



# STRATEGIC LAND VENTURES

June 16, 2025

John F. Trefethen  
Chair, Ashland Zoning Board of Appeals  
101 Main Street  
Ashland, MA 01721

*Re: "Sanctuary at Ashland Mills" / Applicant Comparison of Two Myrtle Street Egress Designs*

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We have had several conversations with the Board and its peer review consultants about the Myrtle Street egress and the need, opportunity and consequence for redesigning that egress and associated features to increase the traveling sight distance at that location.

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, Bohler and we provided a site plan, grading plan and landscaping plan showing a redesigned Myrtle Street egress. Hancock Engineering provided comments on that plan in its June 9<sup>th</sup> letter, which we addressed at the June 10<sup>th</sup> public hearing indicating why we did not believe those additional design options to be valid or appropriate.

Currently, we believe there to be two options.

1. The Myrtle Street egress contained in the Bohler Plan Set revised April 29<sup>th</sup> and submitted to the ZBA on May 5<sup>th</sup>. We are going to refer to this Plan as the **"220' Plan"**.
2. The Myrtle Street egress reflected in the June 4<sup>th</sup> Plans mentioned above. We are going to refer to this Plan as the **"290 Plan"**.

Prior to comparing and contrasting the two plans, we want to reiterate and emphasize that Professional Engineers with significant experience in conducting and evaluating lines of sight at intersections from both VAI and MDM have stated that the lines of sight at the Myrtle Street driveway exceed the required distance for the intersection to operate in a safe manner. No professional has stated otherwise or taken exception with this conclusion.

In addition, if the ZBA recalls, we already redesigned this entrance to increase the Sight Distance from the 200' minimum to provide 220' of sight distance. The entrance as currently designed has some sight distance "surplus". We believe it is also important to note that the 200' is not "barely" safe. It is safe for all contingencies and considerations; that is the whole purpose of the ASHTO standards.



# STRATEGIC LAND VENTURES

We have highlighted the differences between the two plans. The table included below includes quantifiable differences. We have also attached “Exhibit 3”, which provides a comparison from a landscape architecture perspective. We have also included the landscape architecture perspective on each plan below for ease of reference.

	<b>'220 Plan"</b>	<b>"290 Plan"</b>
Plan Revision Date	4/29/2025	6/4/2025
Sight Distance @ Myrtle Street	220'	290'
Usable Public Area Amenity Space	7,100SF (1)	5,100SF (2)
Difference in Street Trees		3 less than 220' Plan
Compensatory Flood Storage Provided	1,321CY	1,090CY

(1) See Exhibit 1

(2) See Exhibit 2

## **Plan A: 220' Sight Distance**

- The proposed retaining wall is located closer to Main Street and its form successfully relates to the street
- Landscape spaces create a gateway to downtown Ashland:
  - Public plaza space is visible from Myrtle Street
  - Trees along Main Street start at the bend in the road near Water Street
- The public space is larger, supporting larger social gatherings, and feels like a pocket park / intimate open space
- Landscape spaces frame and highlight the historic building/landmark to be preserved

## **Site Plan B – 290' Distance**

- The proposed retaining wall tries to preserve the public plaza space while allowing for the 290' sight distance
- Open sight line area limits the potential of creating a sense of a gateway to downtown Ashland, the arrival experience feels empty:
  - The retaining wall does not relate the streetscape, the landscape edge is a large open lawn area
  - Fewer Street trees begin after the historic building when heading east on Main
- The pocket park reduces in size and has less usable area / capacity for gathering, becomes more of an entry plaza to the building
- Historic building feels ignored / left out of the design



# STRATEGIC LAND VENTURES

Hopefully this summary description is helpful to the Board in its evaluation of the two different plans. As we have indicated on the public record, we feel very strongly that the 220' Plan is by far the better of the two plans, and addresses all of the Board's primary concerns including public and vehicular safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey Engler', written in a cursive style.

Geoffrey Engler  
Managing Partner of SLV Ashland, LLC