation and town service needs for schools, public safety and water/sewer infrastructure services such as the Alprilla Farms Well Agreement to improve the water supply system.
- Impacts to Town services such as the public school systems, fire safety and conveyance of restricted land to tax-exempt entities are addressed in the HCA to protect and promote identified community goals and values.

3. SUMMARY

Over the past three years the Town has fostered a pro-active planning process that has resulted in the HCA and the proposed OSMUD for Town Meeting consideration. The OSMUD and HCA provide the understanding and regulatory framework to ensure that Legacy Farms will be developed in accordance with Town goals and to produce the anticipated community benefits.

Legacy Farms is an opportunity for the Town of Hopkinton to take a leadership role in the planning, design and implementation of a sustainable master planned community on the Weston Nurseries property. From Sasaki's perspective, the Legacy Farms master plan proposal is clearly based upon the expressed goals identified in the East Hopkinton Land Use Strategy, and can become a master planned community that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

Perhaps the best way to think about the Legacy Farms proposal is from an observation by George Bernard Shaw, "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

5 | 25 April 2008



On behalf of the Sasaki team, I am delighted to have the opportunity to make these comments and observations and am available at your convenience to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Merrill". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fred Merrill, AICP
Principal

cc: Hopkinton Board of Selectman
Anthony Troiano, Town Manager
J. Raymond Miyares, Town Council
Steven Zieff, Boulder Capital, LLC
Marilyn Sticklor, Goulston & Storrs