



# TOWN OF MEDFIELD

## MEDFIELD STATE HOSPITAL MASTER PLANNING COMMITTEE

TOWN HOUSE, 459 MAIN STREET  
MEDFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 02052

August 15, 2018

Michael Marcucci, Chair  
Gus Murby, Clerk  
Osler Peterson, Member  
Board of Selectmen  
Town House  
459 Main Street  
Medfield, MA 02052

Dear Board of Selectmen:

The undersigned members of the Medfield State Hospital Master Planning Committee are proud to submit to you our proposed *Medfield State Hospital Strategic Reuse Master Plan*. The Master Plan represents four years of work by the Committee to develop a comprehensive and coordinated vision of the sustainable redevelopment and reuse of the former Medfield State Hospital property, as requested by the Board of Selectmen in its mission statement to the Committee.

The Committee conducted extensive outreach to the community in order to discern the priorities and desires of the citizens of Medfield. This was an iterative process involving multiple public interactions in which different concepts were tested with the community. The Committee also focused on the financial aspects of the proposed redevelopment: looking at the impact of proposed scenarios on the Town budget and on individual citizens, as well as the financial viability from the perspective of potential developers. Balancing the desires of the community against the financial realities of proposed redevelopment scenarios, the physical condition of this site and its numerous buildings and the legal constraints governing the property such as its historic designation and the Town's land disposition agreement with the Commonwealth presented a challenging environment for a planning process.

Our draft plan elicited a number of comments from you and others regarding various aspects of our preferred scenario and a general comment on making the plan as flexible as possible. While flexibility can be a virtue in the development process, the balance of open space and development reflected in the plan was shaped by strong expressions of support in the community for maintaining open space and the character of the site. That balance could be jeopardized by an overly permissive zoning. Nonetheless, after consideration of the input we received, we have made a number of changes including the following:

1. Extending the "West Slope" area all the way to Hospital Road in order to allow development of that area while maintaining the views from the core campus to the south.

2. Expanding the non-residential uses permitted in various sub-districts to accommodate a broader array of commercial opportunities.
3. Modifying the “South Field” zoning to allow for commercial uses on 6 of the 12 acres on which development is permitted, while continuing to reserve the remaining 6 acres for municipal recreational use.

We specifically draw your attention to Appendix 11 which sets forth in full our proposed Medfield State Hospital District draft zoning bylaw.

We have also received expressions of concern, including from members of the Warrant Committee, that the preferred scenario does not present a sufficiently attractive opportunity to potential developers. Given concerns from the community regarding the level of development at the site, we have not made it a priority to increase the proposed density of housing units at the site, which is the surest way to increase developer profit. That being said, the zoning we have proposed does allow for flexibility in density within the allowable areas of development and it will be up to the future development committee and the Board of Selectmen, in response to actual development proposals, to decide whether any increased density should be accommodated and, if necessary, any areas designated for open space should be rezoned for development. While we have made significant efforts to ensure that the preferred scenario does not pose an unreasonable burden on Town finances, we do not believe that our mission was to ensure an attractive return to developers at the expense of strong preferences expressed by the community.

With respect to the financial aspects of the Master Plan, we have labored long and hard to create a financial model to analyze the preferred scenario from both a Town perspective and a developer perspective. Pat Casey has worked with our consultant to perform so-called Monte Carlo simulations with respect to a range of variables in order to show the probability of various outcomes from a Town perspective and from a developer perspective. We have a high degree of confidence that our plan is workable from a Town perspective, and thereby the taxpayer perspective, while the developer perspective is more uncertain. In our view, that is an acceptable outcome given the various constraints the Town is operating under and the desires of the community. If the disposition process reveals a need for a greater intensity of development, then the Town will be faced with a decision on whether to pursue that path or not.

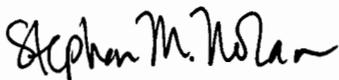
One of the greatest financial challenges in the redevelopment effort will be the need to install significant infrastructure, both on- and off-site, at a cost that has been estimated above \$20 million. Our financial analysis has not imposed that cost on potential developers, but rather assumes a combination of state infrastructure grants and possible Town assistance to developers in the form of tax increment financing. Our financial analysis suggests a high enough level of “profit” to the Town to enable the Town to offer such tax increment financing without significant risk of a negative impact on the Town’s budget. As to possible state assistance, we suggest concerted effort to seek MassWorks funding, including mobilizing our legislative delegation. Given Governor Baker’s push to increase housing production across the Commonwealth, we believe that the proposed redevelopment plan presents an attractive candidate for State assistance.

During the course of our public engagement process, public opinion shifted in Town as to two key aspects of the redevelopment process. First, the attitude toward possible rehabilitation of buildings at the property moved from one of ambivalence to general support. Second, the attitude toward affordable housing at the property changed from opposition to general support, particularly as to maintaining safe harbor under Chapter 40B and eventually reaching the Town-wide minimum of 10% affordable housing. The Master Plan envisions redevelopment that rehabilitates as many of the existing structures on site as possible and preserves the historic campus lay-out of the property, which is one of the key contributing aspects that warranted the historic designation of the Hospital Farm Historic District. While that is the vision, the Master Plan does not dictate that outcome, but rather creates a level playing field for possible rehabilitation, with the actual outcome to be dictated by financial feasibility, as expressed through actual developer proposals. That process is consistent with the dictates of the Memorandum of Understanding entered into by the Town with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance and it is our hope that a viable plan for rehabilitation will be presented in the disposition process.

As for affordable housing, we have included inclusionary requirements in our proposed zoning that is consistent with the Town's overall inclusionary housing bylaw, but our hope is that the housing types proposed in the plan will lead to a considerably higher count on the Subsidized Housing Inventory due to the development of significant amounts of rental housing, some financed with federal and state Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. While the Town is making significant strides to reaching its 10% goal, the increase in housing stock that will be measured in the 2020 census will pose a challenge in achieving or sustaining that level and we believe our preferred scenario will contribute meaningfully to reaching and sustaining the 10% target.

We have appreciated all the support we have received from the community at large, from the Warrant Committee, the Planning Board, the Medfield Historic District Commission, the Medfield Parks and Recreation Commission and other Town boards and officials and from you, the Board of Selectmen. This has been a difficult but at the same time rewarding process and we hope our proposed Master Plan will serve as a viable template for redevelopment of the MSH property in a manner that will make the Town proud.

Sincerely,

  
Stephen M. Nolan, Chair

  
Brandie Erb, Member

  
Gil Rodgers, Member

  
Randy Karg, Member

  
Patrick Casey, Member

  
Teresa James, Member