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March 8, 2023

Kosta E. Prentakis, Chair
Select Board
Town of Middleton
48 South Main Street
Middleton, MA 01949

RE: Redevelopment of Angelica’s Restaurant and Adjacent Property

Dear Chair Prentakis and Other Members of the Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you at your next meeting on Tuesday, March 14th regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Angelica’s Restaurant and adjacent property. This memo is submitted to you in advance of that meeting for your preview, and includes both a summary of efforts undertaken to date, along with a proposal for mixed use redevelopment including both a residential community, as well as an adjacent commercial proposal, intended to be consistent with features found in Middleton Square.

BACKGROUND

Since placing the property under contract a year ago, we have had a lot of dialogue with members of the Board and other members of the Middleton community about redeveloping the Angelica’s site. As you know, we initially proposed a 200-unit mixed-use proposal that, among other things, offered a path for the Town of Middleton to reach a Chapter 40B “safe harbor” designed to enable the Town to meet its 10% affordability threshold for the Town’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). We ultimately withdrew that proposal due to technical and economic challenges, and the input provided by the Town suggested this initial proposal was not consistent with the objectives of the Town for this area of Middleton.

Subsequently, we spent significant effort discussing multiple alternative redevelopment scenarios with Middleton officials, neighbors, and others to develop a proposal that we understood would better match the needs and interests of Middleton. The result of that effort was a proposal that included a total of 47 rental apartment homes, 5 (or 11%) of which were affordable, in a 3-story building configuration, along with approximately 18,000 square feet of stand-alone retail space to be located along South Main Street. Further, this second proposal contemplated that market-rate apartments would be age-restricted to 55+ households.

To enable this second proposal, a use variance was required to allow the proposed multifamily use. We met with the Zoning Board of Appeals in December 2022 and January 2023, and it was clear that the ZBA had concerns about the proposed permitting path and was not in favor of issuing a use variance for the proposal. As such, with the ZBA's unanimous vote of approval, we withdrew our application without prejudice in January.

Accordingly, the following represents our third proposal for the redevelopment of Angelica's and adjacent property.

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Based upon the input received to date, we feel that a redevelopment including a residential community proposed to be approved under Chapter 40B, as well as an adjacent commercial proposal to be approved under the Middleton Zoning Bylaws offers an opportunity to both increase the Town's housing stock in a thoughtful manner, and to introduce a commercial development designed to fit into the Middleton Square area. Our proposal involves dividing the site into two separate parcels, with the dividing line between the parcels being approximately parallel to South Main Street. The left or western portion of the site will be a rental apartment community to be permitted through the Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit process. The right or eastern portion of the site will be a retail development to be permitted according to the Middleton Zoning Bylaws.

We have requested to meet with you specifically to preview the 40B development before we submit a project eligibility/site approval application with MassHousing. While the initial focus of the proposed redevelopment is on the proposed residential community, included with this letter is a conceptual site plan for both portions of the site designed to convey the total vision for the property. It should be noted that the retail portion of the site plan is our current concept that likely will evolve with more details as we move closer to filing for site plan approval with the ZBA.

THE 40B RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The residential development consists of a single 3-story-on-grade residential building, surface parking, landscaping and associated amenities and uses. (See attached site plan, elevations, and perspective rendering.) The 60 rental apartment community will include a total of 36 (60%) one-bedroom, 18 (30%)

two-bedroom, and 6 (10%) three-bedroom units. Indoor amenities will include a club room, work from home offices, fitness facilities, and in-building trash and recycling services. Outdoor amenities include seating and dining areas, and recreation spaces. Apartment features will include 9-foot ceilings, fully appointed kitchens and bathrooms, and outdoor patios/balconies for most units. There will be approximately 101 parking spaces, or an average of 1.7 spaces per unit designed to serve the community.

The preliminary residential development plan complies with most requirements in the table of dimensional requirements of the Middleton Zoning Bylaws. The exceptions are (i) the maximum building height in feet and (ii) the front yard setback.

The maximum building height in feet is limited to 35 feet, and we will be requesting a waiver to allow for up to 42 feet (a difference of up to seven feet) to maintain pitched rooflines and other aesthetics designed to reflect the character of surrounding buildings. Alternatively, we can satisfy the 35-foot height limitation by implementing a flat-style roof, however our understanding from previous discussions with neighbors is this would not be preferred.

Most of the residential site frontage along Boston Street is zoned Residential R-1a, which has a front yard setback requirement of 25 feet. We satisfy this requirement. But there is also a small portion of the residential site frontage along Boston Street that is zoned Business B, which has a front yard setback requirement of 35 feet. We will be requesting a waiver to allow for a uniform front yard setback of 25 feet for the entire residential site frontage, consistent with the frontage requirements of the Residential R-1a Zoning District. In all other respects, the preliminary development plan satisfies the table of dimensional requirements.

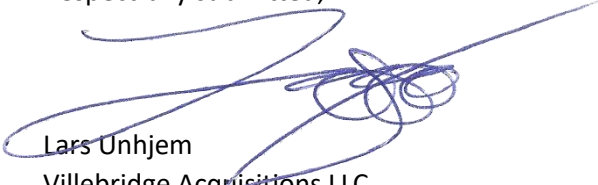
To this end, we feel this redevelopment proposal meets the spirit, goals and objectives of the Town as reflected in both the Middleton Housing Production Plan 2019-2024 (HPP) as well as the Town of Middleton Master Plan 2018-2028 (Master Plan) in several important respects. First, the proposed project serves as a way to help to diversify housing options, especially for seniors and others, to enable residents to stay in Town by reducing housing cost burden while also helping to meet the projected demand for new affordable and market rate housing as articulated in the HPP. Second, the site's location in close proximity to the commercial opportunities within the Middleton Square area presents both residential and employment opportunities for persons both living and conducting business in this area to have additional options within walking distance to many amenities with less dependence on vehicles to get to certain destinations. Third, the redevelopment will help generate increased foot traffic for local businesses and for the Town's overall economic development, particularly in Middleton Square. Lastly, the proposed redevelopment fulfills an important housing need within the Town.

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NEXT STEPS

At our meeting with you on March 14th we will discuss next steps and timing with respect to both the residential proposal and commercial proposal. We look forward to discussing with you as well as other Town officials, departments and the public on this redevelopment proposal.

Respectfully submitted,



Lars Unhjem
Villebridge Acquisitions LLC

Attachments:

1. Residential site plan together with conceptual retail site plan
2. Residential elevations
3. Residential perspective renderings
 - a. View from Boston Street heading east
 - b. View from retail main entrance at South Main Street

CC: Jackie Bresnahan, Interim Town Administrator, Town of Middleton
Katrina O'Leary, Town Planner, Town of Middleton
John Smolak, Esq., Smolak & Vaughan LLP