

# Highfield Commons Development LLC

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501 Daniel Webster Hwy , Merrimack , NH 03054

05/25/10

Michael Behrendt , AICP Chief Planner  
City of Rochester  
31 Wakefield St.  
Rochester NH 03867

Dear Mr. Behrendt ,

Highfield Commons Development LLC is pleased to submit the following to be considered as amendments to the approved PUD for the Highfield Commons development in Rochester, NH.

The following amendments are offered as improvements to the Highfield Commons master plan that are both consistent with the intent of the approved PUD and further demonstration of this teams commitment to the principles of traditional neighborhood design and New Urbanism. The changes requested are primarily an effort to improve the quality of the neighborhood and to offer a greater level of amenity and variety to the future inhabitants of Highfield Commons and the community of Rochester.

The original PUD was very clear to establish controls and flexibility to enable Highfield commons to ultimately realize a community of the "highest possible efficiency and optimal aesthetics". The PUD was also clear to note that "the final design of Highfield Commons is yet to be discovered" and that in order to achieve the type of place we all envision "it is important to preserve....some

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reasonable level of flexibility of design". We believe strongly that the amendments being proposed herein are a reflection of this intent and will result in a neighborhood that is greatly improved from the original submission and more cohesive in every respect as a neighborhood and community

As guidance, our design team has been expanded to include architects and planners who are committed and experienced in the principles of traditional neighborhood development and New Urbanism. As such, the neighborhood design was reviewed based on the philosophy that the community, the sense of "place" and, indeed the ultimate sustainability of Highfield Commons is an outgrowth of the character and quality of the neighborhoods being designed. The masterplan was reviewed from the perspective of continuity, quality of place and strength of the streetscape. The following recommendations are the product of many hours of review and consideration as to the optimal way to amend the design yet retain the intent of the original masterplan and the PUD.

We believe strongly in the importance of creating real neighborhoods that offer variety and amenity within walking distance – to enable a small community such as Highfield Commons to become more than merely a collection of individual homes. By investing our time and resources on beautifully designed and affordably executed community design we believe that these neighborhoods will become the cornerstone for an evolving community life at Highfield Commons and an example of community revitalization in Rochester.

The following notes and the included graphic documents outline the amendments we are requesting in an effort to achieve the goals noted above.

**I. General Notes:**

1. Highfield Commons, LLC is interested in reducing the overall unit density in phase II (multi family) portion of the project and increase the number of single family and townhouse units in Phases I and III – maintaining the overall all unit count as stipulated in the PUD (370 Units)
2. All approved conditions of the PUD will be maintained as initially approved except where a change is requested below to facilitate needed flexibility due to a greater understanding of the site constraints as pertains to individual unit placement on specific lots.
3. Highfield Commons LLC would like to revisit the lands previously reserved for commercial and educational purposes on the original PUD (specifically tax lots 3-123, 3-67 and 3-69). Based on the number of units proposed at Highfield commons and the distance of the neighborhood from the primary road – it is our recommendation that viable commercial / educational of a scale suggested by these parcels is not sustainable / viable. We would like to suggest an adjustment to these lots to enable the design to include more residential within these lots that will strengthen the community character – as well as provide a community amenity in the form of a community center / building that is required by the PUD in Phase III (see below)

**II. Specific Adjustments to the Phase I site plan being requested**

1. Community Building

- a. Highfield Commons LLC is proposing relocating the intended community building / worship space originally required in Phase III of this project and include this amenity within Phase I of this plan. We suggest locating the new community building on the east end of Eisenhower Drive overlooking the sloping green down to phase IA.

## 2. Community Green Spaces

- a. Highfield Commons LLC is proposing the inclusion of several formal community green spaces in the masterplan as structured amenities for the neighborhood community. We feel strongly that these greens will be an amenity for the neighborhood and the greater community and are a vast improvement over the previously unprogrammed green spaces conceived of in the original PUD.
  - i. One green in Phase IA at the frontage between Pierce Drive and Fillmore Boulevard which will become the centerpiece of the first neighborhood in Highfield Commons. We are suggesting that a "tot lot / playground" be included in this green as an amenity for the first phase of construction
  - ii. Small corner green at the intersection of Fillmore and Eisenhower Drive
  - iii. Townhouse green along Eisenhower Drive
  - iv. Programmed green at the interior of the townhouse court
  - v. More formal green at the west end of the Eisenhower loop road.

