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20 January, 2025

Jasmin Farinacci  
Town of Ashland, MA  
101 Main Street  
Ashland, MA 01721

Via email: [jfarinacci@ashlandmass.com](mailto:jfarinacci@ashlandmass.com)

Re: Town of Ashland- 55 West Union Street Initial Architectural Peer Review

Dear Jasmin,

Dewing Schmid Kearns (studioDSK) has completed an initial Architectural Peer Review of the documents and comments submitted by the Applicant.

On Dec 16, 2025 and Jan 20, 2026, I met with the Applicant's Architect, Talia Cannistra of Studio Cann and Lynne D. Sweet of LDS Consulting Group, LLC. They presented the design for 55 West Union Street, and I provided initial feedback. On January 15, 2026 I walked the site with the civil engineer, Vito of Connorstone Engineering Inc and Julia Jameson of United Home Experts. The discussions and site walk formed the basis for this architectural building design peer review.

As discussed in our meeting today with the architect, in general, we would like there to be updates made to the renderings and plans to clarify questions in plan and elevation, at which point we will provide further comments.

#### **BASIS OF REVIEW**

For the preparation of this report, the following documents were received and reviewed:

#### **Applicant's Documents Received:**

- 2 May 2025 Application Materials:
  - 1. Project Narrative W Union St Ashland 3.31.25.pdf
  - 2. MassHousing Comprehensive Permit Application
  - 3a. 55 W Union – Location Map.pdf
  - 3b. Assessors Map.pdf
  - 3c. FEMA Map.pdf
  - 3d 55 west union Ashland – approved ORAD 10.24.27.pdf
  - 3e. Context Photos.pdf
  - 3f. Aerial photo.pdf
  - 4a. Existing Conditions Plan.pdf
  - 4b. Site Plans.pdf
  - 4c. MBTA Access Easement\_Agreement – 55 W Union.pdf
  - 5a. Architectural Plan set 55 West Union St\_PEL Application.pdf
  - 5b. Architectural Narrative.pdf
  - Tabular Zoning.jpg

- 7a. Deed.pdf
- 9. Ashland 55 West Union Rent Comp 3.31.25.pdf
- Town Utility Easement – 55 W Union.pdf
- 2 July 2025 Submitted Application
  - 1 Request for Findings of Facts Union 55 WU.pdf
  - 2. ZBA\_Application\_Form\_55 West Union.pdf
  - 4. PEL – 55 west Ashland.pdf
  - 5c. Town Utility Easement – 55 W Union.pdf
  - 6b. 55 West Union – Site Plans 7-3-20205.pdf
  - 6c. 55 West Union – Fire Truck Template 7-3-2025.pdf
  - 6g Sightline triangles.pdf
- 1 August 2025 Meeting materials
  - 55 West Union – Site Plan 8—1-2025.pdf –
  - 55 West Union – Stormwater Report.pdf
- Traffic Peer Review documents
- 250729 55 WEST UNION-MDLA-COLOR SITE PLAN.pdf- Overall Landscape Plan
- 55 West Union Street, ConCom Comments to ZBA Regarding 40B, 8.25.25.pdf
- Town of Ashland ZBA Submission Letter for 55 West Union.pdf

#### **Project Understanding:**

From the documents received, we understand the following:

The existing 4.90 acre lot at 55 West Union Street is zoned as Commercial Highway and proposed as building a new 116 unit residential building. Located on a wooded lot on the corner of West Union Street (Route 135) and Memorial Drive, the proposed building:

- Is composed of 116 residential units and 168 standard parking spaces and 6 accessible spaces for a parking ratio of 1.50;
- Total Gross Square Footage is 134,806 GSF;
- Height is 52'-0" measured from the average grade plane; is a 4 ½ story structure;
- Unit mix is (72) units of 1 bedroom / 1 bath, (32) 2 bedroom / 2 bathrooms, and (12) 3 bedroom / 2 bathrooms. The unit types are divided equally across the four floors;
- 29 units will be 80% AMI and 87 will be market rate;
- Ground floor has the entry lobby and package area, fitness space, bike storage room, a community room with kitchenette, a work from home area and building support spaces;
- Will be built with the lowest half story of concrete and steel construction while the upper four floors will be wood construction;
- Site is adjacent to Upper Charles Rail Trail.

#### **ARCHITECTURAL BUILDING DESIGN PEER REVIEW: OVERALL DESIGN**

**studioDSK:** The building will provide much needed housing, with (72) 1 Bedroom units and (32) 2 Bedroom units (12) 3 bedroom units.

#### **General comments:**

1. Screening to the south and West Union is recommended.

2. Provide 4<sup>th</sup> floor plan: the Mansard roof adds character to the building design, but its design changes the floor plan, and that has not been shared with the peer review architect.
3. Please confirm the number of accessible units, as they are not indicated on plans.
4. Please provide size, dimensions of materials and lighting information for signage, if any.
5. Please confirm the location of an exterior dumpster, if there would be one.

Architectural peer review comments on the drawings pertain to details to enhance the existing design.

### **ARCHITECTURAL BUILDING DESIGN PEER REVIEW: DRAWING COMMENTS**

Below are the comments as they pertain to each drawing sheet. The comments are also on the marked-up pdfs submitted with this letter.

#### **Comments on Drawings**

Updated drawings are needed to complete the review.

#### **A-000: COVER**

1. Please Lot, Deed, and FAR, are listed on the cover sheet.
2. The 3d view should be updated to reflect updated plans as bedroom windows appear to be missing on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Plans state that each floor is the same but there is a difference between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors with the mansard roof.

#### **A-101**

1. Is there a convenience egress door near the bike storage? If so, please show it.

#### **A-102 Typical Building Plan**

1. Indicate fenestration and openings in plan.
2. Based on the rendering on the Summary Sheet, it is not clear where bedrooms and their associated windows are located.
3. Typical Building Plan applies to floors 1-3. 4<sup>th</sup> floor is different from other plans; please provide 4<sup>th</sup> floor plan.

#### **A-200 Exterior 3D views**

1. Update rendering to show missing windows at mansard roof and redesigned retaining wall. The planting configuration is different in the landscape plan than what is shown.
2. Provide key plans to orient views.

#### **A-201 Exterior Elevations**

1. 4<sup>th</sup> floor fenestration is not shown in plan.

#### **A-202**

1. Please include photos of physical samples of the metal roofing, the siding and brick.

#### **A-601**

1. B2 Plan not shown.

DSK

When we receive these updates, we will review. Please let us know if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Amy Sheehan Latva-Kokko" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amy Sheehan Latva-Kokko, AIA, CPHD, LEED BD+C  
Director

studioDSK: DSK | Dewing Schmid Kearns Architects + Planners, P.C.