## 3. Walking Trail

- a. Highfield Commons LLC is proposing a new walking trail around the perimeter of Phase I connecting the community building, green spaces and residential neighborhoods within this first phase.

#### 4. Single Family Lot Adjustments / Additions

- a. Remove 1 lot on the north-east portion of Pierce Drive (lots 7-10) and re-space the remaining lots – leaving only 3 lots between the north corner of pierce/Fillmore and the first drainage easement
- b. Adjust the common rear lot line for lots 17,18,19 and 20 (Pierce Drive) – giving more space to lots 18 and 19
- c. Adjust the front lot line of lots 17 and 20 along the edge of the green space to give additional space to lots 17 and 20
- d. Additional Single Family Lots Suggested – (20 total):
  - i. 7 lots on the west side of Fillmore Boulevard within tax lots 3-67 and 3-69. Continuing the single family lots on Fillmore Boulevard to the intersection of Fillmore and Eisenhower Drive
  - ii. 4 lots on the east side of Fillmore Boulevard at the north end of Phase IA (entrance road)
  - iii. 2 lots on the east side of Fillmore Boulevard at the southern extent of Phase IA
  - iv. 7 lots on the north side of Eisenhower Drive

#### 5. Townhouse Units (10 additional)

- a. Add an additional 6 townhouse lots and an alley on the western end of the loop of Eisenhower Drive facing the green
  - v. Requirements for alleys will be maintained per the approved PUD
- b. Reconfigure existing townhouse layout to accommodate an additional green at the eastern intersection of the Eisenhower Drive loop. An additional 4 townhouse units included in the reconfiguration.

## 6. Setbacks

- a. Front Yard. Front yard setback in the PUD has been set at no more than 25% of the width of the lot. Given the challenges inherent in siting homes on more complex grading, Highfield Commons LLC would like to suggest that:
  - i. the front yard setback be established as a minimum of 15' and a maximum of 30' – providing a zone within which a house may be set in order to accommodate grade and village character
  - ii. That the porch be allowed to encroach a maximum of 8' over the front setback line as required (not including porch stairs) – see attached diagram
- b. Side Yard: The PUD notes that “all buildings will preserve a building separation of a minimum of 10 ft, unless side walls conform to City of Rochester building codes with regard to fire retardant materials.”
  - i. Highfield commons will respect this constraint but believe that based on the unit designs currently anticipated and

the lot widths proposed in the masterplan – that we would likely maintain a minimum of 20' building separation in nearly all instances (with the exception of attached townhouses).

- c. Attached Garages: In the PUD as approved, attached garages must be in the rear 50% of the side façade of the home. Based on the challenges presented by the grading on the site, Highfield Commons would like to suggest that:
  - i. Attached garages must be set a minimum of 3'-0" behind the primary façade of the home at the front yard (including corner lots where the home has two front yards and the buildings have to primary facades.)

#### 7. Architectural Templates:

- a. Once Highfield Commons finalizes the unit designs for the residential and townhome units anticipated for the community, we will provide an architectural template articulating the unit types, facades, material options and range of detail acceptable for these various unit types as a tool for the City of Rochester in reviewing the design intent of any proposed units. Included with this package are draft examples of the range of architecture anticipated at Highfield Commons. Once finalized, a more complete architectural template package will be provided.

#### 8. City Water:

- a. It is Highfield Common's intention to utilize as many green building practices as economically possible in the construction of

the residential and townhouse units. Our hope is that this will include the use of geothermal heat, a sustainable and reusable energy source to heat and cool the individual homes. Part of our geothermal design would require each home to have its own well. These wells can be dual purpose, providing water for both the geothermal heat and cooling as well as domestic use. The ability to use the geothermal wells for drinking water would allow us to cover some of the well cost in our infrastructure budget making the use of this green technology viable in our development. As we no longer are building the 3-4 story 48 unit multifamily buildings in Phase II, there may be some other options for fire suppression that would not require city water for our project . I have met Melodie Esterberg with the DPW and they would not require us to provide city water. I am currently trying to work on solutions with the Rochester Fire Department. Assuming we are able to resolve all issues with the Fire Department we will be asking the planning board for an amendment from the PUD to allow for private wells rather than city water .

Thank you for your time and consideration to the above , and please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Strickler', with a stylized, flowing script.

Christian Strickler

managing member

Highfield Commons Development LLC